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The name of the journal KAVAKA *is a Sanskrit word which means Fungus.*

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From the Editor's Desk

It is with immense pleasure that we present the second issue of the 61st Volume of KAVAKA, the official journal of the Mycological Society of India. As we continue our voyage into the heart of fungal science, KAVAKA as a journal has stood the test of time, enduring relevance, diversity, and dynamism of mycology in the Indian scientific landscape.

Since its inception, the MSI has been dedicated to facilitating research, education, and awareness in 'Mycology', which is a dynamic field, sitting right at the crossroads of various biological disciplines and holding profound implications across agriculture, environment, health, and biotechnology. As its flagship publication, KAVAKA not only disseminates findings of Indian mycologists but also promotes interdisciplinary dialogue, bridging classical fungal taxonomy with cutting-edge molecular biology and ecological perspectives.

This volume reflects the very essence of MSI's mission, offering a diverse portfolio of contributions that span applied mycology, biodiversity, pathology, and ecological interactions. Each article enriches our understanding of the fungal world and its multifaceted roles in both managed and natural ecosystems. The volume opens with an enriching study that discusses the importance of biopriming in enhancing the storage stability, plant vigour, and suppressing wilt disease in Chickpea with timely relevance to sustainable agriculture. In an era where eco-friendly disease management is crucial, biopriming with fungal agents emerges as a promising strategy to enhance seed longevity and impart resistance against wilt, one of the most pernicious diseases in legume crops. Closely aligned with applied mycology, the subsequent article in the journal presents a technological intervention of substantial value by discussing the importance of gamma irradiation in improvement of post-harvest shelf-life of mushrooms. Mushroom perishability is a persistent bottleneck to their effective commercialisation; and targeted studies addressing the fundamental challenges of cultivation and market dynamics may prove advantageous for both cultivators and consumers.

Equally compelling is the review article on Fusarium dieback, an emerging issue in the tea industry. The tea economy forms the backbone of several regional livelihoods, and the rise of Fusarium-related wilts threatens its sustainability. The piece underscores the importance of early detection, fungal identification, and integrated disease management practices, a clarion call to action for farmers, pathologists, and policy-makers alike.

On the biodiversity front, several significant fungal discoveries are documented. The report of *Candolleomyces albipes* (Psathyrellaceae) as a new Asian record, and the rediscovery of *Pholiota microspora* after 175 years from the Darjeeling hills, India, highlight the enduring value of mycological fieldwork and herbarium studies. These records, strengthened by both morphological and phylogenetic analyses, fill critical lacunae in fungal biogeography and systematics. India's regional mycodiversity continues to astound. The meticulous documentation of Xylariales fungal diversity in Navsari District, Gujarat, and the checklist of wood-inhabiting macrofungi from Telangana and Andhra Pradesh serve as foundational references for future ecological and conservation studies. Such inventories are vital, especially in times of rapid habitat change and climate uncertainty.

The volume further extends its lens to symbiotic fungi. The article on the diversity of arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi associated with *Amorphophallus commutatus* in Goa adds to our

understanding of below-ground microbial communities and their pivotal roles in nutrient cycling, plant health, and forest dynamics. Of particular interest is the first Indian record of *Agaricus niveogranulatus*, a macrofungus previously known only from East Asia. Its discovery in Indian habitats highlights the importance of molecular tools in revisiting and expanding the known range of fungal taxa.

Finally, the volume draws its final curtain with a review article unfolding the role of nectar mycobiome in modulating pollinator preferences and foraging decisions. This scholarly piece expands the scope of mycology into pollination ecology. Fungal communities in nectar, once overlooked, are now emerging as influential players in plant-pollinator interactions, potentially shaping floral evolution and reproductive success.

Collectively, the contributions in this volume illuminate the manifold roles fungi play from pathogens and symbionts to ecosystem engineers and postharvest saviours. In doing so, they not only expand scientific understanding but also inspire practical applications in agriculture, industry, and conservation.

As Editor-in-Chief, I take this opportunity to thank all the authors, reviewers, and members of the editorial board for their dedication and scholarly rigor. Let us reaffirm our commitment to promoting fungal biology through platforms like KAVAKA, which continue to empower researchers and amplify the voice of Indian mycology on the global stage.

30th June 2025

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Kavaka Volume 61, Issue 2 (June) 2025

Contents

Biopriming Enhances Storage Stability, Plant Vigour, and Suppresses Wilt Disease in Chickpea *(Cicer arietinum* L.*)*

Gitashree Das and Pranab Dutta **01-10**

Improvement of Post-harvest Shelf-life of Mushrooms Through the Application of Gamma Radiation

Smritam Maity and Nilanjan Chakraborty **11-24**

Fusarium dieback: An emerging issue in the tea industry

Anik Sarkar **25-31**

Candolleomyces albipes (Psathyrellaceae) - A New Asian Record

Nayana PK and Pradeep CK **32-37**

Rediscovery of *Pholiota microspora* After 175 Years from Darjeeling Hills, India, Based on Morphological Data and Phylogenetic Analyses

Juna Tamang, Alisha Thapa and Krishnendu Acharya **38-43**

Documentation of Xylariales Fungal Diversity in Navsari District, Gujarat, India

Jigitsa Patel, Dilipkumar Patel and Dhruv Patel **44-50**

Checklist of Wood Inhabiting Macrofungi in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, India

P.R. Sushama, Mehtab Yasmeen, and C. Manoharachary **51-57**

Diversity of Arbuscular Mycorrhizal fungi associated with *Amorphophallus commutatus* (Schott) Engl., in Goa, India

Amisha Shirodker Pednekar and Bernard Felinov Rodrigues **58-64**

Unfolding The Role of Nectar Mycobiome in Modulating Pollinator Preferences and Foraging Decisions - A Review

Subhadip Mukherjee and Upashana Ghissing **65-71**

First Indian Record of *Agaricus niveogranulatus* (Agaricaceae)

Chattopadhyay P. and Dutta A.K. **72-77**

Nanoemulsion Formulation Enhancing the Antifungal Activity of *Eucalyptus globulus* essential oil against *Aspergillus tamarii* In Vitro Test

Jyotshna Mayee Bag and Sushil Kumar Shahi **78-84**

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