This issue features Theodosius Dobzhansky, considered to be one of the most influential evolutionary biologists of the twentieth century. We are very fortunate to have an article written by Francisco Jose Ayala (himself a many faceted personality and one of the most distinguished students of Dobzhansky) about Dobzhansky’s scientific contributions and personal qualities: Ayala states that “Dobzhansky was a key author of the synthetic theory of evolution, also known as the modern synthesis of evolutionary theory, which embodies a complex array of biological knowledge centered around Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection couched in genetic terms”. One of the greatest qualities of Dobzhansky was the large number of scientists in all continents who were inspired by him through his writings, research, experimental methods and guidance of doctoral work. Ayala, as a true disciple, has also in turn influenced researchers in several continents. We have a short write up on Ayala following his article. Amitabh Joshi has described in detail how Dobzhansky inspired many, including himself, to pursue research in evolutionary biology. Bimalendu Nath describes Dobzhansky’s pioneering research on the adaptive significance of chromosomal polymorphisms. We also reproduce in the Reflections section, excerpts from a thought provoking article by Dobzhansky on natural selection and its influence on the future of humans. Many of the social and cultural issues raised by him are relevant even more today with debates on human cloning.

We also have a rich fare of articles in other areas. Sukumaran concludes his series on the evolution of atmosphere and oceans and states that “the chemical steady state of the oceans dates back to the late Palaeoproterozoic period and is being maintained since then”. Laboratory experiments are the most important component in teaching chemistry. With growth in the number of undergraduate students in our colleges and shrinking budgets it is necessary to find innovative methods of designing low cost, yet educationally valuable experiments. Kelkar and Dhavale’s first article in a new series has ‘small is beautiful’ as the basic theme to design chemistry experiments. Natarajan and Ranganathan introduce the ‘strange terrain’ of non-Archimedean analysis or p-adic analysis, which is quite different from real and complex analysis familiar to mathematics students. Vijay and Gupta in their article on quantum computing explore how very fast algorithms to solve problems such as factoring a large integer to find its prime factors can be developed using the special properties of quantum computers. When we look at the brilliant hues of traditional clothes of Rajasthan we wonder how they were dyed and retain their richness over centuries. Padma Vankar in her article tells us the chemistry behind plant and animal dyes used before the emergence of synthetic dyes. Electronic commerce is the rage of the day. There are numerous newspaper stories on dot com millionaires, many of them from India. We start in this issue a series in which we will explain to a non-specialist the technology of e-commerce.