

RECOLLECTION OF *CISTACHNE TUBULOSA* (SCHRENK)
WIGHT (OROBANCHACEAE) FROM MAHARASHTRA
AFTER ABOUT A CENTURY

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During a botanical exploration tour to Borivli, Mumbai undertaken by the authors, some curious looking plants were noticed growing underneath the bushes of *Avicennia marina* (Forssk.) Vierh. and *Salvadora persica* L. var. *wightiana* (Planch. ex Thw.) Verdc. at Gorai beach, Borivli (Salsette island). On close observation these attractive plants were found to be some root parasite belonging to Orobanchaceae. The plants were subsequently identified as *Cistachne tubulosa* (Schrenk) Wight. The perusal of literature revealed these plants to be interesting as their occurrence was confined to Gujarat, Rajasthan (Singh, 1965). Hooker (1884) in Flora of British India mentioned the localities of its occurrence in Punjab and Sind, now in Pakistan. Cooke (1905) in Flora of the Presidency of Bombay also enumerated this plant from Sind and Karachi, now in Pakistan.

Indraji Thakar in 1926 gave detailed account of this plant including its medicinal uses in his Plants of Cutch in Gujarati language. In 1964 P.V. Bole identified and described this root parasite from Pirotan island in Gulf of Cutch. There this plant is locally well-known as 'Bambalai'. Shah (1978) in his Flora of Gujarat and Shetty & Singh (1991) reported it from desert of Rajasthan. Recently A.N. Londhe in Flora of Maharashtra 2001, gave Thane Dist as the only locality from Maharashtra State commenting it to be a 'rare one'. But his report of this plant is based on K.V. Billore's Ph. D. thesis entitled "Studies on the Vegetation and Flora of Thana Dist, Maharashtra State", 1972. Interestingly, KV. Billore in his thesis quotes, "The report of this plant is based on W. Burns's collection from Dahanu. Thana Dist in 6-4-1909 and hence the date of collection of this plant goes back to 1909 for the State. It indicates that the present collection of this plant at Gorai beach, Borivli (Salsette island) on 19-04-2002, has been done 93 years after Burns's collections! In another publication of Flora of Maharashtra by M.R. Almeida in 2001, there is no mention of this Orobanchioid genus at all.

Citation and brief description of the plant is as follows.

Cistachne tubulosa (Schrenk) Wight, Ic. t 1420 bis 1850; Hook. f., Fl. Brit India 4: 324. 1884; Cooke, Fl. Pres. Bombay 2: 386. 1958 (Repr. ed.); Bole in J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc. 61: 473. 1964; G. L. Shah, Fl. Gujarat 1: 511 : 1978; B.V. Shetty & V. Singh, Fl. Rajasthan 2: 615. 1991; A.N. Londhe in Singh & al Fl. Maharashtra 2: 560, 2001. *Philipaea tubulosa* Schrenk, Pl. Aeg.-Arab. Sp. 23. 1841.

Scapigerous herbs 25-50 cm high, stems unbranched, fleshy. Spikes 5-7 cm wide, fleshy, covered with

triangular scales. Flowers yellow, bracteate and bracteolate; bracts lanceolate with membranous margins, bracteoles linear-lanceolate with membranous margins; calyx tubular-campanulate, 1.2-1.8 cm long, lobes subequal, rounded, *ca* 1/3 as long as the tube; corolla yellow, 2.5-5.0 cm long, tube hairy at the base within and dilated above with 5 subequal obtuse lobes. Stamens 4, subexserted; anther lobes equal, villous. Ovary 1-celled; stigma rounded, T-shaped, broad. Capsule ovoid, compressed. Seeds subglobose, minute, pitted, numerous.

Flowering and fruiting was observed in the month of April. Cooke (1905), mentioned it to be in December.

The plants were growing scattered as parasites in halophytic and mangrove association probably on *Avicennia marina*, *Salvadora persica*, var. *wightiana*, *Acanthus ilicifolius* or *Thespesia populnea* etc. at Gorai beach, Borivli after crossing first creek on a way to Essel World (Diwakar & Pradhan 176332).



Photograph of the plant

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