

IRIDIUM METAL OR RICE PULLING SCAM IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT:

The Rice Pulling or Iridium Metal Scam is one of the most widespread and strange money scams in India. It takes advantage of people's lack of knowledge about science, superstitions, and the dream of becoming rich overnight. In this scam, criminals say that some old copper or bronze items, like coins or bowls said to contain iridium a rare and very valuable metal can pull rice grains or have special electromagnetic properties. These items are sold as having been used in satellite technology or nuclear research, typically cheating rich people and businessmen into investing large amounts of money with the promise of huge returns. Victims are typically forced to keep this a secret, telling them it is top secret government or international space research.

Despite numerous police actions, the scam has persisted for decades because it can be easily modified, people lack sufficient knowledge, and there are well-organized groups behind them. This paper examines how the scam operates, how the scammers deceive people, significant cases that have been reported in India, and the legal and social issues in preventing this type of fraud. It emphasizes the need for greater public awareness, scientific understanding, and improved laws to save people from bogus science and money scams.

INTRODUCTION:

The Rice Pulling (RP) scam, or the Iridium Metal scam, is an unusual yet frequent form of fraud that has duped numerous innocent individuals in India for generations. The scam is predicated on the delusion that certain ancient metal objects typically copper or bronze containers contain a rare and highly precious substance known as iridium. The substance is claimed to attract rice grains, generate electric charges, or emit unusual energies. Scammers typically claim that the objects are required for sophisticated scientific research, space travel, or defense mechanisms, thereby making their victims think that the objects are worth crores of rupees.

The scam works by combining pseudoscience, superstition, and the concept of covert government agreements, exploiting the fact that people know little about science. Victims, lured by the prospect of enormous profits, are

persuaded to invest substantial amounts of money to "activate," test, or sell these so-called rice-pulling relics. The agreements are typically secret, and the scammers frequently pose as scientists, government officials, or overseas buyers to gain credibility.

Extensively reported in the media and exposed by police authorities time and again, the scam continues to reinvent itself. This introduction sets the stage to talk about the machinery of the RP scam, the psychology behind its success, illustrative case studies, and attempts to curb this distinctly Indian variant of financial fraud.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

The present study will determine why the scam persists in contemporary India, how the cheats operate, and the psychological deceptions used to cheat victims.

Through the history, modus operandi, and actual cases of the RP scam, the research aims to:

1. Discuss the social, cultural, and economic determinants that predispose individuals to such scams.
2. Explain how superstition and pseudoscience are used to establish credibility for false claims.
3. Observe how the scam impacts victims—financially, emotionally, and socially.
4. Analyze how the police, the media, and public education help prevent and curtail this type of fraud.
5. Provide recommendations for expanding scientific knowledge and improving the methods of avoiding fraud.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

1. For the purpose of understanding the genesis and development of the Iridium Metal or Rice Pulling (RP) scam in India.
2. To analyze the tactics and strategies employed by the scammers to conduct the fraud and persuade their victims.
3. To determine the psychological and social reasons why individuals are vulnerable to such fake scientific scams.
4. For the purpose of studying real cases of the so-called scam in various regions of India.
5. To discuss how law enforcement agencies and the laws assist in detecting, preventing, and punishing such fraud.
6. To investigate how the scam affects victims' finances and mental well-being.
7. To gauge the impact of public campaign messages and the media in revealing the scam.
8. To recommend preventive steps and policy suggestions for curbing the incidence of such frauds by means of enhanced scientific literacy, public awareness, and more effective legal measures.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The Iridium Metal or Rice Pulling (RP) fraud has been the focus of various news articles, police reports, and a few scholarly works, but little scholarly work has been done on it. The fraud, primarily rooted in pseudoscientific concepts, has been making headlines for employing superstition, deceiving people, and exploiting their money.

News Reports and Research Writing:

We have learned most of what we know about the RP scam from media reports. Top newspapers such as (The Hindu), (Times of India), and (India Today) have carried investigative reports of numerous cases of people being cheated into investing crores of rupees. The reports indicate that scammers are likely to employ technical science terminologies, forged government documents, and sham demonstrations to cheat victims. Media reports also indicate how victims are threatened or misled by false promises of confidentiality regarding "top-secret" government projects.

Law Enforcement and Case Studies:

Police forces in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Karnataka states have handled numerous RP scam cases. FIRs and charge sheets indicate the same modus operandi in the scam: impersonating scientists or government representatives, preparing fake documents, and demanding money by giving the excuse that it is for testing or registering equipment. Case studies indicate that the majority of the victims are small business owners or moderately educated individuals lured by the high returns on investment promise.

Sociological and Psychological Aspects:

Few academic sources have examined the psychology of the scam. But some research on fraud and behavioral economics provides useful points of comparison. The RP scam employs mental heuristics such as greed, trusting authority, and the illusion of control*. Sociologist Ashis Nandy's work on why

superstitions and irrational beliefs persist in contemporary India also explains why individuals believe pseudoscientific assertions.

Legal Rules:

Cases are legally tried for frauds under Section 420 IPC, criminal conspiracy under Section 120B IPC, and forgery. Pseudoscientific frauds do not have a special law to prosecute and hence prosecution is difficult and time-consuming. The perusal of the literature further reveals that no national plan to combat such scams exists.

Conclusion of Literature Review:

The current literature emphasizes the need for a multidisciplinary approach legal, educational, psychological, and technological to fully understand and respond to the Rice Pulling scam. Even though the scam has been widely reported, academically and policy-oriented engagement with the subject is still scarce, and this research aims to address a vital gap.

MEANING OF RICE PULLING:

The Rice Pulling (RP) scam, also referred to as the Iridium Metal scam, is a form of monetary scam common in India where con artists trick individuals into thinking that specific antique or metallic objects usually copper or bronze in composition are imbued with mysterious qualities such as the power to pull rice grains. These objects are misrepresented as being filled with iridium, a very rare and expensive element purportedly being utilized in space or satellite research, or in government secret projects.

The scammers persuade the victims that these so-called "rice-pulling" products are worth crores of rupees and are in great demand by foreign buyers or research institutions. Victims are lured into paying enormous amounts of money for testing, certification, or facilitating transactions only to discover later that the products are worthless and the entire scam was a charade.

Rice pulling is, in fact, not founded upon any science at all, but the scam depends upon

pseudoscience, manufactured documents, and staged demonstrations merely to create the appearance of realness. It is typically enacted by organized crews and has caught people from across all parts of India, and especially those having no knowledge at all about scientific facts behind claims.

HOW THE RICE PULLING SCAM WORK:

The Rice Pulling (RP) or Iridium Metal Scam is a multi-step, well-planned fraud that exploits pseudoscientific arguments, fabricated documents, and psychological coercion. The process of its usual sequence is detailed below:

1. The Setup: Building the Hype

The scam artists typically begin by circulating a tale of an old "antique" item most commonly a copper or bronze container, coin, rod, or plate that has been handed down through generations. They tell the recipient that the item holds iridium, a costly and scarce metal purportedly employed in space missions or nuclear development. They claim the phrase has rice-pulling properties, i.e., when uncooked rice is in close proximity, the grains will shift or cling to it because of enigmatic electromagnetic power.

Scammers would do the following in order of making the claim plausible:

- Employ magnets or static electricity to simulate demonstrations of the ability.
- Perform staged experiments in low lighting conditions or controlled environments.
- Recruit imitation "scientists" or "government representatives" as part of the performance.

2. Creating a False Market

The scammers then inform the target (the victim) that:

- The object is crores of rupees (millions) worth in the global market.
- Bodies such as NASA, ISRO, or DRDO are willing to purchase it.

- The transaction needs to be kept secret as it is "classified" government research or "black money" transactions.

To support this, they produce:

- Bogus buyer agreements
- Phony government clearance papers
- Spurious letters from "space agencies" or "foreign embassies"

3. Luring the Victim

The victim is typically someone who has some expendable income or who is short of time to earn some fast money.

The victim is tricked into paying money upfront in

- Testing the object using certain equipment
- Obtaining certificates from so-called laboratories
- Paid customs or registration charges
Locating a buyer or setting up a demo

These costs can range from a few lakhs to a few crores of rupees.

4. The Psychological Trap

To preserve the illusion, scammers employ:

Greed: Providing returns of 5x, 10x, or more on the investment.

Fear: Legal consequences if the clandestine agreement is revealed.

Authority: Impersonating officials, scientists, or armed guards to build confidence.

Urgency: Expressing the need to close the deal immediately in order not to lose the opportunity.

They also get victims to sign non-disclosure agreements so that they can silence them and keep them away from others who could warn them.

5. The Vanishing Act

After they've been paid, the scammers:

Postpone the purchase a few times with excuses (testing failed, buyer backed off, more paperwork required).

Gradually disappear or block all contact.

Carry out a fake "police raid" in certain instances to intimidate the victim into silence.

Before the victim can even realize it, the money is gone and the scammers are long gone.

6. Aftermath

Victims often:

- Can be embarrassed or humiliated and can fail to report the offense.
- Do not report to the police out of fear of being labeled as greedy or naive.
- Problem in accessing their money, since these businesses tend to be managed by professional, traveling criminal groups.

Why It Works:

- Scientific illiteracy: Most people do not know that rice pulling does not exist.
- Greed and desperation: The promise of quick, huge returns is just too enticing.
- Clever acting and staging: Scammers are good at pretending to be experts or officials.
- Fear and secrecy: Victims are manipulated into silence.

WHAT IS IRIDIUM ?

Iridium (Ir) is a transition metal which belongs to the renowned platinum group of elements and is assigned the atomic number 77. This incredible metal is distinguished by its extremely high density, breathtaking hardness, and unequalled resistance to corrosion, which is unaffected even when exposed to elevated temperatures. It is also visually distinguished by a remarkable silvery-white color and is typically

considered the most corrosion-resistant metal ever discovered and researched.

The Process of Discovery and the Naming

The element was discovered in 1803 by the British chemist Smithson Tennant, along with the element osmium.

He found it in the residues of platinum ore which were insoluble when treated with aqua regia, a particular combination of nitric and hydrochloric acids.

Tennant, in his quest and inquiry, decided to name the new element iridium, and the origin came from the Greek goddess Iris, whose name was "rainbow." This was particularly fitting as it reflected the bright and vivid colors exhibited by its various salts.

First Applications and Lack

Due to its unmatched hardness and the stern challenges posed by its own handling, iridium possessed relatively few applications in its initial applications.

In the 19th century, there were occasions when this material was used in the production of some products like pen nibs, spark plugs, and crucibles which were specially made for carrying out high-temperature experiments.

The fact that it was rare and the process of purifying it was complicated made it costly, and it was far more costly and less accessible than other metals.

Scientific Importance

Extremely high melting point: ~2,446°C

Density: 22.56 g/cm³ (second only to osmium)

Inertness: It has an excellent capacity for resisting corrosion by almost all kinds of chemicals, such as the highly corrosive aqua regia.

The distinctive features and properties of these substances make them totally essential and indispensable in numerous fields, especially in the realm of high-temperature applications, space exploration, and electronics.

Current Applications and Uses of Iridium across Various Industries

1. The aerospace industry and business of space exploration

It is being utilized in the production and manufacture of satellite components and in deep-space probes, mainly due to its outstanding strength and remarkable resistance to high temperatures. Incorporated into the components of radioisotope thermoelectric generators (RTGs) which NASA uses in a variety of space missions, including legendary programs like the Voyager spacecraft and the sophisticated Curiosity Rover.

2. Electronics

Applied in the area of electrical contacts, especially in harsh and demanding environments where dependability is an utmost concern. Also employed in OLED screens of mobile phones and TVs.

3. Multiple Applications in the Medical Field

Iridium-192, a radioactive isotope, is at the forefront of the application of cancer radiation therapy (brachytherapy) with targeted treatments.

4. Industry

Used in crucibles for growing single crystals (e.g., for lasers). Employed in corrosion-resistant alloys.

Iridium's Role in the Dinosaur Extinction Hypothesis

One of the most renowned scientific applications of iridium is in the K-T (Cretaceous-Tertiary) extinction hypothesis:

In 1980, Luis and Walter Alvarez published a big geological discovery of a distinctive iridium-rich clay bed in the Earth's crust dated to approximately 66 million years ago. Because iridium is not found on Earth but is found in abundance in asteroids, this proved the hypothesis that a massive asteroid impact led to the dinosaurs' extinction.

Mining and Production Processes and Activities

Iridium is extremely rare: about 0.001 parts per million in the Earth's crust.

This specific material is mostly acquired as a by-product of platinum and nickel mining operations.

Principal sources: South Africa, Russia, Canada, and the U.S.

Market and Value

Since it is scarce and there is an extremely high demand for it, iridium has a very high value in most markets.

Prices can become wildly unstable especially in technology bubbles or supply chain shocks. In recent years, its price has sometimes reached up to \$6,000 an ounce in Indian value at today's rate up to 517978.20 rupees

Misconceptions and Deceptive Practices

Iridium has been repeatedly and wrongly associated with a number of pseudo-scientific scams, the most notorious of which was the so-called rice pulling scam which made front-page headlines in India. In fact, by the way, it should be pointed out that iridium is not magnetic at all, has no ability to attract a grain of rice in any way, and is never used by NASA as scammers falsely suggest or claim.

REAL CASES ON RICE PULLING:

The following are some of the remarkable examples and cases which reflect this alarming trend:

1. Kochi Publisher Duped of ₹80 Lakh (2020)

A Kochi publisher was cheated by a gang who said they had a "rice puller" which was nuclear and Bhabha Atomic Research Centre certified and also being pursued by NASA. ₹80 lakh was paid by the victim for test and certification procedures. The police later arrested a person from Bengaluru who was part of the scam.

2. Hyderabad Entrepreneur Loses ₹5 Lakh (2016)

In Hyderabad, a 24-year-old businessman was cheated into thinking that a copper vessel would double his money. He had put in ₹5 lakh, only to realize later that he had been provided with packets of black paper instead of money.

3. Bengaluru Businessman Duped of ₹3.5 Crore (2019)

A Bengaluru entrepreneur was lured to invest ₹3.5 crore in two years for a non-existent "rice-pulling" machine, which was said to be of interest to international bodies like NASA. The scam involved payments for testing and anti-radiation suits.

4. Father-Son Duo Arrested in Delhi for ₹1.43 Crore Fraud (2018)

In Delhi, a father-son duo was arrested for swindling a businessman of ₹1.43 crore. They said they sold goods to NASA and DRDO on the strength of false demonstrations and documents to persuade the victim of the "rice puller's" authenticity.

5. Bengaluru entrepreneurs cheated for ₹78 Lakh (2022)

Two Bengaluru businessmen were promised a nuclear device that they could export abroad for ₹5 crore. They paid ₹78 lakh as an advance before they found that they had been cheated.

6. MTech Graduate Among Four Arrested in Hyderabad (2017)

A postgraduate in MTech from NIT Warangal and three others were taken into custody in Hyderabad for cheating people on the sale of spurious "rice pulling" products. They had cheated victims of ₹20 lakh with the assurance of high returns. 7. Three Held in Bengaluru for Selling Spurious Devices (2023) In the populated city of Bengaluru, three individuals were arrested for engaging in deceptive practices of cheating innocent individuals by selling various gadgets that they claimed had radioactive properties as well as magical powers. Through their deceptive methods, they were able to amass a lot of money, such as luxury SUVs, plenty of gold, and enormous amounts of cash,

all obtained by cheating and exploiting multiple victims.

LEGAL ASPECTS:

The legal provisions that cover rice pulling scams that occur in India are covered under various sections of Indian law, given that such scams have elements of fraud, cheating, criminal conspiracy, and, in some instances, forgery.

1. Sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC)

Section 420 – Cheating and dishonestly inducing delivery of property

- This practice is most often applied in cases of the so-called rice pulling phenomenon.
- Punishable: Fine + up to 7 years in prison

Section 406 – Definition of the criminal law regarding the offense known as breach of trust.

- This provision applies where the scammer had direct control over the victim's money or property and subsequently misused that control for fraudulent purposes.

Section 120B – Criminal conspiracy

- Where a group of people are actively involved in the activities of planning and conducting the scam.

Section 468 and Section 471 – The forgery and use of documents which have been forged.

- If they produce fake certificates of NASA, ISRO, DRDO, etc. (common modus operandi in rice pulling cases)

Section 34 – Common intention

- This doctrine is applied where more than one individual collectively commit a criminal offence, all with a shared purpose which binds their actions together.

2. Information Technology Act (2000)

If the fraud is committed by online means or by the use of false websites or false emails, the appropriate sections of cybercrime could be:

Section 66D (cheating by personation aided by computer facilities)

- Section 67 (furnishing false or misleading information) can be applied.

Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023

With the Indian Penal Code (IPC) being replaced by the newly enacted Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, it is necessary to study the nuances and connotations of how the legal handling of rice pulling frauds would be viewed and dealt with under this new criminal law regime.

Section 316 – Cheating

Replaces the provisions under IPC Section 420

Covers dishonest inducement to deliver property, deceive for gain.

Used for: The primary fraudulent purpose here is persuading an individual to donate their hard-earned money for an item that is misrepresented as a rice-pulling machine.

Penalty: Maximum of 7 years imprisonment + fine

Section 317 – Cheating by Personation

Replaces IPC Section 419

Used when scammers pose as ISRO/NASA/DRDO officials.

Punishment: Up to 3 years + fine

Section 308 – Criminal Breach of Trust

Replaces provisions of IPC Section 406

Whenever a scammer abuses money entrusted to their care.

Penalty: Not more than 5 years' imprisonment + fine

(or up to 10 years on grounds of aggravation)

Section 331 – Forgery for the Purpose of Cheating

Replaces IPC Section 468

Using fake NASA certificates or DRDO approval letters.

Punishment: Up to 7 years + fine

Section 334 – Utilizing a Counterfeit Document as Authentic

This part replaced and repealed IPC Section 471.

When fraudsters use forged documents in their attempts to deceive and manipulate their victims.

Section 43 – Criminal Conspiracy

This provision is continued in IPC Section 120B.

Applied when more than one person conspire to orchestrate the scam.

Punishment: It is decided by considering the gravity and seriousness of the crime that has been committed.

Key Legal Points:

- Possession or transfer of radioactive substances, commonly misstated in frauds and scams, is heavily controlled by the Atomic Energy Act of 1962. In addition, any person who impersonates or misuses the substances in any form is punishable by law and can be charged under laws meant to ensure national security.
- In some extreme situations, the possession of fake documents purported to have been issued by government agencies like NASA or ISRO can even lead to legal action under the Official Secrets Act.

HOW TO STAY SAFE

Major Precautionary Measures to Effectively Prevent from Becoming a Victim of Rice Pulling Scams

For effective protection against falling prey to such deceptions, it is highly advisable that the following mentioned precautions seriously be considered and properly executed:

1. Be Aware and Tuned to Common Warning Signs:

- There are assertions and claims which point towards an object having extraordinary supernatural properties or perhaps even magnetic in nature with the capacity to attract rice.

- Guarantees that global organizations are ready to buy such items for astronomical amounts.
- Requests for advance payments towards “testing,” “government approval,” or “anti-radiation equipment.”
- Focus on word of mouth and secrecy, with little or no documentation.

2. Thoroughly Validate the Scientific Validity

- There is no science involved in the occurrence of metals or objects that have the physical potential to attract rice or release any such effects as outlined in such scams.
- Trustworthy organizations which are well known and highly respected, for example, NASA, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, or ISRO, the Indian Space Research Organisation, do not have private deals or transactions for procuring products that are popularly known as rice-pulling products.

3. Authenticate Documents for Verification Purposes

- One should be cautious and never accept certificates, documents, or ID cards at face value without subsequent verification. There are possibilities of these being forged or altered in some manner.
- If any document refers to a government agency or a research institute, verify it through official channels of communication.

4. Avoid Making Advance Payments

- You should not agree to give any type of payment beforehand for:
 - Laboratory test claims established
 - Charges for registration or certification
 - Clearance or approval charges

- Any request for money or financial assistance that is not in the form of official contracts and the adequate amount of due diligence should be regarded with a lot of suspicion and deemed highly suspicious.

5. Report Suspicious Activity

If presented with any offer of rice-pulling or such schemes:

- Report the matter to the relevant local police in good time.
- It is advisable to file a comprehensive report with the closest cybercrime division or the economic offenses wing, as they are equipped to handle such matters effectively.
- Individuals who wish to present their complaints or grievances may lodge their complaints via the internet through the National Cyber Crime Portal: [<https://cybercrime.gov.in>]

6. Educate and Spread Awareness

It is essential to take it upon oneself to inform and educate relatives, friends, and members of the public about the modus operandi typical of such forms of scams. There needs to be an assurance that such persons are given special care and special attention to their education, including but not limited to the elderly, and small business owners who might also need advice and guidance.

7. Be Wary on Online Platforms

- Be wary of unsolicited messages, WhatsApp forwards, or social media posts advertising magical metals or secret government deals.
- Act firmly by blocking such kinds of communications and immediately report them to the relevant platform or relevant authority.

8. Think of Consulting a Professional

In case of doubt, consult specialists such as:

- Legal advisers
- Certified professionals who have achieved financial consultant certification.
- Experts in metallurgy or science

Important Steps to Avoid

[Do Not]

- Take part in financial deals based on unproven statements.
- Believe unsubstantiated reports from foreign governments or secret technologies.
- Make transactions without written contracts reviewed by legal experts.
- Allow emotions or a sense of urgency to overwhelm rational thinking.

CONCLUSION

The widespread issue of rice pulling and iridium metal fraud in India indicates the continued threat posed by organized financial frauds taking advantage of ignorance and trust among people. The frauds typically involve false assurances regarding products produced from rare metals, which are said to possess incredible properties and acquire huge values from foreign groups. Although no scientific evidence is available to justify these assertions, they are sometimes backed by forged documents, organized demonstrations, and false assurances, leading innocent victims to lose substantial amounts of money.

What is particularly disturbing about these scams is that they can target individuals in rural and urban areas, across educational and income lines. The recurring appearance of these scams underscores the need for continuous public education, firm legal enforcement, and authoritative communication from scientific professionals to counter

unsubstantiated assumptions and misinformation.

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023 has updated the legal instruments to deal with such crimes. This enables the authorities to proceed against the offenders on charges of cheating, impersonation, conspiracy, and forgery of documents directly. But, laws by themselves cannot prevent these frauds.

A long-term measure is to assist people with critical thinking, scientific knowledge, and proper information access. By being vigilant, reporting promptly, and having an educated population, we can identify and prevent these deceptive practices in time and effectively.

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