

Title of the Practice: People's Biodiversity Register (PBR) of Kolkata: A Case Study of Ward No 10 & 17, Kolkata Municipal Corporation Area

1. Objectives of the Practice:

As part of a study initiated in Collaboration with Kolkata Municipal Corporation and West Bengal Biodiversity Board, the Departments of Botany and Zoology have conducted sample survey of biotic resources thriving in Ward No. 10 & 17, situated within the Kolkata Corporation area.

2. The aim of the study was to:

- Document, monitor and provide information of local flora and fauna for sustainable management of local biodiversity resources.
- To assess the impact of human intervention on the biotic resources of the area.
- To develop exhaustive database of plants and animal species for the conservation of the biotic communities of this part of Kolkata.

Primary survey was conducted which involved identification of the trees, canopy measurements, height measurements, GPS survey, and also Questionnaire survey with the local people to understand the level of perception on the importance of biodiversity, their involvement in the biodiversity conservation measures, rearing of animals and so on.

3. The Context:

People's Biodiversity Register (PBR) is a register with names of species and their distribution in a given area. It is a comprehensive data base that record people's traditional knowledge and insight of the status, uses, history, ongoing changes and forces driving these changes on the biological diversity resources of their own localities. Biodiversity registers are being prepared with the help of the local people and hence referred as People's Biodiversity Register. It provides information on the current utilization patterns of biodiversity and its economic benefits to the local people.

National Biological Diversity Act of India (2002) mandates that local knowledge of biodiversity be registered in a national database, called the People's Biodiversity Register (PBR). So, one of the mandates of the Biodiversity Board is to prepare Biodiversity Registers not only by local people but also by school/college teachers and students. Preparation of Biodiversity Register is an attempt to realize the biodiversity at each Local level. Identification of biological resources and documentation is one of the prerequisites for the Register preparation which can lead to new discoveries and development of new commercial products, patenting of such products, equitable distribution of benefits, if any, and through this, paving the way for a new economic order in the country through biodiversity conservation.

Kolkata Municipal Corporation and West Bengal Biodiversity Board has started to prepare Peoples Biodiversity Register of Kolkata . In 2020, both the organizations invited the Seth Anandram Jaipuria College and other academic institutions to take part in this programme. This is a Collaborative work of the College with the West Bengal Biodiversity Board and Kolkata Municipal Corporation.

Importance of PBR

- Local knowledge that is being registered includes utilitarian uses of biodiversity such as for food, fodder, firewood, medicines used in the Ayurveda traditional medicinal system

of India, as well as knowledge of traditional conservation practices such as sacred groves and sacred water bodies.

- Document, monitor and provide information for sustainable management of local biodiversity resources.
- Promote biodiversity-friendly development in the emerging process of decentralized management of natural resources.
- Establish claims of individuals and local communities over knowledge of uses of biodiversity resources, and ensure equitable benefit sharing from the use of such knowledge and resources.
- Teach environmental science and biology
- Perpetuate and promote the development of practical ecological knowledge of local communities and of traditional sciences such as Ayurveda and Unani medicine.
- The registers form a baseline data for future management strategies required for the sustainable utilization of biodiversity in a decentralized manner.
- It helps in equitable sharing of benefits arising out of commercial utilization of biodiversity resources and knowledge on their uses. The Biodiversity Register offers conservation, protection of IPR and the traditional knowledge.

4. The Practice:

Sovabazar area is located within ward No 10 and the adjacent area, Ward No. 17, which is a densely populated area of Kolkata. More than 38% of the population in this area is economically backward. Though it is thickly populated area but importance of this ward is high as it is furnished with one of the oldest royal houses in the city, Sovabazar (Shobhabazar) Rajbari, was constructed by Raja Nabakrishna Deb, a prominent aristocrat of the city; different educational and health care institutions. Primary survey was conducted which involved identification of the trees, canopy measurements, height measurements, GPS survey, and also Questionnaire survey with the local people to understand the level of perception on the importance of biodiversity, their involvement in the biodiversity conservation measures, rearing of animals and so on. The local market was also surveyed to identify the biotic commodities sold every day and their natural sources.

5. Evidence of Success:

A preliminary Report on PBR has already been submitted to the West Bengal Biodiversity Board which includes list of trees, medicinal plants, birds, small mammals, butterflies, molluscs, etc. recorded during the last one year.

6. Problems Encountered and Resources Required:

Sovabazar area is a thickly populated area with more than 38% of the population economically backward. There are several slum areas where people are very much unaware about the importance of biodiversity and at times reluctant to co-operate. Many high rise buildings are also coming up in the area destroying a major part of the biodiversity around. Further the work requires expertise and involves year round survey keeping a track record of the natural vegetation around.