

FLORISTIC DIVERSITY ON SELECTED SHOLA FOREST OF PALNI HILLS, DINDIGUL DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU

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ABSTRACT: Shola forests are tropical forest vegetations comprising subtropical hill forests and montane temperate forests, generally inhabiting over 1,500 m asl. The shola forests in the upper plateau are dense and floristically rich with many endemic and rare species. The trees in the sholas form a continuous canopy usually not exceeding 10-15m. The tree bark is covered with lichens, orchids, mosses and climbers and the crowns are generally rounded and dense. The Palni hills areas are the part of Western Ghats which are one of biodiversity rich area of India. It has rich forests and grassland which are abode of endangered plants and animals. The present study on the shola forests of Palni hills, Kodaikkanal has generated bench mark information on the floristic analysis of Bear shola and Vattakkanal shola in the Dindigul District of the Tamil Nadu. The floristic studies identified 143 species of angiosperms belong to 56 families from two shola of Palni hills, Kodaikkanal. 13 species were identified as endemic and 53 taxa are classified as rare, 71 taxa belongs to endangered and 21 species belong to the threatened category. Of the 143 plants, 34 herbs, 42 shrubs, 4 climbers and 31 trees were recorded. Preservation of shola forest is prime importance to protect water catchment resources.

Key words: *Shola forest, palni hills, endangered, floristic analysis.*

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