

early – rote learning leads to a conformist attitude and a fear of expressing criticism even as success in examinations based on memorizing useless facts leads to a blind acceptance of the 'system'. The most important casualty in all this is the spirit of imagination

which is the lifeblood of research. Regrettably, the attitudes encouraged by the 'system' in the early years of scientific education are in total consonance with the type of behaviour that is expected, even applauded further in the Pilgrim's Progress.

*School of Chemistry
University of Hyderabad
Hyderabad 500 134, India*

Enhancing indigenous science coverage in communication media

Creating public understanding of science in an era when science and technology are permeating every fabric of society needs no emphasis. Though we boast of having the third largest pool of scientific and technological manpower in the world, there is much to be done in the field of S&T communication at the grassroot level. Despite some encouraging trends in recent years¹, the readily available media-friendly western stuff gets the best treatment in our communication media, especially the print one.

Unfortunately, the results of our thousands of scientists, engineers and technocrats actively working in critical areas in S&T, largely go unnoticed. There could be many reasons. For example, there is still a large number of scientists who do not see the need to explain their work to the laypersons at all. Worse still, there are those who actively avoid doing so. The reasons are manifold: scientists often believe that their research work is too complex for ordinary people to understand, that journalists are not qualified to report what they do, or even that there is a danger of funding being withdrawn if the truth gets out. Surely there is no concept of S&T that can't be understood by the attentive layperson, though the investment of a little effort may be required.

With this backdrop, this communication discusses some ways and means to enhance the present coverage of our achievements in S&T sector. This could perhaps be done by identifying 100–150 active science writers and then devising a suitable mechanism by the concerned agency to provide these writers the best of 4–5 S&T periodicals of our country on a regular basis.

To begin with, these science writers could be the members of the Indian Science Writers' Association, the national body of science communicators and the periodicals be our 12 S&T journals being covered by the Science Citation Index (1991) which in turn covers over 3200 world's leading science journals. These are (1) *Current Science*, (2) *Indian Journal of Chemistry: Section A Inorganic, Bio-inorganic, Physical, Theoretical and Analytical Chemistry*, (3) *Indian Journal of Chemistry: Section B Organic Chemistry, including Medicinal Chemistry*, (4) *Indian Journal of Medical Research: Section A Infectious Diseases*, (5) *Indian Journal of Medical Research: Section B Biomedical Research other than Infectious Diseases*, (6) *Journal of Astrophysics and Astronomy*, (7) *Journal of Biosciences*, (8) *Journal of Genetics*, (9) *Journal of Scientific & Industrial Research*, (10) *Pramana – Journal of Physics*, (11) *Proceedings of the Indian*

Academy of Sciences – Chemical Sciences and (12) *Proceedings of the Indian Academy of Sciences – Earth and Planetary Sciences*. Of these, two general journals, viz. *Current Science* and the *Journal of Scientific and Industrial Research* could form the core journals. And from the remaining 10, an option to select any two or three more would make a total of best of our 4–5 S&T journals. Needless to say, the number of both the active science writers as well as S&T journals can be added/deleted simply by 'performance evaluation' exercise.

This could be supplemented with S&T Newsletters, Annual Reports of various S&T Institutes/Organisations/Ministries and non-periodicals like the Technical Reports, Expert Group Reports, etc.

In a world of limited resources it is up to both the scientists and the science writers to convince taxpayers that their money is well spent on research.

1. Jain, N. C., *Curr Sci.*, 1993, 65, 441.

N. C. JAIN

*BII 6/6, New Minto Road Apartments
New Delhi 110 002, India*