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4. Distribution and Utilization of Traditional Medicinal Plants in the Rural Ecosystem: A Micro-Level Study of Satara District

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Abstract

Satara district is rich in biodiversity, and due to the influence of the Western Ghats, a wide variety of traditional medicinal plants are found here. These plants play a significant role in rural life, traditional knowledge systems, and local healthcare practices. The present research aims to examine, at a micro level, the distribution, species diversity, and medicinal uses of traditional medicinal plants in the rural ecosystem of Satara district. The study is based on field visits to selected villages and forest areas, interviews, questionnaires, and direct observation of plant species. The findings reveal that the density of medicinal plants varies across hilly, forested, and semi-arid regions of the district. Local communities still rely on traditional healing practices, though some species are under threat due to a lack of conservation efforts and spatial variation in medicinal plant distribution, with higher species density in forest-dominated western talukas and lower density in semi-arid eastern regions

Keywords: Traditional medicinal plants, rural ecosystem, biodiversity, distribution patterns, Satara district, indigenous knowledge, conservation

1. Introduction

Medicinal plants have held a special place in Indian culture since ancient times. Classical Ayurvedic texts such as Charaka Samhita and Sushruta Samhita mention numerous medicinal plants and their therapeutic uses. Even today, in rural areas, local medicinal plants are used to treat ailments such as fever, cold, stomach pain, and skin diseases. Medicinal plant diversity in this region is closely linked with forest cover, rainfall distribution, altitude, and traditional land-use practices.