



President's Message



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The world is grappling with two major problems at the moment, either or both of which can be enough to wipe off the existence of human beings from Planet Earth. The first is the emergence of not only new types of diseases, but also drug-resistant microorganisms. It appears that as soon as a new drug is released, resistance to that drug occurs within a year or two instead of decades. The second problem is that of global climate change. The two problems are inter-related in pharmacognosy. While the first necessitates discovery of newer drugs in an ever changing scenario of microbial resistance, the second highlights the necessity of preservation of plants and other species, which can be the future sources of these new drugs and which can become extinct as a result of global climate change. At the moment we are merrily cutting down our trees and decimating our forests and polluting everything that can be polluted as if there is no future. And if we continue irresponsibly like this, it will come back to haunt us for there will be no future for human beings alongside a host of other plant and animal species.

It is my personal opinion that we may be missing the forest because of the tree(s). Bats have probably originated in the early Eocene period of earth's history, which would put their evolution to around 52 million years ago. Nowhere from the earliest written history of mankind, has it been suggested that bats can cause diseases to humans. But in the last two decades, we have witnessed multiple zoonotic viral diseases like Nipah, Ebola, SARS, MERS and the latest, namely COVID-19, where bats have been identified as the primary carrier of the virus. So, what is the difference now – global climate change, massive deforestation, or some other unknown factor? What it means in practical terms is that if the root cause is identified correctly and proper remedial actions then taken, the problem will disappear. So, where does pharmacognosy comes in? Even now, a proper vaccine or drug is yet to be discovered against the above viral diseases. And they are only the tip of the iceberg according to scientists. If pharmacognosists are not given the proper support in terms of well-equipped laboratories and if their primary source material like plant species get extinct, one can safely predict that a dark future is ahead of us. So, we need to raise our voices in making the importance of this subject clear to both laymen and officials who are in charge of allocating resources. Plants and other natural products have always formed the best sources of new therapeutics despite advances in the field of *in silico* techniques. And if we indiscriminately destroy nature because of global climate change or wanton greed, the only future we will create for ourselves is extinction of our own species.