7. SUMMARY

The Kanis or Kanikkars are living in the Kalakkad - Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve (KMTR) of the Agastyalai hills in the Southern Western Ghats of India. They speak their own dialect ‘Kanikkarbasha’ or ‘Malampashi’ and are short-statured dolichocephals with round or oval faces and a broad nose.

The Kani or Kanikkar means a hereditary proprietor. According to a version, the then Travancore Government of Kerala gave gun and entrusted the work of protecting forests. Whereas another version says that the British Government settled about 1,000 people at Pothigaiadi in 1910. They migrated to this area from the Tiruvananthapuram district of Kerala (erstwhile Travancore region) for developing Teak plantations.

Around 1914, the disease of Vaisuri (Smallpox) killed majority of them, forced to abandon the habitation, split up and made them to settle in other parts of the Agastyalai hills. Their settlements situated in the interior of the forests are called as Ingikuzhi, Periyamylar, Chinnamylar (Adukkupaarai), Agastiyarkanikudiyiruppu, and Servalar (Thervatampaarai). Their total population estimated is 402.

Their huts are built with a variety of trees inside their agricultural lands without any regular dimension to suit requirement. There are 2 broad divisions such as Annanthambi illakkars and Machami illakkars. A bead necklace is the traditional symbol of marriage. Often it is replaced by other customs.

The community council consisting ‘Moothakani’, ‘Vilikani’ and ‘Pilathi’ a sacred specialist-cum-medicine man meets at ‘Chavadi’ or ‘Pattapara’, discusses and finalizes all decisions on social, religious and agricultural matters. They are the god - fearing people having their temples facing south and north and worship female deities like
Karumpandiamman, Veeramarthandan and Mariamman and male deities like Murugan, Pillaiyar and Iyyappan. They further follow ancestral and spirit worship and believe that dead ancestors (Theivam) guard them from the attack of wild animals, diseases and all kinds of disasters. Mantras are chanted and poojas are performed to cure domestic diseases and to eliminate poisonous effect.

They parted the practice of wearing traditional attire made of bark of Arangi tree, *Antiaris toxicaria*, to cover from hip to knees about 35 years back. They cultivate their traditional varieties, 3 white ones and 1 yellow one, of Elelakizhangu (*Manihot esculenta* of Euphorbiaceae).

Once they were traditional hunters and shifting cultivators. Currently they practice settled cultivation and gather tubers, rhizomes, roots, fruits and seeds from the forests. They still continue the practice of fishing and honey collection with the help of artificial ladders made of twiners and using smoke of dried leaves of Nangu, *Mesua nagasarium* var. *coromandeliana* to drive the bees from the comb. Selling of Elelakizhangu chips during March and April is the major source of income. Other sources of income include temporary employments like undergrowth clearings in the forests provided by the Forest Department of Tamil Nadu, boat operations, and other private and temporary assignments.

They practice 4 different kinds of fishing. In the basket method, baskets made by the sticks of Alapanaieakle (midrib of *Arenga wightii*) are used to catch *Kallari Homaloptera brucei*), *Kalnekki* (*Nemacheilus pulchellus*), *Kendai* (*Puntius arulius-tambiraparani*) and *Keluru* (catfish, *Mystus armatus*), *Keliru* (*Mystus aer*) and *Keluthi Mystus vitatus*). The second method of fencing is practiced during the months of March
and May for catching big fishes of *Perumpilari* (*Torkudiri malabaricus*) by placing *Koolai, Elettaria cardamomum* var. *major* as bait. The third method of casting the net is practiced using plastic wire, a large stick of *Pirambu, Calamus brandisii*, and pieces of boiled *Elelakizhangu* as bait to catch fish. In the fourth and recent method of Fishing net method large-size plastic nets are used in the evening to catch big fishes of *Perumpinari* (*Torkudiri malabaricus*). The Tamil Nadu Government mostly provided solar lights free of cost to their huts. The children enjoy the facility of free school education. Training in basket making and tailoring is imparted to the ladies.

Ethnomedicinal data for 352 plants used to cure 191 diseases were collected from the Kani medical practitioners of Chinnappankani, Sreerangankani, Pitchandikani, Poovendrakani, Mallankani, Boothathankani, Maathikani and Kaliyammal during the field trips.

They diagnose the diseases by the symptoms and sensing pulses, collect plants early in the morning and mostly add either Karupetti or honey for sweet taste to facilitate easy administration of medicine with water, cow milk or coconut milk.

The data screened by Bhattacharjee (1998), Chopra *et al.* (1992), Jain (1991), Joshi (2000), Kirtikar *et al.* (1993), Nadkarni (1908) and Warrier *et al.* (1996) facilitated to divide them under 2 broad categories:

1. Plants new to the recorded literature; and
2. Plants recorded in literature.

The first category has 299 plants used in 169 diseases. An analysis based on habit-wise resulted in further sub-grouping such as 112 herbs, 99 trees, 50 shrubs, 17 climbers, 7 subshrubs, 4 liane, 3 climbing shrubs, 2 parasitic herbs and one each of
parasitic climber, epiphytic herb, epiphytic climber, straggling shrub and parasitic shrub.

Of them, 47 are endemic and threatened plants as per the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) Threat Categories.

The critically endangered category has 2 species namely *Eugenia singampattiana*, a tree, and *Piper barberi*, a climber.

The endangered category has 22 species. According to their habit, they can be classified as follows:

3. Trees: 7 (*Chionanthus linoceroides*, *Glochidion ellipticum*, *Hopea utilis*, *Mallotus resinosus*, *Memecylon rivulare*, *Meteoromyrtus wynaadensis* and *Syzygium zeylanicum* var. *lineare*),

4. Shrubs: 6 (*Claoxylon anomalum*, *Hedyotis albo-nervia*, *Hedyotis travancorica*, *Phyllanthus singampattiana*, *Stenosiphonium wightii* and *Tarenna monosperma*),

5. Subshrub: 1 (*Phyllanthus baillonianus*);

6. Herbs: 7 (*Biophytum longibracteatum*, *Centratherum anthelminticum*, *Elatostema lineolatum* var. *setosum*, *Knoxia sumatrensis* var. *linearis*, *Sonerila tinneveliennis*, *Vernonia peninsularis* var. *kodayarensis* and *Vernonia ramaswamii*), and

7. Climber: 1 (*Dioscorea wightii*).

The vulnerable category contains 23 species. These plants can also be classified based on habit such as

1. Trees: 11 (*Alphonsea zeylanica*, *Baccaurea courtallensis*, *Canthium neilgherrense* var. *chartacea*, *Eugenia calcadensis*, *Isonandra*
1. Shrubs: 157, Octotropis travancorica, Orophea uniflora, Sarcandra chloranthoides, Symlocos macrocarpa, Syzygium mundagam and Syzygium rubicundum;

2. Herbs: 8 (Acranthera grandiflora, Begonia floccifera, Didymocarpus gambleanus, Diotacanthus albiflorus, Hedyotis eualata var. agastyamalayana, Impatiens hensloviana, Impatiens scapiflora and Murdannia glauca);

3. Shrubs: 3 (Diotacanthus grandis, Hedyotis viscida and Saposma corymbosum); and

4. Liana: 1 (Stropanthes wightianus).

Altogether 386 ethnomedicinal preparations were recorded. Analysis revealed that there are 98 preparations from leaves and flowers, 94 from whole plants, 49 from leaves and 36 preparations from leaves, flowers and tender fruits. Other preparations are also given in detail.

Accordingly, plants with single preparations constitute 236, plants with double preparations are 52, plants with treble preparations are 8 and plants with four preparations include 3.

The second category of plants recorded in literature has 87 plants used in 65 diseases. Habit-wise analysis is 35 herbs, 28 trees, 11 climbers, 7 shrubs, 3 straggling shrubs and each one in climbing shrub, parasitic climber and subshrub.

Totally 107 preparations were recorded wherein major preparations include 21 from whole plants, 19 from leaves, 17 from leaves and flowers and 7 each from fruits, and, seeds. The remaining 36 preparations and their plant parts are also elaborated.
On screening these plants with the available literature, they are grouped into six categories based on the percentage of uses: 59 in 14%; 36 in 29%; 26 in 43%; 6 in 57%; 5 in 71%; and 3 in 86%.

Uses that are new to the recorded literature but plants are recorded in literature. 34 such plants are included under plants new to the recorded literature.

Addition of Calcium carbonate is observed in 3 medicinal preparations, one with *Achyranthes aspera* used an antidote for dog bite, second with *Oligochaeta ramosa* to heal cut wounds and the third with *Scutellaria violacea* for pimples.