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Coping with liberalization

The Editorial bearing the above title (*Curr. Sci.*, 1996, 70, 5) surprised me. It seems to indicate that some people believe that *Current Science* ought to limit itself to publication of research reports and 'science correspondence'. This would be a terribly blinkered view, and to make this point, it may be useful to recapitulate some principles.

The publication of scientific research reports and articles bearing on research serves several purposes. One is to stake a claim to being there first, as it were, by a scientist or group of scientists; another is to keep others informed and thereby to invite confirmation or advice in further pursuit of the topic. Yet a third purpose is that leaders in business can become aware of developments which, sooner or later, could promote their business through innovative applications, or adversely affect their business for example through product substitution. Last but not least, at this point in time, it should offer a peep into scientific processes for aspiring students and keep them periodically updated through review articles, tutorials, etc. Articles bearing on history of science and biographical sketches facilitate a good understanding of science, its values and its attraction as a career.

It has become a cliché to say that the world is totally inter-disciplinary but it is not appreciated that this means an interlocking of branches of scientific activity, mostly hidden from the view of all but the super-specialists. The potential

benefits of developments in one area of science can reach far out in apparently unconnected fields but they will remain unnoticed unless they are presented in the form of integrated articles at least partly in non-technical language. This is a service function (for *Current Science* or any other major journal) which is an important corollary to the function summarized in the editorial as 'forum for the publication of the *most interesting* scientific research in the *shortest possible time*' (emphasis added). The two highlighted phrases reflect the importance of publication to individual scientists (or groups) and show the potential value of explanation of scientific developments in lay language.

The national temperament in India today is strongly motivated to surge forward, making ever greater demands on the use of technology in every form, in the process creating a lot of jobs. This requires an almost endless output from our colleges and universities of science- and technology-oriented graduates and post-graduate degree holders to sustain national economic progress through scientific research and through innovative applications. The status of science education and the administration of science are therefore matters of 'public interest' and a discussion of these topics is part of the service that is expected of a journal like *Current Science*. Expressions of dissent are healthy signs of inner strength of the system; in any case readers of

Current Science may be credited with the discriminatory intellectual power to assess the value of opinions expressed on both sides of any debate.

This process is part of the 'accountability' of science, whether funded by government agencies or by private corporations.

General purpose articles (including state-of-the-art reviews and tutorial-style articles) would take varied forms. For example, a comprehensive report on Indian observations on the recent total solar eclipse will be welcomed by, and be useful for, a circle much wider than solar astrophysicists if *Current Science* were to invite a distinguished scientist to edit a special issue which would cover the historical background to recent developments as well as the technology of measurements (instruments, techniques) of solar phenomena.

Current Science is in the class of international journals like the *Scientific American* of USA and, perhaps, has an even greater scope to focus on policy issues affecting scientific research, and education. *Current Science* owes it to the growing following in matters of science (& technology) in India today.

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