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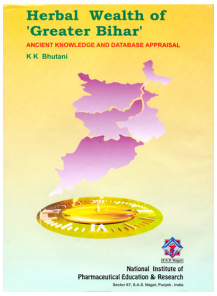
Book Review



Herbal Wealth of 'Greater Bihar', edited by Dr K K Bhutani, Published by Department of Natural Products, National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research, SAS Nagar, Sector 67, Punjab, 2009, India; Hardbound, pp 367, Price: Rs 1,000/-, US$ 80

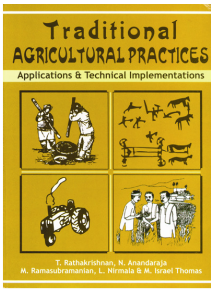
India is a storehouse of the most rare & valuable species of medicinal & aromatic plants. Medicinal & aromatic plants are an integral part of local culture and used in Indian Systems of Medicine such as *Ayurveda, Siddha*, Unani, and *Tibetan*. Early people confronted with illness and disease, discovered a wealth of useful therapeutic agents in the plant and animal kingdoms. The empirical knowledge of these medicinal substances and their toxic potential was passed on by oral tradition and sometimes recorded in herbals and other texts. Over 10,000 wild plants species used by tribals for meeting their varied requirements have been recorded so far.

Traditional Medicine is still used for primary healthcare in many developing countries and is also increasingly used in developed countries. Both modern and traditional medicine has their advantages and weakness for healthcare, if national healthcare systems can include the advantages of both systems it would benefit the mankind. There is need to respect, preserve, promote and communicate widely knowledge of traditional medicine, treatments and practices. Efforts are also needed to formulate national policies, regulations and standards, as part of comprehensive national health systems to ensure appropriate, safe and effective use of traditional medicine and to integrate it into primary healthcare systems. The integration of traditional medicine into countries' healthcare systems is one of the best ways to assure its appropriate and proper use.

The book under review is an inventory of tribes and medicinal plants used in traditional practices and local formulations used in *Greater Bihar* areas that include states of Bihar and Jharkhand. The book is based on the manuscript, *Kaligyan*, basically a instruction manual for the treatment of diseases, written in old *Uriya* language in odd 160 *Tad Patras*. The book has been presented into three major sections, Introduction covering agro-climatic conditions, ethnicity and culture; database of medicinal plants including parts used an folkloric claims; and appraisal of database providing prioritization of plants of both ancient and contemporary knowledge bases potential for drug discovery purposes. Selected images of tribes, 45 *Tad Patras* medicinal plants commonly used and found in wild and mentioned in *Kaligyan* provide value addition. Glossary, References, List of contributing team, Index to botanical names are given at the end.

Painstaking efforts have been taken in providing the data and editing. The printing and production of the book are good. This book will be of immense help for the researchers working in Indian Systems of Medicine, and various disciplines of ethnomedicine, herbal drug industry, academicians, and policy makers.

Editor



Traditional Agricultural Practices Applications & Technical Implementations, by Dr T Rathakrishnan, Dr N Anandaraja, Dr M Ramasubramanian, Dr L Nirmala and Dr M I Thomas, New India Publishing Agency, Pitam Pura, New Delhi 110088, India; 2009, Hardbound, ISBN: 978-93-80235-02-8; Price: Rs. 1,820, US$ 95.95; pp. 512.

Ever since agriculture started, the agricultural practices started evolving as per the requirements faced by the communities. Many traditional farmers in the developing world are still practicing farming methods that are sustainable and highly efficient. Traditional agricultural practices have scientific rationale from the point of view of agricultural productivity and sustainability. These practices need to be understood particularly for those practices, which are beneficial for their integration in the modern day agriculture. Traditional knowledge of a community in a particular region is derived from the local people's farming experience and is handed down from generation to generation. In India, farmers have developed traditional calendars to control the scheduling of agricultural activities. Some ancient farmers developed sustainable agriculture practices that allowed them to produce food and fiber for thousands of years with few outside inputs.

Traditional agricultural practices include diverse areas such as traditional methods of cultivation practices, grain storing practices, pest management, farm tools, post harvest techniques, ethnoveterinary practices, fisheries, etc. Not much work has been done to document this knowledge. Identification, documentation and incorporation of Traditional Agricultural Knowledge in Agricultural Extension Programme are essential to achieve sustainable agricultural development. Traditional agricultural practices deserve more respect than they receive at present. These practices must be understood and preserved before they are lost with the rapid advance of modern agriculture in developing countries.

To address the issue, documentation of 505 indigenous agricultural and allied practices from 16 districts of Tamil Nadu through farmer's participatory approach in the form of present book is a much needed publication. The book with eleven chapters covers from introduction of ITK to rationality of documented practices. The book includes medicinal plants, farm tools and equipments, many practices pertaining to intercropping, integrated farming, plant protection, fisheries, post harvest techniques, and ethnoveterinary practices. References, photographs of traditional rice, millets, oilseeds, vegetables and fruits, crop protection, farm tools and implements, medicinal plants and index has been provided at the end. Photographs, the printing and production quality of the book are good. The book is a good source of information on Traditional agricultural practices. The book written in a simple language will be interesting to a large variety of readers. The book is invaluable for students, researchers as well as Agricultural Extension scientists.

Editor