

From the Mentor...

Sorry for missing out last month's news letter. There was a marriage in my in-laws family...I don't need to give more excuses-- you all would understand!

These two months have been a period to welcome and bid good bye!-- the labs have truly been at a state of transition reflecting much faster turnaround than the average, as yet. We warmly welcome Ankit, Sanket, Madhuri in Shilpee lab. While we have had several clinicians rotating through our labs, a special mention goes out for a medical student Ankit who is the first KVPF fellow in these two labs. Besides, we welcome Hemant and Manoj as the two budding enthusiastic scientist in Dutt lab. A striking feature common among both of them is that they both are in process of graduating from ACTREC. A huge gain for us all ! We welcome these all newbies. And, we bid adieu and wish good luck to Prachi-- a fantastic outgoing JRF from the Dutt laboratory.

With much of newbies around, I dedicate this newsletter with some introspective thoughts discussing an overall philosophy to the lab/s and the field in general. I start with a basic remark that working under an academic settings could be challenging. Very often, goals look obscure the path undefined.... a young researcher usually gets caught asking if the goals for experiments reflect goals for life? Does a successful completion of project ensure a comfortable future? Is there a grade to successful completion? Does this grading directly relate to the grading for the quality of livelihood for tomorrow?---the answer is yes, but it plays only a minor role ! Your laurel/s from successful execution of project/s, degree of your intellectual contribution and factor of luck will end with the project. New project will bring new challenges. What would keep you in good stead beyond that you could carry along from one project to other is your training for tactical approach, disciplined thought process, knowledge gathered, your faith in yourself, and your overall wisdom. Luck, may not strike twice! What about the major part-- while such attributes will be crucial especially under critical situations through out, your satisfaction and success in your life is mostly defined by your overall mindset that made you to enter in the field, that can be reflected in two crucial attributes: passion and honesty. If you have set in the field to get a degree with no direction beyond, as an escape from your family, as a testing ground for a brief period with ill defined future, or as a social prestige-- these attributes suggest "lack of passion". If you set in the field to publish a big story and move up to the next stage encashing the glory, consider yourself to have become indispensable, lack of self discipline, lie at the drop of a hat, arrogance, make imaginary fake excuses-- these attributes suggest "dishonesty".

In a conventional academic world, your future is a responsibility of your mentor, who takes into consideration of your performance in spirits and attitude to evaluate you as a scientist assigning differential weightage to both the parts. Now lets see, what role does a mentor have in the above two separate aspects: a mentor has a peer role to work with you and help your achieve your goals for experiments-- that when garnished with your intelligence, perseverance and luck can make a project complete successfully. For the major part, a mentor plays a far more crucial role in tapping your innate ability of "passion and honesty to science" motivate and help your success in project get transform to success in life by constantly assessing your worth. Mentors at graduate studies help you giving an heads up by passing on their assessment to the follow up mentor, who would then take the credits in good faith and play his/ her role. The mentors at postdoc level would make an independent assessment of both the arms of your attributes and play critical role to help transform your success from bench to a career path ensuring a comfortable future to you. This overall process of assessment is intricately twined to your attitude, intelligence, discipline, innate passion, honesty

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and perseverance. Having registered yourself for Ph.D or qualifying an exam will not transform to a successful future but simply be a means in that direction...

These wordings of mine may surprise all of you and some may even find it misplaced. I will give you all a talisman in this context: if the above words mean little to you, didn't bother you you while reading or arouse a sense of being vulnerable, consider yourself blessed and know that you are on the right track for a better tomorrow. If these words make you go defensive, vulnerable and guilty for not being upto the mark, consider your future doomed in science!... science works on your discipline towards work blend with your attitude towards mentor!