

## **GENESIS**

**In the context of conservation of crop wild relatives, the genus *Momordica* L. assumes significance as directly consumed, high value vegetable with medicinal properties. While engaged in exploration and collection of wild relatives of crop plants from Western Ghats since 1994, I have come across two distinct types of dioecious *Momordica* species, both identified and labeled at Madras Herbarium under *Momordica dioica* ex. Roxburgh, which prompted me to undertake a detailed study on this group of plants. In the process of developing a holistic model for conservation of its genetic diversity, it became necessary to study its lifecycle from seed to seed. Taking the genus in its totality, its systematics, morphology, reproductive biology, basic ecology, aspects of domestication, ethnobotany, genetic erosion and various aspects of conservation were studied. An attempt was made to answer the question as to why it still remain a wild gathered or at best an underutilized vegetable in spite of its economic importance and acceptability as a vegetable.**

**A holistic approach to conservation of its genetic diversity is presented with recommendations for integrating 'home garden' and '*in situ* on-farm' networks in conservation programmes. The Ecogeographic Conspectus is a summary of the findings to the cardinal questions of 'What', 'When', 'Where' and 'How' to conserve the genetic diversity on a taxon basis.**

# *Introduction*