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Indian subcontinent – A destination and potential customer for fungal diversity**A N Rai**

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Indian motherland has an area of 3287263 km² bearing a big population to the tune of 1.3 billion people. Majority of our countrymen totally depend for food and livelihood on agricultural, horticultural, forest and other sectors on their produce. Being an agriculture base country if something goes wrong in any way to the productivity then it becomes a major concern for all of us. As we all know biodiversity is continuously decreasing day by day because of habitat degradation, various microbial plant diseases, abrupt climate change and many more factors. At this junction, all the national and international organizations are giving a call to conserve the biodiversity for our future existence so much so that this slogan has become a global concern. India lies in between Indo-Himalayan ecozone and contains 3 biodiversity hot spots. About 24.16 % of the total available land is under forest cover. We are the 7th largest and fastest growing economy. In our GDP agriculture and allied sectors impart very important role. However, the yield somehow, sometimes shows a decline and attract the attention of all the concerned. The diseases are caused by a variety of microorganisms of which fungi are the foremost. Therefore, this is high time and there is an urgent need for survey, collections, identification and conservation of these fungal organisms so that possible control measures can be adopted. Fungal organisms are so harmful and dangerous that sometimes due to colossal loss they have caused various famines. I am actively engaged in exploring the fungal diversity from the forest flora of different states of Indian subcontinent from the last 30 years. We have made fungal surveys from possible forest patches of various states such as U.P., M.P., and some parts of Jammu and Kashmir. We have extensively and intensively surveyed the state of Madhya Pradesh being almost in the centre of India. This state (M.P.) is a vast state having a large no. of national parks, wild life sanctuaries and biosphere reserves which provide the additional beauty to the cultural and national heritage. This constitutes a sort of paradise for the growth and development of the fungal diversity. We have high hopes and the scope is limitless for the survey, collection, identification and conservation of the fungal biodiversity as no one knows when and how some of these valuable fungal forms might be lost forever. During the course of survey, we have been able to encounter a large number of powdery mildews, downy mildews, blights, sooty molds, black mildews, tar spots, rusts and many more symptoms. This investigation will certainly enrich the pre-existing treasure of fungi of India in general and different states. This will also directly or indirectly lead to the upliftment of the status/social status (socio economic condition) of the forest dwellers and tribes totally depending on the forests and their produce.

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