

## Poetry in Science

### An invitation to readers to verse and win prizes

In recent times, there has been some discussion on the use and relevance of poetry in science. It has been argued that scientists can be and are poets, and that they may provide language and perspectives that are interestingly different from the general populace of poets. The modern poet Gregory Corso has said: 'I love poetry because it makes me love and presents me life... it does tell me my soul has a shadow'. We have also been reminded of the poetic abilities of the naturalist Erasmus Darwin, and how he poetically expressed his ideas on biological evolution in rhyming couplets. For example:

'Organic life beneath the shoreless waves  
Was born and nurs'd in Ocean's pearly caves  
First forms minute, unseen by spheric glass  
Move on the mud, or pierce the watery mass'

*New Scientist* asked its readers several years ago to write on science in the Japanese poetic form called Haiku. This form, practised by Zen philosophers to express lofty and philosophical thought in a succinct form, is a poem of three lines. The first line has five syllables, the second seven and the third line again has five syllables. The prize-winner wrote:

'Galileo said  
That the earth moves round the Sun  
While the church stood still'

When I ventured to launch a similar Haiku competition in science in Hyderabad six years ago, I found that the 'biology lot, bent their neurons to the hilt, but it came to nought'. I am emboldened to throw the challenge afresh to the readers of *Current Science* now, particularly in light of e-mail attachments that are doing the rounds about computer error messages written in Haiku form. Here is a couplet: 'Chaos reigns within; Reflect, repent and reboot; Order shall return', and 'Three things are certain; Death, taxes and lost data; Guess which has occurred'.

Here then is my challenge. I invite readers to submit their thoughts on matters connected with science in the form of poetry. The style is open; as rhyming couplets, Haiku, sonnets, limericks..., but please try and avoid free verse! While I prefer it to be in English, I encourage submissions in major Indian languages as well. We shall have a jury to judge the poems and award prizes. The jury-chosen poems will also be published in *Current Science*. Please send your entries to Poetry Competition, c/o The Editor, *Current Science*, Post Box No. 8001, C.V. Raman Avenue, Bangalore 560 080.

**The last date for sending in entries is 15 November 2001.**

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## Fourth National Symposium in Chemistry

National Chemical Laboratory, Dr Homi Bhabha Road, Pune 411 008, India  
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The Fourth National Symposium in Chemistry (NSC-4) to be held during 1–3 February 2002 at the National Chemical Laboratory, Pune will provide a forum for the chemistry community in the country to get together and discuss recent developments in research in chemistry as an interdisciplinary science. It would also provide an opportunity for younger scientists to get an exposure to the excitement of chemical research. The symposium will include invited lectures with ample time for discussions and poster presentations. A few lectures by leading practitioners of chemistry from abroad are also planned.

Interested participants are invited to submit a one-page abstract of their work for poster presentation. The abstract should be typed (single line spacing) on A4 paper (with 25 mm margins). Senior author's name may be indicated by asterisk and the presenting author's name underlined. Abstracts along with the registration form should be submitted by e-mail as an attachment. The last date for submitting abstracts is **15 October 2001**.

### Registration

The registration fee for NSC-4 is as follows payable by DD drawn in favour of 'Convener, Fourth National Symposium in Chemistry, Pune'.

(i) Delegate: Rs 750/-; (ii) Annual member: Rs 500/-; (iii) Student delegate: Rs 250/-; (iv) Life members: Nil.

For more information please contact: S. Sivaram, Convener (e-mail: [Sivaram@ems.ncl.res.in](mailto:Sivaram@ems.ncl.res.in))  
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