

THE VEGETATION ALONG THE SEASHORES IN SALSETTE ISLAND, BOMBAY

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ABSTRACT

The information about the vegetation along the seashores is scant. After an intensive exploration of various areas in the Salsette Island, this paper is prepared to give an account of the vegetation along sea-creeks near Juhu, Versova, Madh Island, Malad and Ghodbunder. The vegetation is described under the headings Mangroves and Vegetation along the edges of the sea creeks.

INTRODUCTION

Navalkar (Journ. Bom. Nat. Hist. Soc. 53:335-345, 1956) has described only the mangrove composition of the various creeks near about Bombay. In this paper, the author gives an account of vegetation along the sea creeks near Juhu, Versova, Madh Island, Malad and Ghodbunder. The vegetation is described under Mangroves and Vegetation along the edges of the sea creek and on sands.

MANGROVES

In general, the following mangroves are found: *Acanthus ilicifolius* Linn., *Aegiceras corniculatum* Blanco, *Aeluropus lagopoides* Trin., *Arthrocnemum indicum* Moq., *Avicennia alba* Bl., *A. officinalis* Linn., *Bruguiera gymnorhiza* Lamk., *B. parviflora* W. & A., *Ceriops tagal* Robin., *Excoecaria agallocha* Linn., *Lumnitzera racemosa* Willd., *Rhizophora mucronata* Lamk., *Salvadora persica* Linn., *Sesuvium portulacastrum* Linn., and *Suaeda fruticosa* Forsk. Occasionally *Striga euphrasioides* Bth. is found on the roots of *Aeluropus lagopoides* Trin.

In the creeks at Juhu, Versova, Madh Island and Malad, *Avicennia alba* Bl. is the most common and dominant plant; *Acanthus ilicifolius* Linn. is next in dominance. These two plants may occur either in pure or mixed stands. *Aegiceras corniculatum* Blanco and *Ceriops tagal* Robin. are common but not abundant. *Rhizophora mucronata* Lamk. and *Excoecaria agallocha* Linn. are rare. *Bruguiera* sp. does not occur in this area. *Arthrocnemum indicum* Moq., *Sesuvium portulacastrum* Linn. and *Suaeda fruticosa* Forsk. are common on mud flats near the edges of the sea creeks, scattered or in loose patches. *Acanthus ilicifolius* Linn., *Avicennia alba* Bl. etc. are only 1-1.5 m. tall, in these areas; a few trees of *Avicennia alba* Bl., about 3-5 m. high, occur only near Madh Island.

At Ghodbunder creek, the mangrove vegetation consists of large shrubs or small trees. *Avicennia alba* Bl., *A. officinalis* Linn., *Excoecaria agallocha* Linn., *Rhizophora mucronata* Lamk. and *Sonneratia apetala* B.-H. are 3-6 m. tall. *Acanthus ilicifolius* Linn., *Aegiceras corniculatum* Blanco,

Bruguiera gymnorhiza Lamk., *B. parviflora* W. & A., *Ceriops tagal* Robin. are only 1-1.5 m. tall, rarely up to 2.5 m. high. *Arthrocnemum indicum* Moq., *Sesuvium portulacastrum* Linn. and *Suaeda fruticosa* Forsk. are either prostrate or sub-erect, only 30-45 cm. high. *Sonneratia apetala* B.-H. forms more or less a distinct row near the edges of water where as *Excoecaria agallocha* Linn. is found in a row near the edges of the creek. The only twiner on these mangroves is *Derris trifoliata* Lour. *Zannichellia palustris* Linn. is common and locally abundant in the brackish, stagnant water along the creek.

Lumnitzera racemosa Willd. is an interesting mangrove, which, so far, has been found only at Malad creek. It is a common shrub, 75-120 cm. tall, with white flowers. It flowers and fruits in December-July. According to Navalkar (p. 336), this plant was found on the shores of Bandra in 1933 but has completely disappeared in 1934. The later author does not mention the occurrence of this plant from any of the creeks studied by him.

VEGETATION ALONG THE EDGES OF THE SEA CREEKS

Clerodendrum inerme Gaertn., *Malachra capitata* Linn. and *Phoenix sylvestris* Roxb. often form dense thickets along the edges of the sea creeks. On these thickets there are a number of climbers e.g. *Cayratia carnosae* Gagnep., *Ipomoea digitata* Linn., *Melothria maderaspatana* Cogn., *Momordica dioica* Roxb., *Pentatropis spiralis* Decas., *Trichosanthes cucumerina* Linn. The other plants found along the creeks are *Blepharis maderaspatensis* Roth, *B. molluginifolia* Pers., *Blumea amplexans* DC., *Chloris barbata* Sw., *C. virgata* Sw., *Commelina* various species, *Cressa cretica* Linn., *Cyperaceae* various species, *Diplachne fusca* Beauv., *Eragrostis ciliaris* R. Br., *Laggera aurita* Sch.-Bip., *Phyla nodiflora* Green, *Sphaeranthus africanus* Linn. etc.

VEGETATION ON SANDS

On sands *Cocos nucifera* Linn. is a common tree. *Ipomoea pescaprae* var. *pescaprae*, *Launaea sarmen-tosa* Alst. and *Spinifex littoralis* Bl. always trail on

the sands, and form loose or dense patches. *Cyperus arenarius* Retz., *Crotalaria retusa* Linn., *Dactyloctenium indicum* Boiss., *Leucas aspera* Spreng., *Opuntia elatior* Mill., *Pedaliium murex* Linn., *Urginea indica* Kunth etc. are common on sands.

During monsoon, *Chlorophytum tuberosum* Baker is the commonest and most abundant plant, masses of it covering large areas on sands. A number of other plants found on the sands at this time are: *Aerva lanata* Juss., *Alysicarpus* sp., *Calotropis gigantea* R. Br., *Crotalaria verrucosa*

Linn., *C. linifolia* Linn. f., *Corchorus aestuans* Linn., *Cyperus bulbosus* Vahl, *Hibiscus lobatus* O.K., *Heliotropium marifolium* Retz., *Justicia simplex* Don, *Trichodesma amplexicaule* Roth etc.

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