



JOANNA VAN GRUISEN

**Dirty, open secret** As much as 50 per cent of solid waste in India is not bio-degradable  
S. THANTHONI



changed drastically, but we still seem to behave as if it were the same bio-degradable material that will disappear with the monsoon. But it is not so – now visible garbage piles line every village and town, so much of it plastic, and it merely grows and never diminishes. It poses a serious threat to our and the livestock's health. It's also, in all likelihood, causing long-term pollution of toxins in the soil and waterways; in this way also contaminating our food chain.

While aiming for zero waste, we can improve the situation by immediately adjusting our habits in line with our changed rubbish. The government has prescribed the rules and regulations for this; we need to put them into practise. Our duty as citizens is to segregate our household waste. Even living in flats without gardens we can compost our bio-degradable waste odourlessly by using effective microorganisms.

In India as much as 50 per cent of the municipal solid waste consists of biodegradable items. If these are kept separate from the rest, they can be safely used for energy, for cooking and/or for compost, while the rest is cleaner and can be recycled or reused more easily. Imagine the saving to our landfills and the potential for cleaner energy.

JOANNA VAN GRUISEN is a wildlife photographer, conservationist and hotelier based near Panna Tiger Reserve

A BUTTERFLY BREEZE FROM MP

# Waste not, want not

The contents of our garbage may have changed over the years, but we haven't

Staying in a rural area, away from civic amenities, many aspects of life are brought into sharper focus. Waste and rubbish are major ones. There is no daily or weekly collector to remove it all from your door. (Nothing like having all your rubbish at home to concentrate and encourage thoughtful and cautious use, promoting zero waste.) It hit us early: our first task was trying to keep the Sarai's building site clean of non-biodegradable waste. Gutka packets would appear on every path, the sheen of their tiny squares seemed to glisten under every blade of grass.

How I longed for those pre-packaging days of the India I arrived in. So hard to believe now, but 35 years ago when I first

made the Indian subcontinent my home, the plastic bag was not the ubiquitous creature it is today – the occasional duty free or M&S bag I brought were sought-after items that were used carefully and many times over both by myself and others. Packaging was mainly paper, recycled, used school exercise books and such, and the iniquities of plastic and other petroleum-based packaging was as yet hardly known.

In the early '80s, I was working in Manas, a beautiful national park of Assam, on the border of Bhutan. On a winter weekend up to 100 busloads of visitors would drive through the reserve to Mothanguri to picnic by the river. Many balked at such huge crowds invading a

precious biodiversity area but the enlightened park director – a legend in his time – Sanjay Deb Roy, argued that the damage done was minimal compared to the benefit of having such a large constituency of park supporters.

Certainly, the picnic damage was indeed minimal: their discarded leaf plates and cooked meal remains were food for the birds or composted quickly. There were no empty tetrapak drink cartons, no plastic or aluminium packets of salty snacks. Even biscuits came in waxed paper not plastic wrappers. Economic growth brings an exponential increase in rubbish. How different a busload of lunch debris might look now.

In a couple of decades, our waste has



AND TODAY WE SHALL DISCUSS THE BENEFITS OF SUSTAINABLE DESIGN.



WHO SWITCHED THE DARN A.C. OFF?!



# After the storm

As *Masterchef Australia* gears up for a new season this summer, Rishi Desai, a top contender for the title last year, talks about life after the cameras are turned off

For a guy who hadn't fed more than three people on an average day, or pictured 10,000 fans rooting for him on Facebook up until June last year, Rishi Desai seems surprisingly unflappable. Sure he's had a bit of practise – emerging unscathed from the journalistic woods on at least two continents after he made it to the top five on *MasterChef Australia 2013*. But anyone who



Hot property Rishi Desai who made it to the top five at *Masterchef Australia* last year