Psidium guineense Swartz in Gauhati, Assam

During a botanical collection in greater Gauhati some plants of *Psidium* sp. were collected from the hill slopes in Kharguli area of Gauhati. The plants (*A. S. Rao* 46048, *Hajra* 38257 in ASAM) differed from the commonly cultivated *Psidium guajava* L. being stunted undershrubs to shrubs reaching to a height of 1–1·5 m; stem *ca* 2 cm thick; young leaves ferruginous tomentose on both surfaces, but the old leaves so, only beneath; lateral nerves 5–10 pairs and fruits being 1·5–2 cm in diam. The plants agreed with *Psidium guineense* Sw., a native of Guinea.

Deb (in *Bull. Bot. Surv. India* 3 (1): 87–89, 1961) in recording this plant as naturalised in Tripura has mentioned its original home as New Guinea. There are records of its introduction from Guinea to different countries. A review of the literature shows that recently Backer and Bakhuizen Van den Brink (in *Flora of Java* 1 : 334, 1963) have recorded its introduction to Java from tropical America. Similarly Paxton (*A Pocket Botanical Dictionary*, 1849) has also recorded its introduction from Guinea to England as early as 1822. In India Voight (*Hortus Subarbanus Calcuttensis* 46, 1845) has recorded the introduction of this plant into the Company's Botanic Garden (now the Indian Botanic Garden), from the West Indies, where it had been introduced from Guinea.

Considering the common cultural contacts between Bengal and Assam and neighbouring areas including Tripura and till recently the very regular river Traffic on the Brahmaputra river there appears to be a strong probability that the Gauhati plants of *Psidium guineense* Sw. form an introduced and naturalised element and not a native element of the Flora.

It is interesting to note that Lawson (in Oliver's *Flora of Tropical Africa* 2 : 436, 1871) has mentioned "*Psidium guineense* Sw., another species cultivated in the West Indies, is said to have been imported there from Guinea but it does not appear that any species have been found in Africa. It is a variety of *P. araca* which is not a native of Africa". This interesting remark leaves the question of the original home of *P. guineense*, itself in doubt.

Botanical Survey of India, A. S. Rao.
Eastern Circle, Shillong-3, P. K. Hajra.
Meghalaya. *September* 25, 1973.

Botanical Identity of Charcoal from *Nagara*

In the excavations at *Nagara*, Cambay, Gujarat State (Western India) conducted in the year 1965, the archaeologists of the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda unearthed from layer No. 15 (4·15 m depth) charcoal. The period assignable to this find is 1st Century A.D.B.C. and its botanical identity reveals the existence of *Cedrela toona* Roxb. (Meliaceae) and *Terminalia* sp. similar to *T. tomentosa* W. & A. (Combretaceae).

Santapau (1966) wrote that in many of our floras the tree goes under the name of *Cedrela toona* but Roemer in 1846 showed that the true *Cedrela* trees are exclusively American; our Old World trees have been placed under *Toona*. Thus, he considered the *Indian Mahogany*, *Moulmein Cedar* or *Toon* as *Toona ciliata* Roem., the generally accepted distribution being from Afghanistan, South China, India, Burma and Thailand to New Guinea, Java and Australia. Gillet (1972, in his letter) informs the authors that *Cedrela toona* is found *in cultivation* in Africa. On the basis of the present archaeological evidence the authors are much inclined to assert that the true, tall trees belonging to the genus *Cedrela* hitherto considered as exclusively American, were existing in India before the 17th century *when the specimens with which earlier botanists* directly or indirectly dealt were collected!

Locally known as *Sajad*, Cooke (1902) in his *Flora of the Presidency of Bombay* listed the popular 'Ain' tree under the name of *Terminalia tomentosa* Wight & Arn. The identity of the Bombay plant, *found in India, Ceylon, Siam and Indo-China, is T. crenulata* Roth.

The findings reveal the roll of plants in the spread and establishment of human civilization in this part of the country. At *Nagara*, the last use of the wood of these species was as firewood. *This is a fairly common practice to use the planks,* trunks and other parts of the timber tree as fuel after its other uses come to an end.

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