



CENTRE FOR SCIENCE AND ENVIRONMENT

LEAVES OF IMPORTANT SURVIVAL TREES IN INDIA —MAHUA, KHEJDI, ALDER, PALMYRA AND OAK

MESSAGE

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Dear Children and Teachers,

Every year, with the onset of winter, we are faced with two sets of conflicting emotions and actions. One set is related to the coming of the festive season, and we welcome it with open arms. The other set fills us with dread and apprehension – because it tells us that pollution levels will spiral beyond control due to a variety of factors, leading to severe health problems for all of us. As it is, during winters, we are forced to breathe in more pollutants in the air, as the pollution, besides being very high, remains suspended at the ground – and directly breathable – level. Besides gases being emitted by the vehicles we drive, there are other sources of this pollution as well: one of these is the firecrackers that we burst during Diwali.

For some years now, we are noticing that pollution levels climb up dramatically following Diwali. It leads to serious health problems, especially among the vulnerable sections of the population such as young children and the elderly. CSE closely tracks air pollution levels during this time, and we inform the public every year about how high the levels go up. To check this menace, governments have resorted to a few measures, such as banning firecrackers and their use, and restricting the time till when celebrations can be allowed.

These measures have had some impact. But to truly make a difference, to truly drive a lasting change, all of us need to take charge and bear a responsibility – of celebrating Diwali in a clean and as far as possible, a smoke-free and noise-free manner. Of not leaving behind a legacy of pollution and disease after the celebrations have ceased. Of discharging our duty towards our environment and our Earth.

But also, let us move beyond Diwali and take deliberate steps that would help contain air pollution over the longer term. Reduce the use of personal vehicles – walk, cycle or use public transport where possible. Check burning of waste. Inform and influence our families and friends to behave responsibly. As the flagbearers of future, your voices and your interventions are critical. Step forward and set an example.

Wishing you all a festive season and a future that is clean, pollution-free and disease-free.

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