EXTENDED DISTRIBUTION OF A RARE SEAWEED *BOTRYOCLADIA SKOTTSBERGII* (BOERGS.) LEVR. (RHODOPHYCEAE) ON THE INDIAN COAST

P.S.N. RAO AND MARCEL TIGGA*

Botanical Survey of India, Kolkata

INTRODUCTION

The red alga Botryocladia (J. Ag.) Kylin belonging to the Order Rhodymeniales is represented by two species viz. *B. leptopoda* (J. Ag.) and *B. skottsbergii* (Boerg.) Levr. on the Indian coast, the former having been reported from Dwaraka on the west coast and Dhanuskodi and Kanyakumari in the south while the latter from Kavarathy island, Lakshadweep (Sreenivasan, 1962). Among the two, *B. skottsbergii* (Fig.1) is extremely rare for our coast hitherto recorded only from Lakshadweep islands. In the present communication, the occurrence of this rare seaweed in the Andaman & Nicobar archipelago (Lat. 6°45'-13°45' N and Long. 92°15'-94° E) is being reported for the first time showing its extended distribution in the Indian region. As of now, the species is seen growing only on the coast of Little Andaman island near Harminder Bay.

The alga grows in small patches firmly attached to the rocky substratum on the underside of rocky outcrops and prefer situations which are not exposed to direct sunlight. The occurrence and distribution of this extremely rare alga in Andaman & Nirobar islands and Lakshadweep islands but not anywhere along the coast of mainland India indicate its preference for the insular habitats.

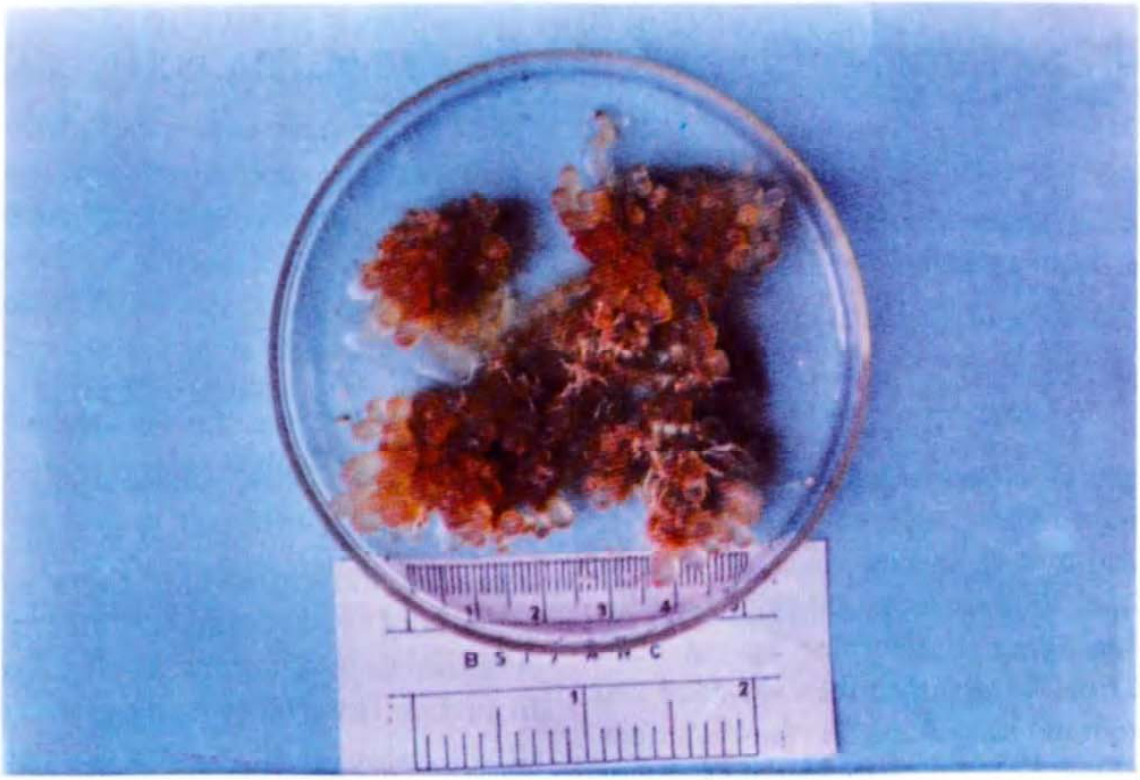
* Botanical Survey of India, Andaman & Nicobar Circle, Port Blair

TAXONOMIC DESCRIPTION

Plants small, up to 2 cm in hight, purple, slimy. Holdfast disc-like. Stem simple or branching irregularly, alternate or dichotomous resulting in sparsely tufted plants. Branches invariably ending in vesicular structures, up to 30 or more vesicles in each plant. Vesicles either spherical or pyriform. 1 cm long and 5-6 mm broad, hollow inside. Vesicular cavities filled with mucilage. Gland cells about 15 in clusters, projecting into the vesicular cavities. Tetrasporangia spherical to ellipsoidal occuring in the wall layers of some vesicles.

CONSERVATION

The marine algal explorations, hitherto, undertaken by various workers on the Indian coast reveal that *B. skottsbergii* occurs only in one or two islands of Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep groups of islands as far as Indian region is concerned. The occurrence of just few patches of the alga even in the islands from where it was reported are likely to be lost due to various anthropogenic activities such as tourism which includes water sports, scuba diving etc. in the intertidal and subtidal regions. Although, there are two Marine National Parks declared in the



Botryocladia skottsbergii (Boergs.) LEVR.

archipelago, this may not be of any help in conserving *B. skottsbergii* as its habitat is outside these protected areas. It is, therefore, necessary that individual species which are vulnerable should be cultured in the laboratory and the raised populations are reintroduced in the wild as part of species recovery projects in order to increase their populations in different islands where similar or almost similar climatic conditions prevail in the nature.

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