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Cover: Illuminating the cruelty of Pangolin trade in India for the purpose of black magic, for the sanctity of protection. Using an animal's shell, ripping its armor against the world to protect oneself. When does one become the evil they are trying to ward off? — Acrylic on wood. © Maya Santhanakrishnan.



A note on *Pterospermum obtusifolium* Wight ex Mast. (Malvaceae), a rare endemic evergreen tree of southern Western Ghats, India

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The genus *Pterospermum* Schreb. belonging to Malvaceae sensu lato family (formerly Sterculiaceae) comprises of 52 accepted and 25 unresolved species (POWO 2024). In India, it is represented by 11 species (Chandra 1993) of which eight species are distributed in southern India: *P. reticulatum* Wight & Arn., *P. obtusifolium* Wight ex Mast., *P. heyneanum* Wall. ex Wight & Arn., *P. diversifolium* Blume, *P. rubiginosum* Heyne, *P. suberifolium* (L.) Lam., *P. acerifolium* (L.) Willd. (Gamble & Fischer 1935), and *P. xylocarpum* (Gaertn.) Santapau & Wagh (Narasimhan & Sheeba 2021). Among them, *P. obtusifolium* Wight ex Mast., and *P. rubiginosum* Heyne are endemic to the southern Western Ghats, and are found growing in the evergreen forests (Gamble & Fischer 1935), the former is rare (Britto 2019) while the latter is common (Rao et al. 2019).

Pterospermum obtusifolium Wight ex Mast. is a tree, grows primarily in the wet tropical biome and its native range is southwestern India (WFO 2024). It was first collected by Robert Wight in 1838 from Courtallum (then Tirunelveli District), Tamil Nadu, and published in 1840 in 'Illustrations of Indian Botany'. Later, although, it has been reported from Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu (Sasidharan 2011; Singh et al. 2015; Britto 2019; Rao et al. 2019), no new herbarium collections including fresh specimens images are available. Only six herbarium

specimens of Robert Wight are available but none of them were found in Indian Herbaria, of which Wight 227 is well preserved at Kew [K000671799] and hence it was designated as lectotype and remaining as syntypes by Rekha et al. (2020) recently. During our revisionary work on *Pterospermum* species of peninsular India, the species was collected from its type locality in the year 2023.

Pterospermum obtusifolium Wight ex Mast. (Image 1) was collected from two locations (Chitaruvi and near Shri Shenbaga Devi Temple) in Courtallum, Sengottai Forest Division, Tenkasi District of Tamil Nadu and identified with the help of local flora, BSI publications, and consulting Virtual Herbarium, Kew. Required taxonomic characters including flowering and fruiting phenology were recorded for detailed botanical description and herbaria prepared. Data were also gathered from the literature for analysis. Ahmedullah & Nayar (1987) have reported that it is endemic to southern Western Ghats in Travancore, Tirunelveli, Coimbatore, Ramanathapuram and Tiruchirappalli. Based on this information, later workers like Rao et al. (2019), Britto (2019), and Narasimhan & Sheeba (2021) have documented only these areas for distribution of this species in their compilation works, without specifying exact collection localities. Similarly, Sasidharan (2011) too documented it

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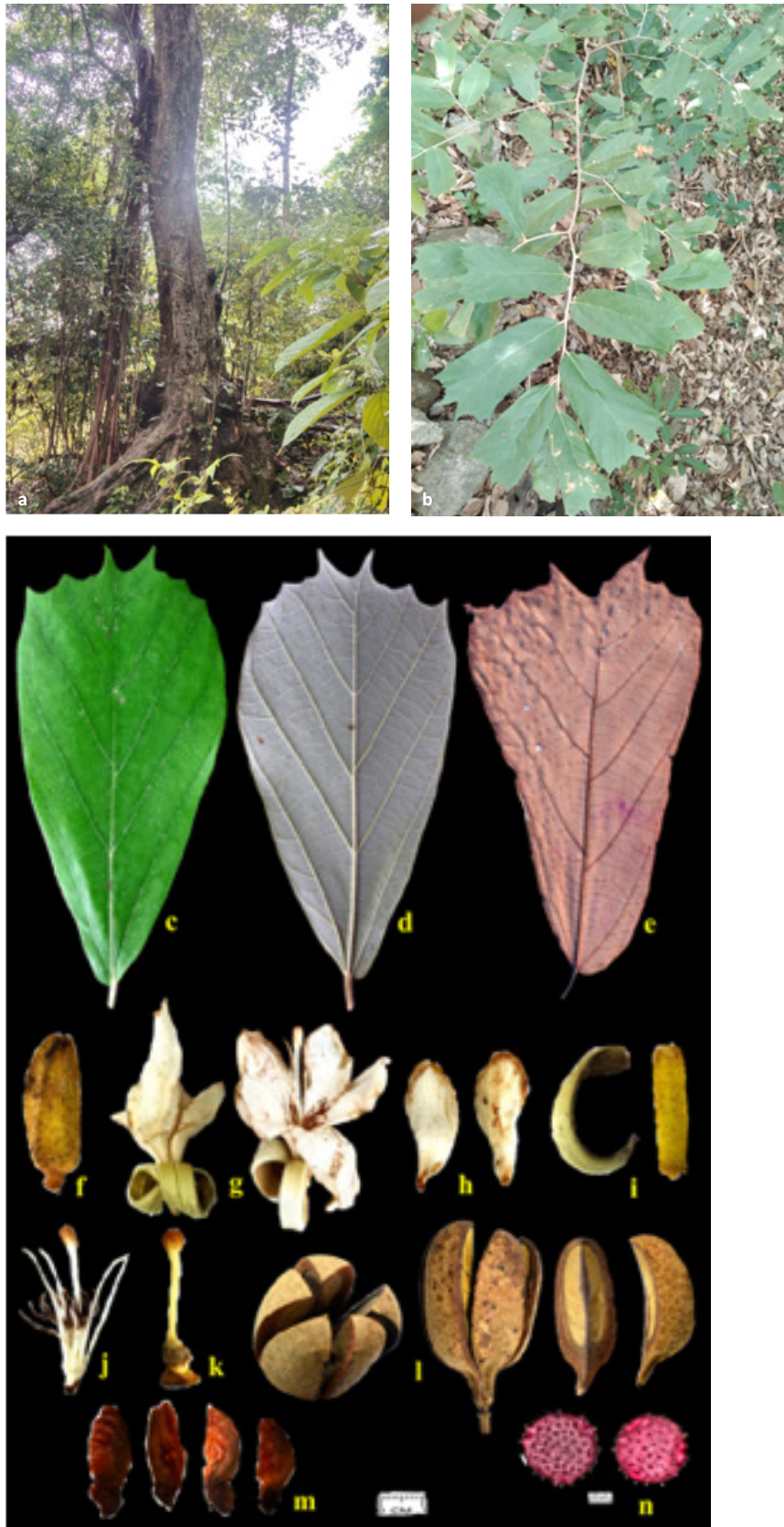


Image 1. *Pterospermum obtusifolium* Wight ex Mast.: A—Habit | b—A twig | c—Leaves upper surface | d—Leaves lower surface | e—Dried leaf showing venation | f—Flower bud | g—Flowers | h—Petals | i—Sepals | j—Androecium | k—Gynoecium | l—Fruits | m—Seeds | n—Pollens. © Narayanan & Abdul Kader.

for 'Flowering Plants of Kerala' without specifying exact collection localities. Therefore, it seems that none of them have collected this species again from these areas. Recently, Rekha et al. (2020) have lectotypified it using Wight's collections deposited at KEW. The prepared herbarium sheets (PCM KN09 dated 07.iv.2023) were deposited in Madras Presidency College (PCM), Madras Herbarium (MH) at BSI Coimbatore, and Fischer's Herbarium (FRC) at IFGTB Coimbatore.

Botanical description

Habit: a large evergreen tree (Figure 1), attaining more than c. 2.13 m GBH. Leaves: simple, alternate, petiolate (petiole 5–15 mm long), three-nerved at base, oblique, cuneate-obovate to cuneate-oblong, margin entire, base cuneate, either very broadly truncated at tip, somewhat obcordate, or irregularly two-lobed at tip, lobes coarsely toothed, upper surface green and glabrous (Image 1), lower surface glaucous pubescence (Figure 1), 5.9–17 cm × 3.1–8.2 cm, lateral veins 5–6 pairs (usually five pairs), prominent, distant (Image 1). Inflorescence: axillary cyme. Flowers: flower bud, oblong-angular, shortly-pedicellate, pedicel 4 mm long; medium-sized, white, fragrant, 4.0–4.5 cm across (Image 1). Calyx: sepals five, green, free, recurved, linear with round tip, 1 mm thick, stellate-tomentose, longer than the petals, 3.7 × 0.4–4.5 × 0.7 cm in size (Image 1). Petals: white, oblanceolate, thin, densely stellate-pubescent outside, 2.7 × 1.0–3.4 × 1.3 cm in size (Image 1). Androecium: staminodes five, 2.3 cm long, white; stamens 15, arranged in bundles of three each in between staminodes, filament white, short, 9 mm long; anthers 7 mm long (Image 1). Gynoecium: pistil white, ovary pentacarpellary, 5 × 4 mm in size; style 2

cm long, stigma 5 mm long (Image 1). Fruit: a woody dehiscent capsule, medium-sized, stalked, stalk 2–2.2 cm long, oblong, 6–6.5 cm × 2.8–3.5 cm, surface rough and tubercled, tip obtuse, 4–5-seeded (Image 1). Seed: brown, 5–13 mm long; wing brown, knife-shaped, tip round or acute, 1.5–3.1 cm × 5–11 mm (Image 1).

Flowering: March–April.

Fruiting: April–May.

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Errata

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In the article "Chaudhary, K.O. (2024) three references printed are incorrect. The correct citations are as follows:

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