



Article

Notes on the identity and status of two Legumes (Fabaceae: Papilionoideae) from India

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Abstract

Indigofera karaiyarensis and *Mucuna pruriens* var. *thekkadiensis* are synonymized under *Indigofera astragalina* and *Mucuna pruriens* var. *hirsuta* respectively.

Key words: *Indigofera*, *Mucuna*, new synonym

Introduction

As part of revisionary studies on legumes of Kerala, India, we examined two recently described taxa [*Indigofera karaiyarensis* Rajakumar *et al.* (2011: 485), and *Mucuna pruriens* var. *thekkadiensis* Thothathri & Ravi Kumar (1997: 703)] and evaluated the taxonomic status which is discussed below.

Indigofera Linnaeus (1753:751)

Gillett (1960), Sanjappa (1995), and Murthy & Sanjappa (2002) discussed the status of *Indigofera hirsuta* Linnaeus (1753: 751) and *Indigofera astragalina* Candolle (1825: 228) based on morphology and SEM analysis of seed coat, and they retained them at specific level. According to Sanjappa (1985, 1995), *I. astragalina* shows continuous variation in size of the plant, nature of leaflets, length of peduncle, color of flowers, indumentum of pods, and number of seeds/pods, and he followed Gillett (1960) to separate it from the closely allied *I. hirsuta* at specific level. However, the diversity in seed types and its importance in evolution as argued by Corner (1951) in Leguminosae prompted Murthy & Sanjappa (2002) to evaluate the seed morphology of 51 species of *Indigofera* in India. Their analysis again emphasized the differences between *I. hirsuta* and *I. astragalina*. The seed coat is granulate in *I. astragalina* and striate–rugose in *I. hirsuta* at high magnification. Even after much taxonomic studies in these two taxa, there continue to be problems (as revealed by innumerable misidentified specimens in various herbaria in India) with the identity at morphological level due to close affinity. Recently Rajakumar *et al.* (2011) proposed a new species, *Indigofera karaiyarensis* Rajakumar *et al.* (2011: 485) from South India. While going through the protologue of *I. karaiyarensis*, we did not observe any progressive character states that could clearly distinguish *I. karaiyarensis* from allied *I. astragalina*. It is also evident that the authors did not consult relevant publications (Gillett 1960, Murthy & Sanjappa 2002), and type specimens [e.g., type of *I. hirsuta*:—SRI LANKA. *Herbarium Hermann Vol. 1, fol. 60, no. 172* (lectotype BM!), designated by De Kort & Thijssse 1984; see figure 1], before describing their new species. According to Rajakumar *et al.*, (2011) *I. karaiyarensis* is allied