

# Editorial

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*S Ranganathan, Guest Editor*

While words of learned length, and thund'ring sound  
Amazed the gazing rustics rang'd around,  
And still they gaz'd and still the wonder grew,  
That one small head could carry all he knew.

– *Oliver Goldsmith (1728–1774), 'Deserted Village'*



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I considered it as a great honor to accept the kind invitation from Professor K L Sebastian, to edit a special issue on Professor R B Woodward, for *Resonance*.

The presentation is entirely original and educational and addressed to students, teachers and scholars. The contents can form an excellent course in 'The Art in Organic Synthesis'.

Never before has the synthesis of Vitamin B<sub>12</sub> been presented that allows one to compare two independent approaches to this formidable target. The simulation of Nature is often cited as the inspiration for organic synthesis, and here one can compare the two independent routes cited above to the way Nature builds Vitamin B<sub>12</sub> from simple starting materials. I am grateful to Dr. Wayne Craig for putting together such a composite profile. In addition to Vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, we have illustrated the total synthesis of Strychnine, Chlorophyll and Cephalosporin C. We have added, as prologue, 'The spirit of adventure and the art of creation' and as epilogue, 'Woodward seminars'. The prologue is preceded by a brief analysis of the personal profile of R B Woodward, where we have created a virtual image of his that hopefully would provide the total profile of this genius as well as the latent traits that are always associated with such obsession.

Only a handful are gifted with, at a very young age, the path laid out for them in life. Indeed Woodward's obsession with organic chemistry sprouted very early. His initiative, at the age of eleven, to secure few original publications in German journals via consular channels in Boston defies imagination. By the time he entered high school, he had already managed to perform most of the experiments in Gattermann's book on experimental organic chemistry.

Two factors dominated Professor Woodward's profile: exceptional brilliance and unyielding determination. The former fuelled the latter and drove him to seek seemingly impossible objectives.

