

Editorial

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Writing in the Science and Technology page of *The Hindu* recently (Speaking of Science, June 14th issue), D Balasubramanian talks about a new trend of ‘cram soon after pram’ coaching schools. These schools plan to take young students in the sixth standard, and train them continuously for six years to get into the IITs. At a time when parents are increasingly putting pressure on their children to succeed, this is not a surprising trend at all. For middle-class Indians, getting into a professional course seems to be the only definition of success.



D Balasubramanian’s article talks about the zombiedom of the young mind that such intensive coaching results in. He contrasts it to the creative joy of a scientist who is constantly discovering new things and is free to choose the problems that he/she works on. His article concludes by leading readers to the book *100 Reasons to be a Scientist* (available free at <http://users.ictp.it/krs/100reasons.pdf>) where many reputed scientists talk about why they took to science. If many of us have chosen science as a career, it is because we find it enormously fulfilling and gratifying. But parents and students often do not realize the pleasure of doing science, and think that success is only possible if you have a BTech or an MBA. Perhaps our youngsters need role models in science who they can look up to and try to emulate. This is partly why we feature a famous scientist in each issue of *Resonance*: to tell our readers about the person, their life, and their accomplishments.

The featured scientist in this issue, Josiah Willard Gibbs, should indeed be such a role model. After completing his doctorate in the US at the young age of 19, he went to Europe because Europe was then the best place to study science. He did not carry out research under the supervision of a professor, but restricted himself to attending lectures by the great European scientists of the time. He drew inspiration from these lectures and came back to the US to settle down and make seminal contributions to our understanding of thermodynamics. If today US is the Mecca for scientific research, it is because of the tradition started by scientists like Gibbs in doing fundamental research in American Universities at a time when they were better known for their teaching at the undergraduate level. We hope that the young readers of *Resonance* will be inspired to start such research in the IITs and other Indian Universities, and in the years to come India will become the Mecca for world-class research.

