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REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-51803 Date: 24-05-2025

Title: Three new species of Meliolaceous fungi from Kolhapur District (Maharashtra)

Recommendation:
Accept as it is.....YES.....
Accept after minor revision.....
Accept after major revision .....
Do not accept (*Reasons below*) .....

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality			√	
Techn. Quality			√	
Clarity			√	
Significance			√	

Reviewer's Name: Tahir Ahmad

Reviewer's Decision about Paper: **Recommended for Publication.**

Comments (*Use additional pages, if required*)
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Reviewer's Comment / Report

1. Relevance and Originality:
The study contributes meaningfully to the field of mycology by documenting three novel species of black mildew microfungi from the order *Meliolales*. The discovery of *Appendiculella hosagoudiana*, *Asteridiella indicae*, and *Irenopsis leeae-indicae* adds to the known biodiversity of fungal flora in the Western Ghats, a recognized biodiversity hotspot. The work is original and regionally significant, expanding our understanding of fungal-host relationships in semi-evergreen forest ecosystems.

2. Abstract Evaluation:
The abstract is succinct and clearly outlines the purpose and outcome of the research. It provides essential taxonomic details and names the new species, indicating the genus and collection locality. It is appropriately concise and informative for an academic abstract in taxonomic research.

3. Scientific Content and Rigor:
The study is methodologically sound. The collection of specimens was systematic, with proper geographical referencing and seasonality considered. Taxonomic identification based on microscopic features and comparison with existing literature is a standard and reliable approach in fungal taxonomy.

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The host specificity and morphological uniqueness of the fungi support their categorization as new species.

4. Contextual Background and Literature Integration:
The introduction offers relevant ecological and geographical context about Kolhapur district. It correctly highlights the richness of the area's vegetation and sets the stage for the study. References to key taxonomic works by Hansford, Hosagoudar, and others provide a foundational background, grounding the study within the broader framework of mycological research.

5. Methodology:
The methodology is clearly described and follows accepted mycological protocols for collection, preservation, and slide preparation. The use of KOH and cotton blue in lactophenol, as well as adherence to the procedure by Patil and Patil (2017), reinforces the scientific validity of the analysis. The mention of specific host plants adds to the ecological precision of the work.

6. Clarity and Language:
The language is clear, direct, and appropriately academic. Taxonomic names are correctly italicized, and geographic coordinates are precisely noted. Scientific and botanical terminology is accurately used throughout, making the paper suitable for an audience familiar with mycology and plant pathology.

7. Presentation and Structure:
The manuscript follows a logical structure, beginning with the abstract and moving through a well-defined introduction and methods section. The focus on taxonomy is maintained consistently, and the study is presented in a straightforward and readable manner.

Overall Assessment:
This is a well-executed taxonomic study that enriches the documentation of black mildew fungi in the Western Ghats. It demonstrates field-based scientific inquiry supported by rigorous laboratory analysis. The findings are valuable for mycologists, ecologists, and conservationists interested in fungal biodiversity and host-pathogen interactions in tropical ecosystems. The paper aligns well with scientific standards for species description and documentation.