Book Review

Flora of Karnataka Vol. 1.
Magnoliaceae to Fabaceae

C.J. Saldanha
Indian Edition series 9
VI + 535 pp., colour frontispiece + 18 colour plates
62 line drawings, 3 maps (2 throw out), 1 graph
Pauls Press, New Delhi & A.A. Balkema, Rotterdam, 1985
Price: $22.80 per volume

Following the publication of the Flora of Hassan District (with D.H. Nicholson of the Smithsonian Institute) it is very encouraging to note the publication of the first of three volumes of the Flora of Karnataka by Fr. C.J. Saldanha.

In the introduction, the composition of the different divisions of the state is recorded together with a map of the main collecting localities. This is followed by accounts on the physiography, geology (with map), soil types (with map), bioclimate, vegetation types and floristics. The use of colour plates effectively illustrates a few of these vegetation types.

The artificial key to the families presented by the author is designed on the same lines as that in the Flora of Hassan District and indicates the number of times each family is keyed out. However, the key does present a major flaw in that, occasionally, one of the couplets lacks contrasting characters. Unfortunately, this error has been repeated in the systematic treatment.

The 64 families treated in this volume are arranged according to the Cronquist system of classification. The systematic treatment is well planned and presented by Fr. Saldanha and six other young taxonomists. Members of 62 families are illustrated by high quality line drawings. A few plates especially of flowers are also included. In general, the descriptions are concise and it is hoped that the inclusion of vernacular names would be useful to the local people. However, it seems that the editing was somewhat lax in that there are at least 15 spelling mistakes and at least 50 punctuation errors relating mainly to the incorrect usage of dashes and hyphens.

This first volume is a most welcome contribution to the flora of this region and ought to stimulate researchers to examine the problem groups. Let us hope it will not be long before the text two volumes appear.

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