

ETHNOBOTANY OF BHIL TRIBE

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ETHNOBOTANY OF BHIL TRIBE

**A CASE STUDY AMONG THE BHILS OF RATLAM
DISTRICT (MADHYA PRADESH)**

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SCIENTIFIC
PUBLISHERS (INDIA)
www.scientificpub.com

Published by:

Scientific Publishers (India)
5-A, New Pali Road, P.O. Box 91,
Jodhpur – 342 001 (India)

E-mail: info@scientificpub.com
Website: www.scientificpub.com

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ISBN: 978-81-7233-699-8

Reprinted from Journal of Economic & Taxonomic Botany
Additional Series # 33 (2011)
ISSN: 0970-3306

| Typeset by Rajesh Ojha
Printed in India

Dedicated

to

The Tribal People of Ratlam district

Who revealed their secrets

for the welfare of mankind.

PREFACE

Man has depended on plants from time immemorial. The human life and culture have directly or indirectly been influenced by their surrounding environment. The primitive people are well acquainted with the properties and uses of plants of their surroundings. They have inherited rich traditional knowledge of surrounding plants used as food, fodder, fibres, woods, fuel, medicine, beverage, tannin, dye, gum, resin, cosmetic, crafts & religious ceremonies. Some other plants are also used as narcotic, hallucinogenic and poisonous. Such knowledge of economic and other properties of surrounding plants acquired by the tribal community through experience of ages has been passed on the word of mouth from generation to generation as a part of their cultural heritage. Ratlam district lying between 23°05' – 23°55' N latitude and 74°30' – 75°42' E longitude covers an area of 4861 sq. km. The district is situated on Malwa plateau at 493.62 m above the sea level. Bhils are the main inhabitants of different villages of the district. According to 2001 census, the population of Bhil tribe in the district was 2.26 lac, constituting about 23.27% of the total population. The ethnobotanical works in organized way were started by Botanical Survey of India in 1960 in this country. Since then, uses of plants by the tribals are being recorded for a variety of purposes. But, records of the past revealed that no ethno-botanical studies have been conducted in this area. During extensive field trips in the tribal pockets in the district, the authors recorded multipurpose ethno-botanical uses of plants. The present ethnobotanical work was carried out by taking periodical and extensive ethnobotanical surveys, assessment of field and tribal knowledge bank of Ratlam district from 2004-2007. For making the work more comprehensive and useful to the readers, the subject matter of this book encompasses information on general Introduction, Review of the previous works, Geographical position, topography and administrative aspects of study area, The people setting, Methodology; Enumeration of ethnobotanical uses of plants, Discussions and conclusions. The investigation has brought to light indigenous knowledge on the utilization of 210 plant species [medicinal-186; vegetables- 27; wild edible fruits-36; fodder/forage - 18; beverage and drinks-3; gum and resin-3; magico-religious beliefs and offerings-25; agriculture implements, handle, tools, boats-5; fibres-11; detergent-3; dye-3; tannin-12; oil yielding plants-3; house, building construction, thatching and furniture-11; taboos and totems-6; musical instruments-11; fuel-6;

biofencing-10; fish poison-10; other economic uses-7] belonging to 178 genera and 71 families. Further, the dicots are represented by 180 species belonging to 150 genera and 59 families and the remaining 30 species belong to 28 genera and 12 families of monocots. Statistically, 210 plant species of ethnobotanical interest belong to different habits, viz, 96 herbs, 55 trees, 37 shrubs, 16 climbers, 5 grasses and one angiospermic parasite. It is hoped all such information provided would be utilized judiciously by all concerned for sustainable utilization of biodiversity and for well being of the humanity.

Lastly, attempts have been made to provide complete bibliography reflected in the text (references), the index to valid botanical names (along with attached local names) in appendix-I, condensed information regarding ailments/diseases and plants used for cure in appendix-II, and other uses and their plant resources in appendix-III. It has made the work (book) more comprehensive and usable upto grass-root level. The beautiful photographs have further added new dimensions to the book.

The authors are thankful to various tribal medicinemen 'Bhopa' and villagers of the tribal inhabited localities of Ratlam district for sharing their traditional knowledge based on the surrounding plants with us. Also our thanks go to all the Volunteers of 'Sewa Bharti NGO' of Ratlam district who helped us in this research work.

Lastly, we take this opportunity to express our gratitude to Shri Pawan Kumar Ji, Managing Editor, Scientific Publishers (India), Jodhpur for accepting the Manuscript and also for guidance and helpful suggestions. Without his encouragement and support this book would not have been completed.

V.P. Singh
Dinesh Jadhav

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