

Dr. R. K. Verma  
27/11/2015

# SOUVENIR

## NATIONAL SEMINAR

on

Recent Advances in Research and Development in  
Medicinal and Aromatic Plants - A Country Scenario

27 - 28 November 2015



Organized By

**Forest Genetics, Plant Propagation &  
Biotechnology Branch**

**STATE FOREST RESEARCH INSTITUTE**  
Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh



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# NEEDS FOR CONSERVATION OF MEDICINAL AND AROMATIC PLANTS IN ACHANAKMAR-AMRAKANTAK BIOSPHERE RESERVE

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## **Abstract:**

Achanakmar-Amarkantak biosphere reserve, which is under the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR), spread over an area of 3835.51 km of rich, dense and unique landscape comprising of hill ranges, rivers and rural area of ethnical importance. It falls in Deccan Peninsula biographic region of the country and is located at the tri-junction of Maikal hill range to Vindhya and Satpura hill ranges of Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh states of India. The BR has tremendous importance in terms of rich flora and fauna providing habitat to many rare and threatened biodiversity.

The forests of BR constitutes the diversity of tropical dry deciduous forests and tropical moist deciduous forests along with their various subtype including sal dominated forests, mixed forests, bamboo forests and riverine area, besides plantations. The varied ecosystem harbor nearly 470 species of medicinal plants with recorded use among the total documented 1734 species of flora. BR is rich repository of medicinal plant germplasm and the diverse habitat support many valuable species. The local tribal and non-tribal population living in 418 villages of BR consumes numerous common and rare medicinal plant species for various ailments. The plant species commonly used in various ailments by the tribal include *Rubia cordifolia*, *Embelia tsjeriam-cottam*, *Aegle marmelos*, *Curculigo archioides*, *Cissemelos pariera*, *Acorus calamus*, *Piper longum*, *Peuraria tuberosa*, *Curcuma aungustifolia*, *Phyllanthus emblica*, *Terminalia bellerica*, *Terminalia chebula* and *Terminalia arjuna* among others, while nearly 12 species including some of the above mentioned are harvested and traded in large quantities at commercial scale.

In recent past, however the destructive harvesting practices of commercially important medicinal species have threatened the wild population of some highly valuable species. Nearly 48 species of medicinal plants and 39 species of NTFPs were assessed at the conservation assessment management prioritization for the states of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh respectively. Leaving aside few taxonomic varieties, majority of these species were placed under various degrees of threats due to overexploitation and unsustainable harvesting practices. As a consequence of degrading habitat conditions of the forests in certain areas, the source of medicine for sustenance of BR population as well as the livelihood supplement provided by their trade has declined tremendously. The present paper, thus emphasize the need to implement the research recommendations laid out for conservation of the threatened species in natural habitat in undisturbed state of BR for the health and livelihood security of population in future. In view of changing climate, a review of present and future strategies for conservation is also the need of the hour.

**Keywords:** *Medicinal plants, threatened conservation and achanakmar-amarkantak biosphere reserve.*

