

Editorial

One hundred years of the *Journal of Genetics*

The *Journal of Genetics* completed a hundred years this November, having thereby lived through and participated in recording a century in which genetics in its various avatars fundamentally transformed biology. Preceded only by the *Zeitschrift für inductive Abstammungs und Vererbungslehre* (now *Molecular Genetics and Genomics*) founded by Erwin Baur in Germany, the *Journal of Heredity* in the USA, focussing largely on breeding, and the very short-lived *Mendel Journal* in England, the *Journal of Genetics* has stayed true to the early roots of the field, retaining its founding focus on both genetics and evolution. William Bateson, the senior of the founding pair of Bateson and Punnett, was drawn to genetics primarily through his interest in phenotypic variation, its causes and the role it played in evolution, especially in the origin of new species. The subsequent stewardship of the journal by J. B. S. Haldane from 1945 to 1964 further strengthened the journal's evolutionary orientation during a period in which the Neo-Darwinian Synthesis was formalized and the theoretical advances in evolutionary genetics of the previous decades began to inspire critical empirical work into the detailed functioning of the microevolutionary process. Over the period since 1985, when it was revived under the auspices of the Indian Academy of Sciences, the journal has maintained its basic orientation while also keeping up with the rapidly diversifying field of genetics and its myriad applications. The journal has also managed to survive three bad periods: a financial crunch in the 1920s when printing costs suddenly rose after World War I, a seven and a half year lapse in publication after Helen Spurway's death, and a lean patch with respect to submissions in the late 1990s. Today, as the relatively new field of evo-devo—itself made possible by the tremendous advances in genetics over the past one hundred years—refocusses attention on the key question of the genesis and nature of phenotypic variation underlying speciation events, we hope that the *Journal of Genetics* will be one of the places where such research is published. Bateson undoubtedly would have wished it so!

While we have been bringing out special issues of the journal from time to time, collating papers on some common theme of topical interest, it was a collective decision of the editors not to come out with a special centenary issue. Thus, this is a 'normal' issue of the journal, with papers dealing with cytogenetics, human genetics and disease, agricultural genetics, and molecular systematics and conservation. We do, however, mark the hundredth year milestone by carrying a review of a recently published and comprehensively detailed biography of Bateson as a reminder of our origins as well as of the still unanswered questions about the role of variation in evolution. We also, unfortunately, have to mark a much more sombre milestone as we mourn the recent loss of Veronica Rodrigues, one of our distinguished editors for many years and a friend to many of us associated with the journal.

One hundred years on, looking back at the heady early days of genetics and of this journal, we can still sense some of the excitement that must have accompanied the publication of some of the early papers trying to explain the phenomena of linkage (reduplication) and sex determination, or some of the earliest attempts at biochemical genetics trying to unravel the mechanistic details underlying pigment biosynthesis in flower colour mutants. As we mark the centenary of the journal, we hope that the efforts of current and future editors will live up to the example set by Bateson, Punnett, Haldane, Spurway, Sharat Chandra, Gadgil, Jayakar and VijayRaghavan and that the *Journal of Genetics* will again occupy its rightful niche at the interface of genetics and evolution in the years to come.

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