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KOSGAI HILLS, KORBA (CHHATISHGARH STATE) A NEW LOCALITY OF THE 'WHISK FERN' – *PSILOTUM NUDUM* (L.) P. BEAUV.

DEEPAK KUMAR SINHA
Department of Biology, DPS, NTPC, Korba-495450
AND
JAGDISH LAL
Botanical Survey of India, Indian Botanic Garden, Howrah 711103

Genus *Psilotum* Swartz belongs to primitive family Psilotaceae and has two species, *viz.*, *P. complanatum* Swartz and *P. nudum* (L.) P. Beauv. of which the former is reported from Nicobar only and has flat stem and branches with two rows of leaves while the later is sporadically distributed in Indian mainland and Andaman and Nicobar Islands and its stem and branches are triquetrous with three rows of leaves.

From the Central India *Psilotum nudum* has been reported from Pachmarhi, district Hoshangabad, Madhya Pradesh (Saunder's Pool, Handi Khoh and Sangam) and Tamia forest, district Chhindwara, Madhya Pradesh (Denwa ravine) by Vasudeva & Bir (1987).

The present report of *P. nudum* is the first authentic report of its occurrence in the state of Chhatisgarh, almost after 20 years of its last report from Tamia forest in Madhya Pradesh.

A short description based on the collected material alongwith photograph of its natural occurrence is given below:

Psilotum nudum (L.) P. Beauv. in Prod. Fam. Aethog. 112. 1805. *Lycopodium nudum* L., Sp. Pl. 2: 1100. 1753. *Psilotum triquetrum* Swartz in Schrad J. Bot. 1800 (2): 109. 1801; Vasudeva & Bir in Indian Fern J. 4: 8. 1987. (Photo-1)

Plants erect, 15-27 cm high; rhizomes firmly fixed in the crevices of moist rocks or boulders. Creeping stem repeatedly dichotomously branched above, stem and branchlets triquetrous (with three wing-like angles). Leaves scale-like, minute, coriaceous, in three rows. Sporangia in triads forming a globose synangial structure and placed on the short sporangiophores in the axils of minute, bifid sporophylls towards the apices of aerial shoots.

Specimen examined : Kosgai hills (22°29′ N and 80°31′ E) 25 km from Korba district headquarters, *ca* 335 m alt. near Kosgai Bai temple. 14.12.2003. *D.K. Sinha* (CAL). Live plants introduced in Indian Botanic Garden, Howrah.

Distribution : Western Himalayas: Kullu, Garhwal; Central India: Pachmarhi, Tamia, Kosgai (present report); South India: Mahendragiri, Nilgiri-Coonar; Island territories: Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Laccadives Islands.

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Photo 1: *Psilotum nudum* (L.) P. Beauv. in its natural habitat.

Due to over exploitation the species is included in rare and threatened category. Ruthless collection by students for studies and professionals supplying the material to academic institutions like universities and colleges is the major cause of threat.

The new locality at Kosgai is quite accessible being near a temple often visited by devotees for prayer, etc., so immediate steps should be taken to mark and fence the area by barbed wire to check the entry of people there. Secondly the students and locals of the area should be made aware of this rare plant and its importance in academics to save it from man made threats.

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REFERENCE

VASUDEVA, S.M. AND S.S. BIR. Ecological and taxonomical observations on the Pteridophytic flora of Tamia hills and Patalkot valley (district Chhindwara) Madhya Pradesh, Central India. *Indian Fern J.* 4: 1-13. 1987.