The Indian sub-continent is inhabited by 40 million tribal people belonging to 563 tribes. In the present study, the ethnobotany of Irulars, a neglected tribe of Coimbatore district, Tamil Nadu, is documented. The enumerated 209 plants belong to 80 families. All these plants are listed in alphabetical order of botanical name, along with family, vernacular name and brief description. Among them, 199 are medicinal, 36 are edible, 10 plants act as insect repellents and stupefying fish, 23 in religious practices and sorcery, 16 as house hold materials and for house construction and 7 plants as cosmetics. The present study is significant since almost all plants are used as medicine. The word, ‘Herbal’ becomes the symbol of safety compared to the synthetic ones.

Among the plants investigated, *Bentinckia coddapana* Berry ex. Roxb. and *Leea indica* Merr. are considered as Endangered (E); whereas *Vateria indica* L. is Vulnerable (V). The present investigation not only stresses the importance of ethnobotany but also the need for conservation of fragile ecosystem and plant genetic resources which are at the verge of extinction.

Irulars are mainly known to utilize plants against gynaecological diseases / disorders, skin diseases, antidote for poisonous bite, gastro-intestinal disorder, cuts and wounds, respiratory disorder, head related ailments, dental problems, infectious diseases, edema, orthopedic treatment, oncological diseases, cardiac disorder, abscess, diabetes, hydrocele, hypothermia, otolgia, urinary disorder and also in veterinary practices. Due to modernization, the herbal knowledge of this tribe will be lost forever. It is high time that we bestowed our attention to document this unwritten ethnobotanical information.

The continued use of plants as source of medicine among Irulars indicates that there is reasonable activity in the plant species, which needs timely and urgent scientific
validation. The chemical composition of selected medicinal plant is studied and discussed to assess whether the plants contain pharmacodynamic principles relevant to the diseases for which they are used by the tribals. The phytochemical screening of 40 plants indicate that each plant has at least three pharmacodynamic agents justifying their medicinal utility. The optimal effectiveness of a medicinal plant may not be due to one main bioactive constituent, but in fact to the combined action of different secondary metabolites originally present in the plant.

The crude solvent extracts from the selected medicinal plants used for curing diseases such as scabies, psoriasis, ulcer, pruritus and wounds were evaluated for antibacterial property against five pathogens. The results of present investigation justifies the usage of ethnomedicinal plants for the treatment of skin diseases and wounds (internal and external). Since the medicinal plants studied appear to have a broad antimicrobial activity spectrum, they might be useful in antiseptic and disinfectant formulations as well as in chemotherapy.

With the findings of antibacterial pharmacodynamic agents, the plant *Clematis gouriana* used for curing skin related ailments is subjected to detailed phytochemical studies. The methanolic extract of the aforesaid plant is found to possess more than one flavonoid in three fractions at Rf values 0.13 and 0.48. A complete and thorough investigation is needed to unravel the profiles of the secondary metabolites to elucidate the quantitative estimation and to enhance the quality of active ingredients present in the plant species.

To conclude, it is suggested that there are several medicinal plants of immense ethnobotanical importance among the Irulars of Siruvani hills. While taking into account, the therapeutic value of *Clematis gouriana*, it can be explored for large scale cultivation since it holds great potential for skin related ailments. Further, crude drug preparation and the efficacy of the crude drug can be tested on experimental basis.