

# Editorial

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*G Nagendrappa, Associate Editor*

Try solving a thousand-piece jigsaw puzzle blindfolded. You would appreciate the challenge of the daunting assignment. If you are a buff, you would enjoy working it out and feel triumphantly happy when you have successfully completed putting the pieces in place and a beautiful picture emerges. The elucidation of structures of natural products (compounds that occur in plants, animals or other organisms and considered as secondary metabolites, which mediate interactions within and between organisms) is comparable to this puzzle-solving game. However, the similarity is only in terms of assembling the pieces. The work on natural products is a team activity that needs sagacious leadership and committed coworkers; its results are far reaching. It involves breaking the molecule into identifiable smaller pieces by a variety of so-called degradative reactions and then assembling them to get a correct acceptable structure, which is proved finally by synthesis. It is an arduous, painstaking task requiring patience, ingenuity, skill, imagination and intellectual capability. Much of the nineteenth and twentieth century organic chemistry research was devoted to this area, engaging the attention of a large number of gifted chemists in many countries. Prof. T R Govindachari was one such Indian chemist whose extensive work on Indian medicinal plant products earned him wide recognition. The current issue of *Resonance* gives a glimpse of his life and scientific achievements written by one of his early students and a well-known organic chemist in his own right, Dr. K Nagarajan, who has observed TRG from close proximity and has the intimate knowledge of his lifetime work.



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Global warming and environmental issues are of great concern to every one. Recognising this, two Nobel Prizes were awarded in 2007 – one for chemistry and one for peace. K L Sebastian and R S Swathi describe the work of Gerhard Ertl, the Chemistry Laureate, on catalysis that has helped reduce environmental pollution.

Also included in this issue is the first article of a new series on ‘The Scientific Enterprise’ by V V Raman. It is a thought-provoking analysis of the evolution of modern science and shows that science or natural philosophy is not an enterprise of a certain race, region, religion, or society, but a product of the endeavour of all humanity. It provides an insight into various aspects of scientific knowledge of the ancient and the modern, the west and the east.

