Since time immemorial India's rich medicinal flora has been utilised for curing different diseases. In the literature of Indian Systems of Medicine (Ayurveda and Unani), a number of these drug yielding plants are attributed with a number of medicinal virtues. These plants are used in their own natural forms as 'Crude Drugs', either as whole plant or their parts of, viz. Root, Stem, Leaf, Flower, Seed, Bark, Modified structures (Rhizome, Tuber and Bulb, etc.), and also as Gums and Exudates. Some of these drugs have scientifically been evaluated and clinically tried for their efficacy and properties, but still there are a number of drugs of plant origin, used in these systems, which are neither described in the literature nor their identity is properly established by the present day physicians of these systems, although they are used advantageously in the Indian Systems of Medicine. Due to the lack of knowledge and the scientific data available on the subject, a number of unauthentic samples of the drugs are sold in the market and employed in the preparation of medicines of these systems, leading either into adulteration or substitution even today. Further, it may be pointed out that as India is a vast Country and has different languages, a single drug is named differently or different drugs remembered with the same vernacular name, which causes a lot of difficulty and confusion in the exact identification of drugs e.g. three different botanical names viz. Cinnamomum cassia, Cinnamomum tamala and Zanthoxylum alatum are given for the drug used in Unani with the name Taj or Salikha. Similarly Eclipta alba, Jatropha curcas and Onosma echioides are mistaken with
one another for Bhangra. Two different plant species *Coptis teeta* and *Thalictrum foliolosum* are mistaken for the drug Mamira. The drug 'Kali Moosli' is botanically identified with two different botanical names e.g. *Curculigo orchioides* and *Aneilema nudiflorum*. Like this many more examples may be cited where the exact botanical identification differ with each other for a single drug. Because of these difficulties not only adulteration or substitution takes place, but due to the ignorance or deliberate intention or even otherwise, on the part of drug dealers, problem of non-availability and exact identification of the drugs arise.

Since very little work has been done in respect of identification and standardisation of the drugs of Indian Systems of Medicine (ISM) in the country, specially on the Bark Drugs, it was therefore felt necessary to take up the study on bark drugs, so that the exact botanical identity could be established and pharmacognostical aspects could be worked out in order to provide exact data on the subject.

The present study deals with three bark drugs viz. Araluka, Bakain and Katphala. These three bark drugs are often adulterated or substituted with barks of other plants. Their vernacular names also differ and cause difficulty in identifying the genuine drugs, as Araluka in some literature is described as Mahanimba or Maharukha, while Bakain is also some times referred as Mahanimba in Ayurvedic and Unani literature as Maharukha. In case of Katphala, it may be mentioned that it has not been worked out so far in detail. It is because of these controversies these three Bark Drugs have been sorted out for the present study. Moreover, recently no botanical and pharmacognostical studies have been made which
could elucidate the exact identity of these drugs.

In present studies therefore, botanical, pharmacognostical and preliminary chemical characteristics of the three bark drugs have been undertaken in order to elucidate clearly the salient diagnostic characters of the barks for identification purposes. Thin layer chromatographical (TLC) studies have also been undertaken for this purpose.

The subject matter of this thesis has been divided into five chapters given below:-

CHAPTER - I has been devoted to the general introduction and historical background of the drugs investigated.

CHAPTER - II has been devoted to elucidate the botanical, pharmacognostical and chemical aspects and the summary of the drug ARALUKA.

CHAPTER - III has been devoted to elucidate the botanical, pharmacognostical and chemical aspects and the summary of the drug KATPHALA.

CHAPTER - IV has been devoted to elucidate the botanical, pharmacognostical and chemical aspects and the summary of the drug BAKAIN.

CHAPTER - V includes discussion, and the references of the drugs investigated.