

12th World Congress on **Pharmaceutical Sciences and Innovations in Pharma Industry**

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9th Edition of International Conference on **Alternative Medicine**

February 26-28, 2018 London, UK



Mohanlal Ghosh

Bejoy Narayan Mahavidyalaya, India

Importance of conservation of medicinal and aromatic plants for health benefits and rural development

According to WHO, medicinal plants constitute the principal health care for more than 80% of total population. India exhibits wide range of topography and climate which has bearing on its vegetation and floristic composition. India having one mega biodiversity centre and two 'Hot spots' with nearly 3500 species are of medicinal values. The world will be benefitted from their conservation and proper utilization. The Eastern part of India (West Bengal) comprising plains and hills is gifted with enormous wealth of medicinal and aromatic plants due to its varied ecological conditions. In order to survey and conservation of priceless natural resources of medicinal and aromatic plants for their sustainable use and their commercial exploitation as nontraditional cash crops for the welfare of rural people of Bengal, the present authors have attempted to explore the medicinal plants flora in south and north Bengal having different agroecological conditions. Present studies clearly revealed that various medicinal and aromatic plants in south Bengal are widely used by the local people for curing their various diseases, which are again depleting day to day due to biotic and abiotic factors. Eight species of medicinal and aromatic plants in south Bengal and six anti-diabetic species (proved by clinical trials) in North Bengal have been identified as target plants. Conservation studies with specific agronomic inputs have been done successfully with the target species of South Bengal and North Bengal for *ex-situ* conservation. Cost benefit ratio clearly revealed commercial feasibilities with the target species of *Gymnema sylvestre*, *Swertia chirata* and *Catharanthus roseus* in north Bengal and *Cymbopogon flexuosus* and *Cymbopogon martini* in South Bengal utilizing waste land and uplifting rural economy.

Biography

Mohanlal Ghosh is a MSc (Gold medalist), PhD Ex-Associate Professor and Head, Department of Botany, Itachuna, Bejoy Narayan Mahavidyalaya, Hooghly, West Bengal, India. Currently he has been serving as Guest Faculty in the college and in the PG Department of Botany, Hooghly Mohsin College. He is also engaged as a member of different academic bodies in colleges and in national and international research organizations. He has visited Austria, Germany, Thailand, South Africa, Italy, China, USA, Australia, Bulgaria, Singapore and Turkey as a Research Scientist. He is a Recipient of E.O.A.I. Award and Life-Time Achievement Award as a Distinguished Scientist in medicinal plants; published more than fifty research papers in national and international journals and proceedings and attended many national and international conferences in India and abroad as a speaker, invited lecturer and chairperson. He has specialization in Physiology and Biochemistry of medicinal and aromatic plants. His research interests include growth, development, conservation and promotion of medicinal and aromatic plants; establishment of potential maps as non-traditional cash crop in waste land and; sustainable use of the maps for health care of common people and upliftment of rural economy.

mohan49gh@yahoo.com

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