

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

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Biological Diversity (often abbreviated as Biodiversity) is the basic to understand the dynamic biological world in term of ecology, behaviour, living trends, richness, utility, endemism and the evolution of different species. Plants are of the important component of biodiversity, on which almost all living organisms depends to survive. To record and enlist the biodiversity of plant kingdom, floristic exploration and documentation plays a significant role and it helps in surveying the bio-potential attributes and utilities. Emphasis on conservation, sustainable utilization and management of biodiversity for mankind are an increasing demand for documentation of biodiversity.

### 2.1 Floristic study in India

The floristic exploration in India has a long illustrated history which laid the foundation of the present taxonomic work. Many taxonomists [1-4] stated that floristic exploration in India was initiated by William Roxburgh who has ample contributions to the record of Indian flora. "Plants of the Coast of Coromandel" (3 Vols.) and the "Flora Indica" (3 Vols.) [5,6] are two of his significant works, which contained not only descriptions of a large number of wild flowering plants but also a large collection of striking illustrations of ca. 2533 plant species. After Roxburgh, Nathaniel Wallich (1786-1854) and many other pioneers viz. Francis Buchanan (1762-1829), William Griffith (1810-1846), Hugh Falconer (1808-1865) and Thomas Thomson (1817-1978) explored flora of India and its sub-continent. Wallich collected 7693 plant specimens and published his work in "Plantae Asiaticae

Rariores” (1829-1832) [7]. T. Thomson and Sir J.D. Hooker have done extensive floristic survey during 1848-1850 and their floristic works were published in “Flora Indica” (1855). Further, Sir J.D. Hooker with Clarke, Anderson, Bennett, Edgeworth and Lawson carried out an elaborate floristic work and published- “The Flora of British India” in VII volumes (1872-1897) [8]. Other contemporary plant collectors in India were Graham (1386) from Bombay; Master (1840) from Bengal; Elliot (1859) and Anderson (1859) from Lucknow; Beddome (1863) from Madras; Stewart (1869) from Punjab; Beddome (1869-74) from South India; Duthie (1883) and Cameron (1894) from Mysore. In 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, numerous floras of region/states were published by different researchers, among them, The Flora of the Bombay Presidency by Cooke [9]; Bengal Plants by Prain, [10]; Flora of the Upper Gangetic Plains and the adjacent Siwalik and Sub-Himalayan tracts by Duthie [11]; Flora of the Presidency of Madras by Gamble and Fischer [12] and Flora of Assam by Kanjilal *et al.* [13] are notable contributions. After establishing of Botanical Survey India (B.S.I.) in 1890 extensive floristic explorations were conducted in different parts of India resulting to Flora of Himachal Pradesh by Chowdhery *et al.* [14]; Flora of Karnataka by Sharma *et al.* [15]; Flora of Tamil Nadu by Nair *et al.* Vol. I and by Henry Vol. II and III [16-18]; Flora of Rajasthan by Shetty and Singh [19]; Flora of Sikkim by Hajra and Verma [20]; Flora of Maharashtra State by Sharma *et al.* [21]; Flora of Jammu and Kashmir by Singh *et al.* [22]; Flora of Kerala by Daniel [23] and Flora of Sunderban Biosphere Reserve by Debnath *et al.* [24].

## **2.2 Floristic and Ethnobotanical works in North East India particularly in Assam**

The North Eastern region of India falls under Indo- Malaya and Himalayan Biodiversity Hotspot of India. North Eastern region is characterised by heavy monsoonal rainfall and high humidity which varied along altitudinal gradients. This eco-physiographically diverse region supports wide range of vegetation from tropical rainforest to alpine vegetation harbouring enormous plant diversity with high level of endemism. Much of the India's plant diversity are found in north eastern region that attracts a considerable numbers of botanist and taxonomists to work in this region since early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Wallich was the pioneer for botanical explorations in this region and collected plant specimens from Sylhet, Chittagong, Meghalaya and Brahmaputra valley during 1826-1836. Under his supervision many eminent plant explorers collected plants from composite Assam viz., Buchanan-Hamilton for Assam; Smith and Francis de Silva for Sylhet, Khasia and Jaintia Hills; Hendry Bruce for Chittagong and Sylhet; Mahmood for Chittagong and Scott for Manipur [25].

However, the very first conservator of Forest of Assam, Mann (1870-1885), was the first to make systematic collection of plants from the former Assam (entire North Eastern province of India) with the advice of Brandis, the Inspector General of Forest, Dehra Dun. Many collections of Mann are preserved in Shillong, then Headquarter of Assam Forest Department (ASSAM). After Mann, U.N. Kanjilal, P.C. Kanjilal, R.N. De and A. Das emphasised in botanical explorations resulting to "Flora of Assam" (1934-1940),

the only regional flora of the erstwhile Assam with IV Volumes. During the process of publication of Flora of Assam, L.N. Bor collected Grasses from most part of the erstwhile Assam since 1936 and published the 5th volume of the series in 1940. Many other notable botanists also took explorations in the NE Region viz. Griffith (1842-1848), Jenkins (1834-1854), Gibson (1837), Robinson (1841), George King (1871-1897), Mann (1875-1877), Watt (1882-1883) and Gammie (1894). Thomson and Hooker explored the North East India along with Eastern Himalaya and Sikkim, Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Sylhet and Chittagong during the year 1848- 1851. In 20th century, Eastern Regional Circle (ERC) of Botanical Survey of India at Shillong and B.S.I. station at Itanagar worked for many regional floras and published viz., Flora of Jowai and vicinity by Balakrishnan [26]; Flora of Tripura by Deb [27]; Flora of Sikkim by Hajra and Verma [28]; Materials for the Flora of Arunachal Pradesh by Hajra *et al.*, [29]; Orchids of Nagaland by Hynniewta *et al.*, [30]; Flora of Manipur by Singh *et al.*, [31]; Flora of Mizoram by Singh *et al.*, [32]. Monocots were also given equal attention during those days, likewise Rao and Verma [33-39] published the Materials for the Monocot Flora of Assam and Shukla [40] published The Grasses of North Eastern India. Panigrahi also contributed a lot for this region particularly on Monocots [41-45].

Chowdhury is the pioneer in the taxonomic studies particularly in Assam (present) and contributed a lot in the floristic explorations of Assam. With the association of many other botanists he published "Assam's Flora-Present Status of Vascular Plants' in 2005 [46-60]. Borthakur is another most prominent

botanist of this region and has contributed a major part particularly in the field of Floristics and Ethnobotany [61-79]. Rao in collaboration with other taxonomists published many works from Assam [80-85]. Baruah contributed in the field of Orchid Flora [86-94]. Importantly Borthakur and Barooah published Diversity and Distribution of Bamboos of Assam in 2003. Barooah also published Plant Diversity of Assam: A checklist of Angiosperms and Gymnosperms [95-99]. Importantly Das *et al.*, published Flora of Barak Valley of Assam [100]. Apart from this many other workers has contributed numbers of publications in the form of local floras, monographs, thesis and other forms. Some of them are – Rajkhowa worked on Forest types of Assam [101]; Bhatnagar worked on the Floristic composition of some Hollong (*Dipterocarpus macrocarpus*), Nahor (*Mesua ferrea*) forests of Assam [102]; Subha Rao published *Polygonum* from Assam [103]; Bhatnagar also worked on weeds and bamboos of Assam [104]; Ohwi published Monocot flora of Assam [105]; Phytosociological studies in some evergreen (Hollong-Nahor) forests of Assam was carried out by Bhatnagar [106]; Das worked on woodlands of Assam and economic function management of Kaziranga National Park [107,108]; Bhattacharjee worked on Weed Flora of Greater Guwahati [109]; Verma worked on Cyperaceae of Assam and neighbouring areas[110]; Hajra worked on Botany of Manas and Kaziranga National Park [111,112] and Baruah published Orchids of Brahmaputra valley [113]. Apart from these many other workers contributed important knowledge to the floristic and ethnobotanical works of Assam where the work of Borthakur is noteworthy. He contributed in the field of folk medicine in different parts of Assam for different communities [114-122];

Basumatary worked on *In vitro* propagation of Orchids and ethnobotany of Bodos [123,124]; Bezbaruah worked on plant diversity of Manas [125]; Biswas published plant diversity of Bournihat Valley [126]; Bora published ethnobotany of Morigaon [127,128]; Bora published ethnobotany of Rabha tribe [129]; Borkotoki worked on tea garden tribes of Nagaon [130]; Borhagohain worked on some Indo- Mongolian communities [131]; Changkia published folk medicine of Nagas [132]; Das worked on different communities [133-135] and different workers published many ethnobotanical works on Koch Rajbongshi, Garo, Rabha, Mishing [136-147]. Gogoi worked on the ethnobotany of Tai-Ahoms [148]; floristic study of Tinsukia district [149]; Orchid flora of Joypore [150]; Flora of Golaghat Sub-division [151]; Flora of Deepor Beel and some other ethnobotanical study [152-156]; Apong of Mishing community [157]; Flavouring plants of Assam [158] and Tai-Khamtis [159-162]; Goswami worked on *Dioscorea* [163]; Hajra is another prominent worker of Assam who published many works on floristic and ethnobotany particularly in Manas and Kaziranga National Park [164-167]; Handique carried out flora of erstwhile Kamrup while Hazarika published flora of Nagaon [168, 169]; Kalita worked on Zingiberaceae and Kar worked on dye yielding plants and *Garcinia* [170-172]; Malakar carried out aquatic angiosperms of Cachar while Medhi carried out the traditional plant resources of North Cachar [173,174]; Narzari worked on wild edible plants [175]; Nath worked on ethnobotany of Jaintia and Rongmai worked on Naga Tribes [176, 177]; Nath carried out Flora of Orang National Park [178]; Wild edible plants of Poba was done by Pegu [179]; Rout and Sajem reported ethnobotanical work from North Cachar Hill [180-183]; Roy

reported ethnobotany of Rabhas [184]; Saikia reported works on ethnobotany of Bodo tribes [185,186]; Sarkar worked on harbeceous plant of Karbi Anlong [187]; Sarma reported a study on traditional worshiping plants in Hindu religion from Nalbari and Sonitpur districts [188]; Swargiari reported anti-diabetic plants from Kokrajhar district [189]; Talukdar reported ethnobotany of Sonowal-Kochari while Tamuli reported on Zame tribe [190,191] and Teron reported ethnobotanical works on Karbis and Hill Tiwas [192- 194].

Hajra and Baishya [195] worked on Mishing, Roy [196] on Rabhas of Goalpara district, Sajem and Gosai [197] for Jaintias of North Cachar Hills district of Assam. Das [198] worked on ethnobotany of Koch-Rajbongshis of Bongaigaon district of Assam. Ethnobotanical study of Mishing tribe living in fringe villages of Kaziranga National Park of Assam was reported by Kutum *et al.*, [199]. Sharma and Pegu [200] reported the ethnobotany of religious and supernatural beliefs of the Mishing tribes of Assam with special reference to the *Dobur Uie*. Ethno-botanical studies on some indigenous plants used by the Bodo tribes of Udalguri district of Bodoland Territorial Autonomous District Area in Assam was reported by Saharia and Yasmin [201].

In recent past many new species has been described from Assam by different workers viz. *Centrosema pubescens*, *Pyrenaria khasiana var. lakhimpurensis*, *Cinnamomum assamicum*, *Murdannia assamica*, *Capsicum sonitpurensis*, *Smilax sailenii*, etc. [202-210] which reflects the ample scope of floristic study in the region. In respect to the work on Non Timber Forest Products (NTFPs), the study on NTFPs in Assam particularly is very limited. Dattagupta *et al.*, [211, 212] reported a study of NTFPs from Cachar district of

Assam; Sarma and Saikia reported NTFPs from Majuli [213] while Sarma *et al.*, reported NTFPs from erstwhile Sonitpur [214].

### **2.3 Floristic and ethnobotanical exploration in Sonitpur**

Limited studies have been conducted on floristic work from erstwhile Sonitpur district, which demands extensive works in the field of floristic and ethnobotany. Devi carried out her research on Herbaceous Angiosperms of Tezpur Sub division of Sonitpur district, Assam with special reference to taxonomy and scope of utilizations [215]. Wild edible plants of Sonitpur district was also reported by Devi [216]. Begam [217, 218] worked on the floristics and medicinal plant resources of Nameri National Park while Bora and Saikia [219-221] reported ethnobotany of Bodos from Gahpur. Considering the kind of works and reports available, it has been felt that floristic and ethnobotanical work in erstwhile Sonitpur district needs to be studied and explored. Therefore, an attempt has been made to investigate the floristic diversity of dicots and their ethnobotanical utilities among few selected tribes, which will strengthen the dicot floral record of erstwhile Sonitpur and will also serve as the additional data for the general Flora of Assam.

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