1. INTRODUCTION:

Every animal existing around us depends upon other plants and animals for its food. Similarly it also depends for its health on the same. There are several evidences of different animals who seek for different plants as their medicine when they suffer from a particular disorder. Ex.: When a cat or dog has problems of digestive track, we know that they eat a particular type of grass. After some time, they vomit their contents of digestive tract and get rid of the problem. Similarly, mongoose is also known to eat some typical grass to get cured from the snake poison.

Human being also does the same. Right from prehistoric period when the man was in very initiating stages of evolution, he observed all the things happening in his surrounding and started to use various plants around him to cure or to heal the disorders he faced. Through observations of animals and through the various trials and errors and experimentation, he obtained knowledge about the healing properties of various plants around him. He gradually obtained knowledge of naturally occurring drugs. At first, this knowledge was transmitted from one generation to another generation in an oral manner. Later on this information was written on leaves, parchments and papers. Modern methods of spread of information include various ways including computerized systems.

In India, the knowledge of plants and their curing properties is equally old as the human culture. In our Gods, Lord Dhanvantari and Ashwinikumaras are said to be the doctors of 33crores of gods existing in our religion. Lord Dhanvantari is taken as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu itself in some places. After that, the knowledge of plant origin drugs came to earth and spread through the mouths of a large number of Rishis and Munis existing at that time. If literature evidences are concerned, Ayurveda is the biggest and historic source of the knowledge regarding curative properties of various plants and their contents which play a vital role in healing. Almost every existing plant has been described with reference to its curative properties in the Ayurveda of India. The mentions of curative properties of drugs of plants occur predominantly in the ‘Suktas’ of Rig-Veda in 3500-1500 B. C. Besides, the milestones of the Indian lines of treatment and healing in historical period were the two big Granthas known as ‘Charaksamhita’ written by an ancient healer known as Charak and the other one known as ‘Sushrutsamhita’ written by and ancient Surgeon as well as healer known as Sushruta. In Sushurtsamhita, he has described even some operations that can be carried out to cure certain diseases. Besides these, there are several references of curative plants available in ‘Manusmriti’ written by an ancient ruler known as Manu. In later periods, a book titled as ‘Materia medica of India’ was written by Ainslie 1813. In 1868, an encyclopedia known as ‘Pharmacoepia of India’ was published by Waring.
Besides, similar type of knowledge was also being discovered in different parts of the world also. In 1815, German scientist Seydler introduced the term ‘Pharmacognosy’ in his work ‘Anolecta Pharmacognostica.’ The term is derived from the two greek words as- ‘Pharmakon’ meaning drug or medicine and ‘Gignosco’ meaning to acquire the knowledge of. Thus it literally means the knowledge of drugs.

At present, the healing and curing properties of plants are still widely used all over the world along with the other new trends of medicinal sciences like Allopathy, Naturopathy, Homeopathy, Unani medicines and others. The use of medicines of plant origin is a still having a respect and faith among the common man all over the world. Hence, not only in India but also the people from Germany, Egypt, China and so many other countries deeply believe in drugs of plant origin. Besides, according to new investigations, European countries are also found to be getting attracted towards that.

Medicinal plants are those plants which are used for curing the diseases. The early man revealed the importance of plants in his surroundings for the healing and curing the diseases; those caused to him and started to use them as medicinal plants for the purpose. This revealed to the modern man about their utility as a medicinal sources combating one or more diseases and ailments. Several of the wild medicinal plants used by the early man were domesticated by growing and rearing them by evolving human civilizations during their fixed settlements. The considerable part of knowledge of early man about utility of plants has been continued to the present days and has been consistently utilized by traditional healers as well as medical sciences. Nowadays, use of medicinal plants by traditional healers is being more emphasized by the common people as well as researchers and medical practitioners because of their perfect utility in curing the diseases but without any pharmacognostic analysis of the same. Ex.: There are several traditional healers in Konkan region who cure the Jaundice and Hepatitis very effectively in a short period of one or two days by using plants in their surrounding but don’t know which factor of the plants cures the disease.

One more very significant fact about these medicines is that they have almost no side effects or negligible side effects as compared to the allopathic line of treatment. Hence overdose of a medicine or mistakenly consumed wrong medicine does not cause any bad or negative effect on the body of the consumer or patient.

The knowledge of traditional healers on this aspect is of immense importance as a raw material in the pharmacognostic studies on such plants. Besides, under the influence of some religious beliefs and
superstitions etc., such healers do not descend their knowledge to the other people in their family itself or to their followers or people in their surroundings. Hence in many cases, this knowledge has still remained a mystery for the common people. Unfortunately, in some cases observed during last few years, it has been detected that the concerned knowledge ends with the death of that traditional healer.

**Topology:**

Devgad Taluka is situated in extreme North of Sindhudurg district of Maharashtra State of India. It is a peninsular place situated 38 km away from the NH-17. It is situated on West coast of Maharashtra at 16° 22’32.18” N and 73° 23’05.71”E. The climatic conditions of the place are drastically influenced by ocean. Its temperature ranges between 26°C-34°C. Average humidity is about 80% per annum. It is a hot and humid climate over here causing heavy rainfall with an average of 140 inches per year. Average elevation of this Taluka is 100-300 meters from the Sea level.

It has been observed that there are about 100-200 different medicinal plants existing in the natural as well as cultivated habitats of Devgad Taluka. They exist in forests, sacred groves, ghat section, foothills, and plains as well open arid lands of the Taluka. Some of them grow around the fresh water bodies and estuarine coasts. But at present, there is no any collective data or reference available at hand about those plants which particularly occur in this Taluka with geographical differences and characters. Hence, this study proposes a complete survey of these plants with respect to their geographical particulars and differences with respect to the similar plants found in other regions. It is also necessary to carry out pharmacognostic studies on some plants to know their biochemical constituents which are significant in healing of diseases and disorders.