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Ethnobotany of dioecious species: Traditional knowledge on dioecious plants in India

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Abstract

Ethnopharmacological relevance

More than 15,000 angiosperm species are dioecious, i.e., having distinct male and female individual plants. The allocation of resources between male and female plants is different, and also variation in secondary metabolites and sex-biased herbivory is reported among dioecious plants. However, little is known about the ethnobotany of dioecious species and whether preferences exist for a specific gender, e.g., in food, medicine or timber.

Aim of the study

The aim of this study was: 1) to study whether Indian folk healers have preference for plant genders, and to document their knowledge and use of dioecious species; 2) to understand the concept of plant gender in Indian systems of medicine and folk medicine, and whether Ayurvedic literature includes any references to gender preference.

¹ These authors contributed equally to this work.

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