

## IS *HEMIGRAPHIS VENOSA* C.B. CLARKE (ACANTHACEAE) EXTINCT ?

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### A B S T R A C T

*Hemigraphis venosa*, a species described from Tamil Nadu, India and in all probability never collected after the type, is described in detail and illustrated for the first time. The confusion in its taxonomy and nomenclature is pointed out. The need to rediscover it is stressed.

### INTRODUCTION

Linnaeus (1753: 653) described *Ruellia crispa* based on a specimen with yellow flowers collected by Osbeck in Java. Bremekamp (1944 : 273) placed it in his new genus *Sericocalyx* as *S. crispus* (L.) Bremek. The name *Ruellia crispa* was later misapplied by Nees (1832 : 84, 1847: 146) to a different plant with purple flowers collected by Wight (Cat. Ind. Pl.: 115, no. 1941. 1836) in Peninsular India. Heyne had earlier given a different name, *R. venosa*, to the same plant in Rottler herbarium. Later Clarke (1884: 423) described it as a new species and validly published the name *Hemigraphis venosa*.

A mention at this point of the comments of Clarke (*l.c.*) on the works of Roxburgh (1832: 473) and Anderson (1867 : 463) with reference to this name will be in order. Clarke (*l.c.*) doubted whether one of Roxburgh's varieties under *Ruellia hirta* Vahl is *H. venosa*. Though the colour of the flowers (purple) matches with that of *H. venosa*, the leaves described as subsessile and the corolla obliquely oval are characters that do not agree with that of this species. It is therefore unlikely that it is the same and that Roxburgh ever collected and/or described this species. Nor did Roxburgh present an illustration of *R. hirta* or its varieties to confirm or refute this contention.

Anderson (*l.c.*) described *Stenosiphonium zeylanicum* (Type : Thwaites CP 3577

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MH!) that resembles much *H. venosa* in habit but differs in the bracts which are as long as the calyx, bigger and differently shaped corolla and presence of 4 ovules in the ovary. He also regarded *Ruellia venosa* (= *H. venosa*) as a variety of this *S. zeylanicum* for its similarity with this species in habit. But later Clarke (*l.c.*) rightly placed *S. zeylanicum* in *Strobilanthes* and described it under a new name *S. exsertus* C.B. Clarke. In Clarke's own words this does not do for *Stenosiphonium* in the inflorescence and number of ovules (6-8). *Strobilanthes exsertus* is endemic to Sri Lanka and *H. venosa* to India, and it is unlikely that they be a source of confusion while collecting. *Hemigraphis venosa* also resembles *Cardanthera triflora* Benth. in habit but the corolla in the latter is obscurely bilabiate. The identity crisis in *H. venosa* has led some workers to overlook and others to include but unfortunately based on wrong determinations.

#### WRONG REPORTS AND DETERMINATIONS

Ramachandran and Nair (1988) included *Hemigraphis venosa* in their flora of Cannanore and cited a specimen. This specimen, *V. S. Ramachandran* 65394, from Baveli and wrongly determined as *H. venosa* earlier is now determined as *H. latebrosa* (B. Heyne ex Roth) Nees as the anthers of the longer filaments are densely bearded in the upper half. Other wrong determinations at MH include *V. J. Nair* 73813 from Kasaragod district of Kerala; *G. V. Subba Rao* 19460, 19502 and 21719 from Visakhapatnam, *G. V. Subba Rao* 27421 from East Godavari and *A. N. Henry* 15924 from Warangal districts of Andhra Pradesh; *Durga Prasad* s.n. from Orissa and *N. P. Balakrishnan & A. N. Henry* 11892 from Madhya Pradesh. All these are now determined as *Lepidagathis fasciculata* (Retz.) Nees. There is no representative specimen of *H. venosa* at MH. Literature including Nees (*l.c.*), Clarke (*l.c.*) and Gamble (*l.c.*) did not mention the exact locality. No published district floras of Andhra Pradesh or the state floras of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh include it. It was keyed out in the flora of Andhra Pradesh but inadvertently got excluded in the enumeration (Pullaiah & Moulali, 1977). Pullaiah (*in litt.*) confirmed that he did not collect or see a specimen but included it based on literature. Rani and Matthew (1983), and Kumari (1987) who chose to exclude it did not explain why.

Clarke (*l.c.*) described *H. venosa* under the group characterised by corolla tubular-ventricose, limb blue and longer filaments of stamens glabrous in the upper half. He included

three species of Anderson's (*H. dura*, *H. hirta* and *H. confinis*) and one of his own (*H. venosa*) under this group. Among these four, *H. venosa* is allied to *H. hirta* but differs from it in the presence of corolla short-cylindric below, upper part campanulate-ventricose, bracts obovate, calyx lobes lanceolate, acuminate, leaves ovate, crenate and to 5 cm long. *Hemigraphis hirta* has corolla long-cylindric below, upper part funnel-shaped-ventricose, bracts elliptic, calyx lobes linear, obtuse, leaves ovate, crenate and to 2.5 cm long. There is also discrepancy in the description in literature. While Clarke (*l.c.*) mentioned the presence of bracteoles, Gamble (*l.c.*) did not. Hence, we felt that it would be appropriate to redescribe in detail and illustrate this less known and confused species to facilitate its rediscovery.

***Hemigraphis venosa*** C.B. Clarke in Hook.f., Fl. Brit. India 4 : 423. 1884; Gamble, Fl. Madras : 1018 (715). 1924; V.S. Ramach. & V.J. Nair, Fl. Cannanore : 338. 1988, sphalm.-Syntypes : Peninsular India, Tamil Nadu, Kumulentawanei, Feb. 1796, *Rottler s.n.* (K! LIV! MH photo!); Wight, Cat. Ind. Pl. no. 1941 (K! MH photo!). *Ruellia crispa sensu* Nees in Wall., Pl. Asiat. Rar. 3 : 83. 1832 & DC., Prodr. 11 : 146. 1847, non L. 1753. *R. venosa* B. Heyne in Herb. Rottler, *nom. nud.* (Fig.1)

A scabrid-pubescent herb, 15-30 cm high, branched, rooting sparingly at lower nodes; branches quadrangular, pubescent. Leaves to 5 × 2.5 cm, acute or acuminate at both ends, crenate at margin, lineolate on both surfaces, sparsely setose above, softly and more densely so beneath; petioles to 2 cm long. Heads axillary and terminal, many-flowered, enveloped between 2 involucral bracts; bracts *ca* 1 cm long, smooth, obscurely obovate, triangular-obtuse or-acute at apex, faintly serrate at margin, lineolate, softly setose above and glabrous below inside, setose all over outside; bracteoles 2, to 7 mm long, lanceolate, scarious, faintly lineolate, ciliate at margin, white-hirsute upwards. Calyx scarious, divided half way down, to 7 mm long, 5-lobed; lobes subequal, lanceolate, hispid, white-hairy at apex. Corolla faintly curved, nearly glabrous outside with 2 tufts of hairs near longer filaments inside; base cylindric, to 5 mm long; ventricose portion almost spherical, slightly longer than cylindric base, to 7 mm long, 5-lobed; lobes ovate, obtuse. Stamens 4, subequal; longer filaments exserted; lower portion densely white-hairy and obscurely plaited near base; upper portion glabrous; anthers unequal, 2-lobed; lobes subequal. Ovary glabrous below, glandular-pubescent above; ovules 6-8, on retinacula; style to 14 mm long, exserted; stigma of one linear and one very short lobes. Capsule not seen.

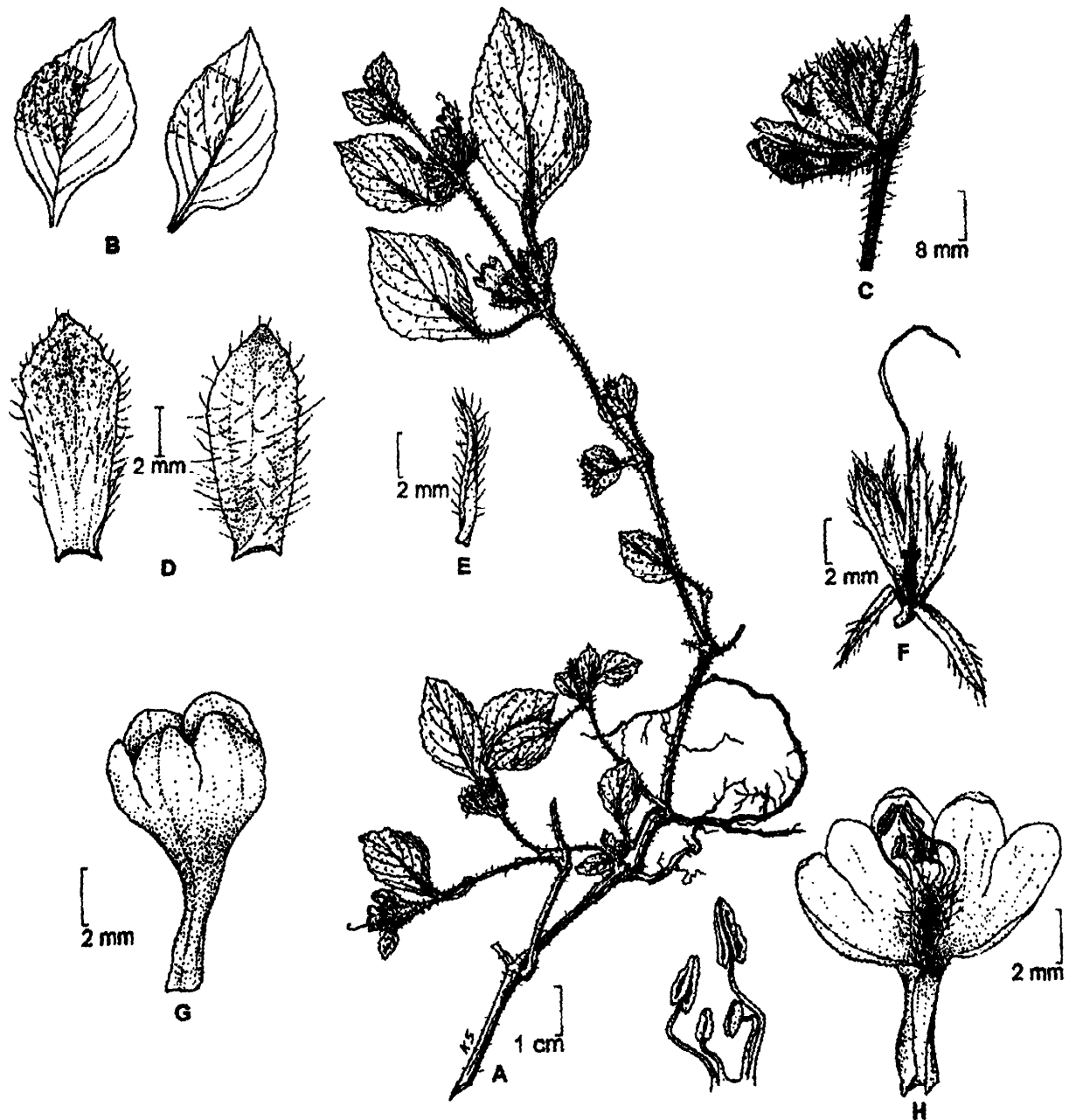


Fig.1(A-I). *Hemigraphis venosa* C.B. Clarke

A. Habit; B. Leaf upper & lower surfaces; C. Inflorescence;  
 D. Bract inward & outward faces; E. Bracteole; F. Calyx with gynoecium; bracteoles;  
 G. Corolla; H. Corolla open and I. Stamens (*J.P. Rottler s.n.*)

*Fl.*: February, *Fr.*: Not known.

*Habitat* : Sandy places, probably in coastal and subcoastal areas.

*Distrib.* : Deccan or Carnatic (locality doubtful) (*vide* Gamble, *l.c.*). Tamil Nadu.

*Notes* : Though the original set of Wight's collections studied by Arnott are reportedly at E, there is no specimen of *H. venosa* there (Noltie *in litt.*). Wight's collection at K did not mention any locality. The locality cited on Rottler's collection is Kumulentawanei, the current Tamil equivalent of which is not known. A village with a similar suffix (Pasuvanthanei) exists in Tuticorin, a coastal district in southern Tamil Nadu.

It may be pointed out here that a number of Indian plants have not been collected after the types collected by Europeans and some do not have representative specimens in Indian herbaria. It needs to be stressed that many Indian species need redescribing as the description is based on scanty material. *Hemigraphis venosa* is a classic example of such a category whose existence requires proof.

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