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Ethnobotanical studies of Ghatsiras region in Ahmednagar district, Maharashtra (India)

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ABSTRACT

The present paper focuses on the traditional knowledge of inhabitants on the uses of wild plants in Ghatsiras area of Pathardi Taluka in Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra state. A total of twenty one plants used for various needs by the residents of study area are enumerated. The entire plant of *Actinopterys radiata* Sw. Link *Cuscuta reflexa* Roxb., the roots of *Abrus precatorius* (L.) *Adhatoda vasica* Nees. *Asparagus racemosus* Willd. *Balanites aegyptiaca* (L.) Diels *Solanum xanthocarpum*, L., *Tecoma stans* (L.) Juss. ex. Kunth. *Withania somnifera* Dunal, stem bark of *Clerodendron serratum* (L.) Moon., *Ailanthus excelsa* Roxb., shoot apex of *Cynodon dactylon* (L.) Pers., leaves of *Annona squamosa* Pers., *Aristolochia bracteolata* Lamk., *Boerhaavia diffusa* (L.), *Catharanthus roseus* (L.) Don., fruits of *Embllica officinalis* Gaertn., *Physalis minima* L., *Tinospora cordifolia* (Linn.) Miers and Thoms and the seeds of *Datura metel*, L., *Jatropha gossypifolia* L. were found to have ethnobotanical importance.

Key words : Ghatsiras, Inhabitants, Traditional knowledge, Ethnobotanical uses

INTRODUCTION

Ancient ethnobotanical literature on global level suggests that the tribal, aboriginal people and forest dwellers have used large number of wild ethnoflora from hundreds of years for curing various ailments along with other routine uses viz., food, agricultural implements, fodder, gums, resins, tannins alkaloids etc. (Heywood, 1992). Traditional healers, ayurvedic practitioners, vaidyas and ethnic societies largely depend on plants for herbal drugs. Therefore, there is a need for scientific documentation of ethnobotanically important plants and to spread the traditional knowledge with regard to uses of plants which is done in the present work. Plants and information about their uses need to be preserved for our future.

Interest in ethnobotanical explorations to gather information on the uses of plants by the tribal and rural people has increased significantly in recent years. (Jain, 1963, 1967, 1981, 1987, 1989, 1994, 1999; Joshi, 1982; Patil and Ramaiah, 2006; Deore and Somani, 2006; Schultes, 1962; Sharma and Malhotra, 1984; Vartak and Gadgil, 1981; Upadhye and Kumbhojkar; 1992, Kulkarni and Kumbhojkar, 1992; Tosh, 1996; Painuli and Maheshwari, 1996; Singh and Sharma, 1998; Chauhan, 2004).

Studyarea:

Ghatsiras is a religious place situated on the bank of Dhora river that originates in Vridheshwar hills on the Western side of Pathardi Taluka in Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra state in India and lies at an altitude of 650-700 meters between 19°10'31"N – 19° 31'32" N latitude and 74°71'49"E – 75° 10'51" E longitude. The area is occupied by 39% forests which are basically mixed typed. It is inhabited mostly by Mahadeo Koli tribal community who has been depending on the wild flora since long for their traditional needs and curing specific ailments. Ghatsiras experiences an average rainfall of about 378 cm and temperature range of 20°C to 36°C (Almeida, 2007).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

An ethnobotanical survey was carried out during July-2006 to December- 2007 to collect traditional information from the inhabitants regarding ethnobotanical importance of flora in Ghatsiras area, through group discussions, questionnaires and informal interviews. The information gathered was confirmed from ayurvedic practitioners and other people.

Simultaneously the plant species of ethnobotanical

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