



# Conservation Times

Honouring Nature Conservation

# Real Estate's Bio-diverse Example

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If the real estate business cannot directly increase size of urban forestry, it can certainly put in practice measures that ultimately contribute to over all urban-scape-conservation. Our Aurum is an example in Jaipur. Eight floors with a basement and stilt over 63,000 sq. ft., land area offering 2,00,000 sq., ft constructed area.

We carefully selected indigenous and also fruit bearing plants like Jamun, Amrood, Neem, Gulmohar, Gular, Aonla, Cheeku, Mango, Karanj, Drumstick, Bamboo and even medicinal species like Giloy, Meetha Neem, etc. Palm and Date Palm were also picked up looking to demand of residents. Ferns, shrubs, bushes and plants of lower height were especially planted along pathways. We ensured that carpet area for lawn be minimum.

Two tube wells supply water for this residential enclave. To reduce the fresh



*Mulberry tree in memory of John Judy now taller than the guard's room at Ariana in Jaipur, Anand Mishra*

**Urban green:** Sixtyfour apartments accommodate about 200 human beings. Much before start of construction, we adopted a human-need-based approach in our model of greenery here. By the time it was completed, about 2,000 tall plants were introduced around.

water requirement a sewage treatment plant with a capacity to treat 40,000 litres per day has been installed. Entire treated water is re-used in toilets and across greenery.

**Green-wisdom:** Solar system is in practice in geysers to provide hot water.



*(l to r) A squirrel pirating at a bird feeder, Rose-ringed Parakeets having a feast and female House Sparrow nibbling, Anand Arya*

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In terms of water Aurum is a zero-discharge building. Solid waste management is in practice. Entire kitchen and garden waste is turned into compost and most of the recyclable waste is sold to recyclers. It is an attempt to balance the urban ecosystem.

To educate residents, we often arrange environmental education related programmes. A large display board has been placed on a prominent wall saying it is "Aurum Biodiversity." It has names of species of plants and also of birds that have started visiting this place. Some birds now breed here. Photos of wild species visiting this area have been added to this display board hoping residents will identify new arrivals. Fallen leaves of plants are left there itself to cause insects to prosper and become more feed for birds.

**What cost:** Our green-wisdom campaign started with planting a Mulberry tree at entrance of another project Ariana some years ago. It was to perpetuate memory of John Judy of Tennessee Valley Authority where he worked for environmental education. It was courtesy Ed McCrea who is leading the editorial board of Conservation Times. We wish Aurum experiment is replicated. I like to add: it does not cost much to go-green. It is a matter of will.

# RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

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I love traveling and many years ago I realized that people were willing to pay more for a hotel that followed eco-friendly practices. I experienced a hotel in Mumbai

that kept eco-friendly practices at the core of everything. Out of the many outstanding features, they also had an eco switch, which on being pressed brought the room temperature to 27 degrees and also informed the management. The hotel would give a letter of appreciation to the guests who pressed the environment switch. This initiative was much appreciated by the guests. This hotel competed with some of the best business hotel brands in terms of occupancy and rates.

The above hotel was an inspiration for the Ecotel hotel that I built in Jaipur. It has become the core of our business philosophy today. New learning: water management, saving electricity, conservation of resources, and community development take the center stage when we plan any project.

Responsible Tourism contributes to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage: eg. city walks, food tours, camel/horse safari, local food; thereby providing more enjoyable experiences for tourists through meaningful connection with local people, etc. Today's traveler is aware, while he would expect a good ambiance and services, he would also appreciate the extra mile a hotel has gone. It would certainly add to the value of the hotel.

I must admit that in my travels to many destinations especially, wilderness resorts around the country, I have seen many local players doing an excellent job. But at the same time, there are some fake guys too.

The genuine efforts are visible and have a nice scent, and the fragrance of the good effort travels far and wide.

# MOUNTAINOUS ECOLOGY

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Mountains have always inspired humans. Since childhood, we have been looking at them with degrees of uncertain images too big and difficult to scale. My

childhood memories are shadowed by the record Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary had created by scaling Mt. Everest the first time. Much later I learnt greater significance of this ecosystem as suppliers of almost all that we need to survive.

Mountain lands are characteristically scattered but diverse habitats. Barring some studies on wild mammals, not much has been attempted on vegetation aspects of hill systems. Lord Hanuman is celebrated for having fetched the "Sanjeevani" herb to revive the breath of Lakshman according to the narration in the Indian holy book, Ramayana. It was believed that the herb would be found across the Dronagiri hills, north of Uttarakhand State in India. Several plants have been proposed as possible candidates for the Sanjeevani plant, including Selaginella bryopteris, Dendrobium plicatile (synonym Desmotrichum fimbriatum), Cressa cretica, and others. A search of ancient texts at Council for Scientific and Industrial Research laboratories did not reveal any plant that can be definitively confirmed as Sanjeevani.

The largest and highest area of mountain lands occurs in the Himalaya-Tibet region. The longest nearly continuous mountain range is that along the west coast of the Americas from Alaska in the north to Chile in the south. Other particularly significant areas of mountain lands include those in Europe (Alps, Pyrenees), Asia (Caucasus, Urals), New Guinea, New Zealand, and East Africa.

Biodiversity Science says: It is emphasized that the topography of mountainous areas is the most critical controlling factor for ecological structures, functions, and processes.

## Conservation Times making waves

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The monsoon has provided long needed relief to most Indians. Good news for agriculture and environment equally. It has been too much monsoon elsewhere like in USA and UK.



The inaugural issue was received well and so it was decided that the Conservation Times would be run as a quarterly. As we sail for the 2nd issue, I am privileged to welcome and greet all new Editors. A most experienced and knowledgeable new group of Editors has joined hands together, from diverse parts of the world, to bless this TWSI product. Thanks to Ed J McCrea, Chairman of the Editorial Board, leading us from USA. All editors are expected to contribute but not all will be able to do so each issue. Hence, we invoke eminent citizens to write down their ideas and tell us all about their on-field experiences. Some have already done so to embellish this issue.

India has been found to be deficient in scientific experiments on wild species. Siberian Cranes were tagged by our group in the 90s after some questioning by the Environment Ministry and forest officials. The experiments did not succeed. The species became extinct in India! The Great Indian Bustard (GIB) waited for decades for its share of satellite tagging. Its plight was highlighted in the inaugural issue of Conservation Times (cover story) by Ashok Mahindra who had visited Desert National Park to inspect by himself the state of affairs. Lesser Florican (LF) follows in the footsteps of its larger cousin bustard. This issue of Conservation Times highlights the same. Besides the Wildlife Institute of India, a forest officer of infinite strength and field experiences, Dr. G.S. Bhardwaj has shared his experiments with LF in this issue.

Brilliant writers have contributed on a variety of topics like Mahendra Singh on Demoiselle Cranes, Bernard Price on a Buzzard, Kevin on citizen-science, Martin on Houbara in the Canary islands, Mrinalini on birds in an army station, Seema on Snow Leopard's impact in the Himalayas, etc. Ed McCrea has been inspired to suggest how social marketing could be initiated for wild species citing example of GIB. Manoj Sharma in the US has come out with an imaginative version of breathing as to be associated with a holy treatise, etc. Salutations to all writers.

A painting competition was held by TWSI on 50th Earth Day which drew response from nearly 600 students. Their prize giving away event was staged in Jaipur and we carry its details as well in this issue.

The distribution of this newsletter is by way of emails and is being strengthened to cover a larger readership. You are welcome to convey more email addresses to be included. We shall try our best and do kindly pour in valued suggestions.

# CONSERVATION, FOR WHOM?

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The 8<sup>th</sup> edition of Conservation Times is dedicated to “Protecting wild areas and creating new refuges.” Experts have expressed valued opinion in this

volume. Some have conveyed what was scripted by Chanakya (350-275 BCE), who was Prime Minister during reign of king Chandragupta Maurya in India. Others have highlighted needs for forests designated as National Parks or Sanctuaries: India is home to 7% of the recorded species of the world, which includes 46,000 plant species and 91,000 animal species.

We need to agree that the Protected Areas Network should play a significant role in conservation of wild species. The common aim is to preserve the ecological wealth. However, the ground realities reveal that the basic approach to PA management has remained isolationist. It is based on the questionable assumption that management must protect the park from people living in surrounding areas and shield wildlife and other natural resources from exploitation. It often leads to human-wildlife conflicts.

Continued advocacy is being voiced on wildlife conservation. Political leaders air it as sermons.

The Forest Department tries to practice it almost round the clock. Significant recovery has been made for some noted wild species like Tiger, Elephant, Rhino, among others. The officials claim forest cover having increased, as evidenced by satellite images.

It is argued how can forest coverage increase while more people remain dependent upon forest produce in most areas of the country? It may be realized that needs of common people in villages are very important for their survival. Is it not correct to assume that wild fauna/flora would receive high priority at their quarters?

# HUMAN HEALTH AND NATURE

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The dedication for 7<sup>th</sup> Conservation Times happens to be: Human Health and Nature. At first I thought, it was an easy bet. However, when I settled down to do this piece, I found

it just opposite. There are many reasons for this.

One scenario is that Human Health should be solely dependent on Nature. All that we inhale, consume and live with is basically Nature. Indescribable texts are available on Nature in the Indian context. This is despite the fact that knowledge, books, etc. were gutted at various university and institutions in the wake of invasions made on India's knowledge-bank as it prevailed then.

There had been valid answers to almost all ills. The very base of medicinal values happened to be Ayurveda. What a pity that ancient scholars practiced Oral Traditions i.e., avoiding written lessons. A good number of people perished in those onslaughts. Hence oral-knowledge was buried along with them.

I am getting more interested in Botany. The more I explore, the more it becomes like fresh leaves of knowledge. I strongly believe that there is no species that does not provide benefits to people.

Betterment in health, in my view is directly proportionate to Nature. I am told there were no Gods and Goddesses in the Vedic period. Facets of Elements of Nature were treated as sources of remedy.

There is no conflict between the West and the East. Admittedly, the West has developed chemical based compositions to treat human being. For some, it may have dwarfed the Indian remedies. There is a need to look holistically. The West had long merged with the East. Walt Whitman's poem had already raised a curtain over it.