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Summer Pollen Sources for *Apis dorsata* in the Forest Area of Bhadrawati Tahsil, Chandrapur District, Maharashtra, India

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ABSTRACT

78 pollen loads recovered directly from the honeycombs of *Apis dorsata* (Rock Bee) collected in 29 March 2012 to 31 may 2013 from Moudholi and Chandankheda forest area of bhadrawati Tahsil of Chandrapur District of Maharashtra State, were analysed. 32 (41.02%) pollen loads were found to be Uniforal, 31 (39.74%) bifloral and 15 (19.23%) multifloral. The Unifloral pollen loads were contained *Terminalia* sp. and *Mangifera indica*. The pollen of *Terminalia* sp. was recovered from 71 (91.02%) of the total pollen loads studied. The study highlights *Terminalia* sp. (combretrceace) do the major pollen source and *Mangifera indica* (Anacardeaceae), *Delonix regia* (Caesalpiniaceae), *Prosopis juliflora* (Mimosaceae) as fairly important sources of pollen of the honeybees during the summer period.

Keywords: Pollen Sources, Honeybee, Bhadrawati Tahsil. forest area

INTRODUCTION

Honey bees visit plants for nectar and pollen. Nectar consisting predominantly of sources often associated with limited quantity of glucose and pollen grains provide the chief source of protein requirement of the bees essential for building their body tissues. (Khan 1941) particularly during the early embryonic growth, bees prefer the nectar of a plant species that has the maximum sugar concentration. (Ramanujam 1991) Similarly they prefer pollen type with the maximum nutritive values and palatability.

Melittopalynological investigation involving honey samples and pollen loads furnish reliable information on the relative preferences of the honey bees among the floral sources available within their foraging ranges. (Ramanujam 1994) Analysis of pollen load unravels the floral fidelity of fixity of the bees to a particular plant species in

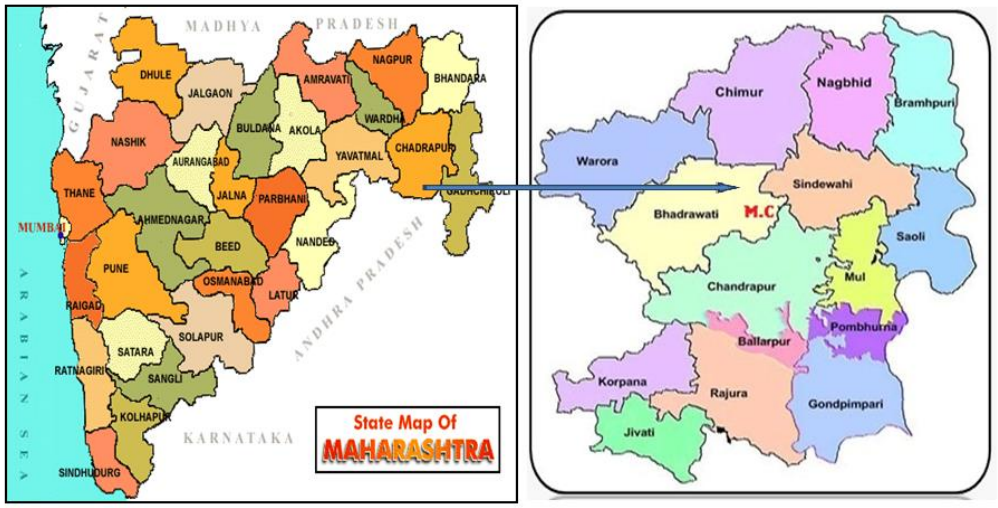

Figure 1: Map (Google) Showing Bhadrawati Tahsil of Chandrapur district from where the pollen loads were collected.

any floristic community, by highlighting the numerical status of the pollen type in the individual loads. The quantification of the data would help us to recognize the major and minor sources of pollen in any particular area. (Chaudhari 1978)

Studies involving the analysis of pollen loads are few when compared to those of honeys, in the Indian context. Sharma (1970 a & 1970 b, 1972) and Chaturvedi (1973) studied the pollen loads of *Apis cerena*, the Indian hive bee, from Kangra in Himachal Pradesh and Banthara in the vicinity of Luckhnow. Seethalakshmi and Perey (1980) recognized Borassus flabellifer as a good pollen sources in Tamilnadu by analysing 900 pollen loads of *Apis cerena* at Vijayarai in West Godawari District of Andra Pradesh and recognized potential of this region for apiculture Kalpana, Khatija and Ramanujam (1990) and Ramanujam and Kalpana (1990) provided information on the pollen sources of *Apis florea*_and *Apis cerena* honey bees in Hydrabad and Ranga Reddy District. Recently Borkar and Mate (2014, 2022, 2023, 2024) provided information on the pollen source of *Apis dorsata* Honeybees in the Bramhapuri,Bhradrawati, Chandrapur, Chimur, Pombhurna forest area of chandrapur District of Maharashtra state and Cherian *et al.* (2011) provided information on the pollen sources of *Apis_cerena* honeybees in Nagpur District of Maharashtra. This study is aimed to recognize the major and minor sources of pollen to *Apis dorsata* bee in these forest during summer period (Honey flow season) on the basis of qualitative and quantitative analysis of numerous pollen loads recovered directly from various honeycombs.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Pollen loads (Comb loads) 78 in number of *Apis dorsata* were obtained from two Honeycombs collected on 29 March 2012 to 31 may 2013 from Moudholi and Chandankheda forest area of Bhadrawati tahsil of Chandrapur District of Maharashtra State. (CHN-BHA-MOU), (CHN–BHA-CHN).

The pollen grains of each pollen load were dispersed in 1 ml of glacial acetic Acid and later on subjected to acetolysis. Erdtman (1960) One slide prepared for each pollen load and microscopically examined. All such pollen loads consisting of a single pollen type represent unifloral loads, with two pollen types bifloral and with more than two, multifloral Sharma, (1970 a). Identification of the pollen types was based upon the reference palynoslides of the forest flora and the relevant literature. The pollen productivity of the significant taxa was computed using haemocytometer.

RESULTs

The analysis has brought to light that 25 (18.24%) loads were unifloral, 23 (6.78%) were bifloral and the remaining 89 (64.96%) loads multifloral (Table 2). The pollen grain of 11 taxa referable to 09 families were recorded. These are *Terminalia* sp. (Combratrceace), *Mangifera indica* (Anacardeaceae), *Delonix regia* (caesalpiniaceae), *Prosopis juliflora* (Mimosaceae), *Bombax ceba* (Bombaceacea), *Blumea* sp. Of these *Blumea* sp. Is herbaceous weeds which represent the undergrowth, the remaining taxa are either arborescent member or shrub of the forest range.

Table 1- Pollen morphological characters of the Taxa recorded

S.N.	Pollen Type	Size, Shape & Symmetry	Aperture Pattern	Pollen Wall (Sporoderm) structure & sculpture
Combrataceae				
01	***Terminalia*** *sp*	19-22 µm, Amb spheroidal; 21-24 x20-22 µm, subprolate; Radially symmetrical	Tricolporate, colpi alternating with pseudocolpi colpi linear, tips acute pseudocolpi almost equal the size of colpi, ora more of less circular	Exine 1.5 µm thick, tectae, surface psilate to locally finely granular
Anacardiaceae				
02	***Mangifera indica*** Linn.	27-31 µm, Amb subtriangular; 29-32 ×26-28 µm , subprolate; Radially symmetrical	Tricolporate colpi long, tips acute ora prominently lanlongate	Exine 2.5 µm thick, subtectate, surface striatoreticulae, striations more or less parallel in equatorial view, lumen generally elongated in polar direction, murisimplibaculate
Caesalpiniaceae				
03	***Delonix regia***	59.62 µm, Amb more or less spheroidal to subtriangular; 53-56× 57-60 µm, oblate to suboblate; Radially symmetrical	Tricolporate, colpi long with blunt ends, ora faint, more or less rounded	Exine 5.2 µm thick, subtectate, surface coarsely reticulate. Heterobrochate, meshes smaller near the apertural regions & larger elsewhere , lumina poly to hexagonal with a number of free bacules, muri thick, sinuous, simpli to locally duplibaculate
Asteraceae				
04	***Tridax procumbens*** Linn.	31-38 µm, Amb rounded triangular to squarish; 30-35x 32-38 µm, oblate spheroidal; Radially symmetrical	Tri to tetra colporate, colpi linear, sharply tapering, ora faint, circular	Exine 5 µm (without spines) thick, tectate, surface echinate, spines 6 µm long, 2.5 µm in diam, at base
05	***Blumea*** *sp.*	21-24 µm, Amb spheroidal, isopolar, Radially symmetrical	21-24 µm, Amb spheroidal, isopolar, Radially	Exine 3 µm thick, surface echinate, spines 5-6 µm long, 4 spines in the interapertural region interspinal area psilate
Mimosaceae				
06	***Prosopis juliflora*** (Sw.) DC	36-39 µm, Amb rounded triangular; 38-42× 30-35 µm, prolate to subprolate; Radially symmetrical	Tricolllporate, occasionally syncolpate, colpi tapering towards poles, tips acute, ora lalongate	Exine 3.2 µm thick, tectate surface faintly reticulate
07	***Mimosa sp.***	Pollen grains in polyads rarely in tetrads, 4-6 celled, 18-20 ×12-14 µm, elliptic; monad with hemispherical outer and conical inner portions; Radially symmetrical	Apertures faint to indistinct	Exine 0.5 µm thick, tectate, surface psilate
Bombiaceae				
08	***Bombax ceba*** Linn	51 µm (49.5×52.5) µm, peroblate, isopolar, Radially symmetrical	Tricolprate, col. length 12 (10.5-13.5) µm	Exine thick 3 µm, coarsely reticulate, mesh 4.1 µm (3-4.5 µm) in the major part except at the angles showing medium reticulations 1-8 µm (1.5 -3 µm), greater number of baculae are found in the lumen. Muri simplibaculate, faint LO pattern.
Rutaceae				
09	***Citrus*** sp.	27-29 µm, Amb squarish, 26-30 ×25-27 µm, prolate spheroidal radially symmetrical	Tetracolporate, colpi linear, tips acute, ora lalongate	Exine 2 µm thick subtectate, surface Reticulate. Heterobrochate, meshes smaller near the apertural regions and larger elsewhere, lumina hexa to pentagonal or irregular, psilate, muri simpli to locally duplibaculate

Capparidaceae				
10	***Capparis grandis*** Linn.	10-12 µm , Amb spheroidal; 14-16 ×9-12 µm prolate to subprolate; Radially symmetrical	Tricolporate, colpi linear to narrowly elliptic, ends tapering, tips acute, ora faint lalongate	Exine 1 µm thick, tectate, surface faintly granular to almost psilate
Amaranthaceae				
11	***Celosia argentea*** Linn	30-35 µm spheroidal radially symmetrical	Pantoporate, pore No. 15-20, circular. Diam; 4-5 µm, pore membrance flecked with granules, interporal distance 8-11 µm	Exine 2 µm thick, tectate, interporal space coarsely granular

Table 2 - Analysis of pollen loads from honeycomb

Bhadrawati Tahsil							
Comb	**Total Po Pollen Loads**	**Unifloral Loads**		**Bifloral Loads**		**Multifloral Loads**	
		Number	**Composition**	**Number**	**Composition**	**Number**	**Composition**
CHN-BHA-Chan-32	38	24	24-Te	10	4-Te(69,77), Ma(23,31) 2-Te(22,42), Pr(58,78) 1-Te(86), De(14) 1-Te(73), Ca(27) 1-Te(87), Bl(13) 1-Te(71), Tri(29)	4	2-Te(35,40), Ca(27,28), De(24,26), Pr(7,13) 1-Te(84), De(8), Ma(8) 1-Ma(34), Pr(4), Te(62)
CHN-BHA-Mou-12	40	08	4 – Te Ma	21	12-Ma(24,47), Te(53,76) 3-Ma(78,87), De(13,22) 2-Te(79,86), Bo(14,21) 2-Te(81,20), Bl(80,19) 1-Te(80), Ci(20) 1-Te(66), Az(34)	11	5-Ma(8,50), Te(44,63), De(5,30) 3-Pr(3,57), Te(9,45), Ma(2,84) 2-Te(7,55), Ma(17,51), Bo(6,37), Cel(4,20) 1-Ma(30), Te(38), Ci(15), Mi(11), Bl(6)
Total	78	32 (41.02%)		31 (39.74%)		15 (19.23%)	

Abbreviations for pollen types recorded from pollen loads

Te- *Terminalia sp.* Ma- *Mangifera indica* Bl- *Blumea sp.* Ci- *Citrus sp.*
De- *Delonix regia* Ca- *Capparis grandis* Bo- *Bombax ceiba* Cel- *Celosia argentea*
Pr- *Prosopis juliflora* Mi- *Mimosa sp.* Tri- *Tridax procumbens*

The unifloral pollen loads include 28 (87.5%) of *Terminalia* sp., 4 (12.5%) of *Mangifera indica* and bifloral 15(19.23%) include *Terminalia* sp. & *Mangifera indica*, *Delonix regia, Blumea* sp*., Prosopis juliflora, Bombax ceba, Azadirachta indica, Capparis grandis* in combination.

The multifloral loads which are encountered showed the pollen types of *Terminalia* sp, M*angifera indica*, *Cappnris grandis, Citrus* sp*., Azadirachta indica, Delonix regia, Prosopis juliflora* and *Celosia argentea* (Fig. 2).

When the representation (Irrespective of percentage) of the various pollen types in the total number of pollen loads studied was considered & the percentages

of pollen types recorded in each bifloral and multifloral loads were determined by counting 200 pollen grains at random, (Sharma 1970a) pollen of *Terminalia* sp. were noted in as many 71 loads (91.02%) followed by *Mangifera indica* in 36 loads (46.15%).

Terminalia* sp.** ***Mangifera indica

Fig. 1 : Pollen types in unifloral Pollen Loads

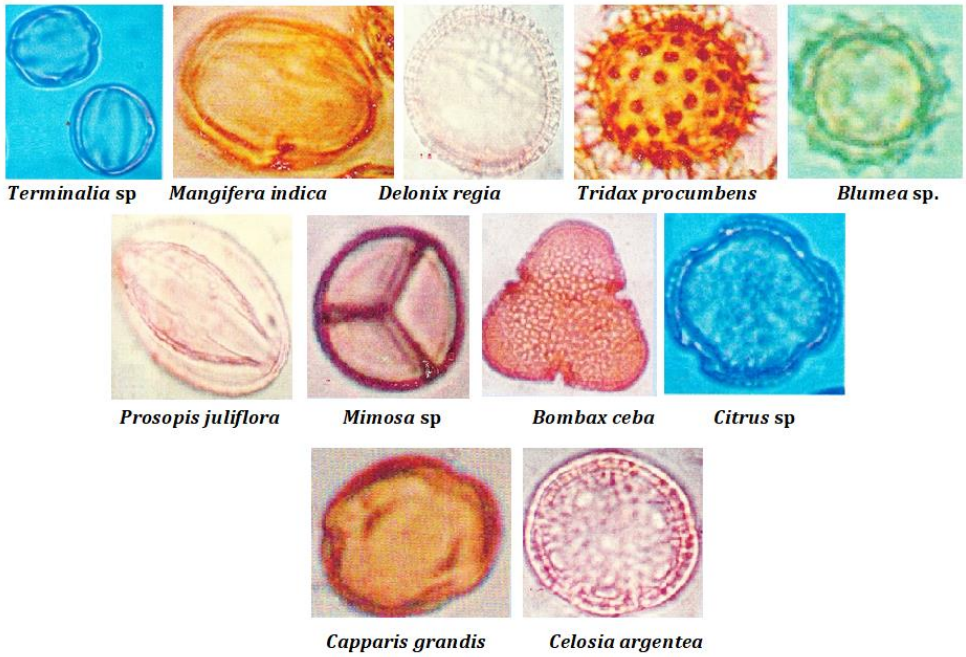

Fig. 2 – Light Microscopic photograph of pollen grain in pollen loads

DISCUSSION

The analysis showed that the pollen loads obtained from the beehives of *Apis dorsata* in the Moudholi and chandankheda forest area of Bhadrawati Tahsil of Chandrapur District of Maharashtra State, originated predominantly from some of the characteristics arborescent and shrubby plants of this forest area. Viz. *Terminalia* sp, Mangifera *indica*, *Delonix regia, Prosopis juliflora*, *Bombax ceba*, *Blumea* sp. The contribution to herbaceous weeds such as *Blumea* sp. as pollen source to *Apis dorsata* bees is very meagre.

The quantification of the data revels unequivocally the predominance of the pollen of *Terminalia* sp as evidenced by its very high representation of 87.5% in the Unifloral loads and 91.02% in the totality of the pollen loads material studied.

It can therefore be concluded that *Terminalia* sp constitutes the major source of pollen to the honey bees during the summer period. The other fairly significant source of pollen to the honeybees of this area are *Mangifera indica* 36 (46.15%), *Delonix regia* 12 (15.38%), *Prosopis juliflora* 8 (10.25%).

All these taxa also constitute important pollen source during the summer season for the honeybees of this forest area.

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