



Ethnophytoetymology of Some Taxa In Maharashtra

¹*Patil A. M., ²C. R. Patil, ³D. A. Patil

¹&² Department of Botany, Rani Laxmibai Mahavidyalaya, Parola- 425111. Dist. Jalgaon (M.S.). India

³Post-Graduate Department of Botany

S.S.V.P. S's L. K. Dr. P. R. Ghogrey Science College, Dhule-424005 (M.S.) India

Abstract: Plants are a gift for humans from nature and a major source of sustenance. Nay, mankind is a guest in the plant-world. He discriminates all objects whether living on non-living. The present authors analysed etymologically vernacular plant names in Maharashtra, a Marathi speaking state. As many as 28 species pertaining to 28 genera and 24 angiospermic families. They divulged total 16 bases of coining vernacular plant names. Abstract as well as concrete relationships of man with the plants are revealed. The authors thus seek attention of plant learners and lovers to tap down knowledge, experiences and wisdom interwoven with traditional vernacular plant names for welfare of mankind.

Key Words: Vernacular Plant Names, Ethnophytoetymology, Maharashtra.

Introduction: Taxonomy of plants is the earliest discipline in biological sciences. It performs three functions viz., identification, classification and nomenclature. Any object, whether living or non-living, is to be named for better communication. Names are both, scientific (botanical) and vernacular. The former is being stressed in botanical world for uniform and international communication. The vernacular names have been mostly ignored in scientific pursuits. Dr.S.K.Jain (1963) for the first stressed the importance of vernacular names during his floristic surveys in Madhya Pradesh (India). Taking a leaf from his account, Patil and his associates paid serious attention in revealing origin and utility of vernacular names in the state of Maharashtra (Patil, 1998, 2009; Patil and Patil, 2000; Pawar and Patil, 2000; Dhale and Patil, 2013; Patil and Jaiswal, 2013).

There are several native phytonyms which deserve unearthing the storehouse of traditional knowledge. The present is also an attempt to study ethnophytoetymology of some taxa inhabiting in the state of Maharashtra.

Methodology Adapted: Vernacular names of plants have been borrowed from certain floristic accounts and research communications. They have been examined on etymological ground revealing the roots words and their relevant meanings. The data revealed is presented under systematic enumeration in a terse manner: botanical name, family (in parenthesis), local name (L.N.), meaning or root words, source of literature and brief explanation for coining vernacular names is given separately below.

Systematic Enumeration:**(I) Culinary Utility:**

(a) *Trachyspermum roxburghianum* (DC.) Craib. (Apiaceae):

L.N.: Ran-ova (Mulay & Sharma, 2014) [Ran: wild, forest; Ova: *Trachyspermum ammi* (L.) Sprague]

Fruits are used as spice substituting seeds of Celery.

(b) *Alocasia indica* Schott. (Araceae):

L.N.: Patrabhaji (Jorwar, 2018) (Patra: leaf; Bhaji: a food article)

A food article called 'Bhaji' or 'Bhaje' prepared using leaves and gram flour.

(c) *Begonia crenata* Dryand (Begoniaceae):

L.N.: Khatti-bhaji (Bhogaonkar *et al.*, 2010) (Khatti: sour; Bhaji: vegetable)

Young leaves are consumed as salad which taste sour.

(II) Domestic Articles:

(a) *Arisaema murrayi* (Grah.) Hook. (Araceae)

L.N.: Diva (Jorwar, 2018) (Diva: Lamp)

Inflorescence simulates a lamp.

(III) Animal Organ:

(a) *Theriophonum delzeellii* Schott. (Araceae)

L.N.: Undirkani (Deshpande *et al.*, 2015) (Undir: rat; Kan: ear)

The leaves are shaped like ear-pinnae of a rat.

(b) *Pentatropis capensis* (L.f.) Bullock (Asclepiadaceae):

L.N.: Popti-sheng (Patil, 2003) (Popat: parot; Sheng: fruit)

The climber bears pale-green fruits (Colour of a parrot) and the fruit is compared with its bill (beak).

(c) *Urena lobata* L. (Malvaceae):

L.N.: Waghacha-panja (Patil & Patil, 2006) (Wagh: tiger; Panja: palm)

The leaves are lobed and compared with the palm of fore-legs of a tiger.

(IV) Mythology:

(a) *Hyphaene dichotoma* (White) Furtada (Arecaceae):

L.N.: Ravan-tad (Samudra, 2018) [Ravan: A person (demon) Ravan in epic Ramayana having ten heads; Tad-a palm].

This palm bears many dichotomous branches simulating as it Ravan with many heads.

(b) *Tacca leontopetaloides* (L.) O.Ktze. (Taccaceae):

L.N.: Jatashankar (Bhogaonkar & Rajgure-Gulhane, 2015) (Jata: matted hair; Shankar: a Hindu God)

Its flowers are provided with long filiform bracteoles which are compared

with matted hair of Lord Shankar.

(c) *Actinorhysis calapparia* (Bl.) Wendl. (Arecaceae)

L.N.: Ram-supari (Sharma *et al.*, 1996) (Ram: Hindu God Lord Rama in epic Ramayana; Supari: Areca-nut).

The seed is compared with areca-nut and honoured by god's name.

(V) Contents:

(a) *Ceropegia bulbosa* Roxb. var. *bulbosa* Hook. f. (Asclepiadaceae)

L.N.: Dudhkand (Bhogaonkar & Rajgure-Gulhane, 2015) (Dudh: milk; Kand: tuber)

It is tuber-bearing climber with milky latex.

(b) *Gardenia gummifera* L.f. (Rubiaceae):

L.N.: Dikamali (Narkhede *et al.*, 2020) Dikamali: a resinous content).

Dikamali is yielded by this species and used medicinally.

(VI) Habitat:

(a) *Rotula aquatica* Lour. (Boraginaceae):

L.N.: Pashanbhed (Jorwar, 2018) (Pashan: stone, rock: Bhed: breaking)

The species inhabits rocky or stony places and supposed to break the rocks or stones while growing.

(b) *Ipomoea eriocarpa* R.Br. (Convolvulaceae):

L.N.: Kupan-vel (Vartak, 1981a) (Kupan: hedge; Vel: climber)

The climber generally grows on hedges along roads or agricultural fields.

(c) *Bacopa monnieri* (L.) Penn. (Scrophulariaceae):

L.N.: Nir-brahmi (Jadhav *et al.*, 2015) [Nir: water; Brahmi: *Centella asiatica* (L.) Urb.]

It is a substitute for 'Brahmi', a medicinal species and inhabits in aquatic places.

(VII) Plant Characteristics:

(a) *Capparis decidua* (Forssk.) Edgew. (Capparidaceae):

L.N.: Nepati (Naik, 1998); Napati (Buchulkar & Wali, 2022) (Ne or Na: not; Pat: leaf)

The species is leafless, hence the name.

(b) *Costus speciosus* (Koen.) J.E.Smith (Costaceae):

L.N.: Koshta, Kanda (Bhogaonkar & Rajgure-Gulhane, 2015) (Kanda: tuberous rootstock)

(i) The plant bears underground tuberous rootstock.

(ii) The generic name appears coined after native name 'Koshta'.

(VIII) Taste:

(a) *Elaegnus conferta* Roxb. (Elaegnaceae):

L.N.: Ambgul (Cooke, 1958) (Amb: sour, subacid; Gul: jaggery)

Fruits are edible, sweetish and subacidic like the Red currant.

(IX) Interrelationships:

(a) *Ocimum americanum* L. (Lamiaceae):

L.N.: Ran-tulashi (Medakkar & Sharma, 2016) [Ran: forest; Tulashi:

Ocimum tenuiflorum L. (a religious cultigen)]

This species is thought a relative of Tulashi plan, but grows in wild.

(X) Parasitism:

(a) *Dendrophthoe falcata* (L.f.) Etting (Loranthaceae):

L.N.: Bandgul (Patil, 2003) (Bandgul: dependent on others).

Parasitic nature of the species is denoted in the name.

(XI) Colour & Interrelationships:

(a) *Hibiscus sabdariffa* L. (Malvaceae):

L.N.: Lal-ambadi (Patil, 2003) (Lal: red; Ambadi: Another cultigen of the same genus viz., *Hibiscus cannabinus* L.)

Name is coined after colour of plant contrasting with green colour of *H.cannabinus* L., a close relative.

(XII) Exotic status (Nativity):

(a) *Pithecellobium dulce* (Roxb.) Bth. (Mimosaceae):

L.N.: Vilayati-chinch (Patil, 2003) (Vilayati: foreign country; Chinch: *Tamarindus indica* L.)

This tree is native of Tropical America and its fruits are compared with those of Tamarind.

(b) *Jatropha gossipifolia* L. (Euphorbiaceae):

L.N.: Mogli Erand (Singh *et al.*, 2001) (Mongli: Mughal, People of foreign country who ruled India; Erand: *Ricinus communis* L.)

Native name indicated its exotic nativity. It is but native of Brazil.

(XIII) Numericals:

(a) *Oxalis corniculata* L. (Oxalidaceae):

L.N.: Tinpatti (Bogaonkar & Rajgure-Gulhane, 2015) (Tin: three; Pat: leaf)

The plant bears trifoliate foliage.

(XIV) Aroma:

(a) *Pandanus amaryllifolius* Roxb. (Pandanaceae):

L.N.: Ambemohar-pat (Vartak, 1981b) (Ambemohar: fragrance emitted by

inflorescence of Mango; Pat: leaf).

The leaves are aromatic and used during cooking rice rendering it aromatic.

(XV) Colour:

(a) *Cuscuta reflexa* Roxb. (Cuscutaceae):

L.N.: Son-wel (Singh *et al.* 2001) (Son: gold; Wel: climber)

This climber is golden colour.

(b) *Geodorum densiflorum* (Lam.) Schltr. (Orchidaceae):

L.N.: Haryakand (Sharma *et al.*, 1996) (Harya: hirva, green; Kand: bulb or tuber).

The pseudobulb is decked with greenish bands.

(XVI) Miscellaneous utility:

(a) *Sorghum halepense* (L.) Pers. (Poaceae):

L.N.: Boru (Sharma *et al.*, 1996) (Boru: primitive form of pen).

The culms were used as a pen (after sharpening as a pen).

Results & Discussion: The vernacular names are also called native, local, common or farmer's names. They are traditional in nature and are not the products of any lawful enactments. They have survived over a long past through the mist of times and vicissitudes. They are not generally favoured by scientific community because of synonymy and not being uniform and international in character. They have perforce been ignored during earlier investigations. It is for these reasons, traditional wisdom, experiences and knowledge of our ancestors have remained unnoticed. The present authors carried out their careful studies on etymological ground, the result of such study are being projected in this paper.

We analysed as many as 28 species pertaining to 28 genera of 24 angiospermic families inhabiting the present boundary of Maharashtra state. They are both wild or cultigens and even exotic. They are coined on various bases such as (a) culinary utility, (b) domestic article, (c) animal organs, (d) myths, (e) chemical contents, (f) habitat, (g) plant characteristics, (h) taste, (i) interrelationships, (j) parasitism, (k) colour and interrelationships, (l) exotic status, (m) numerals, (n) aroma, (o) colour exclusively and (p) some miscellaneous utility. Thus these bases of coining vernacular plant names are the results of indepth observations of plant-world, human sentiments or culture and day to day sustenance of mankind. It is interesting to note that more or less they are based on similar criteria as the scientific (botanical) or latin plant names (*cf.* Patil, 2007, 2021). Etymological investigations thus add in our knowledge about plant-wealth in our ambience and also aid in identification of plant species particularly during botanical outings. If they are explained etymologically to the learners of plant science, they are greatly benefitted academically and inspired. It is to be noted that the fund of data revealed by etymological studies to date find no place in curricula or syllabi of academic bodies. The present authors, therefore, suggest to have a segment in teaching and learning systems to back up botanical studies at tertiary or university levels.

Acknowledgements: Authors are thankful to the authorities of S.S.V.P.Sanstha for library and laboratory facilities extended.

References:

- Bachulkar, M. and A. Wali (2022) Aushadi Ranbhajya (In Marathi) Nisarg Ankur Prakashan Kolhapur (Maharashtra) India.
- Bhogaonkar, P.Y. and Rajguru-Gulhane (2015) Wild Edibles of Vidharbha (Along With Medicinal Uses). Nabha Prakashan, Pune (Maharashtra), India.
- Bhogaonkar, P.Y., Marathe, V.R. and P.P.Kshirsagar (2010) Documentation of wild edible plants of Melghat Forest, District Amravati, Maharashtra State, India. *Ethnobotanical Leaflet* 14:751-758.
- Cooke T. (1958) *The Flora of The Presidency of Bombay*. Vol. I-III. Bot.Surv.India, Calcutta, India.
- Deshpande Suwarna, Joshi Rajashree and D.K.Kulkarni (2015) Nutritious wild food resources of Rajgond tribe, Vidarbha, Maharashtra State, India. *Indian Journal of Fundamental And Applied Life Sciences* 5(1):15-25.
- Dhale, D.A and D.A. Patil (2013) Vernacular plant names in Maharashtra (India): In *Ethnobotanical Perspective*. IJESPR 4 (1):16-19.
- Jadhav, R., Datar, M.N. and A.S.Upadhye (2015) Forest foods of Northern Western Ghats: Mode of Consumption, nutrition and availability. *Asian Agri-History* 19(4):293-316.
- Jorwar Nilima (2018) *Bakhar Ranbhajyanchi (Pravas Ranbhajyancha Shodhacha)* (In Marathi) Lokvangmay Gruh, Prabhadevi, Mumbai (Maharashtra) India.
- Medakkar, S.S. and P.P. Sharma (2016) Some exotic plants in human consumption from Ahmednagar district, Maharashtra. *International Journal of Current Research* 8(7):35433-35436.
- Mulay, J.R. and P.P.Sharma (2014) Some underutilised plant resources as a source of food from Ahmednagar district (Maharashtra) India. *Discovery* 9(23):58-64.
- Naik, V.N. (1988) *Flora of Marathwada*. Vol.I-II. Amrut Prakashan, Aurangabad, Maharashtra India.
- Narkhede, S.S., Handa, A.K., Verma, K.S. and S.G.Bhave (2020) Wild food resources: potential in coastal ecosystems of Konkan, Maharashtra. *Advanced Agricultural Research & Technology Journal* IV(1):42-48.
- Patil, D.A. (2003) *Flora of Dhule And Nandurbar District* (Maharashtra). Bishen Singh Mahendra Pal Singh, Dehradun, India.
- Patil, D.A. (2007) *Origins of Plant Names*. Daya Publishing House, Delhi, India.
- Patil, D.A. (2009) Significance of vernacular plant names vis-à-vis their origins in Buldhana District (Maharashtra). *Ethnobotany*. 21 (1-2) 91-94.

- Patil, D.A. (2021) Etymology of Plant Names: Aspects & Prospects. Lambert Academic Publishing, Beau Bassin, Mauritius.
- Patil, D.A. and A.G. Jaiswal (2013) Philological investigation in Bhili common plant names from Nandurbar district (Maharashtra, India). Life Sciences Leaflets 7:47-53.
- Patil, M.V and D.A. Patil (2000) Bases and utility of vernacular plant names in Nasik District (Maharashtra). J.Swamy Bot.Cl. 17(3-4):83-85.
- Patil, M.V. and D.A.Patil (2006) Ethnobotany of Nasik District (Maharashtra). Daya Publishing House, Delhi, India.
- Pawar Shubhangi and D.A.Patil (2000) The origin and utility of vernacular plant names in Khandesh region of Maharashtra. J.Swamy.Bot.Cl. 17:43-47.
- Samudra, S.M. (2018) Some less known wild plant resources used as food in Pune region of Maharashtra, India. International Journal of Researches In Biosciences, Agriculture And Technology VI(1):83-88.
- Sharma, B.D., Karthikeyan, S. and N.P. Singh (1996) Flora of Maharashtra State: Monocotyledons. Bot.Surv. India, Calcutta, India.
- Singh, N.P. Lakshminarsimhan, P., Karthikeyan, S. and P.V.Prasanna (2001) Flora of Maharashtra State: Dicotyledons, Bot. Surv. India, Calcutta, India.
- Vartak, V.D. (1981a) Observations of wild edible plants from hilly region of Maharashtra and Goa: Resume and future prospects. In: Glimpses of Indian Ethnobotany (Ed.S.K.Jain). Oxford & IBH Publishing Co., New Delhi, India.
- Vartak, V.D. (1981b) Note on Ambemohar-pat (*Pandanus amaryllifolius* Roxb. from Western India. J.Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc. 75:196-198.