

Book Review

Indian medicinal plants, Vol. 10 (Ec-Ex) edited by Neeraj Tandon, published by Indian Council of Medical Research, New Delhi. 2011, pages xxv+1188. Hardbound. Rs. 2190/=, US\$ 146/=ISSN: 0972-7957

Plants have been an integral part of all cultures since antiquity. The discovery of cinchona in the 17th century, followed by digitalis, morphine, and so on, and then introduction of synthetic aspirin, a derivative of a plant-based drug, led human beings to believe in the wonders of diverse plant wealth. According to a current estimate of World Health Organization (WHO), about 80% of the world population depends on plant-derived medicine as the first line of primary health care for human alleviation. Moreover, a large number of plants used in the traditional medicine have now become a part of the modern world health care system. Presently about 25% of pharmaceutical prescriptions in the United States contain at least one plant-derived ingredient. The introduction of herbals in the form of nutraceuticals and dietary supplements are also changing the plant-based drug market. In the last century, roughly 121 pharmaceutical products were formulated based on the traditional knowledge obtained from various sources. The importance of plant-based drugs is increasing and more so in developed countries. According to an estimate, the global market of plant-derived drugs was worth \$18 billion in 2005. And this figure was expected to grow to nearly \$19 billion in 2006 and more than \$26 billion by 2011.

Keeping in view the growing importance of medicinal plants, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has started monographic compilation of multidisciplinary scientific information on medicinal plants in the form of a series, the 'Indian medicinal plants'. The volume under review, which is 10th in the series, covers information on 82 genera, representing 422 species of medicinal plants with 4360 main references under the alphabet Ec-Ex. The volume compiles published research work on the taxa found in India, both indigenous and introduced. The

monograph on each plant deals with a widerange of information under major heads—General Information, Pharmacognostic, Chemical, Pharmacological and Biological, Clinical, and Toxicological Studies with complete references of cited work in the end. Under each head, the compiled information pertains to the research work carried out in Indian institutions whether published in national or international journals. Work carried out by Indian scientists in association with foreign laboratories has also been included. In case of relevance to the text, the work carried out by foreign scientists abroad has been cited. Under major head, General Information, the information containing regional name, habit and habitat, Ayurvedic description (if available), sanskrit synonyms, uses ascribed and ethnobotanical studies are provided. Additional references for further consultation have been included in two sections—Section A, dealing with Indian and Section B, with foreign references. For the benefit of the reader, abbreviations used in the text are given in the beginning of the volume. The source, methodology and rational adopted for the information collected under each head have also been explained under the heading 'Introduction'. In the end, list of plants with changed botanical nomenclature, and list of books, treatises and encyclopaedias consulted for the volume are included. The volume also contains various indices, which facilitate the search of information through family, genera, species, bioactive constituents, pharmacological and biological activity, and regional and other names. The list of genera included in the past volumes (Vol. 1–9) is also given separately in the end.

Although the editor has clearly explained in the beginning the various constraints faced during compilation of information for its exhaustiveness and purpose of publication, one may not agree with the measures adopted in the presentation of information. For example, it could have been better if the information under various heads related to a species would be placed at one place. This may have given a better chance to evaluate the species in terms of its

various qualities/properties and could be easier for the reader to go through the information in totality. In certain species, there are too many references in sub-head *Ethnobotanical Studies*, which makes it almost incomprehensible. For the better readability, the references may have been given as superscript numbers. There was also no need to abbreviate the scientific names of bacteria, whereas the names of other organisms are given in full. Overall the information in the volume is valuable and summed up in the best possible way.

The complete series under 'Indian medicinal plants' has been published by ICMR with the aim to provide information on new leads and help in planned evaluation of medicinal plants. The present volume is very exhaustive and must have involved a lot of hard

work and manpower. For that, everyone associated in the preparation of the volume deserves appreciation. The volume contains extremely valuable information on medicinal plants, which can be useful to the students, teachers and academicians involved in research and development. It may also prove useful to scientific bodies, regulatory authorities, policy makers and herbal industry, apart from other institutions involved in the development, assessment and registration of such plants.

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