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**ABSTRACTS**

Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka  
96, Ananda Coomaraswamy Mawatha  
Colombo 07, Sri Lanka

## Management of Existing Medicinal Plants through Community Participation in the Dawatagolla Forest

Fareena Ruzaik<sup>1</sup>

Medicinal plants as a non-wood forest product play an important role in the Ayurvedic healing system of medicine which has laid down historical records since Aryan periods. Since then, the general public has dependence on Ayurvedic traditional medicine system which should be managed with the participation of the community. To investigate this relationship from a management perspective, the Dawatagolla Forest (DF) was selected as a study area. Dawatagolla Forest (DF) is a fairly dense forest with the indigenous and exotic species. DF is situated at Alawwa in the Kurunegala District with the extent of 30 hectares consisting mainly of Jack (*Artocarpus intergrifolia*) and Mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*). Due to the increasing trend of human/forest relationship, the nearby inhabitants use this forest to fulfill their day-to-day needs, and more medicinal and rare species are destroyed. Therefore, the existing few numbers of species should be conserved with the participation of community together with other relevant stakeholders. The objective of this study is to explore the existing medicinal plants and provide suggestions to manage the DF through community participation. The data has been collected through a field study and interviews/discussions with individuals, especially *Vedamahattayas* and Forest Range Officers of the DF. The stratified random sampling technique was used to collect the field information pertaining to the medicinal plants. The results revealed that many plants species have become extinct and some have been identified as endangered. Therefore, a systematic cultivation of medicinal plants should be introduced in order to conserve the threatened species. The matured plants of DF have to be removed using sustainable harvesting techniques in order to protect existing medicinal plants.

**Keywords:** Indigenous, Medicinal plants, Endangered species, Stakeholders, Exotic

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<sup>1</sup> Lecturer, Department of Geography, University of Colombo  
Email : fareena@geo.cmb.ac.lk