## BOOK REVIEW

*The Flora of the Indian Desert* by M. M. Bhandari. 435 pages, 136 figs. and 114 coloured photograps. 1990. Published by MPS Repros, Jodhpur. Price : Rs. 600.00 or US $ 60.00 or £ 40.00.

One of the major needs of all tropical countries today is cataloguing of the wild genetic resources for conservation and utilisation for the benefit of mankind. This task is all the more important and urgent when one realises that several hundred species have already vanished and many more are approaching the road to extinction. It is gratifying to note that floristic botanists in India have enthusiastically taken up this challenging task of exploration, identification and enumeration of floristic diversities of different biogeographical zones, as is evident by the publication of several regional floras in the last 1 or 2 decades.

The revised *Flora of the Indian Desert* is a unique and welcome contribution by Prof. Bhandari and reveals an ample evidence of first hand field knowledge, personal observations of the author on the desert plants of Indian region. The fact that this flora has appeared in its second print just after 12 years should speak of the utility and necessity of this arid zone flora. Despite the fact that this second revised edition has basically retained its original frame and format, 70 species are added afresh alongwith the updating of nomenclature of all plants. The half-tone illustrations numbering 136 and as many as 114 colour pictures of plants are helpful in easy identification of plants, even by laymen.

The flora deals with the systematic account of 682 species belonging to 315 vascular plant families. Further, the author has clearly indicated as to how many of these are native and how many are introduced (Table 2). This aspect is very useful for all plant geographers. Keys to the families, genera and species and also species descriptions are all based on the actual herbarium collections and are workable. However, the best and most useful part of the present flora is the critical field notes and other notes on the utility of plants, distribution and even nomenclature that are provided under each species.

Although the production and get up of the book is impressive the printing could have been better. Very few printing mistakes could be noticed (*e.g.* on page 71 *Melhania* has been spelt as *Malhania*; on page 276 *Lepidagathis trinervis* has appeared as *Lepidagathis trivervis* and again this valid binomial is missing in Index). The price of the book, though on the higher side, could be ignored considering the utility and quality of the work.

On the whole *The Flora of Indian Desert* is a pioneering effort dealing not only with the plants of the desert region of India but also greatly strengthens the edifice of plant taxonomy in India. The book certainly deserves a placement on book shelves of all botanists, foresters, conservationists and even policy makers.

The author deserves rich compliments from the entire community of floristic botanists.

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