NATURAL DYES:
SCOPE AND CHALLENGES
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PREFACE

Natural dyes is a highly exciting and rewarding field. But the progress that is expected in this area does not appear to happen. This is because of the lack of awareness of the potentialities of these compounds. The National Seminar held in Baroda on 28 and 29th of February 2004 was a beginning to highlight the multifaceted arena of natural dyes. For the first time, the application of natural dyes in foods, pharmaceutical preparations, cosmetics, wall paints and for art paintings has been highlighted. It is heartening to say that the response was very heartwarming.

A vast majority of participants in the seminar was from Textile chemistry and dyeing sections. It is observed that a majority of them used the conventional dyes like madder, saffron, annatto etc. One set back for selection of these dyes is that they are very costly to procure because of their uses in medicine. But some workers attempted to dye clothes with uncommon dyes like apricot or teak leaves or barks of neem and Cassia, which are cheap and readily available. The antimicrobial properties of dyes and the rapid multiplication of dye and yielding plants are the other aspects attempted. Quite a few researchers conducted the search for new dyes, the most prominent among them is Bharathan from Gandhigram Institute, Dindigal whose compilations of the raw materials and dyeing recipes are some of the highlights of this book. The natural dyes used in paintings also received great attention. Accounts of the food colors were given but no attempt was done to put them into practice. There were absolute lacunae in the areas of pharmaceutical colors, wall paints and cosmetics. Another disturbing fact was that nobody was aware or keen to know of the chemical nature and properties of the dyes they have used or the identity and correct name of the source plants.

The workshop and exhibition conducted on the third day was huge success. More than 100 sources of dyes, the different natural dyes like anthocyanins, carotenoids, quinones, flavonoids, proanthocyanidins, iridoids, indigo etc. and the various extraction procedures and their analytical methods were exhibited. Also exhibited were the paintings by Shatrughan Thakur of Department of Paintings, Fine Arts Faculty, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda and a large number of paintings and dyed materials from Gandhigram Rural Institute, Dindigal. Mr. Bharathan, assisted by his
students gave a live-demonstration of various dyeing processes practiced by them. Also presented in the exhibition were wall paints and cosmetics like face powder, nail polishes and lipsticks prepared using natural dyes.

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Editors
CONTENTS

Preface

A. General

1 Scope and Challenges in the Field of Natural Dyes
   — M. Daniel  1

2 Chemistry of Natural Dyes
   — K.C. Gupta, P. Gupta, P. Singh, S.V. Singh and S. Agarwal  7

3 Natural Food Colours : Present Status and Scope
   — V.P. Kapoor  35

4 Natural Food Colors – Chemistry and Sources
   — K.C. Gupta, P. Singh, S.V. Singh, R. Singh and P. Gupta  45

B. Extraction, Analysis and Quality Control

5 Analytical Methods for Natural Dyes
   — M. Daniel  59

6 Extraction and Dyeing Methods for Natural Dyes
   — A. Shrivastava and E.M. Dedhia  67

7 Quality Control of Natural Dyed and Printed Products
   — V.D. Sumant  81

C. Dyeing

8 Dying of Natural Colours – A New Horizon
   — S.D. Bhattacharya and M. Daniel  91
| 9 | Dyeing of Dhabu Resist Printed Cotton and Silk Fabric with Indian Almond, *Terminalia catappa* Linn.  
   | *I. Rai and S. Quereshi* | 97 |
| 10 | Trailing *Eclipta* – A Natural Green Colour for Textiles  
    | *A. S. Devi, B. S. Sumathy and V.K.L.T. Katyayini* | 103 |
| 11 | Eco-friendly Dyeing of Natural Vegetable Dyes on Protein Substrates  
    | *B.J. Agarwal* | 113 |
| 12 | Union Dyeing of Wool with *Eupatorium* and Apricot Leaves  
    | *A. Sood, A. Sharma, S. Rani and A. Bansal* | 129 |
| 13 | Effect of Mordant Combination on Silk Dyeing with Apricot Dye  
    | *A. Sharma, S. Rani, A. Bansal and A. Sood* | 137 |
| 14 | Application of Litchi on Silk  
    | *S. Rani, A. Sood, A. Sharma and A. Bansal* | 145 |
| 15 | Dyeing and Printing of Natural and Synthetic Fibre/Fabrics by Vegetable Dyes  
    | *S. R. Naik* | 151 |
| 16 | Natural Colorants Applicable for Dyeing Textiles  
    | *J.J. Moses* | 161 |
| 17 | Studies on Dyeing Cotton With Bark of *Acacia arabica* Willd  
    | *B.H. Patel and A.M. Darji* | 175 |
| 18 | Eco-friendly Dyeing With Extracts of Tulsi leaves  
    | *K.J. Patel, B.H. Patel, J.A. Naik and A.M. Bhavsar* | 185 |
| 19 | Dyeing Potential of the Leaves of *Emblica officinalis, Eucalyptus globulus* and *Tectona grandis* for Cotton  
    | *S. Saxena, P.V. Varadarajan and A.J. Shaikh* | 197 |
| 20 | Application of Combination of Litchi and Barberry on Cotton  
    | *A. Bansal, A. Sood, A. Sharma and S. Rani* | 201 |
| 21 | Application of Natural Dyes on Bleached Coir Yarn  
    | *M.L. Gulrajani, D. Gupta and P. Gupta* | 209 |
Contents

22    An Unknown Dye-yielding Herb from Open-Cast Mine of Umrer (Maharashtra)
        — S. Mukherjee 219

23    Natural dyes: Exploration of New Medium for Contemporary Expression
        — S. Thakur 223

24    Natural Dyeing Recipes: Trusted, Traditional Indian Recipes for 10 popular shades
        — Bharathan 231

25    Mordants for Natural Dyeing: Ground rules on Applications for Better Results
        — Bharathan 239

26    Some New Sources of Natural Dyes
        — Bharathan 245

D. Antimicrobial Properties and Conservation

27    Antimicrobial Activity of Henna used as Traditional Dye and Medicinal Plant
        — A. Arya, C. Arya and V.K. Muliya 253

28    Antifungal Property of Two Natural Dyes Used in Food
        — R.C. Soni and Arun Arya 257

29    Conservation of Dyed Historic Textiles
        — D. Rathi 263

Index 267
A.
General