Chapter-1

Introduction
Plants are used frequently in tribal areas as well as in rural areas for the control of various diseases. Ethnobotany is the study of how people of a particular culture and region make use of indigenous plants. Ethnobotany deals with the study of relationship between the aboriginal or primitive people and their plant surrounding in the widest sense. Ethnobotany includes a study of the plant used by the aboriginal for his food, medicine, other material culture, such as shelter, fuel and transport, for religious ceremonies and in his spiritual and intellectual culture, such as in music, dance, fables, proverbs, crops, festivals, sowings, harvestings etc.

The term Ethnobotany was first used by J.W. Harshberger in 1895 to indicate plants used by the aboriginals. In 1874, Stephen Power coined the term 'aboriginal botany' to describe the study of "all forms of the vegetation which the aboriginals used for medicines, food, textile, fabrics, ornaments etc. Since Harshberger, the definition of ethnobotany has changed and evolved along with the formation and evolution of the field. Thus, Ethnobotany has been defined as the study of relationship which exists between people of primitive societies, and their plant environment, (Schultes, 1962). Jain (1976), however, regards ethnobotany as the total natural and traditional relationship and the interaction between man and his surrounding vegetation.

India is one of the richest countries in ethnobotanical knowledge due to presence of multiethnic group of ancient lineage and a very diverse vegetation. There are over 50 million tribals belonging to about 550 tribal
communities, mostly living in the forest, hills and naturally isolated regions. They are termed "Adivasi" (Original Settlers, Aboriginal, Indigenous vanyvasi forest inhabitant etc.) The use of plants for the control of diseases is in practice since long time. Tribal people are important for their treasured and unique knowledge of plant wealth and for continuous research of new sources of herbal drugs and other aspects of plants. It is notable that ethnomedicine of the tribals are much similar to the ancient Ayurvedic system, Unani system and Charak Samhita. The tribals use wild plants in a variety of ways and usually in raw state. The chief uses of plants for the tribals are for food, native medicine and variety of domestic articles. They are also used for fuel, dye, tannin, fibre, timber, oils, agricultural or hunting tools, weapons and for witchcraft and magic. Some are used in worship and other mythology.

In India, Ethnobotany is the organised study and research with emphasis on tribal system of medicine and culture is of recent origin initiated in the middle of this century. Earlier works like Materia Medica of Hindoostan (Ainslie, 1813), Indigenous Drugs of India (Chopra, 1933) and indigenous Drugs of India (Dey, 1896) dealt mainly with plants and drugs of established Indigenous System of Indian Medicine since 1960. Ethnobotanical research in India has been intensified at different regional offices of Botanical Survey of India, Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants, Lucknow, National Botanical Research Institute, Lucknow and Central Council of Research in Ayurveda and Siddha, New Delhi, apart from several university centers throughout the country.
Indian Ethnobotanical research got further impetus when the Department of Environment and Forest, Government of India, launched the multidisciplinary, All India Co-ordinated Research Project on Ethnobiology (AICRPE) in 1982 with a view to conduct exhaustive survey and study of plants and animals used by various tribals population in India. Annual reports of AICRPE for the year 1983 and 1984 only have so far been published. It is still an ongoing project under the ministry. This awakening resulted in bringing out volumes like Glimpses of Indian Ethnobotany (Jain, 1981), Bibliography of Ethnobotany (Jain, 1984), A manual of Ethnobotany (Jain, 1987), Dictionary of Indian folk medicine and Ethnobotany (Jain, 1991) and Ethnobotany in India (Maheshwari, 1993), Glimpses of Indian Ethnopharmacology (Pushpagadan et.al., 1995), contribution to Indian Ethnobotany (Jain, 1997), A Handbook of Ethnobotany (Jain, 1999), Dictionary of Ethnoveterinary plants in India (Jain, 1999), Plants of the Quran (Farooqi, 2000). Bibliography of Indian Ethnobotany (Jain, 2002), Objective Ethnobotany Knowledge Traditional Approaches Modern Ethnobotany (Jain, 2004) and Dynamism in Ethnobotany (Jain, 2005).

In the present work Ethnobotanical studies on Rewa district (Madhya Pradesh) has been carried out. This state came into existence on November 1, 1956. Madhya Pradesh was originally the largest state in India until November 1, 2000 when the state of Chhattisgarh was carved out. The total population of Madhya Pradesh is 75,697,565 (According to 2011 census). Rewa has an area of 6,240 sq.km. with a population of
about 2,363,744 (According to 2011 census) (Table-1). The district Rewa inhabited by a large number of tribes such as Gond, Kol, Baiga, Panika, Khairwar, Manjhi, Mawasi and Agaria. My survey of the area has revealed that a fairly large number of plants are used by these tribals in curing a numbers of ailments and also for various purposes (Table-5.1). Further, some selected plants have been assayed for their antimicrobial properties using suitable techniques (Table-5.2.1) and encouraging result have been obtained.