

Book Review

TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS: Culture, Ecology, and Ways of Knowing, Dissenting Knowledges Pamphlet Series (no. 10), by Prof. D. P. Agrawal, Published by Multiversity & Citizens International, Penang, Malaysia, 2011, Paperback, Pp 52, Price US \$ 5, Ringgit Malaysian 5.00 (RM5.00).

The booklet under review here, *Traditional Knowledge Systems: Culture, Ecology and Ways of Knowing*, is presented concise text written in simple language. The author has done an excellent work by assembling a vast amount of information on a general topic such as "Traditional knowledge" that was acquired by the primitive people through trial and errors over thousands of years. The pamphlet has been forwarded by Mr. Vinay Lal. He sketches a bird-eye view on traditional knowledge to catch glimpses of colonial era, past glory of developed nations and significance of indigenous knowledge of third world countries by citing number of examples from global history. Further, he also emphasised the role played by pamphlets in several mass awakening revolutions in world history viz. class struggles in France, propagation of Marxist philosophy and so on and so forth.

The next section deals with how the traditional knowledge systems are mother of all sciences and their potential role in socio-economic development. The booklet has included some interesting examples from UNESCO's project named "Knowledge of

Nature". A fascinating example of traditional knowledge of navigation of fisher folk of the Polynesian atolls has mentioned which helps them to navigate the vast Pacific Ocean. Being the native of Uttarkhand, the author has given several relevant examples of indigenous knowledge from the state like, architecture of water harvesting and purification systems, discovery of modern drugs from plants used in traditional medicinal systems, 1000 BC old iron smelting site near Almora, etc. In relation to socio-economic development through traditional knowledge the author has explained the enriched role played by the traditional knowledge in the development of traditional medicines, *Kumauni* metallurgy, *Gharats* (water mills) and hydropowers in Uttarakhand. Overall, the booklet has successfully conveyed the message about the importance of conservation of traditional knowledge and its potential role for socio-economic upliftment of rural people. This interesting booklet is useful for anthropologists, ethnobiologists, students, teachers, policy makers and common man.

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FOLK VETERINARY MEDICINAL PLANTS OF SIKKIM HIMALAYAS by Dr. Kumar Avinash Bharati, Published by LAP Lambert Academic Publishing GmbH & Co. KG, Dudweiler Landstr. 99, 6123 Saarbrücken, Deutschland, Germany; 2011, Paperback, pp 148, including 69 photographs, Price US \$ 85.00, ISBN: 978-3-8443-8906-7.

Sikkim is situated in an ecological hotspot of the Himalayas, one of the only three among the eco-regions of India. It is the home of nearly 4,458 species of flowering plants and four major ethnic groups viz. Nepalese, Bhutia(s), Lepcha(s), and Limbu(s). In modern societies, ethnomedicines is playing key role in new drug development. Unfortunately, in recent past traditional knowledge, biodiversity and tribes are under threat of extinction, in such circumstances, the present book is relevant.

The book covers all most all aspects of ethnoveterinary medicines of Sikkim Himalayas. It is divided in to five chapters. The first chapter covers a vast amount of information along with photographs on study area, prehistoric evolution of veterinary practices, history of botanical explorations in Sikkim, traditional medicinal systems and ethnomedicinal explorations of Sikkim.

The second chapter deals with topography, climate, soil, vegetational physiognomy, people, socio-economy and livestock disease. The methodology chapter is focused on techniques of information collection, identification of plants and preservation of specimens.

The chapter four i.e. systematic enumeration of plants and folk veterinary medicinal claims, includes

66 plant species which are used by different ethnic groups of Sikkim in the treatment of 37 ailments of livestock. Out of them, 18 species have been documented as veterinary medicine for first time in India and four species are new records to medicinal plants. The correct botanical names with authority of each species is mentioned with English names, local/tribal names, useful part, flowering and fruiting months, habitat, botanical description, ethnopharmacological properties, folk veterinary medicinal claims, remedy preparation and dosages. About 50 quality photographs of plants with botanical names are given, certainly it will aid in identification of plants. The last chapter devotes to discussion on major findings, inferences and suggestions. A bibliography on taxonomy, ethnobotany, culture and climate of Sikkim is provided in last 10 pages.

The book contains three appendices on ethnoveterinary claims of Bhutia nomadic shepherds, plants used by various ethnic groups in the treatment of livestock and species associated with curing major ailments of livestock. It is the prelude of the book in tabular form.

This is the first book on ethnoveterinary medicines of Sikkim Himalayas based on first hand information gathered during his research work. The reader, whether ethnobotanists, anthropologists, ecologists, crude drug dealers, pharmacologists, phytochemists, researchers, and policy makers, will profit from this wealth of information.

— *Editor*