

KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA INVENTORY ON THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

Name of the Element: Khaspiawaw: Herbal medicinal knowledge of the Kalasha

Brief Description: Khaspiawaw is a Kalasha practice of curing diseases with medicinal plants. Various parts of plants, such as the root, rhizome, bark, leaves, fronds, flowers, fruits and seeds are used, mostly in the form of decoctions for treatment.

The Kalash Valleys are surrounded by high mountains, highland pastures and forests, with an abundance of plants of medicinal. The valleys have remained isolated which necessitated the Kalasha people to develop a knowledge system of medicinal plants. This knowledge has been traditionally transferred from generation to generation. Even today, there are no allopaths in the valleys and almost all diseases are treated with Khaspiawaw, with specific practitioners having their own specialization. Many medicinal plants were discovered by observing the animals, for example one practitioner, Kashkari known as a poison specialist, saw a cat eating a poisonous snake and then rushed to a small plant and eating it. He named the plant Khas Pushak (Cat grass) and has been treating patients of snake and scorpion bites, as well as other poisoning cases with this herb for many years. The plant is also used for the treatment of waterborne diseases as well as curing the side effects of allopathic medication. The Khaspiawaw is also used in animal husbandry and many diseases of animals are cured with herbs.