



A Journey Through the Discovery of Elements

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It is a well-known fact that scientists have discovered 118 elements so far. Elements are pure substances made up of only one kind of atom, with no chemical bonding between them. The stories behind their discoveries are not only fascinating but also filled with unexpected moments. Many of them were not discovered through perfectly planned experiments, but were found by accident or emerged from mistakes. We are going to explore the journey of such elements.

Unexpected Discoveries

Before we dive in, let me introduce you to the curious explorers who lived long before the age of modern-day scientists. They were known as alchemists — passionate experimenters who accidentally uncovered some of the important elements used in the modern world today

.Around the 1600s, a German alchemist named Hennig Brand was desperately trying to create gold and somehow believed that it was hidden in human urine. So, he collected a large amount of urine and heated it for hours and hours. To his surprise, he saw a substance glowing in the dark. This glowing substance is what we today call Phosphorus — a



remarkable discovery.

Our curiosity sometimes helps us discover the things we were never even searching for.



“Fire air,” or Oxygen, was discovered while heating a compound called mercuric oxide. Alchemists noticed that a gas was being released which helped things burn brightly and easily. This special gas is the one that keeps life alive on Earth. As we walk through history into the 1800s, we meet a brilliant scientist named Marie Curie, who, along with her husband Pierre Curie, deeply studied uranium. During their experiments, they observed something astonishing — the mineral uranium was shining more brightly than uranium alone. “There must be some hidden element inside,” they thought. After days of relentless hard work and exhausting experiments, two remarkable elements were discovered — Polonium, named after her motherland Poland, and the mysterious glowing element Radium, which amazed the scientific world and opened new doors in medicine, especially in the treatment of cancer.



These discoveries show that our imagination knows no limits. Scientists of the 21st century have gone a step further by creating elements from elements — substances that do not exist naturally on Earth. Elements such as Oganesson, Moscovium, Nihonium, and Tennessine were discovered by smashing particles together in a machine called a particle accelerator.

I would like to conclude with a beautiful quote by Albert Einstein: “The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing.”

— **Athullya B. Alex**

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