

Born. At a time when it was unheard of for a non-Western scientist to receive the Nobel Prize in Physics, he was repeatedly nominated for the award by some of the most important scientists of his time, including Bohr, Ernest Rutherford, and Charles Thomson Rees Wilson. Thanks in part to his network of international scientific connections, Raman eventually received the prize in 1930—the first time it was awarded to a physicist from the non-Western world.

Saha, the third scientist discussed in the book, differed from Bose and Raman in that he came from a lower-caste background; unlike his upper-caste compatriots, he had to deal with everyday discrimination and inequality. Banerjee argues, however, that Saha was accepted alongside Bose and Raman as a *bhadralok*—a member of the educated upper elite in Bengali society—because he excelled in his studies, went to the best educational institutions, and worked with some of the top professors of his day.

Given their backgrounds, neither the lower-caste Saha nor Raman, whose Tamil Brahmin upbringing provided him with cultural and caste privileges, would seem to fall into the *bhadralok* category. Nevertheless, Banerjee attempts to show that the *bhadralok* identity was not tied to geographic origin and caste background but instead linked with education level, intellectual pursuits, and the choice of a modern profession. He argues that a distinct practice of *bhadralok* physics emerged in early-20th-century India—one embodied by Bose, Raman, and Saha.

Although *The Making of Modern Physics in Colonial India* is about three leading Indian physicists, it serves as an invitation for scholars to examine other non-Western scientists who did important work under colonial rule but often remain overlooked in traditional narratives. It also urges historians to transcend the binary of the West and the East and to analyze multiple geographic contexts and individuals in their work. Banerjee's book will be of interest not only to historians and anthropologists of science but also to scientists who want to go beyond Western narratives of quantum physics and related fields.

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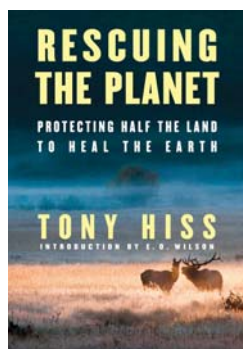
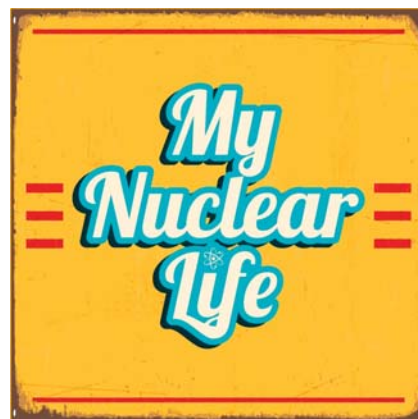
NEW BOOKS & MEDIA

My Nuclear Life

Shelly Lesher, host
2020 (Season 1)

Nuclear physicist Shelly Lesher, a professor at the University of Wisconsin–La Crosse, hosts the podcast *My Nuclear Life*, which examines the intersection of atomic science and broader society. Its six-episode first season, which premiered in fall 2020, discusses such wide-ranging topics as startup companies building generation IV nuclear reactors; the Iran nuclear agreement, which the Trump administration withdrew from and which the Biden administration is considering rejoining; and the Manhattan Project. A particular highlight is the second episode, with nonfiction author Dan O'Neill covering the history of Project Chariot, the early 1960s plan to “excavate” a harbor in Alaska by detonating atomic bombs. The podcast's second season began in March 2021.

—RD



Rescuing the Planet

Protecting Half the Land to Heal the Earth

Tony Hiss
Knopf, 2021. \$27.95

To counter the mass-extinction threat caused by humanity's impact on the environment, a plan has been proposed to protect 50% of Earth's natural land by 2050. In *Rescuing the Planet*, former *New Yorker* staff writer Tony Hiss focuses on efforts being made in North America to further that goal. A blend of biography, history, science, and travel, the book takes the reader on a journey to such wilderness areas as Canada's Boreal Forest, the Appalachian Trail, the Southeast's Piney Woods, and Yellowstone National Park. Hiss discusses their evolution, the plants and wildlife that live there, and some of the people who have worked over the years to conserve them.

—CC

The Next 500 Years

Engineering Life to Reach New Worlds

Christopher E. Mason
MIT Press, 2021. \$29.95

Traveling into space and colonizing new planets is a necessary duty for humanity, writes geneticist and computational biologist Christopher E. Mason. Humans, alone among Earth's species, understand that Earth's life span is finite. Moreover, we have the technological capability to preserve life by transporting it elsewhere in the universe. But to do that, he says, we need to bio-engineer it to survive in alien environments. In *The Next 500 Years*, Mason lays out a timeline for accomplishing such engineering on a genetic, cellular, planetary, and interstellar scale. His vision is ambitious, and his detailed descriptions of current science and what we have achieved so far bolster his expectations for the future.

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