

an important constituent of oil, is capable of lowering plasma cholesterol⁵.

In Ladakh, several types of medicinal preparations from *Capparis* are being used by the Amchis (local traditional doctors) for the treatment of various ailments. The root bark is analgesic, anthelmintic, deobstuent, diuretic, expectorant and vaso-constructive⁶. It is also used in the treatment of gastrointestinal infection, diarrhoea and rheumatism^{2,7}. The leaves are bruised and applied as a poultice in the treatment of gout, cough, expelling stomach worm and for diabetes^{7,8}. Four bacterial strains, viz. *Pseudomonas stutzeri* var. mendocina, *Comamonas* sp., *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* bivar. 2 and *Sphingobacterium* sp., isolated from the rhizosphere of caper were found⁸ to fix N₂.

Unfortunately, this plant has not been exploited to its full potential either by the scientists or by the local farmers of Ladakh. The plant is not cultivated and grows wild in different parts of Ladakh,

especially around 3500 m amsl. The cultivation practices of caper are being standardized by the Defence Institute of High Altitude Research, Leh, for commercial cultivation in the farmer's field. This Institute is in the process of developing various products from this plant so as to make it economically sustainable for the local farmers of Ladakh.

The unique characteristics of *Capparis* in improving the fragile ecosystem, socio-economic upliftment of the local farmers, and the food and nutritional requirements of troops deployed at the high altitudes of Ladakh are receiving due attention from the Institute.

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Ankylosaur skull and type locality

Balaram's editorial on 'Paleontology: A Minefield of Controversies' as always, makes for scintillating reading¹. The rules that govern the establishment of new taxa apply equally to biologists and palaeontologists and are set by the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature (<http://www.iczn.org>). The requirement (Article 76 and Recommendation 73C) for naming a new species is that the details of the Type Locality should be stated. A newly established taxon should have detailed information about its locality, age and provenance. In the case of the ankylosaur skull published in *Current Science*², the descrip-

tion fails to meet this important criterion. An invalid species once in the scientific literature is really a thorn in the taxonomist's flesh, much like an appendix which can do no good but must be carried throughout life. A case in point is an Indian species of a giant fossil ape, *Gigantopithecus*, bought from a farmer in Himachal Pradesh and described over four decades ago in a prestigious journal. In spite of multiple expeditions over the years to find more specimens of the great ape, the locality has not been traced and the status of the specimen remains in limbo. The value of new taxonomic material depends on its reproducibility

and the ethics involved in its procurement. I feel therefore that the rightful place of the splendid ankylosaur skull is in the collector's home, possibly a museum but not in a scientific journal.

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