



Welcome to the latest issue of the CEiBa newsletter. Our year starts with many personal goals like new resolutions (from diet curbs to foreign tours), achievements, and future planning even starting afresh after severe depression. The sincerity and eagerness we show to improve ourselves are often mind-blowing but how these achievements make us really happy is a serious debate. One of the pressing factors is our complete ignorance and/or indifference to our surroundings. The long history of human civilization is impressively filled with the glamorous stories of human conquest over nature which often values benefits in terms of tangible gains. As a side effect, we

are now embracing deforestation, pollution, biodiversity loss, uncontrolled waste generation, global warming, and so on. And as a social group, nobody can escape these fallouts. Now, are we really worried? Apparently, yes. The piled-up reports of meetings, conferences, and regulations say so, rising protests against environmental vandalism say so, and increment in the number of sustainable technologies also say so, but we are still far behind the achievable goals. The wide gap between our environmental consciousness and social-political economic will is a major factor behind this mayhem. It is a strenuous challenge to keep a check on human's ever-growing desire to acquire all possible tangible benefits from nature, and it shoots up exponentially as one moves towards the top tier of the economic strata. However, the silver lining is that there are people who don't give up easily. Our endeavour is expressed through eagerness to learn about the natural world, to be sensitive to other life forms, adapting more sustainable practices in our individual as well as social lifestyle, and so on. Hope we the common people can turn over a new leaf towards a better world.

This issue is teeming with articles of different flavors. We start with a brief encounter with the history of plant exploration in colonial India. The article narrates how the mere plant collection activities unfolded a new understanding of a foreign country in terms of its natural resource, utility, and application in commercial development. It was the time when European natural scientists got much-awaited exposure to the Indian floral and faunal life. It ultimately enriched the global understanding of the tropical biota to a great extent. The write-up largely story-tells to link the plant herbarium world, hitherto strictly as a taxonomists' arena, with the contemporary political-economic-social lives of India. Our second article is about social entrepreneurship in the village landscape. It is a firsthand account of the establishment of natural organic farming practices among the villagers with an ingrained preference toward chemical farming culture. The author narrates his experience in dealing with peoples' attitudes towards the trials with organic cultivation, the constraints on the availability of indigenous seeds and their climatic suitability, the dearth of information, and funding as well as small but cherishable achievement. This local, small-scale initiative to create a healthy eco-friendly food system needs to be appreciated and encouraged to create its own identity. Then gradually, we bump into the theme of sustainable waste management in our third article. Our throw-away materials are currently a looming threat to our comfortable lifestyle.

This elaborate article discusses a few interesting aspects of solid waste problems and their management in modern India with few easy-to-follow recommendations.

The wild food section presents the culinary utility of the widely known greater *Galangal* and *Malabar Spinach*. However, you may be surprised to know that our garden plants and avenue trees are also in this category viz., *Peacock flower* and *Gulmohor* tree. Leaf, stem, seed, and petals each one has something to offer to our palate. So come, enjoy your cooking with them.

Likewise, the glimpses of nature offer stories on the flower of remembrance, dew drops in sustainable sugarcane cultivation, the unique combat strategy in *Cerena* bees, and the tale of mighty trawlers on the sea. Again it's the biological and cultural diversity that keeps us alive, curious, and optimistic about our future.

Happy reading

Rajanni Ray