**Introduction**

Flora is basically the plant life that is present in a particular region or habitat or at a particular time. India is a land of varied flora, fauna and biodiversity. India is one of the twelve mega diverse nations of the World. The Flora of India is one of the richest of the world due to a wide range of climate, topology and environments in the country. It is thought there are over 15000 species of flowering plants in India, which account for 6 percent of the total plant species in the world (Karki, 2002).

According to World Health Organization (WHO), it has listed 21,000 plant species which are used for medicinal purposes around the world. According to Botanical Garden of Kew earlier estimate the figure of flowering plants between 223,000 and 422,000. Using expert analysis, scientists from Kew generated a more precise estimation of 352,000 in a paper published in 2008. On the other hand, a lot of flowering plant groups have up till now to be assessed and the accurate number is likely to be presently over 400,000. New plants species continue to be discovered as well as others are under threat of extinction. Yet changes in the mode scientists classify flora change the estimate, therefore the actual figure is in a constant status of fluctuation (http://www.kew.org/science-conservation/plants-fungi/environment/how-many-flowering-plants-are-there-world). Out of total number of flowering plant species known (about 17,500) in India, there are more than 4,000 species which are used in medicines, about 3,000 for food, nearly 700 as traditional religious and for social purposes, about 500 yield fibers, 400 as fodder, 300 yield gum and about 100
species are used to extract essential oils and scents. Indian biodiversity is a source of several life saving drugs and novel chemicals.

According to WHO medicinal plants are those plants which contain properties or compounds that can be use for therapeutic purposes or those that synthesize metabolites to produce useful drugs (WHO 2008). Therapeutic plants comprise an important component of flora and are widely spread in India. The pharmacological assessment of substances from plants is a recognized method for the discovery of lead compounds which can leads to the development of new and safe healing agents. The significance of therapeutic flora and traditional health systems in solving the health care problems of the world is gaining growing awareness. Because of this resurgence of attention, the study on plants of medicinal importance is rising phenomenally at the global stage, frequently to the loss of natural habitats and mother populations in the countries of origin. The majority of the rising countries have adopted traditional medical practice as a basic part of their traditions. About 90% of all Indian medicines are obtained from pharmaceutical companies from the third world countries, including India. India is the largest producer of medicinal herbs and called as botanical garden of the world (Seth.et.al.2004) and herbal medicines for curing human illness medicinal plants form the only easily accessible health care alternative for the most of our population in rural and tribal area. About 64% of the total global population remains dependent on traditional medicines for their health care system, whereas about 85% of the rural population
of India depends on wild varieties of plants for the treatment of various diseases they suffer from.

Forest resources are the only means of livelihood for catering to the need of food, fodder, fuel, medicine, etc. Since then man knows the importance of plants. Ethno botany is a rapidly expanding branch of science. Concepts and scope of ethno botany has been noticeably expanded in last three decades. In the beginning of plant study with their use by villagers for food, remedy, and shelter, now studies of them include conservational and environmentally friendly practices of tribal, ethnopharmacology, ethnopharmacognosy, ethnomusicology, ethnogynecology etc. The faster pace of life and the need for rapid cure led to the proliferation of synthetic drugs. However, with synthetic drugs came the problems of side effects, ill effects, and complications. This has led to the revival of herbal treatments for a large number of diseases. Since, the world population is growing at an alarming rate, so is the demand for medicines. To cope with the increasing demand of medicines, steps are being taken to populate important economic plants to meet ever-increasing demands of human population.

Medicinal plants have always been the principle source of medicines in India since ancient past and presently they are becoming popular throughout the developed countries. Besides, they also play an important role in the lives of people and rural people, particularly in remote part of developing countries. Plants are used as drug predates written human history that can be traced back to the ancient civilizations or pre-times. The first on paper evidence of the preparation
and use of medicine from plants is in the ‘Rigveda’, the initial scripture of the Hindus (4500-1600BC). The Vedic Aryans were familiar with about 100 medicinal plants. In ‘Atharva Veda’, which was a later work, the uses of medicinal plants described are more diverse. These were followed by the monumental contributions such as ‘Charak Samhita’ (1000-800BC), ‘Sushrut Samhita’ (800-700BC) and Vagbhatta’s ‘Astanga Hridaya’. Numeral books were written by learned scholars on Ayurveda and Hindu botany, such as Nagarjun, Bhikshu Atreya, Madhavaker, Patanjali, Chakradatta, Bangasen (500-100BC), Sankara and Sarangadhar, who expanded the botanical materia medica of the Hindus.

Between plants and man revealed the close relationships studies with archaeology, paleobotany, and ethnography. The uses of plants in India about 2000-1000 BC mentions are there in Rig-Veda and Atharveda. Although some of the therapeutic properties attributed to plants have proven to be erroneous, medicinal plant therapy is based on the empirical findings of hundreds and thousands of years (Gurib-Fakim, 2006). A number of formulations like herbal teas, tinctures, decoctions, extracts, infusions are ready from therapeutic plants (Kraisintu 1997).

The rate with which diseases such as diabetes, cancer, rheumatism, asthma etc. are progressing it seems to have an immediate and effective solution for making a comfortable future for human population against such diseases. Hence, there is an urgent need to study plants with medicinal efficiencies against such diseases. Accordingly, an effort has
been made to describe plants with such uses but has to be explored for their claimed activities, (Jitendra B Jain & et al, 2005).

In India, the use of different parts of several medicinal plants to cure specific ailments has been in vogue from ancient times (Bhattacharya, 1998). Our knowledge of medicinal plants has mostly been inherited traditionally. Use of plants for curing various ailments are not confined to the doctors only but is known to several households as well. There are many interesting and sometimes astonishing things to learn from ethnic people about medicinal plants. Spreading and preserving this knowledge on medicinal plants and their uses has become important for human existence.

In the absence of operation planning and convergence degradation of forests and adjoining lands continued which seriously affected the sustainability of crops and natural vegetation. Due to continuous degradation of land resources, depletion of precious biodiversity and conservation functions of forests the food grain production and availability of the drinking water is getting reduced gradually causing serious ecological concerns in many parts of the country. The poverty alleviation programmes can only succeed if these areas are tackled on priority and the natural resources are managed in an integrated and holistic manner. There are however, many examples set by the pioneering individuals at grass root level and organizations in bringing convergence in the development of land based resources.
The great importance of collecting good herbarium material for taxonomic identification of the collected species must be stressed. There is need for conservation of all useful plant species, and also cultivation, maintenance and assessment of germplasm for future use, since among the most vulnerable plant species in India, the most over-exploited are the medicinal plants.

In modern medicine also, plant occupy a very significant place as raw material for some important drugs, although synthetic drugs and antibiotics brought about a revolution in controlling different diseases. But synthetic drugs are out of reach to millions of people. Those who live in remote place depend on traditional healers, whom they know and trust. Judicious use of medicinal herbs can even cure deadly diseases that have long defied synthetic drugs.

Madhya Pradesh holds highest rank in tribal population of India. According to 1991 census, the tribal population of the state is about 153,99,034 which accounts 23.27% of the state’s total population. There are 46 tribal communities in the state divided into more than 100 ethnic groups (Wagh et. al, 2010).

The faster pace of life and the need for rapid cure led to the proliferation of synthetic drugs. However, with synthetic drugs cause the problems of side effects, ill effects, and complications. This has led to the revival of herbal treatments for a large number of diseases. Since, the world population is growing at an alarming rate, so is the demand for medicines. To cope with the increasing demands of medicines, steps are
being taken to populate important economic plants to meet ever-increasing demands of human populations.

Our pharmaceutical industry is fairly advanced and sophisticated. The plant based drugs, however, have shortened the life-span of the source of material. There is continuous search for more potent and cheapest raw material to feed the industry. With concerted research and development efforts, many medicinal plants could provide raw material in abundance to the indigenous pharmacies and local herbalists. Strong linkages should be developed between medicinal plant growers, health experts and pharmaceutical industries for developing scientific basis on which these systems of medicine are working. An integrated system of medicine based on natural products and synthetics may yield the most effective and cheap package for WHO's goal of health for all.

Medicinal plants constitute the main source of new pharmaceuticals and healthcare products (Ivanova et.al, 2005). The use of medicinal plants in the industrialized societies has been traced to the extraction and development of several drugs from these plants as well as from traditionally used folk medicine (Shrikumar and Ravi, 2007).

In the present work an attempt has been made to bring out a consolidated account of the wild medicinal flora of Balaghat district of Madhya Pradesh dealing with plants of medicinal and economic importance.

The present research work was planned with the following aims and objectives. Information on floristic distribution and botany of plant species is generally described in the flora. This thesis presents a very
valuable information on all plant recorded during exploration. Therefore the present work shows a little deviation from the normal flora as it contains information on only plant species of Balaghat.

The study site was chosen because both the dry and moist deciduous tropical forests are abundant in the district. The forests of district has a vast heritage of diverse ethnic groups and are extremely rich in terms of both floral and faunal biodiversity, which is a great treasure house of valuable medicinal plant wealth. However a number of unknown forest areas still exist in the district that has rich diversity of medicinal plants and herbs, which are still unexplored. In this district, both North and South divisions of Balaghat places such as Lanji, Baihar, Lalbarra, Lamta, Lougor, Ukwa, Balaghat ranges have rich diversity of vegetation. These areas are native place of several tribes. These tribal communities are mostly residing in forest villages and most backward inhabitants of the area. They possess good knowledge of forest, forest growth and indigenous medicinal plants. Till date no authentic and consolidated data is available on Wild medicinal flora of Balaghat.

Objectives of this study has been exploration and documentation of medicinal plants in general and wild areas of selected sites, for identification of species with ethnomedicinal and traditional economic uses, and to collect and classify plants on the basis of Taxonomy, and compilation of species lists of all observed flora species, to complete a wild medicinal flora database of plant species, herbarium specimens, and conducted questionnaires for medicinal plants evaluation.
The present study proposed to make comprehensive list of the wild medicinal plants and their ethnomedicinal knowledge used by local people for common day to day ailments. Aims of the study have to create awareness among the local community about the protection of native medicinal flora and to collect native medicinal plants of the area for proper identification for future reference. Medicinal plant species are also listed on the site and to recommend necessary actions in case of occurrence of endangered, vulnerable or rare species. Traditional knowledge of tribals about medicinal plants is compiled which are used in health care. Besides, data will be useful to taxonomists, teachers and students of botany, Pharmacy, anthropology etc. for further exploitation for formulation of novel allopathic as well as ayurvedic drugs. The present work being of applied nature will be useful to academics, Industrialist as well as to the common man. Therefore during present investigation the attempt has been made to decipher “The Wild Medicinal Flora of Madhya Pradesh”.