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ORCHIDS IN TEAK (TECTONA GRANDIS) PLANTATION OF KANYAKUMARI DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU – INDIA

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Abstract:

Orchids are most abundant in the forest of Western Ghats of India have been threatened in their natural habitat. Orchids were further identified to the respective genus and species with general description and illustrations. The epiphytic orchid Acampe praemorsa grow luxuriously in teak plantations of Kanyakumari district.

Key Words: Orchids, Tectona Grandis, Acampe Praemorsa & Kanyakumari District

Introduction:

Orchidaceae is one of the largest flowering plant families with cosmopolitan in distribution. Orchids are profuse particularly in the humid tropics and sub-tropics so far 17,000 species have been known in the world and about 1,500 species in India. In peninsular India there are about 200 species in 60 genera and about 80 species in 29 genera in Kanyakumari District among these 22 species are found to be endemic, i.e. only confined to peninsular India. The Royal Botanical Gardens of Kew list 880 genera and nearly 22,000 accepted species but the exact number is unknown (perhaps as many as 25,000) because of taxonomic disputes.

Orchid flowers are used for decoration at wedding ceremonies, Easter, Christmas, Mothers day and personal gifts. Consequently there is a great demand for hybrid orchids, especially *Dendrobium* sp in the floriculture industry. Increased plant exploration and critical taxonomic analysis of orchids in different regions with comparable climate and elevation is bound to throw more light on the inter and intra-specific variations of orchids and better knowledge of their distribution pattern and illustrated orchid floras help in stimulating the efforts (Joseph, 1987).

Materials and Method:

The epiphytic orchids was observed from the teak (*Tectona grandis*) plantation, at an altitude of about 500 to 1500 feet of Kanyakumari District, the southernmost end of the peninsular India lies between 8º-20º north of the equator and between 70º-85º in longitude**.** Photographs of the vegetative and reproductive (inflorescence) parts were compared with the description published in orchids of Nilgiris (Joseph, 1987).

Description:

Acampe praemorsa is an epiphytic wild orchid (Plate-1). Robust plant with stout stem, 16 cm long, covered by sheathing bases of leaves, with persisting old inflorescence axis and long stout aerial roots among the leaves. Leaves alternate distichous, large and coriaceous, 8-17cm oblong, unequally deeply cleft at apex. Single branch possess 4 leaves, first leaf 22-2.5cm, second leaf 28-2.5cm, third leaf 18-2.5cm and fourth leaf 18-2.2cm. Inflorescence short, erect, corymbose panicles, 6-10 cm long, leaf opposed, peduncle stout with several copular sheathing bracts. Flowers dense, not wide opening, yellow, midly sweet scented. Bracts 3.0 x 3.5 mm, broadly ovate, obtuse, persistent ovary with pedicel 13 mm long, perianths fleshy with horizontal dark purplish streaks. Dorsal sepals 13.5x7.5 mm, obvovate-oblong and obtuse with a mucro. Lateral petals 7.5x3.0 mm, oblanceolate-spathulate and obtuse. Lip 8.7 mm long, fleshy, trilobed,

saccate at base; sidelobes small, narrow, erect, thick; midlobe 6.5x4 mm, ligulate, ovate-oblong, more or less reflexed, obtuse, fleshy, irregularly crenulate at margins, tuberculate on the upper surface; base saccate, long slender, papillose within. Column short, stout, 2 mm long with two small terminal horns, on each side. Fruits sub-sessile, erect, more or less in cluster, sub-cylindric, longitudinally ribbed; young fruits 7 cm long (Plate-2).

Plate-1 Acampe Praemorsa – Habit

Plate-2 Acampe Praemorsa – Flower
Flowering: May **Fruiting**: June
Vajravelu 45021, Nellithorai forest: Alt. 350 m.

Conclusion:

The presence of large number of orchid species in Indian forests are now at the verge of extinction and some of them have become so rare that a large number of botanical teams were unable to trace them. Burning and falling of forest trees for timber has been the major cause for the depletion of Indian orchid wealth therefore mitigation measures related to conserving the natural wealth ought to be supposed inorder to enduring the growth of orchids affected by the anthropogenic activities.

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