

# Science Reporter

## PROMOTE SCIENTIFIC TEMPER

Kudos to the *Science Reporter* for the excellent editorial in the July 2012 issue *We Are In It Together*. The editorial has amply highlighted the iniquitous attempts by some dubious preachers to project purely scientific phenomena as miracles and the persecutions meted out to the whistleblowers.



The episode concerning the trickling of the so-called holy water from the feet of Jesus in a Mumbai church reminds us of a similar frenzy, a few years ago, associated with widespread rumours that the idols of Lord Ganesh were drinking milk. It was only when activists of Jana Vignana Vedica and some other science communicators demonstrated that it was only a scientific process due to surface tension that the myth was exploded and the rumours were set to rest. There are several other such episodes in which people are being cheated and exploited.

These are the times when science and technology are blossoming. The discovery of the Higgs boson by CERN scientists and the perfect landing of NASA's rover *Curiosity* on Mars are awesome developments. However, it is regrettable that a vast majority of Indian populace is grappling with superstition and mysticism.

It was rightly pointed out at the International Conference on Science Communication for Scientific Temper held in New Delhi in January this year that we (in India) are lagging behind the Western countries in science and that is the real cause of our poverty and social evils.

Lack of scientific temper among the people is also an impediment to progress. It is high time that efforts at the grassroot level are intensified and proper strategies are worked out by the government, people's science organizations and science communicators to inculcate scientific temper among the masses and recommend that our problems such as poverty, disease, ignorance and exploitation can be solved by scientific methods only and not by invoking supernatural powers.  
**Dr E.R. Subrahmanyam**  
Reader & HOD, Amalapuram (A.P.)

## IRRATIONALISM

In the July editorial, it was mentioned that S. Edamuruku, President of the Rationalist International, was threatened with arrest because he wanted to enlighten the believers that the 'holy' water trickling from the statue of Jesus was actually dirty water from a nearby drain. Regrettably in our society, which is obsessed with religion, rationalism takes a back seat.

This unfortunate event reminds one of Europe during medieval times, when apostates had to suffer because they dared to differ with existing religious beliefs.

IRRATIONAL

Though several renegades can be quoted only few are mentioned here: Andreas Vesalius, founder of scientific anatomy, who was sentenced to death in 1564 by the Spanish Inquisition; Giordano Bruno, who was burned at the stake in Rome in 1600 for being a heretic; and last but not the least Galileo, who in his twilight years, was forced to recant his sun-centric theory of the solar system, a concept repugnant to the powerful church.

**Shashi**  
Indore (M.P.)

## UNSUNG SCIENTISTS

This refers to the outstanding article *Unsung Heroes in the History of Science* published in the May issue of SR. The noted scientists contributed vastly and in various ways for our happiness yet never got their due. Dr Suhas Mukherjee's case is tragic. He was compelled to commit suicide under pressure from unknown people who never wanted his success but now we know what he had left for us. I would like to add the name of Dr P.C. Roy, renowned Chemistry professor, to the list of scientists who did not get their due.

**Debasis Ghosh**  
Barrackpur (West Bengal)

## HIGGS HOGS THE LIMELIGHT

The timing of the July issue, containing the cover story *Search for the Higgs boson ... goes on*, was perfect, because I received the issue the day the news of the discovery of this elusive particle was being widely announced. But it was somewhat of a disappointment to note that whereas the physicist Stephen Hawking was



quick to opine that the Nobel Prize should be awarded to Prof. Higgs very little was being spoken about and few were prepared to take cudgels for Bose, after whom the famous physicist Paul Dirac coined the word boson.

Bose's name will undoubtedly linger in the annals of science because of Bose-Einstein statistics (which is important in quantum mechanics) and also for his contribution in predicting the phenomenon of Bose-Einstein condensation. It may appear odd that so much time, money and top scientific brains were involved in the search for such a small, transitory particle. If Higgs boson has indeed been discovered, which is yet to be validated by subsequent experiments, then it will be a red-letter day for science. If otherwise, there will be a tortuous and painstaking quest for a successor theory. Come what may it will be science that will triumph.

**Dr. S.K. Gurtu**  
Jaipur (Rajasthan)

## HAVE YOUR SAY

If you feel strongly about any article or write-up published in *Science Reporter* or have some information to share with the readers, please write to us at the postal address given in the magazine or send an Email at [sr@niscair.res.in](mailto:sr@niscair.res.in).