

and palm and the whole palm was covered with latex that exuded from the cut ends of the plant. Within a few hours of exposure to air, it coagulated forming a protective covering on the wound surface.

The rubber wood is a rich storehouse of starch and sugars and lacks the phenolic compounds normally present in hard wood species. Hence the primary function of latex production is defence of the wood against fungal and insect attack. Does the latex from the rubber tree perform the same function on human beings as well? Was the quick healing of wounds on my palm and fingers due to this property of latex?

During the next wedge-grafting operation, three slanting incisions (4–5 mm long) were made on the index and middle fingers of my left hand. The wounded capillaries exuded blood. The wounds were smeared with fresh latex. Latex dried up as a thin transparent film. The

wounds closely examined at hourly intervals. On pressing the wounded fingers no pain was felt. After 24 hours it seemed there were no wounds at all and all the three healed very quickly. The cut tissues developed a light blackish colour. A similar observation was noted on two other incisions, as well as on deeper gashes. Latex smeared on the wounds helped in healing the wounds by sealing them but leaving the wounded area with a blackish discoloration.

Thus it could be concluded that: (a) Fresh latex when applied on shallow wounds on the skin alleviates pain of the wound totally. (b) It totally prevents entry of infection-causing microorganisms, resulting in quick healing, thereby indicating the wound-healing and pain-killing properties of rubber latex.

Professional rubber tappers with over 20 years of experience corroborated this finding.

This very preliminary finding needs to be buttressed with detailed studies on untreated wound control and on any harmful effects due to HCN content of latex.

The rubber tree on wounding exudes its latex which on drying ensures quick healing of its wound. Maybe the tree also experiences the pain-killing and soothing effect when it is being tapped on its bark at intervals, just as man does!

1. Ridley, H. N., Ann. Rep. Straits Settlement R. Bot. Gardens, 1890–1891.
2. Thankamma, L., Proceedings of the Kerala Science Congress, 2003, pp. 768–769.

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Saturation of Olive Ridley nesting sites

With reference to the article 'Is Gahirmatha the world's largest sea turtle rookery?' by Basudev Tripathy¹, I would like to add that although statistical nesting records may be older for other populations, the oldest record for any turtle population is by Anderson in 1708, who refers to the prodigious number of turtles nesting in almost a 100 km length from Kanika to Balasore which includes the present-day Gahirmatha². It is a matter of great concern that the 100 km nesting length has now been reduced to a 3–4 km island of Nasi in Gahirmatha area in the last 300 years, which means saturation of

nesting space, thereby affecting the population. Further, it may be alright to reassess whether Gahirmatha is the largest rookery or not in the world scenario, but regarding the author's apprehension that declaring the Gahirmatha population the largest may affect the downlisting of the species, it appears that the author is not aware of the fact that the IUCN Red List Standard and Petitions Subcommittee has already downlisted the status of four sea turtles, including the Olive Ridley whose status has been changed from EN A1bd (1996) to EN A1bd in the Red List based on a peti-

tion by Nicholas Mrosovsky (*Species Newsl.*, July–December 2001, No. 36).

1. Tripathy, Basudev, *Curr. Sci.*, 2002, **83**, 1299.
2. Mohanty-Hejmadi, P., *Mar. Turtle Newsl.*, 2000, **88**, 11–12.

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Absence of condensing agent

I am appalled to see the description of a chemical conjugation between morphine hemisuccinate and albumin in dioxane at ice-bath temperature but in the absence of any condensing agent¹. This appears to be a serious omission or some kind of

a 'cold fusion' since amide bonds cannot form unless the carboxyl groups are activated by condensing agents. The structure of the conjugate of BSA and morphine shown in figure 1 is also dubious.

1. Azim Akbarzadeh, Dariush Norouzian, Behrokh Farahmand and Davoud Nouri Inanlou, *Curr. Sci.*, 2002, **83**, 57–60.

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