Foreword

The word "Nature" conveys different meanings to different people. It originated from latin "natura" which means 'birth' and primarily referred to the qualities of an individual, gained by birth and hence the term, "*nature of a person*". Over the years it acquired a broader meaning that included all biotic and abiotic components, forces and their interactions on earth and even beyond, which is expressed in terms such as "*mother nature*" or "*forces of nature*". Increasingly the term is used in ways excluding or juxtaposing it with the word "human" where "natural" means without any influence of humans such as "*natural vegetation*". Social construction of "nature" as explored by sociologist and human geographers like Elizabeth Bird, Judith Gerber and David Demeritt make a fascinating reading and help us to understand the society which created the term and gave it diverse and sometimes contradictory meanings.

We, as a part of this society, need to select our own meaning from the plethora which best suits our aims of conservation and sustainable use. The vision of the Ecological Society and the mission of nature conservation take a holistic view where humans are an integral part of earth's ecosystem. And hence the *human nature* is as much a subject of our interest as the *nature* that shapes and is in turn shaped by the humans. We need to identify and promote sustainable management practices in which human activities can continue without causing imbalance in ecosystem processes. But we also must delve deeper into the processes of human mind that lead us towards conservation friendly behaviour and sustainable lifestyles.

In this issue we have a selection of papers and articles that address both. Five of the contributions discuss practices of ecological management of landscape by humans ranging from old to new and varying in scale from small private landholdings to large multi-use landscapes. One of the contributions, primarily from the field of psychology, discusses the concept of Naturalistic Intelligence that governs our interactions with the rest of the living world.

The research paper on Raakhan Ran, is the first ever documentation of grasslands conserved and harvested sustainably. It is interesting to observe how this fits into the management of agro-pastoral liveli-

hoods by communities in the Northern Western Ghats. The next paper is from an urban landscape, and documents management of mangrove ecosystem in Mumbai by a corporate body. It assesses the carbon sequestration carried out by a patch of conserved mangroves and its potential for the mitigation of pollution in the city. The article on three dams maps and characterizes the biotic and abiotic features of the catchments of Pavana, Chaskaman and Dimbhe dams. The data is used to document restoration potential of these catchments by considering them as ecological landscapes. The article proposes a process for prioritization of restoration among multiple candidate dam catchments. This article will be useful for those working in the field of restoration as well as those discussing the policy aspects. Another article from Kodagu region of Southern Western Ghats puts forth a model using Geodesign concept which can be used to accommodate various complex factors involved in landscape planning. The Kodagu region is well known for rich biodiversity and cultural heritage, at the same time is facing increased negative interactions between humans and elephants which have inhabited the landscape for long time. The problems of this region are representative of many areas within India, where humans and wildlife occupy the same landscape and interact continuously. We hope more such studies are taken up and provide us guidelines for integrated regional planning that strengthens conservation and coexistence. As cities expand and engulf previously wild areas, biodiversity is at the risk of being wiped out locally. Maintenance of common lands such as hills, streams and parks is necessary but inadequate unless private lands between these patches can function as a support for wild species. The article on insects in a home garden describes a microcosm of wilderness that can be preserved in a heavily urbanized landscape.

The paper on Naturalistic Intelligence is included with a hope to provide a different view of environment education, which stresses more on abstract, sensorial experiences than concrete information provision and discusses ways in which nature awareness can be promoted by the society.

An article by Prof. Prakash Gole is reprinted in this

issue as it discusses the 3 Es, Engineering, Economics and Ecology that form the basis of modern life. Over-emphasis on the first two and neglect of the third has led to disastrous effects, where a handful of people are strengthening their hold on resources at the cost of many lives. What is the kind of world we want? As citizens of one common planet it is time to clearly and rationally define the kind of world that we would like to leave as a legacy for future generations. The last article is a review of book that includes various authors describing their vision of alternative futures. Rather than criticizing various social, economic or

cultural processes, the authors offer successful examples of alternative development efforts for all to peruse and ponder upon.

The journal has always aimed towards promoting interdisciplinary thinking and research. The selection of papers and articles in this issue continues with this tradition and we hope will be useful to readers from diverse fields of work.

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