



Indian Ethnobotany: Emerging Trends

Ashok K. Jain

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(Dr. S.K. Jain Felicitation Volume)

Editor

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FOREWORD

It is a matter of great pleasure to know that a “Felicitation Volume” is being released to commemorate the 90th birth day of Dr. S.K. Jain the “Father of Indian Ethnobotany”.

The traditional knowledge of plants and their uses are fast disappearing not in India but throughout the world. The fast pace of developmental activities not only affected the biodiversity but also exploited the traditional knowledge of the country up to a greater extent.

The knowledge of folk medicine in India survived mostly among the village medicine or practiced as house hold remedies. The scientific community does not take seriously the ethnobotanical information until eighties of the last century. **The contributions of Dr. Jain in the popularization of ethnobotany at international level are truly monumental.** The motivation and guidance of Dr. S.K. Jain brought about a sea change in the field of ethnobotany in India and documentation of traditional knowledge initiated in more systematic manner. The validation of existing ethnobotany information resulted into discovery of few new useful drugs.

I congratulate the contributing authors for their endeavour and bringing out this comprehensive and qualitatively important contribution in Indian ethnobotany.

An institution of ethnobotany my long standing respect to Dr. S.K. Jain who is a busy enthusiastic researcher still highly engrossed in his studies at the age of 90. With all my heart and the fervency of my soul, I pray for his long life and leadership.

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PREFACE

It is evident from *Rgveda* and other ancient literature that the Aryans started studying the Indian flora keenly with the intention of finding out the proper utility of plants. At several places in these scriptures, Man-Plant relationship has been mentioned. Ethnobotany, a subject of studying relationship between plants and humans, is an emerging discipline of science. Interest in ethnobotany has increased dramatically in recent years. The search for new medicines by the pharmaceutical industries has turned to plant natural products and to ethnobotanical studies as a first step in bioprospecting and crop improvement. Ethnobotanical studies are making a valuable contribution to the cataloguing of biological diversity and hence to the conservation of endangered ecosystems and the human societies which depend upon them. Till about thirty years ago, ethnobotany was largely, an area of academic pursuit but now has been a source of several applied aspects due to emergence of new ideas from its various disciplines. It is relevant to mention that India is a fertile area for ethnobotanical studies, mainly due to its rich floral diversity, large number of ethnic groups and dependency on bio-resources by a large section of society. Documentation of indigenous wisdom has become, of late, more essential due to the structure of the laws pertaining to patents and the increased awareness about practices of biopiracy.

Academic institutions are established for teaching, learning, research and other purposes, but some people themselves become an institute by way of their exhaustive and extraordinary contribution to the society. Dr. S.K. Jain is one such example, who nurtured and popularized Ethnobotany not only in India but at global level. Theses and publications on ethnobotany are considered incomplete without referring the work of Dr Jain. He is still as active as he was in his service days. At this time when he is running in tenth decade of his life, Dr. Jain discusses about promotion of ethnobotany with his students and colleagues and generates several new ideas for research. Even today, Indian National Science Academy New Delhi has not spared him and funded him a project on ethnobotany. Due to space constraints it was not possible to give all his contributions. One of the articles indicates about his major contributions and achievements. His entire life is certainly an inspiring source to young ethnobotanists.

The present volume comprises a good number of articles on various aspects of ethnobotany, contributed by very active and devoted ethnobotanists. The volume comprises two sections; first section mainly comprises articles on emerging trends in ethnobotany, evolution of ethnobotany in India the subjects like drug discovery, inventory of medicinal and other useful plants, ethnobotany of some specific areas, establishment of cottage industries through indigenous knowledge, threatened plant species and their conservation, importance of lower group of plants in medicine etc. Looking to his vast contribution as a successful academician, many people would

certainly be enthusiastic to know about his family, contacts, publications, projects, expeditions, achievements and working attitude, therefore, a glimpse of his biography has been included in Section-B, which also mentions about the genesis and establishment of Institute of Ethnobiology, a great academic creation of Dr. Jain for the benefit of ethnobiologists. The huge treasure of ethnobotanical information in the form of research papers, Ph.D. theses, archives, tribal exhibits, herbarium, books, photographs, illustrations etc., collected and prepared by Dr. Jain is lying in 'Institute of Ethnobiology'. A large number of archives of many great authorities is a rare collection of the institute. A good number of researchers from various universities and research organizations visit institute and take advantage of the treasure of the institute. Some close associates of Dr. Jain have also shared their personal experiences and given in 'Personal Glimpses'.

An intermediate possible benefit of this volume is that it could be used as a source of primary data as well as many new ideas emerging out from various articles.

The editor is grateful to all the authors, who have contributed their valuable articles well in time to this volume. Special thanks are due to Mr. Arbeen Ahmad Bhat and Musadiq Husain for helping in computer work.

M/s Scientific Publishers (India), Jodhpur deserve special thank for publishing the volume.

We all wish Dr. S. K. Jain a healthy and happy life.

Ashok K. Jain
Editor