GUEST EDITORIAL

It was a pleasure to host a meeting of the Indian National Science Academy at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research Mohali to look at the History of Chemistry in India. Indian society had a sense of past that is different from the one we have inherited from the colonial times. We have lived by oral traditions (*karṇa paramparā*), with the result that facts and myths get inextricably intertwined in historical imagination. In the modern era, the history of science has emerged as a rigorous discipline of research in India, with several leading experts.

Although India over the centuries, seems to have done wonderfully well in areas such as mathematics, astronomy, medicine, arts and a variety of other fields, our success in modern branches of science has been limited and has been largely influenced by the west, particularly the British. The beginning of modern chemistry in India can be traced to Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray, who was trained in the west. Professor Animesh Chakravorty in his article traces the history of chemical researches of the Acharya. The earlier part of the 20th century is considered the golden era of physics. Stalwarts like J. C. Bose, C. V. Raman, S. N. Bose and Meghnad Saha made fundamental contributions that became internationally well known. A beginning was made in the areas of polymer chemistry, inorganic chemistry, magnetochemistry, electrochemistry, spectroscopy and related fields. Kankan Bhattacharyya gives an outline of early research in physical chemistry in India. India has made outstanding contributions in the area of natural products chemistry and medicinal chemistry. Their history is traced by K. Nagarajan and Harkishan Singh, both stalwarts in their field. India is not known for its industrial success. Although Acharya Ray sowed the seeds of chemical industry, the organic chemical industry in India struggled a lot before it carved a niche for itself in recent times. A. V. Rama Rao discusses the trials and tribulations he faced in setting up a state of the art organic chemical industry. India has a respectable history of electrochemistry. This is traced by A. K. Shukla (it was presented by K. S. Viswanathan on behalf of A. K. Shukla in the meeting). The developments in chemistry had its influence on Indian intellectual ethos and brought with it self-cogitation and internal debates on the concepts of self-sufficiency and nationalism. Prajit Basu and Dhruv Raina cover these aspects in their articles.

Overall, this thematic issue on the History of Chemistry in India can be considered a beginning of our appreciation of the history of chemistry in India. We are grateful to all the contributors for their cooperation in bringing out this volume.

Kavita Dorai* and N. Sathyamurthy**

*kavita@iisermohali.ac.in, **nsath@iisermohali.ac.in