

**ETHNO-BOTANICAL STUDY
OF MOKOKCHUNG AND TUENSANG
DISTRICTS OF NAGALAND**

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I certify that the thesis entitled "ETHNOBOTANICAL^{STUDY} OF MOKOKCHUNG AND TUENSANG DISTRICTS OF NAGALAND" submitted by Mr. Sapu Changkija for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY of North-Eastern Hill University embodies the record of the original investigation carried out by him under my supervision. He has been duly registered, and the thesis presented is worthy of being considered for the award of the Ph.D. Degree. This work has not been submitted for any degree of any other University.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Plants contribute to the welfare of human-being in innumerable ways. In contrast to dependence of early men on a few types of plants, at present man has to depend on a large number of plants. Man has been learning about useful and harmful plants by trial and error method since ancient times. Initially man looked for plants not only for his food but also for curing his ailments reason being it was only the plants that were available around him. With huge growth of population there is increasing demand to utilize more and more plant resources not only as a new or alternative source of food and medicine but also for various purposes.

A good part of the traditional medicine (be it "Ayurveda" or "Unani" system), food and vegetables have their roots in the preliminary and basic discoveries made by early man. The tribal societies still largely depend on natural vegetation around them and have a wealth of hidden information among them about uses of plants. Ethnobotany is relevant to the useful and harmful aspects of plants. Ethnobotany helps in understanding both the cultural and biological diversity of primitive societies and the plants. It provides basic data to find out the new or alternative sources of food and medicine etc. The term "Ethnobotany" was first given by Harshberger in 1895 to denote the study of plants used by primitive and aboriginal people. Many people have interpreted it in different ways. Some treated it synonymous with economic botany, others with traditional medicine etc. Richard (1978) have used the term to include the

language
to
not correct

Author did not
try to go through
the latest literature
available on
ethnobotany
ex. manual of ethnobotany
Materials & methods in
ethnobot., ethnobotany
of Thailand,
etc.

relationship between primitive societies and their plant surroundings in wider sense.

Ethnobotany broadly deals with natural relationship of man with plants (Jain, 1989). It is a multidisciplinary study and has linkages with viz. Anthropology, Sociology and Culture, Religion, Medicine, Literature, Mythology, History, Politics, knowledge of flora and vegetation and conservation. The importance of ethnobotanical studies have been realised in respect of various uses of plants among aboriginal societies. Such studies can bring to light numerous uses of plants.

The North-east region of India and Nagaland in particular is inhabited by numerous aboriginal tribes and they possess rich folklore. This region is one of the richest areas in flora. Vavilov in his classical work "Geographic centres of variability" had identified the north eastern region as one of the most important areas within the Indian sub continent. He recognised this region to be the primary or secondary centre of origin of many species of crop plants. The tribals of this region are still practicing same life style utilizing plants as vegetables and herbal medicines. With increasing population, a large area of forested land rich in forest resources (germplasm) are disappearing at an alarming rate. However, few forests in Mokokchung district and a large forest cover in Tuensang district of Nagaland are still protected due to local beliefs or because of inaccessibility of these forests. These forests harbour large number of diverse forms of natural species of vegetables and primitive land varieties of crop plants. Within the species

a

there are large number of subspecies and varieties. The study area remained isolated from rest of the country for a long time. Even today the accessibility is rather poor specially in Tuensang district. The undisturbed condition (upto large extent) combined with suitable environmental conditions and varying altitude provide genetic and vegetation diversity. The contiguity of the area with several countries of South East Asia viz. Burma, China, Thailand etc. have also provided migration and mobility and subsequently microspeciation. The selections made unknowingly by these large number of ethnic groups staying in isolation in varying altitude and agro-climates as well as primitive form of farming and folk practices have led to the diversity of wild relatives of many crop plants.

According to the Botanical Survey of India about ten thousand species of flowering plants occur in north east region which is fifty per cent of the total flora of the country. Plant exploration in this region started ever since the time of Kingdom ward 1820's. He visited Upper Assam and Naga Hills in search of wild tea and rubber. However, knowledge of Nagaland flora and vegetation is very meagre. There is no detailed consolited floristic account (except for pteridophytes Jamir & Rao, 1982) either on any district of Nagaland or State as a whole. Recently few papers have been published listing the plants utilized by some of the tribes. Reference may be made to Rao and Jamir, (1982a), Rao, and Jamir, (1982b), Megonitso and Rao (1983), and Jamir and Rao (1990). So far, no systematic work on Ethnobotanical studies in Nagaland has been undertaken due to

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lack of communication, inhospitable terrain and conditions of insurgency.

The different Naga tribes which live in isolated villages have developed a close intimacy with nature. These people have been utilizing plants not only as food and herbal medicines but also for their religious, traditional ceremonies and beliefs. Many a time they put the fear of God that evil shall fall on those who destroy such plants or plant parts. Therefore, the area has got many such forests which are still protected because of these beliefs. Thus, these ethnobotanical aspects are very important in conservation of useful plants.

Current interest in broad-based inexpensive health care, new drugs and new or alternative food plants has prompted ethnobotanical studies in several under developed societies of the world. It has been stressed that recording and analysis of the surviving ethnobotanical folklore is of great significance for human race.

The study area, Mokokchung and Tuensang district of Nagaland are inhabited by eight (8) aboriginal Naga major tribes namely: Ao in Mokokchung district, Chang, Sangtam, Yimchunger, Khiamungan, Phom, Konyak and Sema in Tuensang district. They have rich cultural tradition and rich heritage of folklore, myths and legends. Generally their occupation is Jhum cultivation, besides the collection of minor forest produce. It is also noticed that almost every village has a person having familiarity with the herbal medicines. These informations are passed on from generation to generation only through oral folklore. Therefore,

keeping in mind the immense scope of ethnobotany, the present work was undertaken and attempt has been made to survey the two districts of Nagaland to collect and record such valuable data on medicinal, wild edible vegetables-fruits, indigeneous domesticated and horticultural, folk practices, beliefs and folklores, before they are lost forever.