Report on Our Visit to ENS

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1 The Exchange Programme

A student exchange programme has been set up between Chennai Mathematical Institute (CMI), Chennai (=Madras, India) and École Normale Supérieure (ENS), Paris. During August - September 2000, three research scholars (Stéphane Fischler, Alexandru Oancea and Mladen Dimitrov) visited our institute CMI and gave some lectures for our undergraduate students. During May - June 2001, two of us (Tejaswi N V and myself) visited ENS. Our trip was sponsored by National Board of Higher Mathematics (NBHM), India and ENS sponsored our stay in Paris. We reached Paris on May 8, 2001 and left for India on June 30, 2001. Our journey was in Air India.

2 Academic work at ENS

The visit to ENS was one of the most memorable events in my academic life. It was decided in January 2001 that I would work under Prof. François Loeser of ENS during my visit. As a preparation, I read some parts of the book "Introduction to Commutative Algebra" by Atiyah and Macdonald. At ENS, under the guidance of Prof. Loeser, I studied the local global principle of Commutative Algebra from the book by Ernst Kunz. My job was to understand the Serre's Problem on Projective Modules. The problem was proposed by Serre in 1955 and was ultimately solved by Quillen and Suslin in 1976.

Apart from this reading course, I attended some lectures with the first year students of ENS. I attended Prof. Don Zagier's talk on Modular Forms and Differential Forms at Collège de France. I attended the Indo French conference on Number Theory at University of Paris 6 which included lectures by Dr. Sukumar Das Adhikari (HRI, Allahabad, India) and N. Saradha (TIFR, Mumbai, India). I attended Dr. C. S. Aravinda's (CMI) lecture on "Exceptional sets of certain endomorphisms of Nilmanifolds and Hausdorff dimension" at university of Paris 6.

We learnt some French in Chennai before we came to Paris. To improve our French, ENS sponsored a four weeks' French course for us at the Alliance Française, Paris. There was a machine in our office with a CD ROM set through which we could practice our French.

At the end of our stay in ENS, on June 25, I gave a talk on "Serre's Conjecture on Projective Modules" to briefly explain what I have studied in those eight weeks.

Prof. Loeser was very helpful to me during my stay at ENS. The senior students at ENS also helped me a lot to understand the subject.

3 Life at ENS

We were given excellent accommodation at the ENS guest house, in the "chambres de passage". We were given 65 meal coupons each to eat in the ENS canteen. The canteen was a nice place to meet people and the food in the canteen was very good too. There was cooking facility too for us in the kitchen and we sometimes cooked our food during the weekends when canteen used to be closed.

We were provided an office (R3) which was situated in passage rouge just next to salle Henri Cartan. The computing facility was up to the best level. We could also play some badminton in our spare time.

We received sufficient amount of money for our expenses in Paris. Apart from the free meal tickets, we were paid FRF 6400 each. We also received a book grant of FRF 3000 each with which I bought lot of very good books.

Stéphane Fischler (ENS) co-ordinated our stay at ENS. He was our teacher in CMI the previous year and here he was a very good friend. He really took care of everything very well and it was only because of him that we did not face any problem during our whole stay at ENS.

4 Outside Paris

Paris is the first place to visit for a tourist. We visited in and around Paris during weekends. According to me, it is not an exaggeration by the French people that Paris is the most "beautiful" city of the world. We also visited some parts of Italy (Pisa, Rome, Florence and Venice) and Spain (Port Bou and Barcelona). Unfortunately, both of our bags were stolen when we were returning from Spain.

I also visited other places of France, namely Marseille, La Rochelle and Nice. At the end, I also had a short visit to Max Planck Institut für Informatik, Saarbrücken, Germany where I am going to join for my MS - Ph.D. studies.

5 Conclusion

The visit to ENS was a great experience for me. It was very fruitful for me, both academically and otherwise. The overall atmosphere at ENS was so nice that I would be very happy to come here again. I also thank all the French people in Paris because everywhere they were very helpful to us. I wish this exchange programme is carried on by the two institutes for a long time.