

tematics. We have not listed this in that particular context where we have mentioned about other universities (Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, Mumbai, BHU, etc.) because these centres are not now contributing much towards classical taxonomy in recent times. We excluded the name of Calicut University, because all are aware of this centre, where significant work on systematics is still being carried out by an excellent team of taxonomists.

Throughout our article we have made an appeal to strengthen these premier taxonomic centres of our country, so that they can become leaders in any future coordinated programme as pro-

posed in our article. Unless this attempt is made on a war-footing scale, we will be losing much of our material and data sources of biodiversity and infrastructural system. Strengthening and supporting BSI, ZSI and other centres through adequate core staff, facilities, etc. are an important responsibility of our nation.

We may conclude by saying that it is enormously important for us to evolve a dynamic strategy that could help revive and rejuvenate the systematic research in India. Both long-term and short-term strategies are to be formulated after conscientious discussions and consultations among all the stakeholders who are concerned and committed to setting

systematic biology research agenda of the country in order.

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Faith and rationality

This is with reference to the editorial 'The astrology fallout' (*Curr. Sci.*, 2001, **80**, 1085–1086). Learning from Meghnad Saha about his work on a problem of astrophysics, a friend of his father commented, 'What's great with it? All these things are already documented in the Vedas!' On cross-examination by Saha, the old man had to admit that he did not read the Vedas, but subsequently he asserted his belief again. The genesis of the recent proposal of UGC to introduce Vedic astrology in the university curriculum lies in such a belief that all the achievements of modern science have their root in traditional Indian knowledge. Going through various scriptures (the Vedas

and the Upanishads), Saha failed to get anything which could substantiate this belief; but it does exist and will continue to exist. It is this traditionally nurtured belief which inspires people at the helm of affairs, from time to time, to rejuvenate our classical knowledge.

Looking from a broader perspective, the present battle is between faith and rationality. Needless to say, in this never-ending crusade, faith has got an edge over rationality. Science research does not necessarily inculcate rationality in the mind of a researcher. That is why we see that some people, working in premier research institutes of India, are taking the help of gem-stones to ward off various problems in their per-

sonal lives or are rushing to get a special type of garland (which increases in length with time) for the treatment of jaundice. The 'defenders of a policy of openness' by and large represent this section of people. It is unfair to blame common people for blind faith, since they draw inspiration from these so-called scientists.

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