

human Activity and Its Impact on Vegetation: A Case Study in Sikkim Himalayas

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KEYWORDS Mountain Ecosystem, Food Plants. Medicinal Plants. Fuel Wood. Sikkim Himalayas

ABSTRACT Sikkim, the smallest hilly state of the Indian Union lies in the Eastern Himalayas. Owing to altitudinal variation (300 to 8,400 metres) the state exhibits climate ranging from Sub-tropical to Alpine. In addition to the variety of environments, there is a large variety of ethnic groups solely depending on the nearby forests for their day to day needs. High population pressure and lack of economic opportunities has led to 'over use' of environments by the way of lopping away of few economic species for sale in the nearby markets. Illicit cutting of trees has become a common feature to meet the firewood and timber demands. The present paper besides documenting the traditional man-plant relationships, ethnobotany, also analyses the catastrophic effects on the natural flora due to the increased exploitation and irregularities prevailing in the region. Few propositions are also made for the overall development of the state in the light of the observations made during the study.