HIGHLIGHT INDIAN SCIENTISTS

It is always a great delight to read about the contributions of Indian scientists to the world of science. I was happy to read in the November 2018 issue of Science Reporter the contributions of two eminent scientists – A.K. Raychaudhury & J.C. Bose.

Due to modern day highlighting of western scientists the work of our own scientists centuries back and even in the modern days are neglected. It’s my request to Science Reporter to please keep up the good work of publishing the achievements of our scientists. Such articles must be published in order to motivate our young scientific minds and to popularise the achievements of Indian scientists who were great visionaries of their times.

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SILENT KILLER

This is with reference to the article, A Silent Killer in the Environment by Dr M.A. Haque (Science Reporter, December 2018). Since time immemorial we are using lead (Pb).

But there was no definite proof that continuous intake of Pb can endanger health until (in 1983) Dr. Jorome Nriagu of the National Water Research Institute, Canada, firmly established, through the critical analysis of ancient records, that Pb intoxication was the major factor responsible for the fall of the once mighty Roman Empire. Dr. Nriagu showed that the Roman elite suffered from gout and progressive mental deterioration that has been attributed to their extensive drinking of wines made by boiling grape juice in vessels lined with Pb. This gave the liquor an irresistible flavour and appealing sweetness.

Lead is still an important component of various alloys. Canned foods leach out Pb from the solders, especially if the food is acidic. Certain spices and herbs, fruits such as peaches, and tea contain varying amounts of Pb. The absorption of Pb from food is influenced by a variety of factors including calcium, fibre, protein, iodine and the vitamins (especially C, E, B complex). Diets deficient in the above contributed to increased Pb absorption and retention in the body system.

Lead is a cumulative poison like mercury and cadmium. Once it is absorbed, it tends to accumulate in the body. Most of the Pb retained by the body is held in the mineral bone, here it may partially replace calcium. Like mercury, it is toxic to the nervous system and kidney.

Lead is probably the most ubiquitous metal poison. It is used for numerous purposes. To contain Pb toxicity steps should be taken to control contamination. Modifications in diets to minimize Pb absorption are also helpful. Diets must be rich in fibre and other important nutrients like calcium, iron, iodine and vitamin C.

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YEARLY ROUND-UP

I am regular reader of Science Reporter and my son Hardik Sharma, a student of class V at St. Edwards, Shimla also feels excited whenever we receive the latest issue of Science Reporter. The cover story by Kirti, Shivani, Anchal, Mansi and Sonali was beautifully presented and gave very good information. It was just a round-up of the scientific events that had happened in the year 2018. The articles published in the January 2019 issue were also very interesting and informative. Thank you Team Science Reporter for such an informative magazine.

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