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Ethnobotany in Khandesh Region (Maharashtra): Revision and Presumption

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ABSTRACT

In 1895, a US botanist John W. Harshberger first used the term Ethnobotany. The word Ethnobotany has been derived from ethnology, which means study of culture. Ethnobotanists aim to reliably document, describe and explain how people of a particular culture and region make use of indigenous plants. It focuses primarily on how plants are used, managed and perceived across human societies for various purposes. From the beginning of human civilization man has been using many herbs and herbal extracts as a source of medicine. The old Indian literature Athervaveda, , Rig-Veda, Charak samhita and Sushruta samhita are the evidence of the use of plants as medicine .It indicate that the herbal medicines have been derived from the old traditions of civilization (Harshberger, 1895). Among the ancient civilizations, India has been known to be rich repository of medicinal plants. Medicinal plants have played an essential role in the development of human life. We know that many food crops have medicinal effects, for example garlic, ginger, turmeric and many more. Medicinal plants are resources of new drugs. Studying medicinal plants helps us to understand plant toxicity or medicinal importance to protect human as well as animals (Jain, 1963, 1989).The Indian System of Medication, like Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani system predominantly uses plant based raw materials. The World Health Organization estimated that 80% of the population of developing countries depends on traditional medicine mostly plant base medicines, for their primary health care needs. An ancient medical text shows the evidence of the use of plants for animals medications for textiles, cosmetics and perfume (Jain, 1987).

KEYWORDS

INTRODUCTION:

The land of khandesh has interesting historical background. The ancient name for this region was 'Rsika'. In Ramayana Rsika is couple with Vidarbha and Mahisaka , the latter relates to the southern portion of the former Hyderabad state. The tribal population of khandesh region is about 40%. History of the region is incomplete without the history of tribal. If they inhibit, this is so because, it reflects the present at states and past forest policies of the region. Dhule and Nandurbar district situated at the north western border of the Maharashtra state , it is apart formerly called 'Khandesh' was divided in 1906 in to two district, viz. west khandesh and east khandesh , which were later on renamed after the district head quarters as Dhule, Nandurbar and Jalgaon district respectively. It is surrounded on the west by Dang, Surat and broach district of Gujarat. The area covered 1350 sq. km. running east to west for about 100 to 130 km., north to south about 52 to 122 km.

ETHNOBOTANY IN INDIA:

The ethnobotanical studies have two aspects, one is botanical which is purely scientific and the other is cultural or anthropological. In 1873, Sir George Watt published 'Dictionary of Economic Product of India' in which he gave Sanskrit, Hindi, Bangali, Arabian, Persian and tribal names of more than 3000 plants along with their uses. Janaki Ammal (1956), initiated ethnobotany as an official programme in the economic botany section of Botanical Survey of India and published a paper on subsistence food plants of certain tribal of south India. Jain (1963, 1989), authenticate vernacular plant names and their utility and origin. He also has given emphasis on some new techniques, concept and methods of ethnobotany. Jain, (1981), in edited book "Glimpses of Indian Ethnobotany". He has a compilation of articles on field studies in different phytogeographical areas of India. The articles dealt with historical perspectives of plants in songs, tales, folk life and proverbs. It contains tribal uses of more than 1500 plants in different parts of the country.

Vartak, (1959), investigated medicinal plants from the hilly region of Pune and Satara district. Vartak (1981), recorded one hundred and twenty species of flowering plants and ferns known for their use as food from the hilly region of Maharashtra and Goa. He also reported medicinal plants of Kamala tribal area in Kolba district. Vartak further presented an account of ethnobotany of Maharashtra and Goa. Janardhan (1963) reported 165 species of medicinal plant from Khed taluka .Malhotra and Moorthy (1973) recorded 126 useful as well as medicinal plants from Chandrapur district. Other prominent contribution are : medicinal plants of Dahanu forest division (Shah et.al.1983) and Khandala (Ved Prakash and Meharotra,1987) and Plant species used by Mahadeokoli tribles for pest management (Kulkarni and Kumbojkar ,1996).A few plants used in worship by tribal communities in western Maharashtra Along with their medicinal utilities were reported by (Upadhye et.al.1997). Kamble and Pradhan (1980) presented ethnobotany of Korkus tribe of Maharashtra. They have systematically studied the culture of Korkus, plants, plant parts used by Korkus in their festivals and other related ceremonies. Kothari and Rao (2000), studied on socio- religious uses of plants by Warli tribes and other local people especially "Mayavanshi" in Thane District for their food, clothing, shelter and other day to day needs including their traditional religious functions. In all 30 plant species of economic value and 10 plant species of socio-religious value are enumerated. Kothari and Londhe (2000), described plants used by Korku, Gavali and local people carried out in Chikhaldara area, Amaravati District in Maharashtra. They enumerated 44 species used for human health care.

ETHNOBOTANY IN KHANDESH REGION:

Studies on ethnobotany can play a vital role in the economic development of an area. Karnik (1956), in his the flora of Tapi valley includes 62 dicotyledonous and 14 monocotyledonous families of this area. Ved Prakash and Mehrotra (1987), studied ethnobotanical plants from Khandesh region. They described angiosperm plants with their utility for medicine among Khandesh peoples. Borse, Bhamare and Patil (1990), have surveyed medicinal plants of Dhule district and recorded 43 species belonging to 39 genera and 23 families of angiosperms. Yadav and Bhamare (1989) reported 46 species belonging to 42 genera and 30 families. Patil (1990) noted 87

exotic elements in the flora of the said region which belonging to 83 genera and 39 families. Patil (2003) reveals that 134 angiosperm families are represented by 620 genera belonging to 1103 species and 1203 total taxa. In which dicotyledons are represented by 109 families with 528 genera and 930 species, whereas the monocotyledons by 25 families along with precise distribution of all taxa, their habit, habitat, phenology, local names and uses.. Tayade and Patil (2005 a, 2005 b, 2005 c) enumerated 170 species of angiosperm are reported medicinally useful for the aborigines and rural population of Nandurbar district. They use crude drugs for general ailments or diseases such as cough, acidity, migraine, body pain, rheumatism, snake bite etc. Pawar and Patil (2008) enumerated 400 angiosperm plants which are used medicinally by tribal and rural peoples of Jalgaon district. The plant names are used in local Ahirani and Bhili language and also in proverb. Patil (2015), in his book `Ethnomedicines of Nandurbar district Maharashtra' revealed ethnomedicinal information of 308 angiosperm plants with morphology and ethnomedicinal uses among tribal peoples. Patil (2007), Presented anti inflammatory plants in Khandesh region.

Ethnobotany deals with the direct relationship of plants with man and animals. It includes study of food, fibers, dyes, taboos, magico-religious beliefs, motifs, medicinal plants, hallucinogens, poisonous plants. This man-plant relationship can be divided into two categories viz. a) Concrete and b) Abstract. The concrete relationship includes the material used such as in food, medicine, house building, agricultural operations, domestic uses and culture like painting, carvings and house decoration. The abstract relationship of man with plants includes faith in the good or bad power of plants, taboos, sacred plants worship and folklore. The entire plant, plant parts such as branches, leaves, flowers, fruits and seeds have been used for offering in worship and some plants are themselves worshipped or considered sacred. Our culture, religious function, festivals and the ceremonies would be incomplete without plants or plant parts. Moreover the plant and plant parts also involve from birth of child and up to the last rites of man. Ethnobotany is rapidly expanding branch of botany. It has considerably expanded, both in its concept and scope. It`s beginning with study of plants used by tribals for food, shelter and medicine. It is now includes near about all aspects of science with man.

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