

Ethnobotany of Similipal

Rout S. , Pandey A.K. & A.P. Das

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Ethnobotanical knowledge encompasses both wild and domesticated species, and is rooted in observation, relationship, needs and traditional ways of knowing. Such knowledge evolves over time, and is therefore always changing and adding new discoveries, ingenuity and methods. The tribals inherit rich traditional knowledge about the plants which occur in their surroundings. Their entire life revolves around plants. For food, fiber, medicines, hut building, boat building, agricultural instruments, dye yielding and various other domestic purposes, these aboriginal people are dependent on plants. Various taboos, totems, myths, proverbs *etc.* are also concerned with various plant species. Medicinal uses of flora investigated and apply this knowledge for making crude phyto-medicines to cure infections and a number of

ailments from simple cold to other complicated diseases. Traditional knowledge forms the basis for origin of not only alternative medicine but also paved way to evolution of a gamut of new and novel modern medicines. But this knowledge is mostly unknown to the scientific world and faces slow and natural death. It is paradoxical to see the modern world of late, focusing more on alternative medicine with a predominantly herbal base.

In simple terms, plant diversity is the vast variety of natural plant life existing in any region. This diversity is usually studied by field botanists or taxonomists, who take great pains in collecting, identifying, documenting and describing the elements of diversity. But, the approach usually is rather materialistic. A plant or animal is just one



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India has a rich ethnic heritage with more than 400 distinct tribal groups inhabiting different parts of India. These ethnic communities possess rich traditional knowledge on indigenous plants. Similipal, the queen of the forests of Odisha, harbors a wide range of flora and fauna for which it is also called the 'Lungs of Eastern India'. The major tribes inhabiting the forested areas of Similipal include Santal, Kolha, Bathudi, Kharia, Mankadia, Gond, and Ho. The tribals are still dependent on traditional hunting, gathering, primitive form of farming for their livelihood. They are endowed with rich folk knowledge about useful plants that are of considerable therapeutic potential. Tribal knowledge is now recognized as an important resource that can be utilized for tribal development, health care and environmental conservation. Ethnobotanical studies on Similipal revealed the availability of wild and cultivated plant species with potential for resource utilization.

The book presents ethnobotanical spectrum of Similipal in the Mayurbhanj district of Odisha. Indigenous knowledge of 300 species of vascular plants, both wild and cultivated, have been collected, analyzed, classified and documented.

The book has been suitably illustrated with map, color photographs and exhaustive bibliography and index of plant names.

We hope that the book will be adored by the students as well as workers in ethnobotany, taxonomy, economic botany, anthropology, sociology, environmental science and also to policy makers and plant collectors.

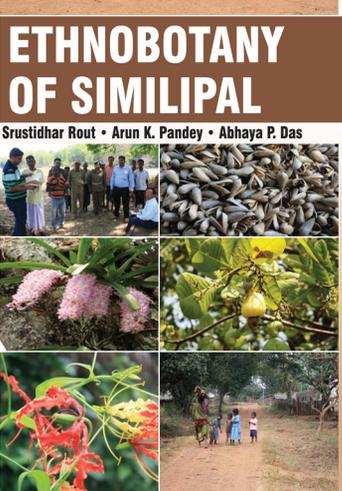
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unit in their inventory. Plants and animals are taken to possess genes and chemicals, and not spirits. Their cultural associations are rarely studied, recorded, or properly understood, and appreciated.

Similipal Biosphere Reserve (SBR) in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha is a most most luxuriant forest and rich in medicinal plant resources. The forest area is dominated by a number of tribes such as Kol, Santal, Bhumij, Mankidias and Khadias who depend on the forest for their food to medicine. Ethnobotanical studies on Similipal reveal the availability of wild and cultivated plant species with potential for resource utilization. Tribals inhabiting Similipal possess specific knowledge about usage of plants unknown to the outside world.

The present book is the representation of an excellent work carried out by authors in Similipal forest area. It is a comprehensive inventory of useful plants mainly used by Kharia tribes of Similipal. The book comprises tribal's indigenous knowledge on over 300 species of vascular plants, both wild and cultivated. This information has been analyzed, classified and documented in a scientific manner.

Besides plants, detailed information on the physiography, river systems, climate, geology, rock and soil, mineral wealth, wildlife of Similipal has also been provided. Vegetation of various forest types in the Similipal area indicates the occurrence of a large number of plant species including a good number of orchid types. The ethnobotanical

spectrum of Similipal has been presented in a beautiful manner. Plant species have been enumerated in alphabetical order so that readers would not find any difficulty in searching them. Utmost care has been taken in presenting the names of species followed by authority, synonyms and vernacular names in Hindi, Odia and different tribal languages. The important and interesting aspect of narrating various uses is that for many species the methods of preparation of the recipe is given. After the description, the species have been grouped according to their uses. It will help readers for quick searching according to use. Besides medicinal, emphasis has also been given on other uses like, musical instruments, magico-religious plants, fibre yielding, beverages, gum-resin and several other purposes. All the references mentioned in the text have been presented in scientific manner under 'Bibliography'. After the indexing of names beautiful photographs depicting various localities and plants are given at the end.

In view of the above comments, the authors deserve high appreciation for bringing out an informative book on ethnobotanical information of Similipal forest. It would be an important document for researchers who would carry out further work. The book also opens new vistas on several new uses of some species.

Ashok K. Jain
Jiwaji University, Gwalior