

# CURRENT SCIENCE

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## Winds of change

*Better refereeing, informed comment, reviews, special issues and opinion will, we hope, make Current Science more interesting and useful. But, clearly, the scientific community must be actively involved.*

The state of India's scientific journals has stimulated considerable debate over the past few years. There is a general consensus that swift and purposeful steps must be taken to raise the standard of our scientific publications. In some meetings, extreme views have been expressed, ranging from a suggestion for surgical closure of most journals to the institution of mechanisms of organized coercion to compel Indian scientists to publish in local journals. Somewhere in between these two extreme views lies the path to improvement. *Current Science*, as one of India's oldest and most widely circulated journals, has long recognized the pressing need to enhance the quality of its offerings and increase its impact on the Indian scientific scene. The last few issues of *Current Science* reflect a concerted effort to improve the appearance of the journal and its content. Several eminent and concerned scientists have expressed their views on the kinds of papers that *Current Science* should publish in various areas of science. There is no doubt that this series of articles clearly reflects the perceived need for dramatic and rapid improvement. How can this be accomplished?

Scientific journals are unique in that they cater to a certain readership, who most often also double as authors and critics. It is hard to distinguish the actors from the audience. The responsibility for improving a journal's standards, at least in a local, nationalistic sense, rests squarely on the scientific community. *Current Science* is committed to the long, hard road to higher standards, but in this uphill climb the journal needs the active involvement of its readers, authors and referees. In the months and years to come *Current Science* hopes to increase steadily the quality of its original papers by effecting more rigorous standards of refereeing. We also hope to be able to attract some fraction of India's high-quality scientific output, which finds its way to foreign or international journals. In this, the pressures of the market will operate, but we are confident that a general improvement in quality and

content will provide sufficient inducement to many prospective authors. *Current Science* will also actively solicit well-focused review articles on problems of intense contemporary interest. In addition, a drive has been launched to build a network of dedicated scientists who will contribute to the Research News section of the journal. We believe that informed assessments of recent scientific advances, which the Research News section is meant to provide, are a valuable source of information to the vast body of teachers and students of science who do not have ready access to increasingly expensive general journals like *Nature* or *Science*. Reviews and short critical reports should also prove useful to the community at large.

There are also plans to bring out issues devoted largely or entirely to a particular topic. Most of these will focus on areas where Indian scientists have made a special impact in recent times or on areas of particular interest in the Indian context. Two issues on the anvil deal with cholera research and structural molecular biology. The former will honour the discoverer of the cholera enterotoxin, Shambhu Nath De, while the latter focuses attention on G. N. Ramachandran's contributions to the area of biomolecular structures. In these issues we hope to highlight the current status of these fields. We have enlisted the international community of scientists in this endeavour. We hope to feature several important areas of science in similar special issues.

*Current Science* will also provide a forum for discussion of important issues of science policy, management, funding and science education, for we believe that India's science establishment has now reached a level of maturity where widely differing opinions can be heard and issues rationally debated. If all this can be achieved, we hope that *Current Science* will become a vehicle for communication among diverse sections of our scientific community and a symbol of Indian science on the international scene.