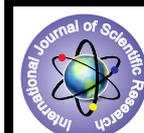


Illustrated Key to The Generas of Menispermaceae Family in Pune & Adjoining Region



Botany

KEYWORDS :

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ABSTRACT

In the recent years there has been growing interest in plant diversity studies in general and floristic studies in particular. Illustrations of plants are as old as human civilization and yet, there is ever greater need for good illustration. Everyone including the specialist, knows that a good illustration is far superior and more efficient in recognizing plants than lengthy descriptions, or even keys. Menispermaceae is a medium sized family of mostly of climbing plants. The great majority of the genera are tropical, but with a few (notably Menispermum and Cocculus) reaching temperate climates in eastern Asia. This study made an attempt to illustrate this key to the genera found in Pune and adjoining region to make its identification easy. The present work is a sincere attempt to provide an illustrative key to the genera of Menispermaceae family. Method includes field study, Herbarium study & Illustrations based on plant specimens. Besides the time consuming process of correct identification of plant species can be minimized, if such flora is easily accessible available at the nearest reference point.

Introduction

In the recent years there has been growing interest in plant diversity studies in general and floristic studies in particular. In this connection regional floristic studies are of much importance. It can be achieved by intensive exploration of smaller areas. Such attempts have been made by taxonomists and other botanists in various research institutes and teachers in degree colleges.

There is stray floristic work on various talukas of Pune district. These floristic works i.e. the floras or check lists, very rarely provide illustrations, 1-4 which is a easy mode of comparing, verifying and identification plants.

Illustrations of plants are as old as human civilization and yet, there is ever greater need for good illustration. Everyone including the specialist, knows that a good illustration is far superior and more efficient in recognizing plants than lengthy descriptions, or even keys.

Menispermaceae It is a medium sized family of mostly of climbing plants. The great majority of the genera are tropical, but with a few (notably Menispermum and Cocculus) reaching temperate climates in eastern Asia. The present work is a sincere attempt to provide an illustrative key to the genera depicting important morphological characters to identify the plants easily.

The present work is based on the results of about intensive exploration of Family Menispermaceae to the Pune and adjoining regions of Pune district.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The present works is based on the result of intensive explorations to the study of plants occurring in Pune and adjoining region of Pune district. The methods and material employed for the present study comes under; Field study Herbarium study Illustrations based on plant specimens.

Pune and adjoining regions mentioned as above is approachable by own vehicle during all seasons. A major bulk plants of collected in rainy seasons because majority of the flowering plants found in rainy reasons and especially some ephemeral plants are only found in monsoon period. While collecting the specimens, the data such as habit, habitat, flower colours, fragrance if present, frequency of distribution, local names and uses, if any were recorded in the field itself. These specimens collected were pressed in the field using blotting and old newspaper.

These specimens have been deposited in the herbarium of University of Pune, Deptt. of Botany, Pune 411007. Generally 3-4 specimens of the each plant were collected. Two specimens were mounted and others were treated as duplicate specimens.

The plant specimens which are carefully collected taking care that the specimens are healthy, free from evidence of insect feeding, rust infections, and other obvious pathological symp-

oms. It was ensured that the specimen is either in flowering or fruiting condition. The specimen is herbaceous, always include enough of the underground parts to show their characters.

The plant specimens pressed on the spot and some time collected in vasculum and pressed after coming to laboratory. While collecting the specimens, the data such as habit, habitat, locality, local name, etc. have been immediately recorded in the field diary.

After returning to the laboratory, the plant specimen have been pressed in between the sheets of blotting paper. One plant should be arranged, on one sheet in a manner that there should be no over lapping of parts. The large size specimens have been folded in 'V', 'Z', 'W' 'C' shape. The blotting papers with plant specimens have been placed in field press for about 24 to 48 hrs. The press is then opened, blottings have been changed and rearranged the plant specimen properly. This practice made continuous for 10 to 15 days till the specimens get properly dried.

Poisoning of the specimen have been done immediately after collection ; all the specimens were poisoned in aqueous solution of Mercuric chloride and dried using standard herbarium techniques.

After drying, the specimens were mounted for permanent record on herbarium sheets. The herbarium sheets of standard size 42 cm X 28 cm; and such standard herbarium sheets have been used. The specimens were mounted on the sheets with the help of glue or by stitched wherever necessary with help of cotton thread.

The plant specimens have been tentatively identified in the field and identification was confirmed by using different floras. The important floras such as "Flora of presidency of Bombay" by Theodore Cooke (1958), 5,6 "Flora of British India" (1872 to 1897) by J. D. Hooker 7, "Flora of Presidency Madras" (Gamble, 1957) 8 "Flora of Akola District, Maharashtra" by S. Y. Kamble and S.G. Pradhan (1988) 9, " Flora of Maharashtra state" (2000) by N. P. Singh 10 & S. Karthikeyan Flora of Mahabaleshwar and adjoins, by Deshpande (1995) 11, "Flora of Nasik" by Lakshminarsimhan (1991) 12, "Flora of Raigad" by Kothari and Moorthy (1993) 13 Then again the specimens confirmed by matching with authentically identified specimens deposited in the herbarium of Botanical Survey of India, Western Circle Pune.

A depiction of the habit, alongwith finer structural details especially of flower and fruit in a comparable format was the main purpose. Thus the details depicted are taxonomically significant.

Following the general pattern of one plate per species, the first step was to visualize the number of sketches involved and scale suitable to the illustration i.e. reduction of larger organ and enlargement of smaller ones.

Depiction of the twig as visual aid to recall the plant characters is important. Thus special efforts were made to make the habit sketch and dissections from the same specimen in order to avoid errors.

A photograph of the specimen from the same collection was most useful in rounding off the habit sketch. To satisfy this purpose an extensive field work was carried out in the study area in various seasons to capture the flowering and fruiting season of plants. The plant parts were detached from the twig, and examined under a binocular dissection microscope under suitable magnification (X5 or X 10 is usually sufficient). Almost all the details were studied.

Serial sketching of structure in order (Calyx, Corolla, Androecium, Gynoecium, Fruit) with detail was done. All the sketches were drawn with fresh specimen and with hand by using isograph drawing pens with zeichentusche drawing ink on A4 size bond paper and scanned for further DTP work in Photoshop, then it was inserted in MS- word and edited for labeling, numbering and preparation of keys. The sketches were made first with pencil, with suitable scale (X 5) in case of minute flowers the magnification was X2- X20 times of the original specimen. In case of large specimen five to twenty times reduction was done. All the sketches are calibrated and suitable magnifications have been shown near the sketch.

The advantage of keeping the same scale of magnification/ reduction for comparable structure within the taxon enables us to emphasize the actual scale of various plant parts. From the printed plate, which usually gets reduced in size during DTP or printing it is possible to compute back the original values, both of the sketch and the actual material.

The sketches aim to convey maximum information for which all parts are illustrated : habit, flower, calyx, corolla, stamen (front and back view), pistil, ovary (V.S. and T.S.), fruit and seeds. Scale is individually given to all figures. In each plate family name is given in capital at the top of the page, so also page number which considers with the plate number. The correct botanical name is given in bold face type, is linked to current rules of nomenclature. This is followed by the figure numbers in numerals given serially in clockwise fashion as the figures are distributed on the plate. Families are arranged in the modified Bentham and Hookers system of classification, followed in India. An index gives the names of families genera as vernacular names.

The discriminating morphological character is placed below the description in form of the actual sketch of the selected character in the indented key e.g leaves, stamens, flowers, fruits etc. lots of efforts have gone on to this DTP work to prepare the illustrated key. All the sketches here are given with scale, so as to calculate the actual size of the specimen. The plants described are illustrated, so that even non botanist can know what is what. Finally we have no pretension that this is the last word on this topic. Probably a more extensive explanatory study might reveal more of such variations, even within Maharashtra.

Key to the genera.

1. Leaves as long as broad, glabrous. (Fig. i) ... TINOSPORA



Fig. i . Tinospora Cordifolia (Willd.) Miers ex Hook. F. & Thomas.

1. Leaves 2 or 3 times as long as broad, softly pubescent or vilous. (Fig.ii) ... COCCULUS



Fig. ii. Cocculus hirsutus (L.) Theob.

Discussion :

This work will provide a handy tool to those, who wish to work in the field of taxonomy. The pictorial keys enable the researcher to identify the plants by matching the characters with the illustrations which are drawn with scale. So the confusion generally created while reading the information of plant can be minimized. More extensive keys could have been prepared, but due to time constraint, which may be taken up in near future.

There have been innumerable thesis, research papers, projects going on where many ideas have been expanded, still basic need of floristic study is, correct identification of floristic elements in the field. We as researchers or botanist, get to realize the heavy price we will have to pay in future, if we don't start such work today. These Illustrations are good enough as regard the habit of plant but not for the structural details. These old volumes are scarce, no larger in print and becoming beyond the reach of common research student or college teachers working on floristics. There is also ever greater need for good illustration.

This work will provide a practical introduction to the techniques of documentation in taxonomy to study the plant genetic resources. Besides the time consuming process of correct identification of plant can be minimized, if such flora is easily accessible available at the nearest reference point. Instead of wasting time and paying heavy fees which such institute ask for identification, one can easily go through the illustrative keys and identify the plant, within no time. Therefore such kind of floras are need of time today and in future.

Conclusion : India's native biodiversity is of unique global significance, that this country is recognized as one of the 12 most biologically diverse on mega diverse areas on the earth. Our area exhibits a wide range in topography bearing on it vegetation. This subcontinent is one of the World's 12 leading biodiversity centers.

We must realized that if the world's still existing species and gene pools are the priceless heritage of all humanity, then people everywhere need to share the burdens of documentation and further conservation, according to their ability to do so.

There have been innumerable thesis, research papers, projects going on where many ideas have been expanded, still basic need of floristic study is, correct identification of floristic elements in the field. We as researchers or botanist, get to realize the heavy price we will have to pay in future, if we don't start such work today.

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