A NOTE ON THE DISTRIBUTION AND CONSERVATION STATUS OF *MEMECYLON CAPITELLATUM* LINN. IN SOUTH INDIA

The specimens of *Memecylon* Linn. collected from Alagarkovil MPCA (Medicinal Plants Conservation Area) in Dindigul Anna District of Tamil Nadu in Southern India were identified as *Memecylon capitellatum* Linn. with the help of an authentic Sri Lankan specimen available in MH and relevant literature. Linnaeus (1753) described this species based on Sri Lankan specimen which is the type species of the genus. Trimen (1894, 1895) reported this species again from Sri Lanka. Later, the species was reported by Beddome (1872) from Tinnevelly in India and Brandis (1906) from Tinnevelly and Travancore Ghats and low country up to 1,000 ft. in Sri Lanka. But Bremer (1979, 1987) inadvertently reported this species as endemic to Sri Lanka. The present record from Alagarkovil R.F. in Dindigul Anna District of Tamil Nadu in the Eastern Ghats is of phytogeographical interest due to its extended distribution from the Western Ghats to the Eastern Ghats. *Memecylon capitellatum* Linn. is always confused with *M. umbellatum* Burm.f. in India but it can easily be distinguished from the latter by rounded, acute, subacute, often subcausate leaves with intramarginal veins and flowers 3 15 in condensed heads on long peduncles. In the latter species the leaves lack intramarginal veins and are notched at apex and flowers in thyrsoid to umbel-shaped manner with long pedicels. Hence, the species is dealt with hereunder in detail to facilitate the process of identification and to help in conserving this rare species in wild in its known range of distribution in India.

Memecylon capitellatum Linn., Sp. Pl. 349. 1753; Trimen, Handb. Fl. Ceylon 2: 222. 1894 & Ill. Handb. Fl. Ceylon t. 41. 1895; Bedd., Fl. Sylv. t. 206A. 1872; Brandis, Indian Trees 336. 1906; Bremer in Opera Bot. 50: 10. f.3. 1979 & in Dassanayake and Fosberg, Rev. Handb. Fl. Ceylon 6: 213. f. 3B. 1987. *Memecylon edule* Roxb. var. *capitellata* (Linn.) Clarke in Hook.f., Fl. Brit. India 2: 564. 1879. *M. edule* Roxb. var. *laeta* Clarke in Hook.f., Fl. Brit. India 2: 564. 1879.

Small trees, ± 4 m high; branches and branchlets subterete; bark ashy grey; nodes terete; internodes 0.8-5.2 cm long. Leaves decussate-opposite, shiny, elliptic, cuneate at base, rounded, acute, subacute, often subcaudate with obtuse margin at apex, drying yellowish green, 2.2-9.7 × 1.1-4.7 cm; midrib prominent, sulcate above; lateral veins 5-10 on either side; intramarginal veins prominent; petioles 2-7 mm long. Inflorescence in condensed heads on long stout peduncles, 3-15-flowered, axillary or at leafless nodes, solitary or in pairs; peduncles subterete, primary ones 3-13 mm long with rarely secondary ones; pedicels indistinct; bracts fleshy, deltoid-subulate. Flowers whitish purple, fragrant, 4-merous, bisexual with an epigynous disc, *ca* 4 × 4.2 mm. Receptacle campanulate-cyathiform, prolonged above ovary, continuous with calyx. Calyx shallowly 4-lobed, *ca* 0.6 × 4.2 mm; lobes widely triangular, acute or apiculate, fleshy. Petals 4, white without, purple within, twisted in bud, orbicular in outline, apiculate at apex, *ca* 2 × 2.5 mm. Disc rays 8, deep. Stamens 8, equal; filaments purple, incurved in bud, straight, *ca* 3.5 mm long; glands yellow, disc-shaped; anthers brown, *ca* 1.6 × 1.2 mm. Ovary 1-celled; ovules numerous, attached to central placenta; style purple, simple, *ca* 3.5 mm long. Fruit a globose berry, *ca* 9 mm across, pink.

Fl. & Fr. : March June.

Local name : *Kayamaram, Kaayaan.*

Local use : Dye is extracted from leaves.

Specimens examined : INDIA : Tamil Nadu : Dindigul Anna District, Alagarkovil R.F. : ±475 m, 7.3.1994, *M.B. Viswanathan* 3069; ±510 m, 27.5.1994, *M.B. Viswanathan* 16960; ±420 m, 3.2.1995. *M.B. Viswanathan* 17026; ±480 m, 4.2.1995, *M.B. Viswanathan* 17062. Tinnevelly Ghats, locality unknown, *s.coll., s.n., Acc. No.* 21642 (MH).



Fig. 1. *Memecylor Capitellatum* Linn.

Sri Lanka : Locality unknown, *s. coll., C.P. 1564* (MH).

Ecology : *M. capitellatum* Linn. is rerely met with in southern tropical dry mixed deciduous forest type on laterite red loamy soil above 420 m MSL in Alagarkovil reserve forest.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author is thankful to the financial assistance provided by the Foundation for Revitalization of Local Health Traditions (FRLHT), Bangalore, for the Botanical Survey work of Alagarkovil MPCA and its Project Co-ordinator, Sri Vinay Tandon and to the concerned ranger of the Forest Department of Tamil Nadu, Dr. P. Daniel, Scientist 'SD', Thiru K. Vivekananthan, Scientist 'SB', of the Botanical Survey of India, Coimbatore, Dr. N. Sukumaran, Professor & Head of our Centre and Thiru P. Kumar for their help in various ways.

M. B. VISWANATHAN

Sri Paramakalyani Centre for Environmental Sciences, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Alwarkurichi