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Book Review

***Temple & Sacred Courtyards in Khandesh: Biodiversity & Ethnobotany by* S. M. Khare, Shubhangi Pawar & D. A. Patil. Published by: Scholars World – a division of Astral International Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, India. 2024. pp. 1-252, Hard bound, ISBN: 978-93-5919-771-5, Price: INR 2195/-**

Culture-based man-plant relationships are a unique treasure of mankind and reflected in rituals, ceremonies, festivals, dances, social gatherings as well as from various sacred sites. In India, extensive research has been done to study Need-based man-plant relationships but fewer reports are available on Culture-based man-plant relationships. In this regard, the present book provides an inventory on the sacred and socio-religious plants documented by the authors during floristic and ethnobotanical surveys carried out from 2013-2017 in Khandesh region of of northen Maharashtra which comprises of three districts, namely, Jalgaon, Dhule and Nandurbar. Mostly, the temple yards were visited to collect the information related to sacred aspects of plant species. The major tribes studied in the Khandesh region were Bhils, Pawaras, Vanjaras, Tadvis, Mavchi and Konkanis.

It contains five chapters and eight appendices along with references. Black & White illustrations of 39 sacred sites/interview sessions with informants are also given. The first chapter, 'Introduction' provides background of the current study. The second chapter describes about Geography and Geology of Khandesh. Third chapter provides the Methodoloy adapted for the floristic and ethnobotanical survey. Chapter four gives details of information gathered related to 263 plant species of 221 genera from 83 families obtained through field surveys in tribal, rural and urban areas of study region. The plant species are arranged alphabetically with their botanical names, authors' citation, family and local names, sacred aspect and ethnomedicinal uses if any. The fifth chapter covers the results, discussion and conclusion of the research work. Out of 263, as many as 163 plant species were found useful for sacred and religious purposes whereas 708 ethnomedicnal use reports were noted for 232 plant species. Besides, 44 species were also used for miscellaneous purposes like, food, fodder, fibre, timber etc. It is important to note that 103 cultivated plant species were found to be used for different purposes and among these only 18 were utilized for sacred and religious purposes.

The book has some errors and missing details which could happen in such an exhaustive compilation for example, few references are missing in the list (*e.g.*, Reddy, 2008) and few having incorrect citation year (*e.g.*, Jain, 2015). Some typographical errors are also visible along with incorrect authority of some botanical names, such as, *Tinospora cordifolia*. Few numbers are erroneously written for example, total plants used for sacred & religious purpose (163 or 143?), total exotic plant species (119 or 57?), total trees (89 or 88?) etc. Color illustrations would have been a good choice to display the study area

properly among readers. Moreover, recent updated botanical nomenclature could have been adopted. Moreover, the word Biodiversity could have been avoided as authors have mainly dealt with plant species. Nonetheless, except these errors, the present work is praiseworthy as dealing with several aspects of more than 250 plant species is an arduous task indicating towards dedication, perseverance and hard work of authors.

Indigenous and traditional knowledge is depeleting rapidly and in this context, the present book is a good attempt to document the details of plant species which are being considered sacred and used for socio-cultural purposes. It pinpointed the hidden potential of those underutilized plant species which could be utilized further for boosting local economy. The book will be useful for researchers pursuing floristic, ethnobotanical and biodiversity conservation studies, and also for environmentalists, forest officers, anthropologists and policy makers and pave the way for other researchers who wish to explore various culture-based man-plant relationships in their study area.

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