PREFACE

The research work presented here in this thesis was carried out at the Department of Botany, Amravati University, Amravati, under the Faculty Development Programme of UGC in IXth Plan Period. The author is extremely grateful to the University Grants Commission, New Delhi for granting FDP fellowship.

The present investigation deals with the study of ethno-medicinal plants and socio-cultural practices prevalent in the tribal areas inhabiting remote villages at the foothills of Satpudas. The study of ethno-medicinal plants pertains to the beliefs and practices concerning illness in different human populations. The world health organisation has recently defined the traditional medicine including, herbal drugs as comprising therapeutic practices that have been in existence, often hundreds of years, before the development of modern medicine and are still in use today. These herbal drugs constitutes mainly those medicinal plants of which crude preparations are used for therapy. The main emphasis is given to the documentation of information as explained by the local practitioners like Vaidus, Bhagats, Senior Practitioners. Frequent field trips were made to collect the plants and ethnomedicinal information. Further, depending upon the paucity of available information about chemical constituents, important plant taxa were selected and subjected to phytochemical analysis and an attempt has been made to authenticate the traditional therapeutic practices. One of the important aspect of present investigation comprises the study of socio-cultural practices and involvement of diversified plant-taxa in the traditional practices of Gond, Korku, tribes and Balai caste inhabiting the villages adjoining Satpudas, in Amravati district.

The work plan of the thesis has been divided into Five Chapters.

The first chapter deals with the Introduction which gives significance of study and elaborates the area of investigation. This is followed by chapter two an exhaustive Review of Literature.
The third chapter comprises Material and Methods, involving mode of collection of material, methodology adopted for study, the phytochemical methods and the problems encountered during the field work.

The fourth chapter comprises the Observations which includes Ethnomedicinal Plants, elaborating systematic description, diagnostic features, location and ethnomedicinal significance of each taxon. In every taxon the phytochemical compounds as encountered after scrutiny of literature are given with references.

The second part deals with Ethno-medicinal Plants of which phytochemical analysis has been undertaken separately, so as to corroborate the medicinal properties with the chemical constituents.

The third part of the Observations, comprises a separate account of socio-cultural aspect wherein, the plants associated with varied cultural practices, rituals, festivals, socio-cultural beliefs among Gond, Korku tribes and Balai caste have been dealt with exhaustively.

The chapter five gives an account of Discussion highlighting the implications of herbal medicines in treatment of various ailments, overexploitation of wild medicinal plants, their importance in drug formulations, conservation strategies etc. Also, the interrelations of plant-taxa with cultural diversity and socio-cultural practices are elaborately discussed.

The discussion is followed by concluding remarks and Bibliography.