NOTES ON SOME RARE AND INTERESTING PLANTS FROM NILGIRIS, SOUTH INDIA

The paper presents five rare/endemic species of angiosperm collected from the Nilgiris by the authors. Though Gamble (1957) reported these species from various localities including Nilgiris, these could not be collected by the exploration parties during the last two decades. Hence, these species have not been represented in MH except the two species *Desmodium wynaadense* and *Ventilago goughii* which are represented by type materials only. The authors could relocate these species from Nilgiris during the years 1972-1976. Due to the rarity of the species, this note is given, so that these species can be looked for in other localities as well. The species are dealt in alphabetical order with short notes.

Desmodium wynaadense Bedd. ex Gamble, Fl. Pres. Madras 348. 1918 ; 244. 1957 (repr. ed.) ; Kew Bull. 223. 1919 (PAPILIONACEAE).

An erect undershrub. Leaflets lanceolate or oblong-lanceolate, acute, softly villous beneath. Flowers large, purple, in axillary or terminal racemes with filiform pedicels. Pods broad, reticulate, curved, glabrous with dehiscent joints. (Plate I).

It is an endemic species reported from Carcoor Ghat, Nellialum, Pandalur (Nilgiris) ; Attakatti (Anamalai) and Arienkara, Udamban Shola (Travancore hills). It has been collected after a lapse of about 70 years on river banks.

Specimens examined : TAMIL NADU : Nilgiris : Nellialum, Nov. 1886, *J. S. Gamble* 18404 (Acc. No. 15443 and 15444—TYPE MATERIALS) ; Carcoor Ghat, Nov. 1888, *M. A. Lawson s.n.* (Acc. No. 15445) ; near Cholady river, Cherambadi, Nov. 1972, *E. Vajravelu* 43117.



Plate I : *Desmodium wynaadense* Bedd. ex Gamble

Eulophia macrostachya Lindl., Gen. & Sp. Orchid. 183. 1833 ; Wight, Ic. tt. 1667-68. 1851 ; Hook. f. Fl. Brit. India 6 : 4. 1890 ; Fischer in Gamble, Fl. Pres. Madras 1003. 1957 (repr. ed.) (ORCHIDACEAE).

A terrestrial orchid with fusiform pseudobulbs. Leaves elliptic-lanceolate, 3 ribbed. Scape stout unbranched with a long raceme. Flowers greenish-yellow, mildly fragrant ; lip broader than long, golden yellow with purple striations, spur a rounded two lobed sac. (Plate II).

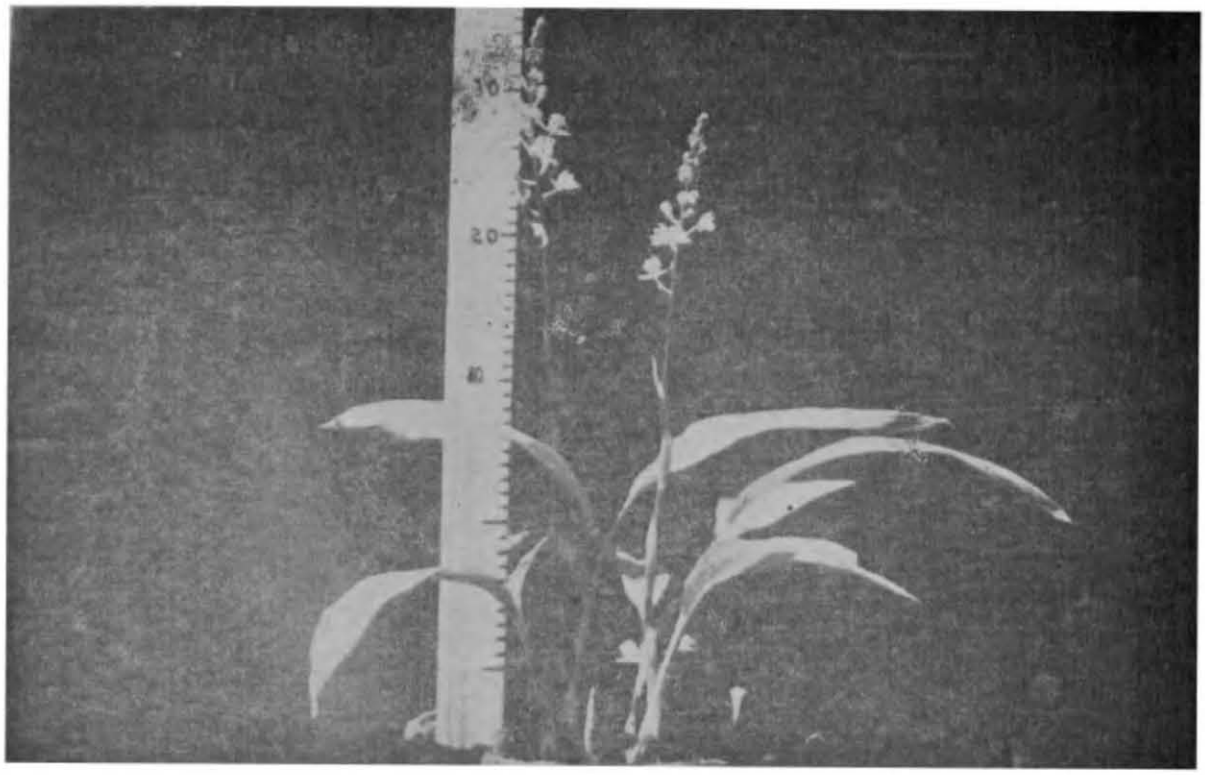


Plate II : *Eulophia macrostachya* Lindl

J. D. Hooker (1890) and C. E. C. Fischer (1928) reported the species from Nilgiris and Courtallum based on the collection of Wight. So far, this taxon has not been collected again from the above localities ; but the authors could locate the same in scrub jungle on the banks of Manar river—a tributory to Kundha river in Nilgiri slopes. Only a few clumps of this species could be found in the above locality. It was introduced in the BSI garden at Coimbatore and growing well.

Specimens examined : TAMIL NADU : Nilgiri : Parali Forest, along the banks of Manar River, June 1974, *E. Vajravelu* 45067.

Ficus nervosa Roth var. **minor** King in Ann. Roy. Bot. Gard. Calcutta 1 : 53. 1887 ; Hook f. Fl. Brit. India 5 : 512. 1888 ; Fischer in Gamble, Fl. Pres. Madras 954. 1957 (repr. ed.) (MORACEAE)

A medium-sized or large tree. Leaves oblong-lanceolate to obovate-elliptic, acuminate at apex, slightly narrowed at base. Receptacles axillary, peduncled, subglobose, pubescent. It is distinguished from the species proper by the smaller size of all parts and more puberulous nature. (Plate III).

This is one of the rare and endangered species, not represented in MH except the present collection by the authors. The authors could see only one or two trees in the locality.

Specimen examined : TAMIL NADU : Nilgiris : Pandalur-Devala Forest, June 1974, *E. Vajravelu* 44909.

Vanilla walkeriae Wight, Ic. t. 932. 1845 ; Hook. f., Fl. Brit. India 6 : 90. 1890 ; Fischer in Gamble, Fl. Pres. Madras 1015. 1957 (repr. ed.). (ORCHIDACEAE).

A gregarious fleshy climbing shrub ;



Plate : III : *Ficus nervosa* Roth var. *minor* King.

branches with adventitious roots. Juvenile leaves (abortive) fleshy, caducous. Racemes terminal, many flowered ; flowers white, lip ovate, oblong or entire or undulate (trumpet or rhomboid shape when spread out). Capsule 10-20 cm long, cylindric, greenish, glaucous. (Plate IV)

Fischer reported the species in Jirganhalli in North Coimbatore and Wight reported it from Travancore near Quilon. This rare and interesting orchid has not been collected/ represented in MH untill 1975 when the authors could locate the same from the scrub jungle of Parali (Begumbahalla) forest. It is found in abundance in this locality. It has also been located in scrub jungle near Kottathorai in Kerala. Live plants have been introduced in BSI garden at Coimbatore and National Orchidarium at Yercaud and growing well but have not flowered so far.

Specimen examined : TAMIL NADU : Nilgiris : Veerakkalai Forest, Parali, Aug. 1975 & January 1976, *E. Vajravelu* 46401 (fruiting), 47206 (flowering) respectively.

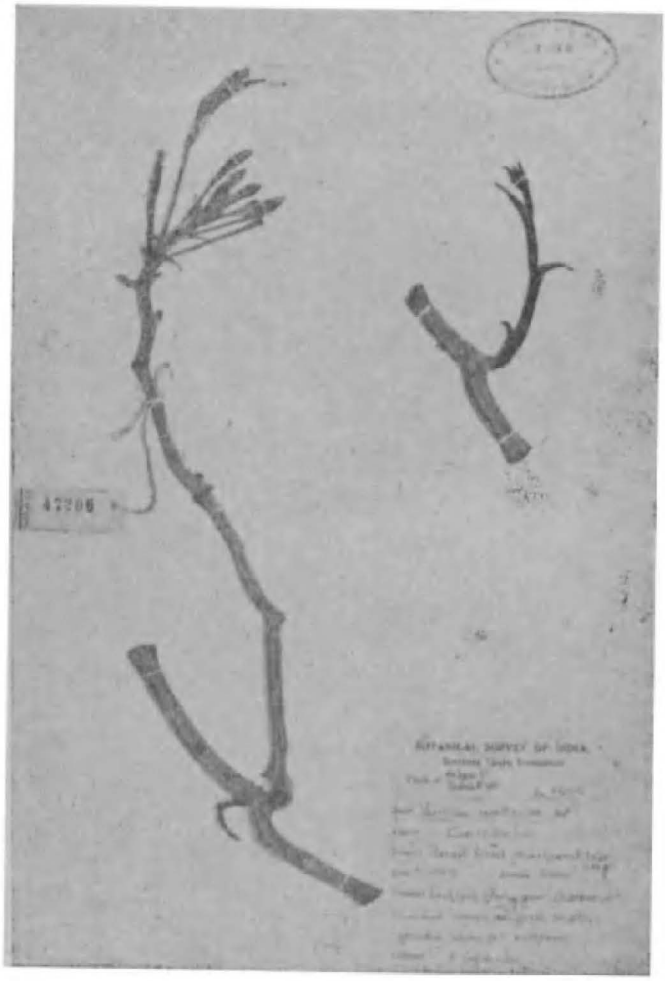


Plate IV : *Vanilla walkeriae* Wight.

Ventilago goughii Gamble in Kew Bull. 134. 1916 et Fl. Pres. Madras 156. 1957 (repr. ed.) ; S. P. Banerjee & P. K. Mukerjee in Ind. For. 96 : 211. 1970 ; Henry *et al.* in Journ. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc. 75 : 687. 1979 (RHAMNACEAE).

A climbing shrub with minutely puberulous branchlets ; leaves oblong-lanceolate, attenuate at base, crenulate at margins. Panicles ± 12 cm long, slender, lax flowered ; flowers small, pale yellow. Samara

± 5.5 × 1.00 cm, oblong, reticulate. Calyx tube covering 3/4 of the nut (Plate V).



Plate V : *Ventilago goughii* Gamble

It is one of the rare and endangered species. There are two sheets in MH collected by Lawson in 1866. After a lapse of over 90 years, this rare plant could be collected in the dry deciduous forest of Nilgiri eastern slopes by the authors in 1972. A very few live plants were found in this locality.

Specimens examined : TAMIL NADU : Nilgiris : Carcoor Ghat, *M. A. Lawson s.n.* (Acc. No. 10348, Flowering-TYPE MATERIAL) ; Segur Ghat, March 1886, *M. A. Lawson s.n.* (Acc. No. 10369, Fruiting) ; Kunjappanai Forest, Feb. 1972, *E. Vajravelu* 39709. Tirunelvelly Dt., Thulukkanparai, Tirukurungudi, Feb. 1972, *S. Karthikeyan* 40142.

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