### CURCUMA PEETHAPUSHPA, A NEW SPECIES OF ZINGIBERACEAE FROM INDIA

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ABSTRACT. A new species of Curcuma L., C. peethapushpa is described from Western Ghats of India.

The genus Curcuma is a difficult subject for taxonomists and plant explorers owing to its occurrence in remote and inaccessible areas and its short flowering period. Consequently, we do not have a realistic estimate of the diversity of the genus except for the information provided in the earlier Floras. Recent exploration along the Western Ghats of Peninsular India has amply demonstrated that there is considerable scope for observation, collection and detailed taxonomic study of the species available there (see Ansari et al., 1982; Sivaraian & Balachandran, 1983; Bhat, 1987).

During one of our recent explorations of the Peechi forests in Trichur (Kerala) along the Western Ghats, we encountered an interesting weedy species which grew abundantly on the forest floor. It closely resembled C. oligantha Trimen (syn. C. cannanorensis Ansari et al.) but was easily distinguished by its much smaller, non-esserted flowers and the short, straight basal appendages of the anther. The material is described below with the name, C. peethapushpa, the specific epithet meaning 'yellow-flowered' in Sankrit'

# Curcuma peethapushpa Sasidharan & Sivarajan, sp. nov. Fig. 1.

Curcuma oligantha Trimen affinis sed in floribus multo minoribus, calyce glabro, antherae appendicibus basalibus brevibus rectis differt.

Rhizomatous herb. Rhizome short. Roots fibrous, some of them terminating in tubers; tubers void or oblong, white or yellow inside, to  $2 \times 1$ -5cm. Leaves 3-5; petiole above the sheath 8-12cm; lamina 12-15  $\times$ 4-8cm, oblong-acuminate, glabrous. Spikes terminal on the leafy shoot, peduncle 4-5cm, 5-7-bracteate; bracts green, ovate-orbicular, fertile ones c.2cm across, coma absent. Cincinni few-flowered, shorter than and included in the bracts. Calyx glabrous, tube 3-4mm long, lobes subequal, obtuse. Corolla funnel-like, dorsal lobe  $6 \times 5$ mm, concave, hood-like, laterals slightly smaller, ovate-oblong; lateral staminodes  $5 \times 4$ mm, spathulate or obovate-oblong, pale yellow; lip yellow,  $8 \times 6$ mm, fan-shaped, crenulate on margins, shortly 2-fid at apex, pubescent below; filament 2mm long, anther white, longer than filament, basal appendages short and straight. Fruits oblong, c.1cm long, crowned by the persistent calyx; seeds 8-10, smooth, shining, aril white, laciniate, covering the whole seed

Type: India, Kerala State, Peechi, c.250m alt., Sasidharan & Sivarajan 4975 (holo, E. iso, KFRI); 4984 (Para, E. KFRI).

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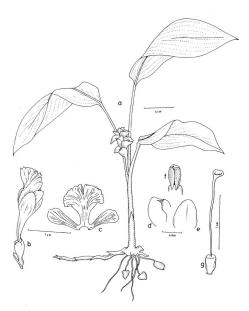


Fig. 1. Curcuma peethapushpa. a, habit; b, flower; c, lip with lateral staminodes; d, dorsal petal; e, lateral petal; f, stamen; g, pistil.

As undergrowth in moist deciduous forests at about 250m. Flowering and fruiting from July to September.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank Mr B. L. Burtt and Miss R. M. Smith, Edinburgh for their various help during the course of the work and to Dr J. F. Veldkamp, Leiden for the Latin diagnosis. The figure was kindly prepared by Dr. K. Swaroopanandan and Mr K. Subhash Kuriakose, KFRI, Peechi. The senior author is grateful to the Director, Kerala Forest Research Institute, Peechi for facilities and encouragement.

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#### Footnote

It had been Dr Sivarajan's intention to visit Edinburgh prior to the publication of this paper, but he was unable to do so and, consequently, did not examine our material of Curcuma. The following collection matches the holotype of C. peethapushpa well: India; Malabar, without precise locality, vi 1836. Wight 1067 (E).

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