

# OPINION

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## OUR VIEWPOINT

## FORESTS

**S**OME would have read with consternation of the problems being experienced with the takeover of the NCT Forestry Co-operative Limited by the Msunduzi Municipality.

While accusations fly thick and fast between the interim board of the Msunduzi Forestry Company and the higher structures of Msunduzi, it must be stressed that our green-belt forests, which have so much to do with the sense of place of our city, are hugely important to the residents of Pietermaritzburg.

NCT Forestry has managed the forests exceptionally well over many years. It has a wealth of knowledge and an impressive range of services that have seen the forests thrive.

But our green-belt forests must not just be seen as a profitable stream of revenue for the city going forward. While they must add to the city's coffers, they must also be seen as much more than that.

These are the forests that border our homes. They provide a haven for the abundance of wild-

life and birds of our city.

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# Language of symmetry



## OPINION

Rajen Singh

**R**EADING aloud and talking often to a child promotes brain development.

Albert Einstein dwelt on mathematics, which made his brain 35% larger in that area.

Together, 90 billion neurons, 100 000 miles of blood vessels and around a trillion glial cells tell you that you cannot tickle yourself because your brain distinguishes between an external touch and your own touch.

The nucleus of the human cell contains information that can fill 30 volumes of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* put together; just one cell.

Therefore the human brain is a product of complexity, immensity, intensity and mystery, all interwoven to exemplify the language of symmetry in all of its functioning.

A recent study found that musicians have the electrical circuit in their brain rewired, and the size of the brain in the area associated with music, is increased.

It also found that musicians can better detect faint speech in noisy areas and emotional cues in conversation.

According to research, listening to quality music releases endorphins into the brain, which counteract pain and slow the heartbeat.

This is the work of the symmetry of the brain as it resonates with music, leaving one in an exalted state.

"My life has been a tapestry of rich and royal hue, an everlasting vision of never changing view"; this from Carole King's masterpiece, *Tapestry*. It is a sweet blend of lyrics and simple words strung together to articulate emotion and thought.

Literature Nobel Prize Laureate Bob Dylan's mesmerising rock ballad *Knocking on Heaven's Door* is a fine example of lyrics and sound in symmetry, saying that which one cannot say through words alone.

How attractive a woman is to others is determined by the golden ratio of 46%. This measures ratios between the mouth, nose, chin, hairline, lips, face and eyebrows in terms of size and distances between these facial features. The ratio of the distance from eyes to lips, hairline to chin, length of face to base of nose, size of pupils to width of face, width of face to nose and width of lips to chin are critical. When most of these ratios are 46% or close, the result is breathtaking beauty.

Generally, facial beauty translates to general beauty. This golden ratio is identified swiftly by the brain because it resonates with the symmetry for facial attractiveness. The symmetry of beauty pleases the brain immensely because it is configured as such.

In Charles Dickens' classic novel *Great Expectations*, Abel Magwitch was Pip's generous benefactor to make Pip a gentleman. It was only after 17 years that Magwitch disclosed this to Pip. Pip was disappointed as he was under the impression that his benefactor was an aristocrat.

Magwitch found no need to disclose

his identity to Pip or others over those years. This was pure altruism and is rare today. Pip did not return the requisite gratitude to Magwitch, but later felt deep remorse and shame.

Pure altruism is symmetry while having no gratitude is asymmetry.

Not being sincere and genuine are readily detected by the brain as an early warning system, experienced as instinct and gut feel.

Magwitch must have discerned this in Pip.

The world needs more intelligence and less aggression.

The human genome project is currently mapping the human genetic code. Once completed it will be possible to identify single genes that control aggression and intelligence, and then modify them to render humans less aggressive and more intelligent.

The project will identify genes responsible for cystic fibrosis, cancer and muscular dystrophy, among others, with the intention of correcting them through genetic engineering. This will improve human behaviour.

This exemplifies the symmetry of the genetic machinery in humans, to which we owe our origins, while we continue to evolve and remain the most complicated creatures in the known universe — a universe which is majestic and mysterious, and presents a stark reflection of symmetry, from an atom to a black hole.

There could, however, be other more complicated creatures in the universe and they might know about us.

Rajen Singh is a communications deputy director in the KZN provincial government but writes in his personal capacity.