

Proceedings of the Indian National Science Academy

Original Research Papers, Review Articles, Short Notes, Commentaries

1/March 2010

Volume 76

Available on the Internet: <http://www.insa.ac.in>



Indian National Science Academy
Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi 110 002

Review of the Book — “Plants Affecting Human Mind (Psycho Active Plants)”

SK JAIN*

26A - Avas Vikas Colony, Mall Avenue Colony, Lucknow 226 001 (UP), India

(Received on 8 January 2010; Reviewed on 31 March 2010)

With the rising awareness about the medicinal use of plants among the common masses and also with new research strategies coming up in the life sciences and biotech sectors to utilize natural resources for health care, the knowledge base of plants is becoming more and more important at a faster pace today. There are a large number of publications, reviews, reference volumes and books, in addition to the research papers that appear in this field. However, the need is always being felt to have focused, consolidated and authentic information on specific medicinal uses and availability of plants. This book by Dr. SK Jain in this direction is a very timely publication, particularly so, since the preventive health care research as well as practice is now coming to the forefront of science and society. Golden triangle of traditional knowledge, modern medicine and new biology is making the base line for strategy to discover new medicines and therapeutic molecules with mechanism based data to support the claims. Nervous system related ailments as well as neuro-developmental requirements are becoming a priority sector since these cover from pediatrics to geriatrics for children to old age related health aids. This initiative of concise expression in form of this book on psychoactive plants therefore should find high value in this context.

The book has centered on the information on psychoactive plants from three major knowledge domains. These include (i) botany and psychoactive properties, (ii) chemistry and (iii) distribution of plants. Plant distribution domain covers biological activity with medical conditions as well as taxonomic placement among botanical families. With the Author's vast experience contributions in the fields of ethnobiology, botanical science and taxonomy,

the book provides in one single volume a highly authentic precise, and reasonably illustrated information not just as a list of plants but in form of a reference source. Further it is well supported through systematic drawings and selected coloured photographs. This should help in proper identification of the right plants to a great extent for variable spectra of users covering teachers, students, researchers, explorers and practitioners.

Though the attempt has also been made on exhaustively covering the chemistry of the listed psycho active plants, one may feel here a void of structures of the chemical compounds and their linkage to the right source of references and data bases which today have become available both on the web and in published public domain literature. Further with reading of this book the appetite of readers and user research community will rise to have a direct information linkage of this compilation with molecular data including biological assays and activity validation etc. No doubt, everything is not possible to be covered in such a single volume. Hopefully, this book should open up a possibility of next series of volumes by other experts to link this pool of knowledge with modern biology and natural compounds based pharmaceutical science. The book is well supported with common names index for these plants, so that the linkage between scientific information and common or folklore/traditional knowledge is not missed.

Surely, this book will be a useful entity for those who are into active research of medicinal plant resources as well as those who are using such knowledge for new products or tools to aid various

*INSA Hon. Scientist & Founder Director, Institute of Ethnobiology Jiwaji University, Gwalior.

aspects of research for brain health. With the basic information of chemistry provided, the beneficiaries both from natural product chemistry to pharmaceutical science will find it useful as reference book to bio-resources. On the other hand, for botany and medicinal plant, students and researchers, its a ready to practice semi-manual too. It will not be inappropriate to refer this book as a starting resource book for the psychoactive plants, which may lead to knowledge base and discovery process for, next generation products for the brain health research. At the same time this will be highly useful for the

students and teachers in the field. One would definitely like to see the advanced volumes coming up from experts of integrative medicine and plant science utilizing this basic information pool.

Book Reviewer:

Dr. Suman PS Khanuja
Former Director, CIMAP (CSIR) India
Chief Mentor, NutraHelix Biotech
New Delhi/Mumbai
E-mail : spskhanuja@gmail.com;
spskhanuja@nutrahelix.com