



A new species of the ant spider genus *Suffasia* (Araneae: Zodariidae) from the Western Ghats, India with a key to the species of the genus

AMBALAPARAMBIL V. SUDHIKUMAR¹, RUDY JOCQUÉ² & POTHALIL A. SEBASTIAN³

¹Terrestrial Ecology Unit, Department of Biology, Ghent University, K. L. Ledeganckstraat 35 B-9000 Ghent, Belgium.
E-mail: avsudhi@rediffmail.com

²Invertebrates non-insects section, Royal Museum for Central Africa, B-3080, Tervuren, Belgium.
E-mail: rudy.jocque@africamuseum.be

³Division of Arachnology, Dept. of Zoology, Sacred Heart College, Thevara, Cochin, Kerala, India – 682013.
E-mail: drpothalil@rediffmail.com

Abstract

Suffasia keralaensis, a new species in the spider family Zodariidae from the Western Ghats in India is described. It can be diagnosed from other members of the genus by oval spermathecae in the female and by the presence of three cymbial pits and long curved embolus with pointed tip of the male palp. A diagnostic key to both male and female species so far reported of the genus *Suffasia* is provided.

Key words: Spider taxonomy, biodiversity hot spot, Zodariinae, *Suffasia* genitalia, new taxa

Introduction

Suffasia Jocqué, 1991 is a genus with only six described species of the subfamily Zodariinae Thorell, 1881 in the Zodariidae Thorell, 1881 but numerous species are expected from Nepal and the genus apparently occurs in Africa (Jocqué, unpublished data). Among these, three species are reported from Nepal, two from Sri Lanka and two, including the type species *S. tigrina* (Simon, 1893), from India (Benjamin, 2006; Benjamin & Jocqué, 2000; Jocqué, 1992; Ono, 2006; Platnick, 2008; Simon, 1893).

The genus belongs to the so-called “femoral organ clade” but is the most basal taxon in that group with ancestral characters such as the presence of a chilum, the long palpal tarsus in the female and the femoral organ with simple setae (Jocqué, 1991). Most species have a single tooth or two teeth on the promargin of the chelicerae and the anterior eye row is slightly procurved (Jocqué, 1991).

During a field work in the Western Ghats (India), one of the biodiversity hot spots of the world, an undescribed species of the genus *Suffasia* was collected. The collecting site of this species, Nilambur Forest, is situated in the Kerala state of India. The specimens were collected by sifting leaf litter and by extraction with Berlese funnels.

Although *Suffasia* is a less studied genus, the species are easy to identify due to the complexity in the structure of genital organs and these complexities of the male and female genital organs have allowed us to provide a key for both sexes.

Material and methods

The type material is preserved in 80% alcohol and deposited in a reference collection housed at the Division of Arachnology, Department of Zoology, Sacred Heart College, Thevara, Cochin, Kerala, India. Epigynes