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INTRODUCTION

People of all cultures have always depended on plants for their primary needs (food, shelter, warmth, medicines, etc.), and have naturally learned diverse applications of plants. In the course of nomadic roaming, this knowledge was exchanged with neighbouring tribes, friends and foe, and was gradually expanded upon. Thus, plant knowledge has been passed around the world since the beginning of time, and frequently, the actual plants themselves have spread along as well. The investigation of plants and their uses is one of the most primary human concerns and has been practiced by all cultures since generations, though it wasn't called 'Ethnobotany'. The term "Ethnobotany" was coined by US botanist John William Harshberger in 1895. Ethnobotany is coined with two terms i.e., "ethno" - study of people and "botany" - study of plants; per se it is the study of the relationship between plants and people. It is considered as a branch of ethnobiology and is a multidisciplinary science defined as the interaction between plants and people. The relationship between plants and human cultures is not limited to the use of plants for food, clothing and shelter but also includes their use for religious ceremonies, ornamentation and health care (Schultes, 1992) . The focus of ethnobotany is on how plants have been or are used, managed and perceived in human societies and includes plants used for food, medicine, divination, cosmetics, dyeing, textiles, for building, tools, currency, clothing, rituals, social life and music. The relationship between people and plants has always been profoundly important. Plants play an important role in every aspect of our lives and without them life is not possible. Plants not only regulate the concentration of gases in the air,



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but also the only organisms capable of transforming sunlight into food energy on which all other forms of life ultimately depend upon. Given their extensive range of knowledge of medicinal plants, indigenous people remain the ultimate resource for retrieving this information for the purpose of application, particularly in modern medicine. Ethnobotany can be categorized in two major groups. First is basic ethnobotany that includes compilation and organization of information about biota obtained from indigenous and other peoples, such as obtaining data about useful plants and animals, understanding how peoples manage their environments and learning about their lexicons and classifications. These results are then organized in many ways once species determinations are completed. They may be basic quantitative and experimental ethnobotany includes basic documentation, quantitative evaluation of use and management and experimental assessment.



Fig: Ethnobotany: Study of the relationship between plants and human.



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SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES OF ETHNOBOTANY

SCOPE OF ETHNOBOTANY

The scope of Ethnobotany in recent times has been established with the problem of-

- 1) Rural Health
- 2) Drugs
- 3) Social customs
- 4) Cottage industries
- 5) Conservation of ecosystems
- 6) Nutrition
- 7) Energy

Scope of Ethnobotany:

- Botany
- Anthropology
- Ecology
- Medicine
- Chemistry
- Agriculture
- Horticulture
- Forestry
- Agroforestry
- Ecomis
- Linguistics





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Fig: Multidimensional scope of ethnobotany.

Objectives of Ethnobotany

The aims and objectives of Ethnobotany are as follows:

- Proper documentation of indigenous knowledge about medicinal plants.
- Preservation of unwritten traditional knowledge about herbal plants.
- Conservation of our national heritage before its extinction.
- To create awareness about its role in cultural, social and health of people.
- To train people or students for utilization and conservation of medicinal plants.

ETHNOBOTANY AS AN INTERDISCIPLINARY SCIENCE

Ethnobotany as an interdisciplinary science is, therefore, in a position to contribute to development of the wealth of traditional knowledge of the indigenous people concerning their natural systems and environment, their knowledge on utilization and maintenance of plant resources on a long-term basis without damaging or destroying their habitats.



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Ethnomedical data can be utilized by economic botanists to provide new plant resources, to provide fresh ideas for environment planners, as a tool for basic selection of plant species for the development of drugs by pharmacologists, Phyto chemists and clinicals, as a new source of history through the study of plant names by linguists, as a source for locating new germplasm for agriculturists, etc.

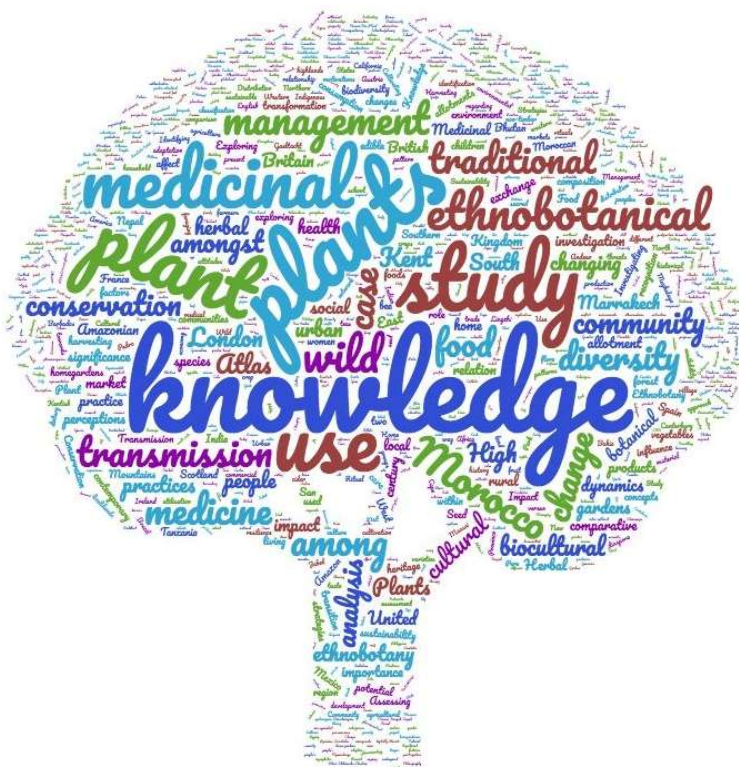


Fig: Ethnobotany as an interdisciplinary science

Reference

1. Pandey, A.K & Tripathy, Y.C. Ethnobotany and its relevance in contemporary research. Journal of Medicinal Plants Studies 2017;5(3):123-129.