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MY SEARCH FOR ‘*PASTEURELLA* 52’ FINALLY ENDS HERE!

September 18, 2020

Dear Prof. Roy

A bacterial strain named ‘*Pasteurella 52*’ was isolated by scientists of the Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI) in the 1940s. I found that an annual report of IVRI (1950) had mentioned this strain. However, a 1953 report (Banerji and Mukherjee, *Current Science* **52**, 177–178) indicated that Das and Rawathad published their work on ‘*Pasteurella 52*’ in 1947 in *Science and Culture*. Since I had some contacts at Delhi, I tried to obtain information on the availability of older issues of *Science and Culture* in the National Capital Region and elsewhere. Through these contacts, I came to know about the digitization initiatives at *Science and Culture*. I am overwhelmed to learn about your monumental efforts in digitization of older issues of *Science and Culture*. To do this with minimal support, and not to seek any publicity for the accomplishment, is truly heroic. I hope you have a great sense of satisfaction because all issues of *Science and Culture* are now completely digitized, and the latest articles are directly searchable using their digital object identifiers (DOI). Future generations of scientists would/should be grateful to you for making *Science and Culture* accessible with the click of a button.

It now appears to me that digitization of older issues of some Indian journals/magazines was no big deal at all, given the financial resources they have, and the support for digitization by their respective societies.

I am once again thankful to you for helping me with the 1947 articles that I needed for my work, and for your leadership role at ISNA.

Sincerely,

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OPTIMISM IN PANDEMIC LOCKDOWN

October 11, 2020

Dear Sir,

The editorial “Learnings from COVID-19 Pandemic” of the May-June 2020 issue of *Science and Culture* draws our attention to the important facts and truths of life focusing on the positive sides of an otherwise bleak situation resulting from the pandemic induced lockdown. The situation made us realize the contribution of domestic helps in our everyday lives. Fatigue is mostly a psychological feeling since we feel more tired just by sitting at home than we do while performing the chores of a usual hard working day. We have also witnessed a Nova effect play out, albeit possibly ephemeral, in the form of lowering of pollution levels, be it for air or noise. Due to the lockdown, far fewer vehicles had been plying on the streets and events churning out songs on loudspeakers have also been on a pause.

As pointed out by the editor, “*The world has enough for everyone’s need, but not enough for everyone’s greed*” as said by Gandhiji was realized during this lockdown through the minimal cost incurred for a decent life. The suggestion of using internet and video conferencing for first level of patient-doctor interaction on a permanent basis will reduce crowding at hospital Out Patient Departments (OPDs). Here I would like to share a personal experience: during the last week of August 2020, my family and I were down with fever and cold, symptoms of which resembled those of the common flu. Getting medicine over the counter in a medical store without prescription was prohibited and getting an in-person appointment with a doctor was not possible. Our only option left was to avail online advice and prescription through a digital platform, acquire the medicine and get cured.

While appreciating the behavioral changes among the public in recent time such as wearing masks, washing hands and maintaining personal hygiene, the editorial at the same time expresses its worry that “*any habit driven*

only by fear usually disappears after the crisis is over. It is to be seen how much of the changes in social structure and behavior persist even after the pandemic.” The editor being an eminent scientist has rightly expressed his disappointment and pain when he finds that an entire area of a neighborhood is barricaded if one person in one of the houses is affected with COVID-19. Ignoring the scientific reason for the virus spread through sputum from an affected (or asymptomatic) person and from personal contact, the administration blocked an entire area sending a very wrong signal to the public, thereby turning safety to a stigma. A better approach would have been to raise the awareness of the masses through interactive sessions. Seeing these odds, the editor rightly mentions “*that nothing much has changed since the time of Meghnad Saha who tried to inculcate scientific reasoning among people to eradicate superstition and unscientific beliefs through Science and Culture, the journal he established 86 years ago.*”

With a mission to encourage people to think positively about the otherwise panicky situation prevalent in our country, the editor concludes with a personal anecdote; “*In Europe, I know of cases where neighbors and friends have delivered essential items at the door step of an affected house and then informing them by phone for taking them in. This is in stark contrast to the practice being followed in India. We can only pray for scientific reasoning to prevail in this society and let human beings be humane during this trying time of human history.*”

I would like to thank the editor for sharing his insights and concern on a matter as pertinent as this pandemic and look forward to more such relevant and thought provoking pieces.

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