2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The simplest and most common definition of a weed is provided by Baker (1965) “A plant is a weed if in any specified geographical area its populations grow entirely or predominantly in situations markedly disturbed by man”.

A study on weeds is a subject embracing many disciplines including ecology, physiology and genetics and nobody can be equally expert in all of these. Of the many people all over the world who devoted their whole time to the study of weeds, most are concerned directly or indirectly with weed control.

Because there is no doubt about their importance to man and because nearly everybody is familiar with at least some examples it is in one way fairly easy to write about weeds. Amongst the problems of approaching such a large subject, however, is the sheer number of plants involved. The present work gives details about the weed plants and some of their utilities for mankind.

Out of the whole world flora only a very tiny fraction, probably amounting to no more than a few hundred species is composed of weeds. However, as soon as examples of their activities are discussed names multiply and tend to confuse those not familiar with the plants. Most of these are found in the Ahmednagar district.

Work related to utility of plants is undertaken since several decades under the Economic Botany, which covers the plants of economic value. However, the exhaustive studies regarding the all possible aspects of plant utility are covered through the Ethnobotanical studies.

The maximum work in this field is being done in the United States of America. At present, ethnobotanical researchers at different centers throughout the world are being undertaken at several places. The Botanical Museum of Harvard University in Massachusetts, the Museum of Anthropology, and University of Michigan, The Richard Spruce Foundation at Massachusetts and Department of Anthropology, California State University are some of the main centers in the United States of America.

In India, ethnobotanical research has been intensified at different research centers. The main institutions/organizations, engaged in research are different regional offices of Botanical Survey of India; Institute of Ethnobiology, Gwalior; Central Drug Research Institute; Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants and Birbal Sahani Institute of Palaebotany, Lucknow; Central Council for Research in Ayurveda and Siddha; Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine and National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources, New Delhi;
Regional Research Laboratory, Jammu Tawi (Jammu and Kashmir); Tropical Botanical Garden and Research Institute, Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala); M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, Chennai (Tamilnadu); Agharkar Research Institute, Pune (Maharashtra) and in Several Colleges and Universities. The studies are undertaken by number of research workers in India.


Several books have been published on the subject covering various aspects. Among the books worth mentioning is *An Introduction to Ethnobotany* by Faulks (1958), which is the first book on ethnobotany and contains various topics of economic plants in general. *The Ethnobotany of Western Washington* by Gunther (1945), is one of the volumes of University of Washington Publications in anthropology, devoted to the ethnobotany of specific area. *The book American Indian Medicine* by Nature and Status of Ethnobotany by Ford (1978), included 17 manuscripts on various issues of ethnobotany. *Bibliography of Interest in Utilization of Vascular Aquatic Plants* by Boyd (1972), and *Bibliography on Botany and are the bibliographic references. While the dictionaries published on ethnobotany throughout the world outside India are Dariene Ethnobotanical Dictionary by Duke (1968) and Isthmian Ethnobotanical Dictionary by Duke (1986).*

In India at several places notable work has been done by different workers. Some of the workers on different areas are – Bhargava (1983), Yoganarasimhan *et al.* (1983 & 1984), worked on Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Hemadri *et al.* (1980) and Rama Rao & Henry

As far as Ahmednagar district is concerned at some places notable work has been done by different workers in taxonomy. Some of these workers contributed for different areas, are as follows, Almeida, M.R., 2007 published checklist of plants of Ahmednagar district while flora of the area was worked out by Pradhan, S.G. and N.P. Singh 1999. Ethnobotanical point of view exhaustive work covering whole district is not done so far. Some research papers based on different smaller areas have been published, like, Khyade M.S., et. al., 2010; Wabale, A.S. and A.S. Petkar, 2005; Petkar, A.S., et. al. 2002; Khyade, M.S., et. al. 2008; Billore, K.V. and K. Hemadri, 1969.

The district is rich as far as the plant wealth is concerned. Since, several people in the district live in nearby forest areas and still depend on the plants, for their livelihood.

Considering these facts it was decided to undertake this district for exhaustive ethnobotanical explorations.

Following is the literature consulted for verifying the folk claims. Glossary of Indian Medicinal Plants by Chopra et al. (1956,1986,1995), Glossary of Indian Medicinal Plants with Active Principles, Part-I (A-K)(1965-81) by Asolkar et al. (1992); Dictionary of Indian folk medicine and ethnobotany by Jain (1991); The useful plants of India by Ambasta et al. (1992); Ethnobiology in Human welfare by Jain (1996); Ethnobotany of Dadra Nagar Haveli