**BRYOPHYTES: PIONEER IN LAND VEGETTION**

Bryophytes are the first plant group to occupy and colonise open land spaces through the process of adaptive radiation called terrestrialisation. They are mostly found growing in moist, shady places, producing phenolic compounds to deter herbivores and they prefer mesic environments. These are spore-producing, non-vascular land plants and exhibit a clear division of their plant body into photosynthetic and storage zones (Lakna, 2017). This plant amphibian group was once considered an evolutionary failure due to poor knowledge about inter and intraspecific genetic variations (During and van Tooren, 1987).

Bryophytes are the second largest division of plants after angiosperms but are less known because of their small size (Chandra et al., 2017). Members of this plant division include liverworts (Hepaticopsida or Hepaticae), hornworts (Anthocerotopsida or Anthocerotae) and mosses (Bryopsida or Musci). Bryophytes are considered as the amphibians of the plant kingdom because they inhabit amphibious zones. However, this plant group continuously survived on Earth at least 75 million years before the age of the dinosaurs. Bryophytes are found in diverse habitats as groups of individuals with characteristic of shape and structure, depending on their family, genus or species (Mägde-frau, 1982). Bryophytes have been found in almost all terrestrial habitats as well as forming biological associations with other organisms.

Together, the three bryophyte divisions have around 25,000 representative species. The mosses are the most abundant followed by liverworts and then the hornworts. It may be suggested that more bryophyte species are yet to be discovered especially in tropical regions of the world, where taxonomic and general information are rare. The true mosses show several evolutionary advances over the liverworts, hornworts, and other mosses by possessing rhizoids, calyptra, hadrom (single strand conducting hydroids) and leptoms for conducting nutrients and photosynthates. Besides their ecological value, modern representatives of this plant division contain the legacy of adaptations that led to the greening of the Earth (Hanson & Rice, 2014).