Ethnobotany of Andhra Pradesh: A Review

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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the work done so far in the ethnobotany of Andhra Pradesh.

OVERVIEW

Plants have been used both in the prevention and cure of various diseases of humans and their pets. With the advent of human civilization, many systems of therapy have been developed primarily based on plants. Ayurveda, Homeopathy, Sidda, Unani, etc. are our traditional systems of medicines. The plant-based traditional medical systems continue to provide the primary health care to more than three-quarters of the world’s populace. The World Health Organization has estimated that over 80% of the global population rely chiefly on traditional medicine (Akerele 1992).

Indigenous herbal treatment is a part of the culture and dominant mode of therapy in most of the developing countries. These traditional phytoremedies, with a considerable extent of effectiveness, are socially accepted, economically viable and mostly are the only available means. Still, one-third of the modern pharmaceutical preparations have botanical origin. International trade on medicinal plants is, therefore, increasing rapidly mainly as result of intensified adoption of crude extracts for self-medication by the general public in the developed countries. In India, the use of plants for medicinal treatment dates back to 5000 years. It was officially recognized that 2500 plant species have medicinal value while over 6000 plants are estimated to be explored in traditional, folk and herbal medicine (Huxley 1984).

Ethnobotanical research can provide a wealth of information regarding both past and present relationships between plants and the traditional societies. Investigations into traditional use and management of local flora have demonstrated the existence of extensive local knowledge of not only about the physical and chemical properties of many plant species, but also the phenological and ecological features in the case of domesticated species. In addition to its traditional roles in economic botany and exploration of human cognition, ethnobotanical research has been applied to current areas of study such as biodiversity prospecting and vegetation management. It is hoped that, in the future, ethnobotany may play an increasingly important role in sustainable devolopment and biodiversity conservation (Rajasekaran & Warren 1994). In interaction with the traditional areas of science, ethnobotany gives out several
interrelated and interdisciplinary subjects link ethnomedicine, ethnoarchaeology, ethnobryology, ethnoecology, ethnoagriculture, ethnonarcotics, ethnopharmacology, etc.

Ethnobotanical investigation has led to the documentation of a large number of wild plants used by tribal for meeting their multifarious requirements (Anonymous 1990). Studies on ethnobotany was initiated by Janaki-Ammal as an official programme in the Economic Botany Section of Botanical Survey of India (Howrah) in 1954. From 1960, Jain started intensive field studies among tribal areas of central India (Jain 1963 a-c; 1964 a-c; 1965 a-b). These publications in early sixties triggered ethnobotanical activities in many botanists, anthropologists and ayurvedic medical practitioners. An AICRP on Ethnobiology came into operation from 1982 at NBRI, Lucknow, and four centres (Shillong, Howrah, Coimbatore and Port Blair) of Botanical Survey of India (Jain & Mitra 1997). Mudgal (1987) provided a synoptic account of ethnobotanical works in India. Binu et al. (1992) compiled the ethnobotanical work carried out in India. Later, Lalramghinglova & Jha (1999) reviewed work on ethnobotany of the World with special reference to India. An important prerequisite for proper utilization of raw materials of the country is the survey of its natural resources and the preparation of an inventory. It is necessary that we should have full knowledge regarding the occurrence, frequency, distribution and phenology of various plants for their proper utilization. The forests of Andhra Pradesh have great potentiality both from the economic and botanical points of view. The State is one of the timber and non-timber rich forests in India.

ETHNOBOTANICAL STUDIES IN ANDHRA PRADESH: A REVIEW

Andhra State was carved out of the erstwhile Presidency of Madras in 1953 with Kurnool as its capital in response to the desire of telugu-speaking people. According to the State Recognition Commission, Andhra Pradesh was formed on November 1, 1956 by the addition of nine districts, which were formerly in Nizam’s Dominion. Later on, three more new districts were constituted out of the existing. The 23 districts of the State are grouped into three geographically distinct regions called Circars or Coastal Andhra (with nine districts), Rayalaseema (with four districts) and Telangana (with 10 districts).

While Edgar Thurston (1909) provided a glimpse of the castes and tribes of southern India, S.S. Hassan (1920) describes the castes and tribes of H.E.H. the Nizam’s Dominions. Later, C.V.F. Haimendorf, the British Anthropologist, was appointed by the Nizam to study the plight of the tribes in his dominion in the light of tribal unrest in Madras Presidency. Haimendorf (1943, 1945, 1979) published accounts of Chenchus, the Reddis of Bison hills and the Gonds of Adilabad. These publications carry information largely about the life-styles, customs, socio-economic conditions and, to some extent, the crops raised and plants used by the ethnic tribes.

Andhra Pradesh State is ethnobotanically well-explored, most of the work done was during 1985-2002. The work so far done in the field of ethnobotanical resources by different workers to help the modern World as well as local communities in the rein disappearing knowledge and returning it to local communities in Andhra Pradesh are reviewed here.

Pal & Banerjee (1971) reported the less-known plant-foods among the tribals of Andhra Pradesh and Orissa. Krishnamachari (1900) has reported the use of the leaves of Erythroxylum monogynum (Devadari)


Ethnobotanical work research works carried in Andhra Pradesh are arranged region wise alphabetically.

COASTAL ANDHRA

RAYALASEEMA


TELANGANA


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