

FIRST RECORD OF *FICUS TINCTORIA* FORST F. SSP. *PARASITICA* (WILLD.) CORNER,
AS A HOST OF *KERRIA LACCA* (KERR), FROM INDIA

While searching suitable alternative lac hosts in Madhya Pradesh, the authors came across a new lac host at Silondhi forest of Umaria Forest Division, bearing healthy natural lac encrustation. Identified as *Ficus tinctoria* Forst f. ssp. *parasitica* (Willd.) Corner (Urticaceae) and locally called as *girri*, the host plant was epiphytic on a lac bearing *palas* tree [*Butea monosperma* (Lamk.) Taub.] and obviously the source of inoculation was the living lac on the *palas* tree. Regular observations during the year 1963-64 revealed that *baisakhi* as well as *katki* crops developed satisfactorily on this new host and the cell development at all stages was comparable with that on *palas*. Later, several such lac-bearing bushes were located in the area.

Attempts to colonise *kusmi* strain of lac insects during *jethwi* 1964 season on this host, however, failed. Almost all larvae died just after settlement, except a few, which were able to grow and reach sex differentiation stage, after which they also died.

According to a private communication from Mr. M. Mukherjee, Keeper, Central National Herbarium, this plant species was known as *Ficus gibbosa* Blume var. *parasitica* till recently, but now it is considered a sub-species of *Ficus tinctoria*. *Ficus gibbosa* Bl. (variety not mentioned) has been reported as a common lac host in Yunnan, China (Chung-lo, 1957) and as a host of *Laccifer lacca* (now *Kerria lacca*) and *L. ebrachiata* in Oriental Region (Sharapov and Prokopenko, 1960). Neither *F. tinctoria* nor *F. gibbosa* have so far been recorded as hosts of the lac insect, *Kerria lacca* (Kerr) from Madhya Pradesh or India (Kapur, 1955; Roonwal *et al.* 1958; Roonwal, 1962; Mehra and Gokulpure, 1967; and Varshney and Teotia, 1967).

Since the species retains leaves during summer season, it can fairly be used as a "summer brood preserver" for *rangeeni* lac, wherever available.

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