

EDITED BY
SANTOSH KUMAR UPADHYAY
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BIOPROSPECTING OF PLANT BIODIVERSITY FOR INDUSTRIAL MOLECULES



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**Bioprospecting of Plant Biodiversity
for Industrial Molecules**

Bioprospecting of Plant Biodiversity for Industrial Molecules

Edited by

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Contents

List of Contributors xv

Preface xxi

About the Editors xxiii

Acknowledgments xxv

1 An Introduction to Plant Biodiversity and Bioprospecting 1
Ramya Krishnan, Sudhir P. Singh, and Santosh Kumar Upadhyay

- 1.1 Introduction 1
- 1.2 What is Bioprospecting 1
 - 1.2.1 Chemical Prospecting 3
 - 1.2.2 Gene Prospecting 3
 - 1.2.3 Bionic Prospecting 4
- 1.3 Significance of Plants in Bioprospecting 4
- 1.4 Pros and Cons of Bioprospecting 5
- 1.5 Recent Trends in Bioprospecting 6
- 1.6 Omics for Bioprospecting and in silico Bioprospecting 7
- 1.7 An Insight into the Book 8
- References 10

2 Entomotoxic Proteins from Plant Biodiversity to Control the Crop Insect Pests 15

Surjeet Kumar Arya, Shatrughan Shiva, and Santosh Kumar Upadhyay

- 2.1 Introduction 15
- 2.2 Lectins 16
- 2.3 Proteinase Inhibitors 21
- 2.4 α -Amylase Inhibitors 24
- 2.5 Ribosome-Inactivating Proteins (RIPs) 27
- 2.6 Arcelins 30
- 2.7 Defensins 32
- 2.8 Cyclotides 32
- 2.9 Canatoxin-Like Proteins 33
- 2.10 Ureases and Urease-Derived Encrypted Peptides 33
- 2.11 Chitinases 36
- 2.12 Proteases 36

- 2.13 Conclusions 37
- References 37

3 Bioprospecting of Natural Compounds for Industrial and Medical Applications: Current Scenario and Bottleneck 53

Sameer Dixit, Akanchha Shukla, Vinayak Singh, and Santosh Kumar Upadhyay

- 3.1 Introduction 53
- 3.2 Why Bioprospecting Is Important 54
- 3.3 Major Sites for Bioprospecting 54
- 3.4 Pipeline of Bioprospecting 55
- 3.5 Biopiracy: An Unethical Bioprospecting 55
- 3.6 Bioprospecting Derived Products in Agriculture Industry 56
- 3.7 Bioprospecting Derived Products for Bioremediation 57
- 3.8 Bioprospecting for Nanoparticles Development 59
- 3.9 Bioprospecting Derived Products in Pharmaceutical Industry 60
- 3.10 Conclusion and Future Prospects 63
- Acknowledgments 64
- References 64

4 Role of Plants in Phytoremediation of Industrial Waste 73

Pankaj Srivastava and Nishita Giri

- 4.1 Introduction 73
- 4.2 Different Toxic Materials from Industries 75
 - 4.2.1 Fly Ash from Thermal Power Plants 75
 - 4.2.2 Heavy Metals and Pesticides in Environment 75
 - 4.2.2.1 Cadmium 75
 - 4.2.2.2 Arsenic 76
 - 4.2.2.3 Chromium 76
 - 4.2.2.4 Pesticide in Environment 76
 - 4.2.3 Phytoremediation Technology in Present Scenario 77
 - 4.2.4 Conclusion 80
- References 81

5 Ecological Restoration and Plant Biodiversity 91

Shalini Tiwari and Puneet Singh Chauhan

- 5.1 Introduction 91
- 5.2 Major Areas of Bioprospecting 92
 - 5.2.1 Chemical/Biochemical Prospecting 92
 - 5.2.2 Gene/Genetic Prospecting 92
 - 5.2.3 Bionic Prospecting 93
- 5.3 Bioprospecting: Creating a Value for Biodiversity 93
- 5.4 Conservation and Ecological Restoration for Sustainable Utilization of Resources 94
- 5.5 Biodiversity Development Agreements 95
- 5.6 Conclusions 96
- References 96

6	Endophyte Enzymes and Their Applications in Industries	99
	<i>Rufin Marie Kouipou Toghueo and Fabrice Fekam Boyom</i>	
6.1	Introduction	99
6.2	The Rationale for Bioprospecting Endophytes for Novel Industrial Enzymes	100
6.3	Endophytes as a Source of Industrial Enzymes	101
6.3.1	Amylases	104
6.3.2	Asparaginase	105
6.3.3	Cellulases	107
6.3.4	Chitinases	109
6.3.5	Laccases	110
6.3.6	Lipases	111
6.3.7	Proteases	113
6.3.8	Xylanases	115
6.3.9	Other Enzymes Produced by Endophytes	116
6.3.9.1	AHL-Lactonase	116
6.3.9.2	Agarase	116
6.3.9.3	Chromate Reductase	116
6.3.9.4	β -Mannanase	117
6.4	Overview of the Methods Used to Investigate Endophytes as Sources of Enzymes	117
6.5	Strategies Applied to Improve the Production of Enzymes by Endophytes	118
6.6	Conclusion	119
	Acknowledgements	122
	References	122
7	Resource Recovery from the Abundant Agri-biomass	131
	<i>Shilpi Bansal, Jyoti Singh Jadaun, and Sudhir P. Singh</i>	
7.1	Introduction	131
7.2	Potential of Agri-biomass to Produce Different Products	133
7.2.1	Conversion of Agri-biomass into Valuable Chemicals	133
7.2.2	Energy Production Using Agri-biomass	134
7.2.3	Role of Agri-biomass in Heavy Metal Decontamination	135
7.2.4	Manufacturing of Lightweight Materials	137
7.3	Case Studies	138
7.3.1	Utilization of Paddy Waste	138
7.3.2	Utilization of Mustard Waste	140
7.3.3	Utilization of Maize Waste	140
7.3.4	Utilization of Horticulture Waste	142
7.4	Conclusion and Future Perspectives	144
	References	144
8	Antimicrobial Products from Plant Biodiversity	153
	<i>Pankaj Kumar Verma, Shikha Verma, Nalini Pandey, and Debasis Chakrabarty</i>	
8.1	Introduction	153
8.2	Use of Plant Products as Antimicrobials: Historical Perspective	154
8.3	Major Groups of Plants-Derived Antimicrobial Compound	156

- 8.3.1 Simple Phenols and Phenolic Acids 156
 - 8.3.1.1 Flavonoids 156
 - 8.3.1.2 Quinones 160
 - 8.3.1.3 Tannins 160
 - 8.3.1.4 Coumarins 161
- 8.3.2 Terpenes and Essential Oils 162
- 8.3.3 Alkaloids 163
- 8.4 Mechanisms of Antimicrobial Activity 163
 - 8.4.1 Plant Extracts with Efflux Pump Inhibitory Activity 164
 - 8.4.2 Plant Extracts with Bacterial Quorum Sensing Inhibitory Activity 164
 - 8.4.3 Plant Extracts with Biofilm Inhibitory Activity 165
- 8.5 Conclusions and Future Prospects 165
- References 166

- 9 Functional Plants as Natural Sources of Dietary Antioxidants 175**
Ao Shang, Jia-Hui Li, Xiao-Yu Xu, Ren-You Gan, Min Luo, and Hua-Bin Li
 - 9.1 Introduction 175
 - 9.2 Evaluation of the Antioxidant Activity 176
 - 9.3 Antioxidant Activity of Functional Plants 176
 - 9.3.1 Vegetables 176
 - 9.3.2 Fruits 177
 - 9.3.3 Medicinal Plants 181
 - 9.3.4 Cereal Grains 181
 - 9.3.5 Flowers 181
 - 9.3.6 Microalgae 181
 - 9.3.7 Teas 182
 - 9.4 Applications of Plant Antioxidants 182
 - 9.4.1 Food Additives 182
 - 9.4.2 Dietary Supplements 183
 - 9.5 Conclusions 183
 - References 184

- 10 Biodiversity and Importance of Plant Bioprospecting in Cosmetics 189**
K. Sri Manjari, Debarati Chakraborty, Aakanksha Kumar, and Sakshi Singh
 - 10.1 Biodiversity, Bioprospecting, and Cosmetics – A Harmony of Triad 189
 - 10.2 The Fury of Synthetic Chemicals in Cosmetics on Health 191
 - 10.3 India's Biodiversity and Its Traditional Knowledge/Medicine in Cosmetics 191
 - 10.3.1 Herbal Cosmetics 194
 - 10.4 Use of Plant-Based Products in the Cosmetic Industry 194
 - 10.5 Green Cosmetics – Significance and Current Status of the Global Market 196
 - 10.5.1 Sustainable Development Goals (Economic, Ecological Benefits) in Cosmetic Industry – How Bioprospecting and Green Cosmetics Can Help? 199
 - 10.6 Ethical and Legal Implications of Bioprospecting and Cosmetics 200
 - 10.6.1 International Laws Regulating Bioprospecting 201
 - 10.6.2 Indian Law Regulating Bioprospecting 202
 - 10.6.3 Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) 202

- 10.6.4 World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) 203
- 10.6.5 Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge, and Folklore (IGC) 203
- 10.7 Laws Regulating Cosmetics 203
- 10.8 Role of Biotechnology in Bioprospecting and Cosmetics 204
- References 205

- 11 Therapeutic Lead Secondary Metabolites Production Using Plant *In Vitro* Cultures 211**
Vikas Srivastava, Aksar Ali Chowdhary, Skalzang Lhamo, Sonal Mishra, and Shakti Mehrotra
- 11.1 Introduction 211
- 11.2 Secondary Metabolites and Pharmaceutical Significance 212
- 11.3 Plant *In Vitro* Cultures and Strategies for Secondary Metabolite Production 214
 - 11.3.1 Precursor Feeding 214
 - 11.3.2 Metabolic Engineering 215
 - 11.3.3 Elicitation 216
 - 11.3.4 Bioreactor Up-scaling 216
- 11.4 Exemplification of the Utilization of Different Types of Plant *In Vitro* Cultures for SMs Production 217
 - 11.4.1 Shoot Culture 217
 - 11.4.2 Adventitious Root Culture 220
 - 11.4.3 Callus and Cell Suspension Culture 220
 - 11.4.4 Hairy Root Cultures 221
- 11.5 Conclusion 221
- References 222

- 12 Plant Diversity and Ethnobotanical Knowledge of Spices and Condiments 231**
Thakku R. Ramkumar and Subbiah Karuppusamy
- 12.1 Introduction 231
- 12.2 Habitat and Diversity of Major Spices and Condiments in India 232
- 12.3 Ethnobotanical Context of Spices and Condiments in India 241
- 12.4 Major Spices and Condiments in India 243
 - 12.4.1 Black Pepper 243
 - 12.4.2 Capsicums 243
 - 12.4.3 Cinnamomum 244
 - 12.4.4 Coriander 244
 - 12.4.5 Cumin 244
 - 12.4.6 Cardamom 245
 - 12.4.7 Fennel 245
 - 12.4.8 Ginger 245
 - 12.4.9 Mustard Seed 246
 - 12.4.10 Nutmeg 246
 - 12.4.11 Saffron 246
 - 12.4.12 Turmeric 246
 - 12.4.13 Vanilla 247

- 12.5 Importance of Indian Spices 247
- 12.6 Spice Plantation and Cultivation in India 249
- 12.7 Cultivation Technology of Caper Bud in India 250
- 12.8 Export of Indian Spices 251
- 12.9 Conservation Efforts Against Selected Uncultivated Wild Spices and Condiments 254
- 12.10 Institutions and Organization Dedicated for Research and Development in Spices and Condiments in India 254
- 12.11 Recent Researches on Spices and Condiments 255
- 12.12 Conclusion and Future Perspectives 256
- Acknowledgments 256
- Authors' Contribution 256
- References 257

- 13 Plants as Source of Essential Oils and Perfumery Applications 261**
Monica Butnariu
- 13.1 Background 261
- 13.2 Biochemistry of Essential Oils 262
 - 13.2.1 The Physiological Mechanism of Biosynthesis of Essential Oils 262
 - 13.2.2 The Role of Terpenes in Plants 263
 - 13.2.3 The Prevalence Essential Oils in Plants 264
 - 13.2.4 Paths of Biosynthesis of Volatile Compounds in Plants 265
 - 13.2.4.1 Metabolic Cycles Involved in the Biosynthesis of Different Groups of Secondary Metabolites 265
 - 13.2.4.2 Metabolic Cycles of Biosynthesis of Phenolic Compounds 266
 - 13.3 The Metabolism Terpenes 269
 - 13.3.1 Metabolic Cycle of Mevalonic Acid Biosynthesis 271
 - 13.3.2 Metabolic Cycle of Methylerythritol Phosphate Biosynthesis 272
 - 13.4 The Role of Essential Oils and the Specificity of Their Accumulation in Plants 272
 - 13.5 Essential Oils from Plants in Perfume 281
 - 13.5.1 Linalool (3,7-dimethylocta-1,6-dien-3-ol), C₁₀H₁₈O 286
 - 13.5.2 Camphor (1,7,7-trimethylbicyclo [2.2.1] heptan-2-one), C₁₀H₁₆O 286
 - 13.5.3 Cedrol (1S, 2R, 5S, 7R, 8R)-(2,6,6,8-tetramethyltricyclo [5.3.1.01,5] undecan-8-ol or cedran-8-ol), C₁₅H₂₆O 286
 - 13.5.4 Eugenol (2-methoxy-4-allylphenol; 1-hydroxy-2-methoxy-4-allylbenzene), C₁₀H₁₂O₂ 287
 - 13.5.5 Citral (3,7-dimethyl-2,6-octadien-1-al), C₁₀H₁₆O 287
 - 13.5.6 Vanillin (4-hydroxy-3-methoxybenzaldehyde) C₈H₈O₃ 287
 - 13.5.7 Syringe Aldehyde (4-hydroxy-3,5-dimethoxybenzaldehyde) C₉H₁₀O₄ 288
 - 13.6 Conclusions and Remarks 289
 - References 290

 - 14 Bioprospection of Plants for Essential Mineral Micronutrients 293**
Nikita Bisht and Puneet Singh Chauhan
 - 14.1 Introduction 293
 - 14.2 Plants as a Source of Mineral Micronutrients 293

- 14.3 Bioavailability of Micronutrients from Plants 294
 - 14.3.1 Bioavailability of Fe and Zn 294
 - 14.3.2 Impact of Food Processing on Micronutrient Bioavailability from Plant Foods 295
- 14.4 Manipulating Plant Micronutrients 296
 - 14.4.1 Improving Bioavailability of Micronutrients from Plant Foods 296
 - 14.4.2 Metabolic Engineering of Micronutrients in Crop Plants 297
- 14.5 Microbes in the Biofortification of Micronutrients in Crops 298
- 14.6 Conclusions 299
 - References 299

- 15 Algal Biomass: A Natural Resource of High-Value Biomolecules 303**
Dinesh Kumar Yadav, Ananya Singh, Variyata Agrawal, and Neelam Yadav
 - 15.1 Introduction 303
 - 15.2 Carbon Dioxide Capture and Sequestration 304
 - 15.3 Algae in High-Value Biomolecules Production 306
 - 15.3.1 Proteins, Peptides, and Amino Acids 310
 - 15.3.2 Polyunsaturated Fatty Acids (PUFAs) 311
 - 15.3.3 Polysaccharides 312
 - 15.3.4 Pigments 313
 - 15.3.4.1 Chlorophylls 313
 - 15.3.4.2 Carotenoids 314
 - 15.3.4.3 Phycobilliproteins (PBPs) 315
 - 15.3.5 Vitamins 316
 - 15.3.6 Polyphenols 316
 - 15.3.7 Phytosterols 317
 - 15.3.8 Phytohormones 318
 - 15.3.9 Minerals 318
 - 15.4 Algae in Biofuel Production/Generation 319
 - 15.4.1 Thermochemical Conversion 319
 - 15.4.2 Chemical Conversion by Transesterification 321
 - 15.4.3 Biochemical Conversion 322
 - 15.4.4 Photosynthetic Microbial Fuel Cell (MFC) 324
 - 15.5 Algae in Additional Applications 325
 - 15.5.1 Algae as Livestock Feed and Nutrition 325
 - 15.5.2 Algae as Feed in Aquaculture 326
 - 15.5.3 Algae as Bio-Fertilizer 326
 - 15.6 Conclusion and Future Prospects 326
 - References 327

- 16 Plant Bioprospecting for Biopesticides and Bioinsecticides 335**
Aradhana Lucky Hans and Sangeeta Saxena
 - 16.1 Introduction 335
 - 16.2 Current Scenario in India 336
 - 16.3 Plants-Based Active Compounds 337
 - 16.3.1 Azadirachtin 337
 - 16.3.2 Pyrethrins 338

16.3.3	Rotenone	338
16.3.4	Sabadilla	339
16.3.5	Ryania	339
16.3.6	Nicotine	339
16.3.7	Acetogenins	339
16.3.8	Capsaicinoids	339
16.3.9	Essential Oils	340
16.4	Advantages and Future Prospects of Bioinsecticides	340
16.5	Conclusions	342
	Acknowledgment	343
	References	343

17 Plant Biomass to Bioenergy 345
Mrinalini Srivastava and Debasis Chakrabarty

17.1	Introduction	345
17.2	Plant Biomass	346
17.2.1	Types of Biomass (Source: [17])	347
17.3	Bioenergy	347
17.4	Biomass Conversion into Bioenergy	348
17.4.1	Cogeneration	349
17.5	The Concept of Biomass Energy (Source: [27])	349
17.5.1	Thermochemical Conversion	349
17.5.1.1	Direct Combustion	349
17.5.1.2	Pyrolysis	349
17.5.1.3	Gasification	349
17.5.2	Biochemical Conversion	350
17.5.2.1	Anaerobic Digestion	350
17.5.2.2	Alcohol Fermentation	350
17.5.2.3	Hydrogen Production from Biomass	350
17.6	Use of Biofuel in Transportation	350
17.7	Production of Biogas and Biomethane from Biomass	350
17.8	Generation of Biofuel	351
17.8.1	Bioethanol	351
17.8.2	Biodiesel	352
17.9	Advanced Technologies in the Area of Bioenergy	352
17.10	Conclusion	353
	Acknowledgment	354
	References	354

18 Bioenergy Crops as an Alternate Energy Resource 357
Garima Pathak and Shivanand Suresh Dudhagi

18.1	Introduction	357
18.2	Classification of Bioenergy Crops	358
18.2.1	First-Generation Bioenergy Crops	358
18.2.1.1	Sugarcane	359

18.2.1.2	Corn	359
18.2.1.3	Sweet Sorghum	359
18.2.1.4	Oil Crops	360
18.2.2	Second-Generation Bioenergy Crops	360
18.2.2.1	Switchgrass	360
18.2.2.2	Miscanthus	361
18.2.2.3	Alfalfa	361
18.2.2.4	Reed Canary Grass	361
18.2.2.5	Other Plants	361
18.2.3	Third-Generation Bioenergy Crops	362
18.2.3.1	Boreal Plants	362
18.2.3.2	Crassulacean Acid Metabolism (CAM) Plants	362
18.2.3.3	Eucalyptus	362
18.2.3.4	Agave	362
18.2.3.5	Microalgae	363
18.2.4	Dedicated Bioenergy Crops	363
18.2.5	Halophytes	363
18.3	Characteristics of Bioenergy Crops	364
18.3.1	Physiological and Ecological Traits	364
18.3.2	Agronomic and Metabolic Traits	364
18.3.3	Biochemical Composition and Caloric Content	365
18.4	Genetic Improvement of Bioenergy Crops	365
18.5	Environmental Impacts of Bioenergy Crops	366
18.5.1	Soil Quality	366
18.5.2	Water and Minerals	367
18.5.3	Carbon Sequestration	367
18.5.4	Phytoremediation	367
18.5.5	Biodiversity	368
18.6	Conclusion and Future Prospect	369
	References	369
19	Marine Bioprospecting: Seaweeds for Industrial Molecules	377
	<i>Achintya Kumar Dolui</i>	
19.1	Introduction	377
19.2	Seaweeds as Nutraceuticals and Functional Foods	378
19.3	Seaweeds in the Alleviation of Lifestyle Disorders	380
19.4	Anti-Inflammatory Activity of Seaweeds	381
19.5	Seaweed Is a Source of Anticoagulant Agent	381
19.6	Anticancer Property of Seaweed	382
19.7	Seaweeds as Antiviral Drugs and Mosquitocides	384
19.8	Use of Seaweeds in the Cosmeceutical Industry	385
19.9	Use of Seaweed as Contraceptive Agents	386
19.10	Extraction of Active Ingredients from Seaweed	388
19.10.1	Supercritical Fluid Extraction (SFE)	388
19.10.2	Ultrasound-Assisted Extraction (UAE)	389

19.10.3	Microwave-Assisted Extraction (MAE)	389
19.10.4	Enzyme-Assisted Extraction (EAE) and EMEA	390
19.11	Market Potential of Seaweeds	390
19.12	Conclusion	391
	References	391
20	Bioprospection of Orchids and Appraisal of Their Therapeutic Indications	401
	<i>Devina Ghai, Jagdeep Verma, Arshpreet Kaur, Kranti Thakur, Sandip V. Pawar, and Jaspreet K. Sembi</i>	
20.1	Introduction	401
20.2	Orchids as a Bioprospecting Resource	402
20.3	Orchids as Curatives in Traditional India	403
20.4	Therapeutics Indications of Orchids in Asian Region	403
20.5	Evidences of Medicinal Uses of Orchids in Ethnic African Groups	404
20.6	Orchids as a Source of Restoratives in Europe	405
20.7	Remedial Uses of Orchids in American and Australian Cultures	405
20.8	Scientific Appraisal of Therapeutic Indications of Orchids	406
20.8.1	Orchids as Potent Anticancer Agents	406
20.8.2	Immunomodulatory Activity in Orchids	412
20.8.3	Orchids and Their Antioxidant Potential	412
20.8.4	Antimicrobial Studies in Orchids	412
20.8.5	Orchids and Anti-inflammatory Activity	413
20.8.6	Antidiabetic Prospects in Orchids	413
20.8.7	Other Analeptic Properties in Orchids	414
20.9	Conclusions	414
	Acknowledgments	415
	References	415
	Index	425

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Preface

Nature has the reservoir for all the desired molecules in the form of biodiversity that includes microbial, animal, and plants. Bioprospection is very well-established method for the identification and isolation of new active molecules of desired activity. Researches are being conducted to exploit the biological resource for obtaining biomolecules of pharmaceutical, bioceutical, agricultural, bioremediation, etc. significance. The exploitation of bioactive significance in the natural compounds in the biosphere is required to be intensified with systematic and sustainable approaches. The expedition and validation of the scientific parameters in the ethnic knowledge, preservation of bioresource, and biotechnological advancement in the generation of efficient biological systems, keeping in mind the approach of societal development exploitation with nature's protection, are the current demand in scientific investigations.

Bioprospection is the exploration of economic potential in the biological resource mostly in terms of nutraceutical value. In recent decades, substantial attention has been given on a variety of bioresources for bioprospecting. For example, macro- and microalgae have been demonstrated to be a biomass value of nutraceutical, pharmaceutical, food, biomedical, bioenergetic importance.

Plants are a crucial biological component of the biosphere in the earth. The plant resource has served the humankind in several ways by providing food, feed, medicine, nutraceuticals, shelter, etc. About 3.9 lakh known plant species make the animals and other organisms' life possible at the earth. Plant bioprospecting is being performed since the existence of human life on the earth. Extensive investigations have been done to explore several phytochemicals, pharmaceuticals, antioxidants, etc. There is a need to develop plant products with prebiotic properties and with high bioavailable mineral micronutrients. A rich cultural knowledge associated with multifarious health beneficial aspects of plants is available in different parts of the world. Many plants of cosmetic and perfumery importance have been shown to be of great economic value. The plants grown for production of spices and condiments have significant societal and medicinal merits. Many lower plants have been demonstrated to exhibit potential in biopesticide development. Furthermore, this is an era of secondary agriculture by the valorization of the abundant residual plant biomass.

We firmly believe that this book will be an essential repository in obtaining the holistic knowledge of plants bioprospecting. The compiled information will be useful to academicians and researchers in augmenting their understandings on the aspects mentioned earlier.

About the Editors



Source: Santosh Kumar Upadhyay

Dr. Santosh Kumar Upadhyay is currently working as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Botany, Panjab University, Chandigarh, India. Prior to this, Dr. Upadhyay was DST-INSPIRE faculty at the National Agri-Food Biotechnology Institute, Mohali, Punjab, India. He did his doctoral work at the CSIR-National Botanical Research Institute, Lucknow, and received his Ph.D. in Biotechnology from UP Technical University, Lucknow, India. He has been working in the field of Plant Biotechnology for

more than 14 years. His present research focuses in the area of functional genomics. He is involved in the bioprospecting and characterization of various insect toxic proteins from plant biodiversity and defense and stress signaling genes in bread wheat. His research group at PU has characterized numerous important gene families and long noncoding RNAs related to the abiotic and biotic stress tolerance and signaling in bread wheat. He has also established the method for genome editing in bread wheat using CRISPR-Cas system and developed a tool SSinder for CRISPR target site prediction. His research contribution led the publication of more than 58 research papers in leading journals of international repute. Further, there are more than 5 national and international patents, 22 book chapters, and 6 books in his credit. In recognition of his substantial research record, he has been awarded NAAS Young scientist award (2017–2018) and NAAS-Associate (2018) from the National Academy of Agricultural Sciences, India, INSA Medal for Young Scientist (2013) from the Indian National Science Academy, India, NASI-Young Scientist Platinum Jubilee Award (2012) from the National Academy of Sciences, India, and Altech Young Scientist Award (2011). He has also been the recipient of the prestigious DST-INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship (2012) and SERB-Early Career Research Award (2016) from the Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India. Dr. Upadhyay also serves as a member of the editorial board and reviewer of several peer-reviewed international journals.

Dr. Sudhir P. Singh is currently Scientist at the Center of Innovative and Applied Bioprocessing (CIAB), Mohali, India. He has been working in the area of molecular biology and biotechnology for more than a decade. Currently, his primary focus of research is gene mining and biocatalyst engineering for the development of approaches for transformation of agro-industrial residues and under or unutilized side-stream biomass into value-added bio-products. He has explored the metagenomic resource from diverse habitats and developed enzyme systems for catalytic biosynthesis of functional sugar molecules such as D-allulose, turanose, fructooligosaccharides, glucooligosaccharides, 4-galactosyl-Kojibiose, xylooligosaccharides, levan, dextran biosynthesis, etc. Dr. Singh has published over 55 research articles, 4 review articles, and 4 books (edited). Further, he has five patents (granted) to his credit as an inventor. He has been conferred International Bioprocessing Association–Young Scientist Award (2017), School of Biosciences–Madurai Kamraj University (SBS-MKU) Genomics Award (2017), Professor Hira Lal Chakravarty Award, ISCA, DST, (2018), and Gandhian Young Technological Innovation Award to team (2019).

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1

An Introduction to Plant Biodiversity and Bioprospecting

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1.1 Introduction

There is an extensive diversity in life that has been disentangled and organized into coherent units called taxa. The five kingdom system of classification has simplified the life forms into five groups. These groups orchestrate information concerning a wide variety of characteristics such as morphological, genetic, metabolomic, ecological, etc. Kingdom Plantae is one of these five kingdoms that consists of all the plant forms on earth and is rich in its metabolomic characteristic. This kingdom is highly diverse and is composed of both seed bearing (Phanerogams) and seedless (Cryptogams) plants forming five broadly classified groups, i.e. algae, bryophytes, pteridophytes, gymnosperms, and angiosperms, which are evolutionarily related. Each of these groups consists of hundreds of thousands of known species, which in turn consist of a variety of chemicals called metabolites or more specifically secondary metabolites. These secondary metabolites or natural products are believed to possess certain biological activities that are used by the producer for their environmental and competitive fitness. Progressively, it became a paradigm that all the plants possess some potent biologically active substance/s that could have great commercial/therapeutic value to humans. It has been often argued that the currently available knowledge regarding the chemical diversity of the plant biome represents only a fraction of that diversity, hence paving way toward further explorations. Thus, their rich metabolomic diversity and its knowledge increase the opportunity for humans to utilize plants as a key resource for bioprospecting.

1.2 What is Bioprospecting

Let us widen our imaginations and visualize an underdeveloped rural village in India, where an old wise man is treating a sick man with his self-made herbal concoction comprising

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the roots of some wild plants, or, let us visualize him trying to squeeze a stream of juice from a bunch of leaves upon a snake-bitten area of a person's leg. Just after a few days, the concoction healed the patient of his fever and inflammations, and the juice rescued the patient from snake venom. Therefore, it could be assumed that the concoction made from the herbs might consist of metabolites having antimicrobial properties, and the juice of the leaves might consist of chemical/metabolite that had antivenom properties. Now again, let us visualize a group of scientists walking inside the same village, talking to this old wise man, collecting these herbs, and returning to their respective laboratories, where they try to screen these herbs for the presence of active compounds having antimicrobial or antivenom properties using modern technologies. This whole procedure of exploring biologically important/useful compounds from natural resources lays down foundations to the science of "bioprospecting." The former half of our visualization could be considered as "traditional bioprospecting," and the latter half of it could be considered as "modern bioprospecting." Traditional bioprospecting can even be traced back to as old as the bronze age. In 1991, a 5300-year-old corpse of an iceman "Otzi" was discovered in the Tyrolean Alps and was found to have a whipworm (*Trichuris trichiura*) infection. Surprisingly he was already equipped with the corresponding anthelmintic medicine, which is the fruiting body of the fungus *Piptoporus betulinus* [1, 2]. Thus, the utilization of natural resources for the interest of humans is as old as humankind itself, and what we follow today is just a modern and sophisticated version of this science.

The term "bioprospecting" was initially described by Reid et al. [3] as the science, where biological systems are screened for novel components that are of industrial, commercial, or scientific value. It includes the hunt for biological products that possess characteristics interesting to humankind. These characteristics could be considered to have great potentials in the field of therapeutics, agriculture, cosmetics, etc. Although the utilization of the biologically active properties of plant/animal extracts for various purposes was seen even before thousands of years, bioprospecting as a science for commercial and economic gains was introduced and progressed in and around the twentieth century. In 1958, vinblastine and vincristine, two therapeutic agents for cancer, were developed from the rosy periwinkle plant in Madagascar. These therapeutic agents were researched and manufactured by the company Eli Lilly with cues from the local shaman spiritual herbalists [4]. Further, prospecting in the wild has warranted many therapeutic agents, such as antibiotics and several other anticancer drugs. The modern biochemists and pharmacologists have been busy seeking ways to block or enhance the function of a target protein molecule for a cure to a particular disease. The classical combinatorial chemistry has its limits in the synthesis of new compounds when it comes to the exceedingly large and diverse number of the target proteins that are being identified. The diverse and continuously evolving structures of the natural products of Mother Nature may be a possible solution to these problems. Even as the rational drug designing with the help of combinatorial chemistry is becoming more important, natural products have been valuable for pharmaceutical companies owing to their wide structural diversity and their excellent adaptation to biological active structures [4]. A fast exploration of any medicine cabinet or a cosmetic shop directly indicates the share of bioprospecting natural products, by astute businessmen in building the global economy.

Chemicals, genes, and designs are the three major sources of motivation that biodiversity extends to contemporary scientists. Thus, the science of bioprospecting finds its