INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND WILD FOOD: PERSPECTIVES OF AN ETHNOBOTANICAL STUDY FROM INDIAN DESERT

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Short Abstract

Food security,Indigenous people, Wild food, Ethnobotany, Indian desert,Tribal people,Famine food, Nutritive value,Traditional knowledge, Rajasthan, Tribal diet, Folk wisdom,Deciduous forests, Aravalli and Vindhyan hills.

Long Abstract

Indigenous people throughout the world possess knowledge of their surrounding flora and fauna. People's knowledge and perceptions of the environment and their relationship with it are often important elements of cultural identity. Wild foods are a part of tribal people's diet not only during periods of food shortages but also on a daily basis. It is this daily consumption of wild food products, which contributes overall nutritional well being of tribals.
The state of Rajasthan has a sizable tribal population existing in the still surviving deciduous forests of the Aravalli and Vindhyan ranges. Though having undergone varying degrees of change, a substantial population even today can be seen thriving in primitive conditions with the preserved traditions. Living close to nature, the tribals have acquired unique knowledge about the properties and uses of wild food plants, most of which are not known to the outside world. Exhaustive field work in tribal villages with a macro-level perspective brought forth interesting revelations from the panorama of their lives. The present work highlights useful ethnobotanical information about the uses of wild plants as food by the tribals of Rajasthan. Wild foods are not only important to food security in extreme cases, they often make up a portion of the tribal diet in other times too. This folk wisdom, if subjected to scientific scrutiny, could benefit humankind in many ways.