SCIENCE COMMUNICATION

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Transmission of scientific knowledge on any particular discipline of science to the lay public may be regarded as a very complicated and difficult task for any person; he may be a scientist or a journalist without any sound knowledge of any discipline of science. Various disciplines of science, may include the fields of physical sciences, life sciences and all their branches, social and behavioural sciences, the application of science through technology and certainly of course medicine and health care. But whatever be the branch of science, the very key to successful science communication is to make the write-up or the speech understandable and intelligible to the layman whom the writer or the speaker wants to reach. The communicator is to keep it in his mind that the joy of understanding is one of the most precious gifts man possesses. To deny the majority of people to take part in understanding the modern developments in science and technology would be to deprive them of the glory, excitement and advancement of science and technology to which they have every right to as follow human beings.

Science is written records of man's understanding of nature and that is why to make science, technology and society synchronize, we have to make science more meaningful and technology more human-oriented. Science only accepts proof -- mathematical, experimental or one based on unrefutable evidence. As long as the proof is not there, science is not to accept any scientific theory or hypothesis as truth. This is the essence of scientific consciousness and this is to be considered if we are to remain true to ourselves. Truth should prevail over prejudices, but superstitions still cloud our mind. Science has developed while scientific bend of mind lags far behind. Science therefore has only a limited influence on the society.

Let me cite an example. In the year 2004, I had to visit a remote village in the district of Midnapore, West Bengal, in connection with the delivery of a popular lecture on astronomy with the aid of coloured slides. After the delivery of the lecture, I was taking rest at the local high school in the night. At about 10 in the night, the science teacher of the school took me to a house in the village, where a young man of 22 years had been suffering from utter pain due to a snake-bite. I noticed that an *ozha (gunin)* was striking the back of the young man with a broomstick for removing the poison out of the body. I immediately appealed to the father of the young man to make an arrangement for taking his son to the nearest health centre where antivenom serum can be pushed. He kept my request and took his son for administering AVM serum and his son survived after this treatment. The doctor in charge of this treatment told me that the bite was by a poisonous snake and without the administering of AVM serum, he would have died. This is the way of life still in vogue in remote villages of West Bengal, which is regarded as a state of advanced consciousness in India. More than thirty thousand people are still killed every year in our country due to snake-bites and we have not yet been able to communicate to the rural people about the utter detrimental consequence of such deep-rooted superstitions. Science communicators in our country should think over such deep-rooted problems of our society.

Science popularization means the transmission of scientific knowledge from scientists to the lay public for purposes of rational thinking. But unfortunately we find in our country various types of superstitions, pseudo-science and deep-rooted religious dogma still prevailing in our society. In our country common people fall prey to superstitions at every step, but do not feel the urge to prove the existence of sound logic behind these. However, those who considered themselves modern and highly educated also do have belief in various superstitions. Many a time, I have seen university professors teaching physical sciences having tremendous faith in astrology – a faith that is proudly displayed by three or four gemned

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