

# CORRESPONDENCE

## A READER'S RESPONSE

I would like to offer my comments on some recent editorials by Dr B P Radhakrishna in the columns of the Journal

### On 'Medical Geology', [JGSI, v.66(4), pp.395-400]

The write up raises an important issue which should receive prompt attention of the Earth Science community of the country, or shall we wait for some one in the west to take the initiative? Dr BPR very rightly highlighted the need of introducing this new "branch" of geological studies. He has presented a broad-based and comprehensive survey of the various facts of the subject. It provides an excellent background. That minerals and rocks play an important role in human health is an established fact. Also, geology has become an essential factor that is being taken into account in evaluating the impact of natural environments on our health. The scope of medical geology would be very wide, and once we get involved, we will be able to work out a programme and strategies for India. For this, a beginning is necessary. Some organization or university has to take the initiative, and start a process of thinking to give a concrete shape to the concept. I would like to mention the following in this context

- 1 Geological aspects of the rocks and minerals that find use in various systems of medicine
- 2 Studies of the problems of degradation, preservation and regeneration of various environments – natural as well as man-made
- 3 Systematic studies of the thermal springs, their medicinal value, proper development and management

These are just a few points given randomly. A collective think will result in a well-thought out document defining the scope of studies and the strategies of approach.

### On the Issue of 'Vandalism' [JGSI, v.66(2), pp.137-144]

Contents of the write up on this subject have caught my imagination, and prompt me to pen down my reaction. I am giving here some random suggestions for the perusal of the Earth Science fraternity, with a view to draw its attention towards the important aspect of preservation of our national geological heritage. Indian sub-continent abounds in a large number of occurrences of rocks, minerals, fossils and a unique variety of geomorphological and structural features, which need to be conserved and preserved for posterity.

These are natural, non-replenishable and non-replicable

assets and once destroyed, they will be lost for ever. Such destruction is going on all over the country.

In 1960, after I came back from Imperial College, I visited Pallavaram to examine the rocks of the type area of charnockites to find out if I could get some structural (fold) interference patterns in the high-grade metamorphic rocks. To my horror, I found that quite a few hills that comprised type localities (e.g. Rifle Range Hill) were practically destroyed by quarrying. I do not know what is the current position. Similarly, 'Frog Beds' of Bombay at Worli have been destroyed by quarrying and lost for ever. Miliolite occurrences of Saurashtra are being extensively quarried and destroyed. These unique rocks are gradually lost to the country. Similar scenario exists in all parts of the country, and the best of our natural losses would be very long.

It is most urgent to give serious thought to this problem and urgent steps are taken towards evolving a plan for the preservation of unique geological and geomorphological landscapes and occurrences of minerals, rocks and fossils. Not only the uninformed and un-enlightened sections of the Indian society, but also the geologists are causing irreparable damage by 'vandalising' important sites. With increased geological activity including innumerable geological field trips by students and researchers, in their anxiety to collect good samples, good outcrops are destroyed and contribute to the loss of material which cannot be replenished or restored. An awareness needs to be created amongst our own fraternity.

No one should be allowed to tamper with this heritage. In this task, the various government departments, Geological Survey of India, ONGC, university departments of geology and various ES-related research organizations have to come together and hammer out a policy and strategy. This will necessitate preparation of an exhaustive inventory of the various items which need our attention. This can be achieved by involving geologists, especially those who are field-oriented, from various organizations, who could provide precise and authentic data. If the necessary the sites may be visited and examined by suitably qualified persons. Once the objects, sites and locations have been identified, then a strategy for their preservation can be formulated.

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