

F-03: Sociological definition of flora in the North Central Province

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The social definition of flora in one society may be completely different from that of another. This paper tries to examine the major sociological classifications of the selected flora varieties in the N.C.P.

Maminiyawa village near Maradankadawela in Kekirawa electorate, Anuradhapura District, N.C.P. was selected for the study. Non home garden flora species were studied. Ideas and opinions of the people in this area, were investigated using informal discussions and the focus group method.

Many species of flora varieties in the area have been socially accepted and certain values given to them by the people. These qualitative meanings and related values cannot be hierarchially ordered.

According to the villagers' classification of plant species in their locality, it's very clear that their environmental knowledge is extremely high. They do not know the pH value of the soil or nitrogen concentration of the soil; but the quality of the soil is determined by them with reference to specific flora naturally growing on the soil. *Mudamahana* is a small medicinal plant, growing in the upland or muddy land and its presence indicates the presence of substantial soil fertility and an adequate supply of nitrogen in the soil.

Another example is Mee (*Madhuca longifolia*), a multipurpose tree and all the components of the tree are valuable: flowers, wood, leaves, seeds, oil, bark and roots. People of the area think that this tree absorbs alkaline or saline elements and thus prevents the soil from becoming saline.

The majority of the trees in and around the surrounding forest areas are categorised as multipurpose trees, according to their special qualities. Some tree varieties are classified specially for agricultural purposes such as agricultural implements. In terms of the findings of this study, there were about 45 varieties of plants of which the green leaves were used for human consumption.

Eight creeping plant types were identified for extraction of fibre for making cords. In addition, the people of the area have identified 12 different plant species which they use for green manuring. People have classified plants in their environment into 10 different classes of flora species and they had identified them as such, in terms of rural folk cultural estimation.