

## **TREE DIVERSITY OF MAHARASHTRA- SPECIES RICHNESS, DISTRIBUTION, ENDEMISM, INTRODUCTIONS AND USE VALUES**

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**ABSTRACT:** Trees constitute important component of all terrestrial ecosystems. Maharashtra has large number of tree species distributed in different climatic zones ranging from coastal regions of Konkan to crest of Ghats and from Khandesh to the eastern plains of Marathwada and Vidarbha. The tree component, however, has not been evaluated so far as a separate entity. In present communication, efforts have been made to analyze tree flora of Maharashtra especially for its past and present distribution, diversity, nativity and for changes due to various developmental activities. Total 752 species, 5 subspecies and 11 varieties of trees belonging to 367 genera under 89 families are reported from Maharashtra State with 54 endemic species. Native tree species (460 in number) forms the bulk of the vegetation of Maharashtra. It is interesting to note that around 292 introduced species i. e. more than 1/3 of the total tree elements, form major component of urban ecosystems or greenery near habitations. This work also brings on record use value of tree resources as timbers and medicinal plants and decline of a few of them due to commercial exploitations. The wild tree diversity including endemic elements is more concentrated in Western Ghats and Konkan Region. Nonexistence of 36 species reported earlier in present political boundaries of Maharashtra is also documented. The compiled data is valuable for planning and better management of arboreal resources of Maharashtra.

**Key words :** *Maharashtra, Tree Diversity, Endemism.*