

Editorial

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The recent earthquake in Kashmir, of magnitude 7.6 on the Richter scale, has resulted in a death toll running into tens of thousands. Every event of this kind reinforces the importance of strengthening our defences against such calamities. One sees pictures of standing houses, and those reduced to sheer rubble, side-by-side. It is well known now, that special design codes exist for buildings in earthquake-prone regions. *Resonance* has been running a series of articles 'Earthquake Tips' since August 2004. In the October issue we read an interesting fact, namely that buildings that have empty ground floors are extremely prone to collapse during an earthquake. Apparently, over a hundred such buildings collapsed in Ahmedabad, about 225 kilometres away from the epicentre of the earthquake in Bhuj in 2001. The article in this issue reports that a technique called *seismic base isolation* has been used in the construction of a school building and a shopping complex in Killari (where there was a disastrous earthquake in 1993), as also in the construction of a new four-storey hospital in Bhuj. However, such norms have to be employed on a wide scale to avoid the large-scale destruction that inevitably accompanies every such natural calamity in our country.

John Maynard Smith, one of the most influential evolutionary biologists of his generation, is featured in this issue. His academic course followed a somewhat unusual path, beginning with aeronautical engineering and ending up in evolutionary biology. Like his mentor, the great J B S Haldane, Smith had a large circle of admirers. He proposed a game theoretic model of the evolutionary process, and worked on problems central to debates on evolution. He remained technically active right to the end, completing his last book on animal signalling a few months before his death at the age of 84.



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