

Ethno-medicinal uses of Asteraceae in Barak Valley, Assam

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SUMMARY

The North Eastern region in general and Assam in particular is known for the rich floristic diversity. Therefore, in the present study the first attempt to make an inventory and analysis of the different species of the Asteraceae family and extensive surveys were carried out during 2008-2010 in the Barak Valley or South Assam of North East India. The study represented a total of 34 species and 32 genera of Asteraceae family of Angiosperms. Species like *Ageratum conyzoides*, *Spilanthes paniculata*, *Xanthium strumarium*, *Mikania micrantha*, *Eclipta prostrata* and *Chromolaena odorata* are the most common weeds in the fields of the study area. Though, most of the species are weeds but rural and tribal people utilized them as medicines mostly in minor cuts and wounds. Some of the species of this family grow abundantly well in Barak Valley, but no research has been conducted on these valuable plants. It requires immediate ethno-ecological study for the cultivation and conservation of plants of Asteraceae in Barak valley as well in North east India. Conservation activities should be concerned with all medicinally important species. There is a greater need to combine ethno-botanical information with ecological studies of Asteraceae.

Key Words : Asteraceae, Ethno-medicine, Weeds, Barak Valley, Assam

How to cite this article : Baruah, M.K. and Choudhury, M. Dutta (2012). Ethno-medicinal uses of Asteraceae in Barak Valley, Assam. *Internat. J. Plant Sci.*, 7 (2) : 220-223.

Article chronicle : Received : 25.11.2011; Revised : 31.03.2012; Accepted : 08.04.2012

Asteraceae or the Aster family of Angiosperms, formerly known as Compositae, features plants with flower heads made up of many tiny flowers arranged in a central disc, with outer petals giving the overall inflorescence its disc-like shape. Asteraceae is one of the largest families of vascular plants represented by 30,000 species and over 1100 genera all over the world. In India, there are 900 species under 167 genera. The North Eastern region in general and Assam in particular is known for the rich floristic diversity. IUCN has recognized India as one of the world's 17 mega diversity countries and within the country this region or north east India deserves the special mention for being one of the richest areas in plant endemism. On the basis of availability of a number of primitive terrestrial angiosperms, Takhtajan

(1969) considered this region as the cradle of flowering plants. Utility of a vast majority of plant species still remain unexplored, because most part of the area are still without communication and inhabited mostly by backward ethnic community. The "*Flora of Assam*" by Kanjilal *et al.*, 1934-1940 is the most important contribution which paid special attention to woody or arborescent plants; and casually made references to herbaceous plants and described 3431 species including a few varieties. Over the years a good number of district level explorations and collections have been made in this valley especially by Botanical Survey of India, ERC, Shillong; Assam University, Silchar; Gauhati University, Guwahati and North Eastern Hill University, Shillong. Despite all these efforts, the floristic data-base of Assam and North Eastern Regions still remains incomplete. The exact number of species occurring in the Barak valley region is uncertain due to lack of inadequate exploration. Some of the district level floristic studies include Malakar (1995), Das (2007), Das (2009) and Sharma *et al.* (2002) So far, there is no published record of Asteraceae from Barak Valley of Assam. Therefore, in the present study the first attempt to make an inventory and analysis of the different

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