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Trends, Analysis
Green Products,
Green Books,
Entrepreneurship



*Purpose*
**To excite entrepreneurs, executives and graduate students about immense opportunities in green business.**

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# Can Virgin Coconut Oil Destroy Covid 19 Virus?

Do you believe that washing your hands with soap for the duration of two "Happy Birthdays" songs, will kill the Corona Virus? I hope you do, for it does, and you will be safer by washing your hands. The whole world knows this.

How does soap work? Soap is a mixture of fats and oils and caustic soda. The molecule of soap looks like a microscopic pin. The head is hydrophilic i.e. attracted to water, and the pin tail is hydrophobic i.e. pushes away from water. Think of the two poles of a magnet, positive and negative – attracting and repelling. The soap molecule is just like that. It mixes with the clothing being washed, causes a separation of oil and other stains, loosens them and they are freed from the bond to the clothing. They

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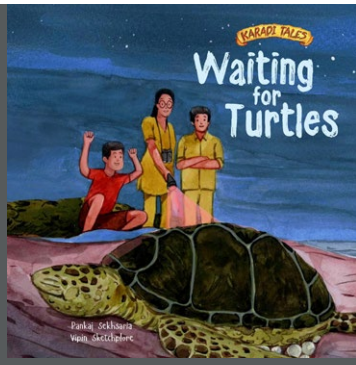
Two Indian Bodies win 2021 Equator Prize

Locally Made Low Cost Water Purifier by Women Makes Big Impact in West Bengal





are called surfactants. The same happens when washing your hands. To help you understand this better I quote from the net – "**Surfactants** are usually organic compounds that are amphiphilic, meaning they contain both hydrophobic groups (their tails) and hydrophilic groups (their heads). Therefore, surfactant contains both a water-insoluble (or oil-soluble) component and a water-soluble component."

But now you are dealing with a virus. Did you know that scientists are not sure if viruses are animate or inanimate? Are they live or not live? This is because they do not classify properly as living cells. But that is not important. What is important is that they can do great damage, are highly reckless and go out of control, and can hardly be stopped. This is because they have a strong protective coating. A lipid coating that nothing can penetrate. Well, almost nothing! Soap can.

In simple terms the Corona Virus [not all viruses] has a lipid coating over its protein protective layer which is damaged and even dissolved by soap. The lipids are made of oils or fats and are hydrophobic and the proteins are nitrogen compounds that are hydrophilic. The pin head and tail of the soap molecule creates a disturbance into these layers of the virus, damaging it and then destroying it. Do refer to this easy-to-understand article by Palli Thordarson dt. April 8th, 2020, to learn how it works.

**https://www.marketwatch.com/story/deadly-viruses-are-no-match-for-plain-old-soap-heres-the-science-behind-it-2020-03-08**

Soap works on the outside. Disinfectants do NOT work from the inside, no matter who says what. Let us see what can work from the inside on the lipid coating of viruses.


## Lauric Acid

Even the human immune system without exposure is not able to penetrate and damage or kill viruses. Only vaccines or inoculations build up specific antibodies, which can. Furthermore, medical science has developed specific medicines for specific viruses. Apart from these there is one natural substance found in mothers' milk and in virgin coconut oil (VCO) called Lauric Acid. It is a fatty acid, which gives good protection to the infant against most illnesses. VCO is the richest source of lauric acid with content as high as 49 % up to 51%.

VCO is extracted from the fresh kernel of the mature coconut. Coconut oil is extracted from copra, or the dried kernel of the coconut. They are different and look different.

How does lauric acid kill viruses? In our digestive system and that of a human infant, lauric acid becomes monolaurin, which is a more effective virus killer. It does the same to the virus but from the inside. Just like soap, it damages the lipid coating, and if the virus coating is exposed long enough to monolaurin, the virus will die, or becomes inactive. Once damaged the human immune system attacks and totally inactivates the virus.

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What is good is that monolaurin continues to sing "Happy Birthday" the whole day long. Do remember that washing your hands is very necessary. Do also remember the moment after your hands are washed, they begin to get contaminated soon and so washing gives some protection but not security. It is a partial solution. Monolaurin is possibly the most constant dependable solution. Monolaurin controls the virus after it enters the body. Washing with soap is not enough. Washing and ingesting Lauric Acid just may be the perfect solution.

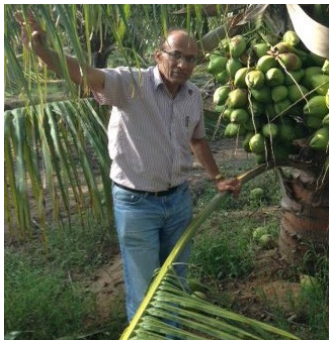
Research has been done on 16 lipid coated viruses and they are found to be susceptible to monolaurin because VCO damages and kills them. Empirical evidence have shown that they are effective against the dreaded HIV and Cytomegalovirus (CMV). The flu virus is also lipid coated and has been proven to be susceptible to monolaurin. CMV is known to clog the arteries resulting in heart related diseases.

**I have searched but not found a single reason why Covid 19 may not be susceptible to monolaurin. And until I find a reason, I believe that VCO is the possible and easily available prophylactic for Covid 19. Nor have I found a lipid coated virus that has shown resistance to monolaurin. So if you believe that soap can kill the corona virus from the outside, kindly do not be afraid to believe that VCO can do that constantly from the inside.**

I suggest that that all of us take a tablespoon of VCO in the morning and one at night to keep the levels of monolaurin high. After the pandemic times, taking VCO just once a day either before or after meals, should suffice in keeping most illnesses, diseases and sickness at bay. However, studies have not been done on the most efficacious dosage.

Once you start taking VCO, kindly check your wellness levels. I feel confident that many people will find their wellness levels rising, at least those who have high levels of CMV. I call CMV, the world's best kept secret.

If more coconut producers introduce virgin coconut oil brands at an affordable price, it could have a dramatic influence on people's wellness all around the world. It could also mean a significant hit on pharma companies that sell lifestyle drugs as if they are life-saving drugs.



Read more such stories in the series **'The Coconut's Promise'** in **SustainabilityNext**.

**David Lobo** is the founder of the Bengaluru-based Deejay Coconut Breeding Farm Pvt. Ltd., which is into the breeding of new and better hybrid coconut palms. He neither manufacturers nor has any direct interest in virgin coconut oil.


SHG Training

# Two Indian Bodies win 2021 Equator Prize

**UNDP has picked Snehakunja Trust for the Equator Prize 2021. This prize is said to be equivalent to the Nobel Prize for biodiversity and conservation. It is among the 10 organizations that has won the prize worldwide and was selected from a total of over 600 nominations from 126 countries.**

**Aadhimalai Pazhangudiyinar Producer Company Limited**, a 1,700-shareholder cooperative, managed and run entirely by indigenous people from the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, improves livelihoods for villagers by supporting sustainable collection and cultivation of a wide range of forest produce and crops. Through local value addition, members earn premium prices.

The prize is for their work in protecting and restoring freshwater swamps, evergreen forests, and mangrove ecosystems, preserving biodiversity, maintaining aquifers and safeguarding carbon sinks in the Western Ghats and the coast of Karnataka. It also involves empowering local communities to pursue sustainable livelihoods.

India Foundation for Humanistic Development [IFHD] is a not- for-profit company with pan India operations in sustainable agriculture, livelihoods, micro-enterprise development, biodiversity conservation and greening of food and energy systems.

**Snehakunja Trust** is IFHD's sister organization. It has been operating for 45 years, works in the central Western Ghats and west coast of India on sustainable agriculture, rural livelihoods, holistic healthcare and environment conservation. IFHD and Snehakunja Trust work together seamlessly and collaboratively on different projects pan India.

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The 12th Equator Prize is recognizes deep work with local and Indigenous communities from around the world. The winning organizations display local, innovative, nature-based solutions for tackling biodiversity loss and climate change and achieving their local development goals even during a pandemic.

*The Government of Norway is the key sponsor of the prize.*

This year's winners, announced in July 2021, include locally-led cooperatives marketing sustainably harvested fruits and organically grown crops as an alternative to logging and poaching in forest reserves; an Indigenous group fighting to protect their ancestral territory from oil exploitation; a local organization protecting critical wetland ecosystems, helping mitigate climate change while safeguarding water sources for hundreds of communities; and a grassroots advocacy group promoting a transition to organic agriculture based on traditional practices, leading to a government commitment to organic-only food production country-wide within a decade.

Equator Prize winners receive US$10,000 and the opportunity to take part in a series of special virtual events associated with the UN General Assembly, the Nature for Life Hub and the UN Food Systems Summit later this year. They will join a network of 255 communities from over 80 countries that have received the Equator Prize since its inception in 2002. This year's winners are from Kyrgyzstan, Brazil, Bolivia, Cameroon, Costa Rica, Ecuador, India, Niger and Mexico.

Community workshop_swamps preservation

Partners of the Equator Initiative include the governments of Norway, Germany, and Sweden, as well as Conservation International, the Convention on Biological Diversity, Eco-Agriculture Partners, Estee Lauder Companies, Fordham University, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, One Earth, The Nature Conservancy, PCI Media Impact, Tribal Link, Rainforest Foundation Norway, Rare, UNEP, UNDP, UN Foundation, USAID, WWF, and the Wildlife Conservation Society.

The Equator Prize is also supported by former Heads of State Gro Harlem Brundtland and Oscar Arias, Nobel Prize winners Al Gore and Elinor Ostrom, thought leaders Jane Goodall and Jeffrey Sachs; indigenous rights leader Vicky Tauli-Corpuz, philanthropists Richard Branson and Ted Turner, and celebrities Edward Norton, Alec Baldwin, Gisele Bündchen, and many more.

## Other Winners

### Asociación de Jóvenes Reforestadores en Acción (AJORA) – Bolivia

This group of young women promotes sustainable agroforestry models and addresses ecosystem loss and degradation through traditional fire management and restoration activities. AJORA helps slow the exodus of rural youth in the Bolivian Amazon.

Continued on next page

## CoopCerrado – Brazil

Through creative marketing of dozens of organic, sustainably sourced products from Brazil Cerrado ecoregion, this network of over 4,600 families improves local livelihoods, protects biodiversity, and supports the creation of sustainable-use reserves, showing a pathway to a green economy.

Malabar Gliding Frog
(Rhacophorus malabaricus)

## Tropical Forest and Rural Development – Cameroon

Empowering Indigenous communities in the Dja Biosphere Reserve in Cameroon, this community organization promotes cocoa-based agroforestry and the collection of forest products for better local incomes while protecting a vulnerable forest.

## Asociación de Mujeres Indígenas del Territorio Cabécar Kábata Könana – Costa Rica

Combining traditional knowledge and social media to ensure food security during a pandemic, the NGO is a model for community resilience to climate change and other external shocks.

## Pueblo Originario Kichwa de Sarayaku – Ecuador

The Kichwa people of Sarayaku have won legal battles to protect their 133,000-hectare territory in the Amazon rainforest from oil drilling, logging, and road construction. Their "Kawsak Sacha" Declaration "Living Forest" seeks recognition for a new category of protected area, reflecting Indigenous worldviews and ancestral practices.

## BIO-KG Federation of Organic Development – Kyrgyzstan

Reversing land degradation in rural and mountain communities in Kyrgyzstan, BIO-KG has spearheaded the creation of "Organic Aimaks" (communities), whereby villagers commit to organic-only agriculture based on traditional knowledge and agrobiodiverse food systems. The model was instrumental in transition to organic agriculture nationwide within a decade.

## Grupo Ecológico Sierra Gorda IAP – Mexico

A leader in community-based climate change mitigation, Grupo Ecológico Sierra Gorda IAP has advanced a state-funded carbon footprint mechanism, social entrepreneurship, ecosystem restoration activities and private reserves to holistically protect the Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve and promotes its 638 communities' economic and social development.

## Farmer Union Maddaben of Falwel and Farmer Union Hareyben of Tera – Niger

These two farmer unions, part of a coalition of agricultural unions and farmer groups in Niger, have improved food security, local livelihoods, and community adaptation to climate change through the promotion of agrobiodiversity in participatory research, restoration and regeneration of degraded land, and organic agriculture.

# Locally Made Low Cost Water Purifier by Women Makes Big Impact in West Bengal

**By Rangeet Mitra, Senior Consultant, Prayukti Group**

Basirhat municipality, which encompasses 22.5 sq.km, was established on 1st April 1869, It is in West Bengal, adjacent to river Ichhamati. It gets flooded for more than seven months a year affecting people's health and livelihoods. Daspara and Mathpara wards were picked for a pilot project for installing urban flood management frameworks.

Project area has long history of waterlogging because of climate change and global warming. There were many initiatives taken by local governmental body to mitigate this issue, but because of unknown reasons, they were not able to solve this issue. Due to urban flooding, quality of life of local people are rapidly degrading. It is also affecting the local social fabric.

During research visit, no underground sewerage system has been observed. Two types of latrines such as Septic Tank and Two-Pit Flash Latrine are popular among common people. Water logging is the major problem in low areas because municipality has not constructed drainage systems and natural drainage system is damaged due to unscientific urbanisation. It is shocking that ground water is the only source of drinking water in this locality. Also, poor solid waste management is another striking issue to be solved in near future.

To address this issue, research team primarily has analysed the adverse effects of waterlogging in peri urban locality. One of the key team members has said that waterborne and skin diseases are occurring due to inundation, subsequent stagnation & submergence from frequent flooding during monsoon. Side by side, in absence of proper solid waste management practices, the environment has been polluted and it has provided breeding grounds for vectors diseases. Also, it curbs the minimum access to safe drinking water mainly for poor & marginalized families.

In baseline study, research team has found out some interesting points as reasons of urban flooding in the post-globalisation era. The key findings are as follows:

1. Pilot project site is lower than the adjacent areas
2. Drainage system is poor.
3. Unscientific urban infrastructural development has destroyed the natural drainage system
4. During visit, a drainage channel is observed. But it is not capable to carry large volume of water.

Continued on next page

In the first phase of the project, when researchers have asked locals regarding urban flooding. They have explained their distressful condition to the research team. Shefali, a resident of Daspara, has said that after monsoon, water stayed inside the locality for more than seven to eight months and it has impacted negatively on the growth of the locality. Also, Locals have complained that during rainy season, they have found the water to be unfit for drinking. Also, they have to cross the waterlogging areas to get the drinking water. It has spoiled their quality time.

In the pilot phase, research team has selected eighty six households in Daspara and Mathpara of Basirhat Municipality of North 24 Paragna, West Bengal to distribute cost effective simple to use water purification system called Amritadhara through the public participation method. For this, they did not charge a single penny. This project is supported by Humanitarian Innovation Fund – ELRHRA, UK and IRS, Jahangir Nagar University, Bangladesh is the knowledge partner of this project.

Eminent environmental professional Mr. Swarnabha Bandyopadhyay said, "Access of pure drinking water is our constitutional right. Our primary aim is to help the local community to get proper, pure and hygienic water and also, installed permanent mechanism to restrain from inundation. In this way, we are trying to provide a long-term solution to the society. As per our previous experiences, it is observed that Amritadhara is the only option to us to provide access of pure and clean water to poor and marginalise people. We have successfully solved urban-flood related issues in India and abroad."

**During the research, social innovator and thinker, Dr. Aniruddha Dey said, "AMRITADHARA is our innovation. It can effectively remove arsenic/fluoride, iron, hardness and bacteria from potable water. It also reduces Salinity up to a significant level and remove brownish colour, bad odour. We have developed and designed it to treat Surface Water, Sub-surface Water and Ground Water as per the need of the people."** According to him, the major part of the innovation Amritadhara are highlighted below:

- Drinking water from poor quality water
- It is user-friendly
- It's affordable as the cost comes to Rs 0.015per litre of safe drinking water
- Entire Water supply system can be managed by women
- Dependency on energy, skilled people, accessories are removed
- Provide social entrepreneurship opportunities for the unemployed
- Follows WHO recommended Household Water Treatment & Safe Storage (HWTS)
- This has potentials to change behavioural pattern(s) of maintaining Personal Hygiene
- Full compliance to regulatory norms

Amritadhara tells stories of women empowerments. It is manufactured by Barnali self-help group which is run by women. It can be manufactured locally. Interestingly, women stakeholders of the project areas, are showing leadership to support the battle against climate change and urban flooding.

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After successfully installation of Amritadhara in Daspara and Mathpara, locals have thanked the research team for addressing the neglected & unsolved issue. Astami, a sufferer of water logging, has requested the team members to implement this project in a large scale to support all the stakeholders of Basirhat Municipality. She has also added that Amritadhara has changed their mindset and it has brought significant changes by abolishing gender politics and casteism in the locality.

| Query | Answer |
|---|---|
| Cost of setting up the single plant | As per present market price of various input component, costing of the single plant is INR 1 lac + GST |
| Cost of single system | As per present market rate of various component, the finish product is costed at INR 3300/- + GST (excluding INR 1000/- + GST as per year maintenance cost) |
| Details of the self-help group | A number of self-help groups are involved in manufacturing as well as distribution of this system across various districts of India |
| For how long is it free. | The system and purifying agent for the first year has been provided to the all the beneficiaries at free of cost. The reagent for the subsequent period needs to be procured by the beneficiaries, however it is noted the cost of these purifying agents are very small. |
| Size of the population it serves. | At present, project at Basirhat, directly benefit more than 350 persons and indirectly expected positive impact on more than 1000 persons. Further implementations of these systems in other parts of county, have already benefited more than 2.5 lacs persons. |
| What needs to be done to replicate it in all the low-lying areas | In order to replicate and scale up this system to all similarly low – lying areas, it would be to understand the present water quality in those areas and suitability of the Amritadhara system to purify the water and possibility of customization as well as financial sustenance of this system. |
| Are these models where people don't mind paying for water and they are successfully run. | Willingness to pay is an important aspect for sustenance this kind of purification system. However, Amritadhara being a low – cost (capital and recurring) system, the expenses far out way the medical cost involve in treatment of water borne diseases. Therefore, these systems are successful in all communities where people are properly aware about the water borne diseases. |

**prayuktigroup.com**

**By Rangeet Mitra,**
Senior Consultant, Prayukti Group

# Lessons in Carbon Neutrality in Indian Universities Soon

In an effort to promote Sustainable Development Goals and carbon neutrality across the national universities and higher educational institutes the **Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL),** a joint venture under the administration of Ministry of Power, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Technology, Education, Research and Rehabilitation for the Environment (TERRE), a global NGO. The MoU is for setting up a launch platform for kick-starting actions on carbon neutrality in educational institutions.

TERRE and EESL will work together to propose nation-wide projects, across educational institutes/campuses in India. These projects will transform the higher educational campuses in India into hubs for energy efficiency, renewable energy, emission reduction and air-pollution abatement. All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) is supporting this much needed partnership.

As a part of its partnership with TERRE, EESL will jointly prepare guidelines for a benchmark survey of the institutes that have taken pledge for Not Zero-Net Zero. EESL will also hold workshops for energy audits, make available the guidelines for aggregating demand, set standards for super-efficient appliances available in the market for developing energy efficient plans and map out emission reduction strategies.

EESL, using its ESCO models (CAPEX and PAYS) will finance the replacements of existing inefficient appliances and set in motion the processes to make campuses and infrastructure of the educational institutions energy efficient.

EESL and TERRE would identify research areas for net-zero campaigns to benefit the industry and consumers and create a fund for research on sustainable energy. They will also arrange field visits of interested national/international entities to these institutes to showcase the best practices under the "Knowledge-Exchange-Program (KEP)"

EESL is a joint venture of NTPC Limited, Power Finance Corporation, Rural Electrification Corporation and POWERGRID, Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) was set up under Ministry of Power to facilitate implementation of energy efficiency projects. EESL is a Super Energy Service Company (ESCO) **that seeks to unlock energy efficiency market in India, estimated to at Rs. 74,000 crore**

Continued on next page

**that can potentially result in energy savings of up to 20 per cent of current consumption,** by way of innovative business and implementation models. It also acts as the resource centre for capacity building of State DISCOMs, ERCs, SDAs, upcoming ESCOs, financial institutions, etc.

**TERRE** is a global non-profit, non-partisan and independent organization dedicated to sustainable solutions. TERRE (Technology, Education, Research and Rehabilitation for the Environment) works with communities to create demonstrations that inspire the similar initiatives like renewal of water bodies, urban forestry, renewable energy, waste management and energy efficiency. One of the flagship projects of TERRE is **Smart Campus Cloud Network** (sccnhub.com). SCCN is a global network of the education campuses of schools, colleges, institutes, and universities committed to make a tangible contribution to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the projects in the campuses.

# Tata Chemicals Rescues 803 Whale Sharks

**Tata Chemicals** has been running various initiatives such as Whale Shark conservation, Protect the Pollinators, conservation of Coral Reefs and Mangroves are focused on ensuring environmental integrity that promote the protection and preservation of biodiversity for a few years.

The Whale Shark project, which was launched with an aim to raise awareness and save the gentle giant, has successfully saved and rescued 813 whale sharks till date. The Coral Reef conservation program has covered an area of 2,000 m2 and through its Mangroves Regeneration initiative 1.15 lakh mangroves have been planted last year.

Tata Chemicals was recently conferred with the prestigious D&B award for its work in ESG (Environment, Social and Governance). It was also ranked 3rd amongst the Indian corporates for its Sustainability and CSR practice in responsible business ranking 2020. A part of the over US$ 106 billion Tata Group, Tata Chemicals Limited, is a global company with interests in businesses that focus on Basic Chemistry Products and Specialty Chemistry Products.

# Tata Power to Adhere to Science Based Targets initiative

Tata Power, India's largest integrated power company, said it is committed to set emission reduction targets in alignment with the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi).

SBTi is an initiative which drives ambitious climate action in the private sector by enabling companies to set science-based emissions reduction targets. It is a partnership between CDP (Carbon Disclosure Project), the United Nations Global Compact, World Resources Institute (WRI), the Worldwide Fund for Nature and We Mean Business Coalition.

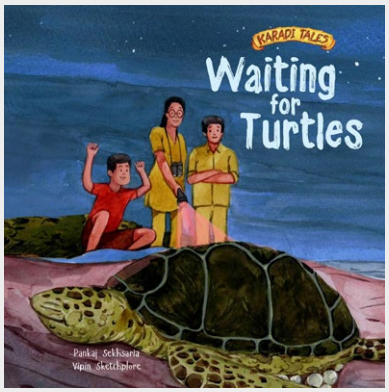
"Mitigating the impact of global warming requires swift and strong action. Tata Power has committed to SBTi and is working on an ambitious plan to drive the transition to decarbonized energy models, aiding the global climate action agenda. To achieve the emission reduction targets, we are moving rapidly to a green energy portfolio and continuously exploring and adopting technology-based solutions. We are confident of being #FutureReady and will continue lighting up lives!" said **Dr. Praveer Sinha, CEO & MD, Tata Power.**

Dr. Praveer Sinha,
CEO & MD, Tata Power

Tata Power has already announced the planned phase out of coal-based capacity and is rapidly expanding its clean and green portfolio with an intent of achieving 80% by FY30. Through its business offerings. It is spearheading development of integrated solutions, focusing on mobility and lifestyle and empowering customers through emerging smart and green technologies.

Tata Power, with its subsidiaries and jointly controlled entities, has an installed/ managed capacity of 12,808 MW. A pioneer in the field, it has a presence across the entire power value chain – generation of renewable as well as conventional power including hydro and thermal energy, transmission & distribution, coal & freight, logistics and trading. The company had developed the country's first 4000 MW Ultra Mega Power Project at Mundra (Gujarat) based on super-critical technology. With nearly 3.9 GW of clean energy generation from solar, wind, hydro and waste heat recovery accounting for 31% of the overall portfolio the company is a leader in clean energy generation. It has successful public-private partnerships in generation, transmission and distribution in India.

List of Companies working with SBTi link - **Companies taking action – Science Based Targets**




# On Waiting for Turtles and other such pursuits

**Pankaj Sekhsaria** wears many hats. A faculty member at IIT-Bombay, he is also a long time environmental researcher with the environmental group Kalpavriksh and a prolific writer. Well-known for his research and writing on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, his latest book Waiting for Turtles has just been published by **Karadi Tales** in **English** and **Hindi**. In an email interview with **Meghaa Gupta**, he discusses his work and life.

## How did you get interested in environmentalism and turn your gaze to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands?

Where interest in wildlife and the environment is concerned, the earliest and perhaps the most important influences go back to the time when I was in high school. My younger brother Peeyush was always interested in nature and birds. We used to live in the suburbs of Pune and one of our neighbours had a relative who was a student at IIT-Bombay, a keen wild-lifer and also secretary of the nature club in IIT. He introduced both of us to birding and slowly to the larger world of wildlife, nature and the environment.

The other simultaneous influence was the Cub Magazine and then Sanctuary Magazine, with Bittu Sahgal as their amazing editor. We were keen readers of these magazines that opened up entirely new worlds to us.

There were two other very important influences during junior college. One was my participation in the Western Ghats march, a yatra by a big group of researchers, activists, ecologists, anthropologists and journalists along the mighty Western Ghats to understand the social and ecological challenges. I joined the march for about 10 days from the famous hill station of Mahabaleshwar to Patan in Satara district.

The other was joining the Narmada Bachao Andolan support group in Pune. We would do small events and join meetings that were happening in the city. This made me realise the importance of the questions and issues the andolan was raising – the central one being whose development at whose cost.

These two experiences broadened my interest from just wildlife to the larger canvas of the environment and to the intimately linked issues of equity of human rights and the rights of nature.

My work on the Andaman and Nicobar (A&N) Islands has been serendipitous. I first visited the islands in the late '90s and was quite smitten by the place. I wanted to go back and spend time there and also perhaps work there. That worked out first through a project executed through **Kalpavriksh** that was funded by the **BNHS**. And then, one thing led to another. I've been involved in the place in multiple roles – as a photographer, researcher and chronicler of the islands, in advocacy, as an activist and more recently as a storyteller of tales of and from the islands.

## You've written fiction and non-fiction on the islands for an adult audience and your latest book is a children's book. What has been the writing experience between all these different kinds of books, especially writing for children after writing for adults?

Each kind of writing has its own challenges and opportunities. Each has its own identity, purpose and readership. The biggest challenge in shifting from one to the other is to keep this in mind. This is partly limiting, because you might end up circumscribing your story, story-telling and use of language. At the same time, there is the possibility to creatively use the lessons from one kind of writing in the other. For example, academic writing demands a certain kind of rigour and attention to detail, and this can and does bring a similar rigour when one is writing fiction. One has to push boundaries, but also needs to strike a balance. The proof of the pudding is finally in the eating. I might say I've written this or that, but it is finally for the reader to tell.

Writing specifically for children was never on my agenda, but neither was it to become an author. However, friends had been telling me for a while to try writing for children. I guess it's also helped that over the last decade or so I've been growing up with my son who is 11 now. And one learns to see the world of the child and the many worlds that a child creates through his imagination. Working with the publishers Karadi has been great too.

In a children's illustrated book like Waiting for Turtles, while the story and the writing are important, the visualisation and the illustrating are absolutely critical. What Vipin Sketchplore has done for this book is incredible. He's actually made the book what it is.

## Could you tell us a bit more about 'Waiting for Turtles'?

Waiting for Turtles is the story of a 10-year-old boy, Samrat, who lives in the Andaman Islands with his mother, Seema, a scientist studying marine turtles. These turtles spend their entire lives in the ocean, but the females come to the beaches once a year or once in two years to lay their eggs. It all happens on remote and secluded beaches in the pitch dark of the night, and is one of nature's most amazing and enduring happenings. Seema's work involves visiting these beaches and studying these nesting turtles. This book speaks of Samrat's first field visit with his mother to the beautiful island of Tarmugli in the hope that he will see his first marine turtle.

**For most people, the islands are unknown geography. Is there something we should all know about them, especially in light of the recent government decision to develop them?**

There are many things about these islands that we don't know and even a lifetime is not enough. They are beautiful and fragile and unique in innumerable ways. They have to be treated with care when we think of development and that, I think, is not happening at the moment. Mega projects have been proposed here that are insensitive to the geological, ecological and socio-cultural reality of the place and I think, it will be a monumental folly to let them happen.

## Other works by Pankaj Sekhsaria

- **The Last Wave: An Island Novel**
- **Islands in Flux: The Andaman and Nicobar Story**
- **Instrumental Lives: An intimate biography of an Indian Laboratory**
- **The State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra**
- **The State of Wildlife in North-East India**
- **Nanoscale: Society's deep impact on science, technology and innovation in India**

Editor & Publisher
**Benedict Paramanand**
CEO - bangalorebizlitfest.com
Please share your article ideas, views, thoughts and feedback to

benedict@managementnext.com
91-80-41126557
**https://sustainabilitynext/**

Design
**H.S. Ganesh Keerthi**
https://ganeshkeerthi.com/