

Edible Tribal Mushroom Resources of Central India and Their Ethnological Aspects

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Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, two Central Indian states, have an area of 443,400 sq km, the bulk of which lies between latitudes 21° and 25° N and longitudes 74° and 84° E with a forest area of 15447 km²—i.e., about 37.84% of the total geographical area of the states. The region has the largest concentration of tribal population and forest dwellers, forming about one-fourth of the population of the states. Tribal members subsist to a great extent on nontraditional food sources, especially wild edible mushrooms, which grow abundantly during monsoon and post-monsoon seasons and are sometimes collected in large quantities for sale in urban markets.

A study conducted during 1997–2000 in tribal markets of 120 tribal localities of only five districts of two states yielded 53 edible mushrooms belonging to four orders, 11 families, and 18 genera of Basidiomycetes. They are mostly symbiotic (ectomycorrhizal), and few are saprotrophic or parasitic. Family Russulaceae dominated the mushroom flora represented by two genera—*Russula* with 23 species

and *Lactarius* with nine species. Other prominent mushroom genera include *Cantharellus* (2 spp.), *Termitomyces* (2 spp.), and *Pleurotus*, *Lentinus*, *Calvatia*, *Scleroderma*, *Lycoperdon*, *Astraeus*, *Clitocybe*, each with one species. Proximate analysis with reference to protein, fat, carbohydrate, crude fiber, ash and moisture content, and energy value of 22 common edible mushrooms have been determined. Most of them have been found to be on a par with common edible mushrooms in nutritional content, but few, including *Pleurotus florida* Eger (nom. nudum), *Lentinus cladopus* Lev., *Cantharellus* sp., *Clitocybe gibba* (Pers.:Fr.) P.Kumm., etc., showed higher protein and lower fat content. Inquiries regarding ethnological aspects of edible tribal mushrooms were made mainly from tribal heads (*Vaidyas* and *Guniyas*, etc.) through personal contacts and interviews. Information obtained had revealed that many mushrooms, apart from being used for edible purpose, are also used by tribes for different ailments. These aspects will be discussed in the present communication.