

7 - 18
CHEMICAL INVESTIGATION OF AYURVEDIC DRUG PLANTS OF SRI LANKA

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Pavetta root which is used in the treatment of jaundice (Chandrasena, 1933) is freely available in Ayurvedic Drug Stores in Sri Lanka. In an attempt to isolate the biologically active component of *Pavetta* roots purchased from Ayurvedic Drug Stores we purified the major alkaloid and the physical and spectroscopic data of this showed that the major alkaloid was vasicine. The botanical name for *Pavetta* is *Pavetta indica* (Family-Rubiaceae) (W. M. Bandaranayake *et al.* 1974). The roots of authentic *Pavetta indica* L. collected from Akkaraipattu did not contain vasicine even in trace amounts. The leaves of this species and those of *Pavetta blanda* and *Pavetta gleinei* were rich in alkaloids. Comparison with authentic samples showed that these alkaloids were not vasicine or pavettine.

According to certain Ayurvedic Physicians, the Sinhala words *Pavetta* and *Adathoda* are used by them to refer to the same plant. It is interesting to note that *Adathoda vasica* Nees (Family-Acanthaceae) (Sinh. *Adathoda*) contains vasicine in all parts of the plant including the roots (E. M. Haq *et al.* 1967). *Adathoda* is used in the treatment of cold, cough, bronchitis and asthma (Mehta *et al.* 1963). Even though the medicinal uses of *Pavetta* and *Adathoda* are widely different, because of the confusion in the Sinhala names, *Adathoda* is being sold under the name of *Pavetta* in the Ayurvedic shops in the Kandy and Gampola areas.

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