

Pseudo-Ethnobotany: Are We Doing Justice with the Discipline?

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Science came from the Latin word '*Scientia*' which means to know, knowledge or experience. Ethnobotany is a branch of Botanical Sciences in which man-plant relationships are studied thoroughly. The Botanical Knowledge (BK) held by man is communicated among the generations' mostly through oral means and then considered as Traditional Botanical Knowledge (TBK). Besides, elements of Non-Traditional Botanical Knowledge (NTBK) also exist among communities. Both of the TBK and NTBK, as part of Ethnobotanical studies, is documented, statistically analyzed and also used for practical applications for example, development of novel drugs/implements etc. There are many evidences which show that the leads of modern medicine have come through keen observation of man on the plants growing in his vicinity. People in rural and backward areas are still treating their most of the diseases with that botanical knowledge. Unfortunately, laboratory scientists are unable to see the science rooted in the BK. Moreover, Ethnobotany is considered as 'soft science' which means that it deals with intangibles and it is harder to devise an experiment as well as to recreate that experiment with same multitude. Usually, sociology, psychology, anthropology are considered as soft science in contrast with hard sciences like, chemistry, biology, physics, geology and astronomy etc. In fact, ethnobotany is a multi-disciplinary science incorporating elements of both soft and hard sciences.

Documentation of ethnobotanical knowledge requires detailed and frequent field trips to the study area along with following appropriate methodology to study the man-plant relationships. Development of cut-copy-paste technique to find out BK rather than having actual field experience has reduced the importance of field studies among laboratory researchers. Moreover, present day ethnobotanists are not updated with quantitative ethnobotanical tools and the stringent methodology to find out the ethnobotanical knowledge and this is doing a serious harm to ethnobotany as a discipline in science. Rather, ethnobotanical research is being looked upon as an easier science and this devaluation has been majorly caused by all those ignorant or so-called ignorant researchers pursuing research work in ethnobotany and creating a world of pseudo-ethnobotany. Many of them are completely unaware about recent developments in ethnobotany for example, urban ethnobotany, credibility assessment, objective ethnobotany, dynamism in ethnobotany and so on. This is further reducing the potentiality of ethnobotany. Many of the research papers published in the name of ethnobotany in past few years are without application of any statistical tool and do not describe the informant, study area, voucher specimen, plant name in the language of informant and many such critical information particularly from Indian sub-continent. Several researchers still cannot describe the differences or similarities among traditional medicine/indigenous medicine/ethnomedicine/alternative medicine/codified/non-codified



system of medicine etc. and this further enhances publication of pseudo-ethnobotanical data. The apathy to procure authentic literature in the discipline and reading, assimilating and implementing the current advances in the subject is one of the major reasons behind deterioration in the quality ethnobotanical research work. Despite the availability of literature, the lethargy to know more is against the principle of Science and hazardous for development of ethnobotanical science.

Ethnobotany is now emerging as pseudo-ethnobotany and this needs serious attention of all those genuine ethnobotanists who want to preserve the sanctity of ethnobotany and to promote the subject on global map in its true sense. Training courses and workshops with experts having updated knowledge of the subject ethnobotany are required in order to do justice with the subject otherwise pseudo-ethnobotany is going to make extinct the real ethnobotany very soon.