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## Role of folk nomenclature in understanding and managing plant diversity

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### Abstract

Folk nomenclature is how cultures name, identify and classify living organisms. Previous studies have indicated that folk classification will eventually prove helpful in better understanding of local biodiversity and primitive man's understanding of the natural Universe. Indigenous people name and classify living organisms based on their local history, experience, ethnoecological knowledge, and specific habitats connected with culturally important species. The folk plant names used by people of Gond tribe in the Bastar region of central India provide vital information on plant morphological traits and plant-environment interactions. The Gonds' indigenous language has extensive terminologies related to plants. This specific biocultural diversity needs to be addressed as the indigenous knowledge is disintegrating and could be useful for future biodiversity management. Therefore, the study aims to document and analyse the local plant nomenclature in the context of biodiversity management. The study was part of a Ph.D. thesis and conducted over a span of 4 months in selected Gond villages in three districts across the Bastar region of Chhattisgarh. Important stakeholders in the field such as village heads, Biodiversity Management Committees (BMC), District Forest Officers and plant knowledge holders were identified during the initial phase. The study sites were randomly sampled villages/hamlets. The data were collected through interviewing informants selected by snowball and purposive sampling. Followed by identification, data was collected using focus group discussions to enlist local names, household interviews for meanings of names and 'walk in the woods' method to document identification strategies. The herbarium specimens of plant species investigated were collected, identified taxonomically and deposited at the Herbarium and Raw drug repository at Trans-disciplinary University, Bangalore. 210 plant species belonging to 90 families were documented including herbs, shrubs, trees, climbers and tubers. Analysis of their folk names revealed that the local names describe vital information on species habitat, morphology, phenology, uses and taste characteristics. The results also showed the studied community has a specific system of classification and naming of plants. Data acquired could be useful for local stakeholders working on plant management and biodiversity conservation.

**Keywords:** Agrobiodiversity, biodiversity conservation, ethnobotany