

# Editorial

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*Rajaram Nityananda, Associate Editor*

Perhaps *Resonance* has been around long enough that one can now describe some general pattern in the way it is produced. This may not quite be the pattern which was originally imagined five years ago when the journal was just a gleam in the eyes of a few people. It may not even be the best that we can do based on the experience gained over this period. What is closer to the truth is that this pattern has evolved over time, and is still evolving, under a form of natural selection.



A *Resonance* article could just start off with the author's feeling that there is a topic worth describing in this forum to a particular audience. Ultimately, it is this creative impulse which has to be the basis for any journal, not just this one. In the early days, of course, this spontaneous process had to be stimulated by broad hints aimed by the editors at likely candidates for various specific topics. Even today, if we have a theme about which we would like three or four articles to appear together, this is the mechanism. But it is satisfying that many articles now come out of the blue, so to speak. At least some writers seem to be getting addicted to *Resonance*. Of course we would like the same to happen to readers as well but this is harder to judge! An early questionnaire was inconclusive, and we hope that our ongoing effort to define and interrogate a sample target audience will help. There are always letters from individual readers which span a wide spectrum of opinions. Rest assured that these are read and discussed, and some changes have been the direct outcome of such letters. But space is a severe constraint in publishing even a sample of such letters. Our fortnightly meetings often witness bargaining for even two and three pages. Apparently, the most economical size would be a multiple of sixteen pages, and if not, a multiple of four is preferable. Size is a matter of both cost and utility.

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Many readers would be put off as much by thickness as a hefty subscription. (Our current one is just viable)

What about the length style and technical level of individual articles? This has been a matter of heated debate, both within and outside the board of editors. A fair summary would be that we would like some overall unity and consistency but have no desire to impose uniformity. A given topic might need greater length, or might be aimed at the upper end of our target audience, say post graduates. But readers keep reminding us that not all articles can be of this advanced and extended nature. Achieving a balance of levels and styles is very much on our minds. To some extent, editors can help by suggesting changes, or inserting additional boxes and marginal notes or splitting a long article. As the readership stabilises and becomes more vocal, we can certainly transmit their feedback with greater confidence to our authors. There is of course no single Indian Standard Author, and diversity of styles and viewpoints should ultimately provide us the raw material on which the evolutionary process can operate.

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In some ways, working for *Resonance* is closer to editing a magazine than a conventional academic journal. There is always rewriting to be done, fillers and layouts to worry about, proofs to be examined, and everything is to a deadline. Such a fairly bland account does not do justice to the thrills of real life editorial work, *Resonance* style. This is something like a game of football, perhaps played with more than one ball, since one is seriously worrying about at least three issues and five broad areas at a given time. There are long passes, sometimes backwards to make progress in some other direction. Roles can change as backs suddenly move forward or vice versa. The referees, of whom there are several on the field, can blow their whistles, award yellow cards (articles need revision) or red cards (rejection) which please authors about as much as typical football players. The rulebook itself is often under criticism and revision. And of course, all the time one's own goal has to be



protected, and there is a goalkeeper whom the spectators can blame. On a longer timescale, we hope that editorship, like readership and authorship, will exercise its spell over a larger group of people.

Our back cover person of the month is actually going to last two months, first in a young and then in an older form. No, we are not running out of names or ideas, it's just that Albert Einstein looms larger than life over the science of the twentieth century, and indeed over the century itself. We have tried to introduce you to the physics behind the legend, or, indeed, exploited the popularity of the legend to encourage revisiting the physics. Photons, special relativity, and Brownian motion are the stuff of which revolutions are made. Not many people can start off three revolutions in less than a year! We invite you to travel this path again. Not all the feet that have beaten on this track before can take away the excitement of the journey. The legend itself receives its due in a book review, and one realises that near instant international stardom could occur long before television and the Internet. In fact, without these media, the channels of communication were probably less congested and the impact of stardom even greater and more lasting. To physicists, Einstein clarified and simplified their science. But in the popular mind, he made it more complicated and difficult to understand. The pair of lines by Alexander Pope and the sequel by John Squire illustrate this popular conception.

*Nature and nature's laws lay hid in night  
God said, let Newton be, and all was light.  
It did not last. The devil, shouting, "Ho  
Let Einstein be", restored the status quo.*

Perhaps Einstein's piece on the meandering of rivers will give you a feel for how he sought simplicity and clarity rather than complication and confusion. But the simplicity and clarity come at the end, and the greatness lies in seeing them when everyone else sees only difficulties and contradictions.

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