

## Editorial

---

*S Mahadevan, Chief Editor*

The pursuit of science, to a large extent, is a curiosity-driven enterprise. The major motivation for scientists involved in their profession is the thrill and excitement of making a discovery, thereby contributing to the body of human knowledge. It is this challenge of science that lures many to the profession and often compensates for poor pay, lack of social recognition and long and hard working hours. However, one cannot forget the fact that the practitioners of science are also human beings with their own

insecurities and frailties. As a result, very often, the impersonal and objective nature of science tends to be overshadowed by human feelings and emotions. One frailty most scientists succumb to is the desire for claiming priority for discovery. If credit for one's findings has to be shared with others, it is sure to be a damper. Worse still is the fear of being preempted by others. For most scientists, getting "scooped" is a genuine nightmare. Years' worth of hard work may go down the drain if similar results are documented and published by others before one gets to publish one's own findings. That is why most journals carry the original dates of submission of manuscripts so that the priority of the authors can be safeguarded.

Conflicts related to priority of discovery have rocked the scientific world since the time science became a professional human endeavour. Some of the well-known historical examples are the conflict between Newton and Leibnitz for the discovery of calculus, and the spat between Pasteur and Koch in connection with their work on anthrax. Articles in this issue of *Resonance* highlight the circumstances related to the discovery of the mechanism that drives biological evolution – natural selection. The two great biologists Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace came across the same mechanism for evolution in the course of their work 150 years ago. However, rather than being involved in an acrimonious fight for priority, Wallace behaved in the most gentlemanly way, proclaiming his respect and admiration for Darwin. The sad result though is that natural selection is often exclusively associated with the name of Darwin. The name of Wallace is by and large unfamiliar to even students of biology. Hopefully, the articles in this issue will contribute to making amends to this historic injustice.

Wallace's scientific contributions go beyond the theory of evolution. He is considered the founder of biogeography, a discipline central to biological conservation and therefore of great relevance in today's context.

