

JOURNAL OF CAMEL PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

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GUEST EDITORIAL

The great Indian poet and scholar Noble Laureate Rabinder Nath Tagore in his famous work GITANJALI wrote "A candle which is not lit cannot light others, a teacher who is not learning himself can not teach others". The interpretation of these lines is not as simple as it looks. The implications are wide spread and can touch any field or profession. When editor of JCPR asked me to write a guest editorial, being the second one from me, I felt honoured but could not restrain my self to make the beginning from the cited couplets from GITANJALI. How this couplet is related to JCPR comes later in this editorial.

A good teacher does not mean one who is a good orator and delivers lectures from well prepared notes from existing books. Such a process usually encourages rote learning: A good teacher is a person, I think so, who continuously updates his knowledge and transfers the same to inspire his students. He commands respect but not popularity. Similarly, a research worker, or for that matter an investigative clinician, is not expected just to conduct experiments or trials to publish them in a journal. It is also expected that he should be creative to generate new ideas. As President of India, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam said that being creative means to look innovatively at things the way others do not. To achieve this in science one has to go through journals. Books certainly do impart knowledge, but scientific books are not updated so frequently. Therefore, journals are means of acquiring updated knowledge.

There is mushrooming of journals world over. Frankly many of these do not publish quality works. In my terminology such journals are "increment journals". Publications in these journals are not even worth scanning. These journals allow publications of papers so that persons can fulfill criterion of universities to earn annual increments or designated marks during assessments for promotions. This comment may be viewed with a tongue in cheek but a fact remains a fact. In such papers abstract/summary is vague, experiments and results are repetitive and discussion conveys nothing. Often erroneous conclusions are drawn. There is a hilarious "cockroach story" which I would like to share with readers. An investigator wanted to know how a cockroach listens. He placed the insect on a table and said GO. The cockroach ran. He then cut few legs of the insect and said GO. Speed came down. Slowly he cut all legs and said in a loud voice GO, GO. The insect did not move. The conclusion drawn was that the cockroach listens through its legs. Any takers?

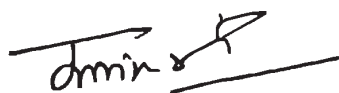
It is said that in science credit does not go to the person who gets the idea but to the person who convinces the world. To convince the world one needs to publish a quality paper in a quality journal. A journal, which has credibility. I do understand that every paper cannot be published in journals like "Nature or Science". However, there are number of other journals which publish quality papers. This is where JCPR comes in my thoughts. When it was launched more than a decade back, its future, at least in my view, was uncertain. It is one of those journals which do not cover wider species of animals. It is entirely devoted to camelids, especially to the camel which is considered as a ship of the desert. Data of FAO shows that the camel population dropped from 4.5 million in 1994 to 3.5 million in 2004. One of the major reasons for this declining population being mechanisation in agriculture sector and rapidly decreasing pasture lands for the camel. According to the FAO 300 of the 6000 breeds of mammals and birds identified by this UN agency have become extinct over the past 15 years-currently 1350 breeds face extinction. If the environmental issues are not urgently addressed to, may be after a decade or two, the camel will be an object of zoos only. If it does happen, it would be very sad, keeping in view the importance of this animal for arid and semi-arid zones of the world. When will nations realize the huge impact it would have on the society? May be the awakening occurs when the earth shakes.

Michael Fox, the Vice-President of the Humane Society of United States of America and a friend of mine, in his book "Between Animals and Man" stated that man destroyed nature to feed his own greed in a dream of progress. He further stated that once man re-establishes his own contact with his own animal nature and reaffirms his commitment to conserve nature, we may have hope for our children's children.

Now, having written all that, I come to JCPR. It has met several criteria of a good journal, meeting the standards of couplet of "GITANJALI from where I made the beginning of this editorial, and my own definition of a teacher and a scientist. Over the years, it is a candle which is lit to light others on camelids issues, it has updated itself on various issues, and has certainly generated new ideas. Top scientists of the world have contributed their papers to this journal. The Agricultural Scientists Recruitment Board of India, within 12 years of JCPR launching, rates it equal to "Research in Veterinary Science" published from U.K. Kudos to the contributors, its editor and of course those who helped it to rise to such standards.

For a guest editorial, it is a long narration. However, when does one get such a chance in a good quality journal? Apart from publishing quality papers, JCPR does other things too. It reminds us about what Dr. (Mrs.) Ilse Kohler Roleffson of Germany and Chairperson of a NGO in a remote area of Rajasthan is doing for the welfare of pastoralists and for conservation of the camel. It informed us about the plight of children as Jockeys on camels in races in middle east and efforts now on to use robot Jockeys; the cover picture of one issue of the journal showed that in UAE a camel sits between two high profile cars. The JCPR informed us how a camel cart journey took place from Jaipur to Delhi in India to promote a casteless society. It also projected how Jim Wiltens and Danial Wright took journey on a camel back from Bikaner (India) to Kathmandu (Nepal), a total of 1400 miles, to spread message of education and solar energy.

In the end, I have to ask only one question. Why I was asked to write this editorial? I have only one answer- perhaps I am being overrated by editor of this journal.



(Jit Singh)

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