

## SHORT NOTE

### *Omphalotus olearius*, a toxic mushroom of Kathmandu valley

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**O** *omphalotus olearius* (DC. : Fr.) Fayod, (Syn.: *Pleurotus olearius* (DC.) Fr. and *Clitocybe olearia* R. Mre.), was collected in September 1999, from the markets of Kathmandu Valley. This is a large mushroom growing in dense cespitose clusters on a tree stump. The fruit body is deep orange coloured. The cap is yellowish orange to reddish brown, 3-10 cm in diameter, convex to flat and depressed at the centre (see photo). Its surface is smooth, radially fibrillose; the margin is inrolled and often cracked. Lamellae strongly decurrent; branched, thin, close, with the same colour as the cap, luminescent in darkness. Stipe more or less excentric, 3-15 cm x 0.5-1.5 cm long, solid, tapering towards a narrow base where it is stuck to the other. The surface is smooth, the colour is orange, darkening downward. The flesh is firm, white tinted orange, smell is slightly unpleasant. Spores subglobose, 5-7.5 x 4.5-6.5 µm ; spore print creamy-white.

It is generally considered as not distinct from *O. illudens* (Schw.) Sacc. However, the differences are: smaller size of fruit body, lighter color in the basal part of the stipe and the habitat outside Mediterranean regions (Courtecuisse and Duhem, 1994 ; Kuhner and Romagnesi, 1953).



*Omphalotus olearius*

These mushrooms are lignicolous, growing at the base of trees or their roots, generally in large clusters of numerous fruit body. The hosts are hardwoods such as oak, chestnut and olive tree. This species is new for the mycological flora of Nepal (Adhikari, 1996) and may be for Indian subcontinent as it is not yet recorded in Indian fungi indexes (Vasuvada, 1954, 1962 ; Tandon and Chandra, 1964; Sarbhoy *et al.*, 1975). It is known in

South and Western Europe and in North America. It is not cited from Japan and China by Imazeki *et. al* (1988).

The species is very toxic and could easily be mistaken with *Cantharellus cibarius*, an edible mushroom. It is particularly important to advise people of its presence in the mushroom growing habitats of Kathmandu valley. If eaten, the patient exhibits symptoms of nausea, violent vomiting, epigastric pains, cold sweats, etc. Therefore, for the interest of people, is important to show them the differences between *Cantharellus* to avoid any confusion. *Cantharellus cibarius* (edible) has lone or small clumps with sweet odor like that of apricot, whereas *Omphalotus olearius* possesses fruit bodies in dense cespitose clusters without particular or light unpleasant smell.

#### References

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