Introduction

The roots of Indian Medicine can be seen in the art of healing in primitive days. Gradually the leaves, the fruits, the roots, the bark, the stem etc. and the mineral and animal substances were added to Materia Medica after keen observation. The medicine during the Vedic period was after Magico-religious style. In the times of Brahamanas and Upanishads, a change took place in the practice of medicine from religion to philosophy. The seers of Ayurveda during Samhita period streamlined the practical observations made scientifically on several herbs and propagated the most rational medical system identified as AYURVEDA.

The treatises like Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Kashyapa Samhita, Bhela Samhita and Asthanga Sangraha were written during this period which was considered as “creative period” of Ayurveda. The total number of herbs mentioned in the three main Samhitas, otherwise known as Brihattrayi, Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita and Ashtangahridaya is about 600 - 700. We do not find many additions to this number in the first part of the medieval period and on the other hand the other works which appeared
after Brihattrayi have not mentioned the drugs like Soma etc. either due to non-availability of them or due to lack of practical experience on those particular drugs. However, the Nighantus period has seen some inclusions like Ahiphena, Parasikayavani, Bhanga, Dwipantara vacha and Jhandu etc. But when we diligently follow these Nighantus, the number of inclusions to each Nighantu is very minimal. Chakrapani Dutta’s Parasikayavani, Sarangadhara’s Ahiphena and Bhanga, Bhava Mishra’s Dwipantaravacha and Narahari’s Jhandu are some of the notable contributions to the Ayurvedic Materia Medica. The authors of later period did not contribute much in this direction due to unknown reasons. The period (16th & 17th centuries) was considered as Black period of Ayurveda as its study and practice were on the wane, and so the development in this field came to a stand still. At this juncture, Basavaraju brought a new hope by incorporating more number of herbs into the Ayurvedic Materia Medica.

**REASONS FOR SELECTING THE TOPIC:**

Basavarajeeyam has almost bridged the gap which was created between the 16th and 17th centuries. By this time works like Sarangadhar Samhita, Yogaratnakaram, Chakradutta etc. became popular in one or the other parts of the country by virtue of the good clinical information provided. Chakradutta and RasendrasaraSamgraha are popular in Bengal, Yogaratnakara in Maharashtra and Sarangadhara Samhita in Gujarat. In the same manner Basavarajeeyam has become a popular hand-book to the physicians of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamilandu to a certain extent. The reason for this popularity is that Basavarajeeyam is a bilingual work i.e., Sanskrit and Telugu, transcripted in Telugu language. Until Pandit Govardhan Sharma Changani transcribed it into Sanskrit during 1930, nobody from the other parts of the country knew about this valuable work. This is considered as an extra-ordi-
nary work in view of the clinico therapeutic information available all through the work. Though Vaidyachintamani contains the same material, it could not become popular, as the author furnished more details about Medico-religious practices which are not tangible to the average Ayurvedic practitioner. Moreover Basvarajeeyam contains many recipes in Telugu language which are result oriented.

This particular aspect has inspired us to select this topic for a special study. The absence of a workable morphological description of a plant, the use of only a few multivocal descriptive terms both old and newly coined, and their indiscriminate use by the Nighantu writers during the last few centuries went on causing confusion worse confounded regarding the correct identification of herbs mentioned in various Ayurvedic texts including Basavarajeeyam. Keeping this in view, an attempt has been made to reidentify those herbs. By reidentifying botanically the herbs introduced by Basavaraju, it is felt that it could be synthesised as per the need of the present scientific world.

**Methods & Materials:**

For the purpose of fixing the place and time of Basavaraju, an effort has been made to go into the Archeological Inscriptions and the Colophon furnished at the end of each chapter of Basvarajeeyam. A number of medical and historical works have also been consulted for this purpose. The Vernacular and the other references are cross matched with those of various parts of Andhara Pradesh to get a clear picture in this direction. As regards the re-identification of the herbs mentioned in Sankrit verses, Telugu verses and also Parenthitical expressions, a field survey is carried out in different districts of Andhra Pradesh, which is also helpful in fixing the time and place of Basavaraju. For this purpose, the help is also taken from Botonical Survey of India, Coimbatore, SMP units of CCRAS and other useful resources.