

the year and publish articles in Indian journals. Twenty research articles in *Indian Journal of Chemistry* are equivalent to one publication in *Angewandte Chemie* (!).

Why do these observations bother our mind? For a true researcher, the primary incentive for research work is his mental satisfaction (!), the secondary incentives being an award or a promotion. For both the latter cases, the mathematics of impact factor works. Very little recogni-

tion is generally given to scientists in Indian laboratories. One important question that bothers is 'Does the candidate have any research training (experience) in a good research laboratory (work in any foreign laboratory, then come back to reputed institutions like IISc, IITs in India)?'. Sometimes this training without publication is rated higher than research publications of one's work from Indian laboratories. Though research in Indian laboratories is being encouraged, foreign

training and publication in foreign journals are still considered to be better, which may have a bad impact on research in India.

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Blind folly?

This concerns an article published recently in *Current Science* (2000, **78**, 1136). As all of us know, we are a nation where compartmentalization has been carried to its ultimate in the specification of sub-sub-classes in all spheres of life ranging from the communal to the professional – and it is risky business to make any comment that might be construed as 'casting aspersions' on anything outside one's own sub-sub-class. However, the contents of the article have raised some questions in my mind that require airing.

The article concerned deals with the influence of photoperiod variations on the copulatory behaviour variables of certain mammals. One gathers that earlier studies have been performed on laboratory rats, prairie voles, Indian palm squirrels, cane mice and Indian desert gerbils, and therefore it is now the turn of South Indian gerbils (*Tatera indica cuvieri*).

It is perhaps a quite legitimate scientific objective to study this sort of problem in our endeavour to understand the grand design of life. One cannot seriously

object to taking these animals and subjecting some of them to varying periods of light and darkness, in order to study systematically what they do or do not do in the dark. If done in a reasonable fashion, the effects of such experimentation upon the animals concerned would probably be only temporary and reversible.

But *blinding* them by injecting absolute alcohol ('Merck, Germany', presumably to ensure real quality) into the vitreous chamber of the eye, 'following which the iris turned white'? I doubt whether the subjects could derive any satisfaction from the fact that they thereafter went from being inactive adult males to (hyper?) active ones with enhanced 'intromission frequency, thrust frequency, ejaculation frequency and [perhaps as a bonus] post-ejaculatory copulation frequency'.

I am no rabid animal rights activist, and in fact I find the extremes to which the fringe groups among the latter push their objections quite ridiculous. However, I find the nature of the present study and the means used somewhat

incommensurate with the advancement of real knowledge achieved as a result. One shudders to think of the possible extensions of such a study. Perhaps blinding by a series of increasingly more virulent agents would spur the poor creatures on to even greater efforts – hydrochloric acid, laser radiation, Chennai Metrowater? And now that we know that yes, gerbils have what it takes, what about mongooses, rabbits, cats, dogs, chimps, . . .? Eventually, does one expect to establish that Braille is an unnecessary distraction?

If I have overstated my point, it is because I feel that a certain level of discerning judgment and overall perspective is needed in choosing the *means* used to attack scientific problems.

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NeemAzal-F

The paper entitled 'Control of coconut black-headed caterpillar (*Opisina arenosella* Walker) by systemic application of 'Soluneem' – A new water-soluble neem insecticide formulation' by T. Shivashankar *et al.* (*Curr. Sci.*, 2000, **78**, 176–179) on the application of Soluneem to coconut through stem injections comparing other commercial preparations, included one of our products NeemAzal-F. In this regard, it is important to note that:

(i) Neem-Azal-F has been recommended only so far foliar application based on application research; (ii) Neem-Azal-F has not yet been recommended for stem injection in coconut; (iii) Neem-Azal-F has not been recommended for coconut at the concentrations the authors have cited.

With the above views, we strongly feel that is illogical and not in the interests of science to compare products which have not been recommended for specific appli-

cation with those products intended for the purpose. Further, we also bring to your notice that use of brand names citing negative attributes for a non-recommended crop application is inappropriate.

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