

Botanical Survey of India (BSI):

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FOR M.Sc 3rd semester students

India has a rich and varied flora found in different types of vegetation such as tropical, subtropical, temperate, alpine and desert vegetation. India is also considered as one of seven centres of origin of cultivated plants. Out of a quarter million species of vascular plants so far recorded, India has about 15,000 species estimated so far.

The Botanical Survey of India (BSI) is engaged in the survey, study, utilization and conservation of plant wealth of the country. Its headquarters, are at Central National Herbarium, Central Botanical Laboratory, main Garden at Howrah, the Botanical Museum at Calcutta and nine regional circles or stations in different parts of the country -Dehradun, Coimbatore, Shillong, Pune, Allahabad, Jodhpur, Port Blair, Gangtok and New Itanagar.

These stations also have regional herbaria with about 2,000,000 specimens. Nearly 250 new plants (genera and species) have so far been discovered and described while more than 500 new records of plants have been found for our country.

The Botanical Survey of India is a government organisation. The main programme of the survey is the preparation of a detailed account of the plant resources of the country in the form of national, district and regional floras. It has started publishing the new Flora of India in the form of Fascicles for higher plants.

2. History of Botanical Survey of India:

From early historic times the vegetable resources of India had attracted people all over the world. The ancient Egypt first established vegetable and other sources trade with India; then the Arabs, the Turks, the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and finally the English started trade with India.

Towards the 18th century there was a widespread interest in Botanical Collections in India and large number of people including missionaries, East India Company, Government of Bengal, Madras and Bombay were all actively engaged in valuable collections. In 1787 the East India Company set up a garden at Sibpur, Calcutta.

The Survey was formally constituted on 13th February 1890 under the designation "BOTANICAL SURVEY OF INDIA".

Sir George King, the then Superintendent of Royal Botanic Garden, Sibpur, was made as the ex-officio Director.



The country was divided into four botanical regions viz., East, West, North and South, each under the charge of a Regional Director. During early stages of its development, the department conducted extensive surveys in different parts of the subcontinent extending to Burma and Malaya Peninsula.

Later several of its functions were taken over by other departments and survey work slowed down with the retirement in 1939 of Dr. C.C. Colfer, the last incumbent to the post of Director, the activities of the department were reduced to the minimum.

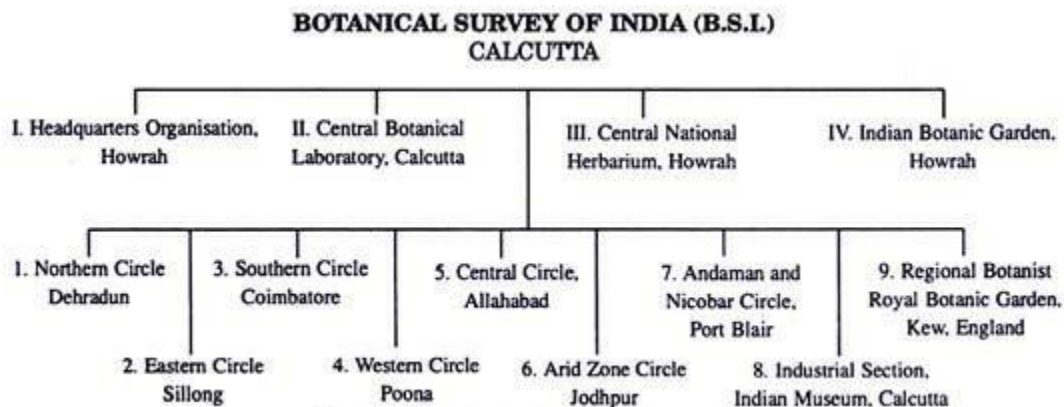


Fig. 10.1 Chart showing the organisation and circles of B.S.I.

5. Activities of Botanical Survey of India:

1. Sustained utilization of our plant resources is the watchword for the survey and multipronged efforts are made to conserve plants. Practical steps for regulating trade in endangered species are regularly suggested to the Agriculture Department.

Areas of rich biological diversity are studied at Silent Valley (Kerala), Namdapha (Arunachal Pradesh), Similipal (Orissa), Nanda Devi (Uttar Pradesh), Dechigam (Kashmir), Valley of Flowers (Uttar Pradesh) etc. and steps taken for their conservation.

2. Preserving the diversity of flora and fauna and conservation of individual species of flora which are facing threat or danger of extinction in a major area of interest to the Survey.

3. Sanctuaries have been set up in forest areas for selected plants like the curious carnivorous pitcher plant (*Nepenthes khasiana* Hook. F.) in Meghalaya, and beautiful Rhododendrons and Orchids in Sikkim and Darjeeling Himalayas.

4. Botanical gardens play a very important role in conservation, education, research and recreation. The Indian Botanic Garden at Sibpur, largest in the country, is maintained and developed by the Survey.



In addition, a number of smaller gardens have been established at Pauri (Uttar Pradesh), Allahabad, Mundwa near Pune, Yercaud (Shevaroy Hills, Tamilnadu), Barapani (Meghalaya) and Dhani Kari near Port Blair. All these gardens give special emphasis to the conservation of rare plants.

5. The Survey assists in teaching and research activities in the country by identifying selected botanical specimens, and also by supplying samples of authentic materials.

6. The Survey maintains close collaboration with Universities, Research Organisations, such as Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Forest Research Institute, Forest Departments of the states and several Herbaria and botanical gardens of the world.

6. Organization of Botanical Survey of India:

1. The Directorate is the Survey of located at the Indian Botanic Garden, Howrah, and is headed by a Director. He is assisted by a Joint Director, a Deputy Director, a Senior Administrative Officer and Senior Scientists in charge of various divisions.

The scientific, technical and administrative units of the Directorate run broadly as follows.

Scientific-Flora, Ecology, Cryptogams, Plant chemistry, Pharmacognosy.

Technical-Publication, Documentation and Library, Drawing and Photography.

Administrative-Establishments, Accounts, Administration, Stores, Security. Besides the Directorate there are the Central Botanical Laboratory, Central National Herbarium and Indian Botanic Garden at Howrah. Industrial Section, Indian Museum, is located at Calcutta.

Nine Regional Circles, Field Stations functions for the following centres, each under the charge of a Senior Scientist for major circles and Junior Scientist for smaller Circle/Field Station; Southern Circle, Coimbatore, Northern Circle, Dehra Dun; Eastern Circle, Shillong; Western Circle, Pune; Central Circle, Allahabad; Aridzone Circle, Jodhpur; Andaman and Nicobar Circle, Port Blair; Sikkim-Himalayas Circle Gangtok; Arunachal Field Station, New Itanagar.

