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## 4th standard dropout leading brain drain reversal

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Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh's call to Indian scientists living abroad to return to India to help the country break into the big league of developed countries did not bring many despite many incentives, but a woman, who has studied only up to 4th standard, is bringing some best brains back.

The much-touted reversal of brain drain is being catalysed by Mata Amritanandamayi, who has emerged as one of India's leading spiritual leaders by breaking caste, social, economic, educational and several other barriers. Amritanandamayi, who is popularly called Amma, has been attracting top scientists from across the world not by throwing huge sums of money but by impressing upon them a higher sense of service.

"When Amma asked me to head the Amrita University founded by her I thought of developing it as a centre of excellence by attracting the most talented students from across the country, but when she said that she did not need a person like me to do it I got her message. She apparently wanted me to turn the ordinary student into an extra ordinary student", says Dr P Venkat Rangan, an internationally recognised pioneer of research in Multimedia Systems and Internet E Commerce.

Rangan, who founded the Multimedia Laboratory and Wireless Networks Research at the University of California, San Diego, passed the message to his fellow-scientists in the US and brought many of them back to assist him in this noble mission. The varsity has so far attracted over 80 top scientists. Several foreign scholars, including Nobel laureate Leland H Hartwell, have also joined the university. They have together succeeded in turning the university into one of the fastest growing institutions of higher learning in India in a brief span of eight years.

Apart from offering over 150 courses, the university, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, with headquarters at Coimbatore and campuses at Quilon, Cochin, Bengaluru and Mysore has embarked on research in cutting-edge areas such as nanosciences, molecular medicine, biotechnology, cyber security, computational engineering and environmental studies.

The research is also guided by Amma's concern that it should help in taking the benefits of modern science and technology to the common man. One of the major research initiatives undertaken by the university with the help of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) today helps students access the services of teachers and resources from across the world.

The research being done in the health sector with the objective of making the modern treatments affordable to all may change the face of healthcare delivery in the coming years. A significant contribution of the varsity is an insulin pump to be available in the market at one tenth the price of the existing pumps.

The university is also focusing on the development of advanced nanomedicines and advanced implants based on the regeneration of the body's own natural tissues using stem cells.

These advanced products that will revolutionise cancer treatment will go into clinical trials in two to three years. These medicines are significant since they not only combat drug resistance, prevent toxic side-effects associated with chemotherapy regimens and are considerably more effective and cheap. —

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