

Khet hi Sona hai

The verdure around us is not just nature's gift. Some of it is manmade—at least the way it looks. Amidst the imposing grandeur of bricks, green lawns provide refreshing contrast. A scene that soothes the eye. Elsewhere, flowers of a variety of hues and shapes sprinkle a splash of colour. No wonder our campus inspires many.

But what about the men behind it all? We hardly see them, let alone knowing them. In the Institute parlance, there is no interaction. One such man is Ramratan L. Pasi, the seniormost gardener of the Institute.

Ramratan came to the campus 16 years ago not just with a spade. But with experience. He was working with Dr. Mehta of ATIRA and later with Prof. Kamla Chaudhuri, who brought him here. That was when, in the words of Ramratan, the campus was a jungle and the construction of what is now D-12 had started. From then, he has seen the campus develop brick by brick—no, lawn by lawn, plant by plant, flower by flower. "I have many ideas of beautifying the campus," he says but there is not enough people around. Being the seniormost, Ramratan supervises the work of others.

Hailing from Sultanpur district in Uttar Pradesh, Ramratan, 34, started his career as a farmer at a young age. But he was underemployed and so started looking for opportunities for employment. He and his uncle decided to seek out a career elsewhere. That brought Ramratan to Ahmedabad, to IIM. He was 17 years then. He picked up Gujarati slowly. He now speaks that language fluently.

He has no extra-curricular activities. He does not even see movies! "Ham ko



achha nahi lagta hai," he says. He knows about the Recreation Club but has not taken part in any activity. He does not like spending money on such items. He leads a simple life. Asked how he spends his leisure time, he said he works in a Professor's house and earns Rs. 30 extra every month to supplement his salary. This extra income is saved and sent home. He doesn't have any saving except the share capital in the cooperative society. Whatever money is sent home and even the loans taken from the society, he says, is used to buy land and cattle. In his own words: "Khet hi sona hai, dhaan hi dhan hai."

Ramratan has three sons. He doesn't want to educate all of them. Children

educated in city would not like to come back to village and settle there. Instead of utilizing their knowledge and ability in agriculture, they would go for office jobs. Moreover, they would go in for luxurious life and would spend lavishly. "However, I will educate one, so that he will be able to read and write. Others will do farming in my own agricultural land," he says.

What are his plans? "Till retirement, if possible, I will work here. By then I will ensure that I have my own house and enough land and cattle. I will then go back to my village and lead a peaceful life with my children."

NKS Kumar