

sand grain composition were restored to the typical beach values', as typical beach salinity and DO values are in the range 34 to 35‰ and 6 to 7 mg/l. Therefore, re-colonization of meiofauna cannot be co-related to physico-chemical parameters, as values of DO and salinity have not reached typical coastal water values.

Thus, possible errors in estimation of DO and subsequent wrong interpretation have been reported by the authors.

1. Altaff, K. *et al.*, *Curr. Sci.*, 2005, **89**, 34–38.

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Response:

We regret that we have not mentioned the unit of DO; it is mg/l. We would like to state that the DO values mentioned by us, prior to and after the tsunami are the true state of this parameter to the best of our knowledge, in the intertidal zone of Marina Beach. The Marina Beach receives large quantum of untreated domestic sewage and industrial effluents through the Coovum River. Probably, this might be the reason for low DO content. We had not discussed these aspects as the correspondence dealt with the impact of tsunami on meiofauna. Further, our interpretations are restricted to the conditions on the Marina Beach.

Further, we would like to point out that we have not studied the fish populations in this region. Nevertheless, the

meiofauna shows rich diversity and density with the DO level mentioned by us. With regard to silt deposition, we have provided detailed data on sand grain analysis, from which silt level can be inferred and scientific interpretation can be suggested.

Thus we hope there is no confusion or inappropriateness with regard to our data or interpretations.

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Does homeopathic treatment work?

A recent research paper in the British medical journal, *The Lancet* (2005, **366**, 726) has raised serious doubts about the homeopathic system of medicine. The study claims that there is no understandable biological mechanism underlying this system. The authors say that homeopathic medicines have simple placebo effect only. This paper has caused grave resentment amongst the homeopathic practitioners, and according to media reports, some of their associations intend to move to the courts of law. They maintain that this study is essentially a well-planned move on the part of the manufacturers of modern medicines to defame homeopathy and to strengthen their own position.

Homeopathic system is based on the belief that 'like cures like'. One of the

most interesting aspects of homeopathy is that the efficacy of a drug increases with dilution. This is something completely inconsistent with our scientific understanding of biochemical reactions. Therefore, from a scientific point of view, this system cannot be accepted and supported. But it is difficult to ignore that homeopathy has gained noticeable popularity amongst a significant number of patients who maintain that they have benefitted a lot from it. That homeopathic drugs are far less costly than modern medicines is their indisputable plus point.

A question that deserves an answer is which of the two is more important: to have an academic understanding of the mechanism of how a system of treating ailments works, or the simple fact that

people feel assured of being cured by and are generally satisfied with a given system. The first would undoubtedly draw the attention of a scientist, but a patient only expects that the system works. These days yoga and meditation are also gaining popularity, even though it is not clear how they really work. Perhaps 'mind over matter' works in many cases, which perhaps is outside the realm of the present-day science as we know it.

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Can Habur limestone curdle milk? – a myth or reality

Ranawat's¹ endeavour to suggest solutions to geo-myths is worth appreciating. The scientific community should come forward to eradicate myths spread in the society. If we make efforts to unveil the truth behind such myths, it is a wonderful service to the

society. But if our endeavour is incomplete and conclusions are not based on proper scientific investigations, then it may mislead the society.

Habur limestone of Lower Cretaceous age in Jaisalmer district, western Rajasthan

has enough porosity between the fossil fragments to hold curd-forming microorganisms if soaked in curd and used repeatedly for curdling process. But a fresh piece of Habur limestone should not cause curdling of milk, if curdling is due