

On some recent papers about Indian spiders

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In the last fifteen years a large number of papers have been published on Indian spiders; unfortunately the value of many of these publications is seriously reduced by insufficient attention to the extensive older literature.

The purpose of this note is to help to correct some of the faulty or misleading information which has been published and to point the way on how to avoid future errors due to the same causes.

The Indian "Caponiidae"

The family Caponiidae, known only from America and Africa has been recently recorded from India; unfortunately *Indonops deccanensis* Tikader, 1975 does not belong to this family.

Judging from the description and the illustrations, the genus *Indonops* Tikader, 1975 is a synonym of *Tetrablemma* O.P.-Cambridge, 1873 (syn.nov.), whose generotype, *T. medioculatum* O.P.-C., 1873 was described from Ceylon.

Tetrablemma deccanensis (Tikader, 1975) (comb. nov.) is, on the basis of its general morphology and the ♂ palp, very close to the generotype (compare with plate XII, figs. 1 a/h in O.P.-Cambridge, 1873).

The position of the family Tetrablemmidae has been discussed in the past, but it is now clear that it forms an independent, well delimited group, possibly part of the superfamily Scytodoidea (Brignoli, 1972, 1973, 1975).

The respiratory system of *T. deccanensis*, as described by Tikader (1975: 176) would be unique in the family, as there would be apparently four independent tracheal stigmata (in the African Tetrablemmidae the tracheae are completely absent; Brignoli, 1974).

The Indian "Lutica"

"The arenicolous zodariids of the genus *Lutica* live in restricted insular and coastal areas of southern California" (Gertsch, 1961: 365).

"*Lutica*" *bengalensis* Tikader & Patel, 1975 cannot possibly belong to *Lutica* Marx, 1891 by general morphology (see fig. 1 in Gertsch, 1961).

On the basis of general morphology, position of the eyes and spinnerets, "*Lutica*" *bengalensis* should belong to the Zodarieae (*sensu* Simon, 1893).

The "Homalonychus" from Sikkim

The much discussed family Homalonychidae is purely American; "*Homalonychus*" *joyaus* Tikader, 1970 from Sikkim, by general morphology is unrelated to the genus *Homalonychus* Marx, 1891 (see figs. 1 a/f of the generotype, *H. selenopoides*, in Marx, 1891).

The exact position of "*H.*" *joyaus* is not clear; it probably belongs to the Zodariidae (*sensu lat.*).

The attribution of this, and of the other mentioned Indian species, to typically American genera (or families) is probably due to the use, for identification at family level, of *The Spider Book* by Comstock.

Concerning the catalogue of the Indian spiders

The usefulness of local catalogues, notwithstanding the existence of the catalogues by Bonnet and Roewer, is well known; unfortunately, in the catalogue by Tikader (from 1969 onwards) a very large number of species described or recorded from India have been omitted. It is puzzling that even some papers published in Indian periodicals have not been considered.

The number of omitted species is so large that to list them would take far too much space.

The following is a list of a few of the papers which have apparently been overlooked:

- SIMON, E. 1888: Arachnides recueillis aux îles Andaman par M. R. D. Oldham. *J.Asiat.Soc.Beng.* 57: 282-287. (5 n.sp.)
- SIMON, E. 1889: Arachnides de l'Himalaya... *J.Asiat.Soc. Beng.* 58: 334-344. (19 n.sp.)
- SIMON, E. 1897: Arachnides recueillis par M. M. Maindron à Kurrachee et à Matheran (près Bombay) en 1896. *Bull.Mus.Hist.nat., Paris* 1897: 289-297. (13 n.sp.)
- LEARDI, Z. 1901: Aracnidi d'Almora. *Atti Soc.ital.Sci.nat.* 40: 85-94. (1 n.sp.)
- LEARDI, Z. 1902: Aracnidi di Mahè e Kandy. *Atti Soc. ital.Sci.nat.* 40: 345-373. (3 n.sp. from India)

- SIMON, E. 1905: Arachnides (1e partie) in Voyage de M. M. Maindron dans l'Inde méridionale. *Annls Soc.ent.Fr.* 74: 160-180. (18 n.sp.)
- SIMON, E. 1906: Arachnides (2e partie) in (as above). *Annls Soc.ent.Fr.* 75: 279-314. (42 n.sp.)
- STRAND, E. 1912: Ueber einige Spinnen aus Travancore in Indien. *Arch.Naturgesch.* 78 (A 8): 144-148. (2 n.sp.)
- SHERRIFFS, W. R. 1927: South Indian arachnology part II. *Ann.Mag.nat.Hist.* (9) 19: 533-542. (1 n.sp.)
- GRAVELY, F. H. 1931: Some Indian spiders of the families Ctenidae, Sparassidae, Selenopidae and Clubionidae. *Rec.Indian Mus.* 33: 211-281. (18 n.sp.)
- REIMOSER, E. 1934: Araneae aus Süd-Indien. *Revue suisse Zool.* 41: 465-511. (23 n.sp.)
- GRAVELY, F. H. 1935: Notes on Indian Mygalomorph spiders II. *Rec.Indian Mus.* 37: 69-84. (7 n.sp.)
- FAGE, L. 1946: Araignées cavernicoles de l'Inde. *Bull.Mus. Hist.nat., Paris* 18: 382-388. (4 n.sp.)

I could continue this list, but I think it unnecessary. A glance in the catalogues by Roewer or Bonnet should be sufficient to show how many species have been omitted.

Conclusions

What is even more serious, is that insufficient knowledge of the literature has led to the description of dozens of new species.

I should like particularly to point out several erroneous statements:

1. "Particularly there is not a single oriental reference of the above mentioned genus [*Philodromus*]" (Tikader, 1962: 39). Six Oriental *Philodromus* have been described, one of which was from India.
2. "The genus *Argyrodes* is practically unknown from the Oriental region except for the fragmentary and rather incomplete account of Gravely (1921)" (Tikader, 1963a: 99). In Roewer's catalogue no less than 33 Oriental *Argyrodes* (*Argyrodes* + *Ariamnes* + *Rhomphaea*) are listed, of which at least 5 are certainly present in India.
3. "Only Stoliczka (1869), Dyal (1935) and Tikader (1962) described a few species of the genus *Scytodes*... This genus [*Loxosceles*] is being recorded here for the first time from India" (Tikader, 1963b: 24). No less than 7 species of *Scytodes* are known from India; *Loxosceles rufescens* was recorded from India and Sikkim by Sherriffs (1919) and Roewer (1959).

4. "Even this representative work [Pocock's *Fauna of British India*] contains no reference to such an obscure family as Dictynidae. No doubt the genus *Dictyna* has been mentioned once before by Gravely (1921) but he provides no descriptions of the species belonging to this family" (Tikader, 1966: 45). What of the 4 *Dictyna* described from India by Simon (1905, 1906) and Sherriffs (1927)?
5. "Even this representative work [Pocock's] contains no reference to such an obscure family as Uloboridae" (Tikader, 1969a: 127). Quite true, but what of the 5 *Uloborus* described from India by Simon and Hingston?
6. "This [*Selenops agumbensis* n.sp.] is the third species of the family described in this paper from India" (Tikader, 1969b: 252). More exactly, this would be the fifth species known from India.

Progress in taxonomy can be ensured only by accumulation of knowledge: what would happen if everybody described again as new most of the species?

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