RECOLLECTION OF AN ENDEMIC PLANT, *FICUS CUPULATA* HAINES FROM TYPE LOCALITY (PACHMARHI BIOSPHERE RESERVE)

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Botanical Survey of India, Allahabad - 211 002

Ficus cupulata Haines, an endemic plant, has been recollected from Pachmarhi Biosphere Reserve, Hoshangabad district, Madhya Pradesh (type locality) after a lapse of 86 years.

Haines (Kew Bull. 1914 : 155. 1914) reported a new species of *Ficus viz., F. cupulata* based on his own collection from the adjoining areas of Pachmarhi. The species is allied to *F. benghalensis* L. and *F. mollis* Vahl (syn. *F. tomentosa* Roxb. *ex* Willd.) but can be differentiated by the shrubby habit, absence of aerial roots and cupular nature of basal bracts of the receptacle. During recent survey of Pachmarhi Biosphere Reserve (Hoshangabad district) area, the authors observed a few plants of *Ficus cupulata* Haines growing on the slope of sandstone rocks (Pachmarhi to Rorighat forest road) which showed characteristic features of the species, particularly the cupular nature of the basal bracts of the receptacle. A perusal of various herbaria has indicated that the species has not been collected after type collection. Hence, the collection of the species after a lapse of 86 years is interesting and note-worthy since the plant is endemic and rare in the area. The correct nomenclature of the plant with its description, flowering and fruiting periods, status, ecological notes and conservation measures proposed have been presented below.

Ficus cupulata Haines in Kew Bull. 1914: 155. 1914. (Plate-I).

Shrubs or small trees, 2-6 m high; bark ash-coloured, wrinkled, tomentose; aerial roots absent. Leaves alternate, ovate, 6.5-13 × 4-9 cm, cuspidate-obtuse at apex, cordate at base, entire, puberulous; petioles 2.5-4 cm long; stipules c. 2 mm long. Receptacles axillary clustered towards apical portion of the branch, sessile, subglobose, 8-10 mm across, dark cream-coloured and silky hairy when young, light purple on ripening; basal bracts cupular, shallowly 2-3-lobed. Male and gall flowers in one receptacle. Tepals 4. Female flowers in separate receptacle. Tepals 3-4. Achenes tuberculate.

Local names : Akai-bat, Pakar.



Plate-I. *Ficus cupulata* Haines

Fl. & Fr.: July-January.

Status : Rare, endemic.

Ecological notes : On slopes of sandstone rocks alongwith *Anogeissus pendula* Edgew., *Terminalia bellirica* (Gaertn.) Roxb., *Chloroxylon swietenia* DC. and *Bauhinia* Sp.

Specimens examined: MADHYA PRADESH, Pachmarhi Biosphere Reserve, Pachmarhi Rorighat road, 13.11.2000, *K.K. Khanna* and *Anand Kumar* 53702.

Conservation : Being rare and limited in number, the species is highly endangered in its type locality. The construction and repairing of forest road coupled with land slide during rainy season may further pose threat to the species. Declaration of the area as biosphere reserve will certainly help in the conservation of the species. Moreover, attempt should also be made to grow the plant in botanic gardens.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors are grateful to Dr. N.P. Singh, Ex-Director, Botanical Survey of India, Kolkata and Dr. R.D. Dixit, Ex-Additional Director, Botanical Survey of India, Central Circle, Allahabad for providing facilities.