



Ficus middletonii Chantaras. – A New Distributional Record For Central India

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Abstract

Ficus middletonii Chantaras., native to India & Thailand, a less known species is hitherto reported from Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh & Telangana and recorded here for the first time from Chhattisgarh state. Detailed description, photo plate and relevant notes are provided for easy identification.

Keywords: *Ficus*; Chhattisgarh; New Record; Urostigma; India

Introduction

The present paper deals with addition of *Ficus middletonii* Chantaras., to the flora of Central India (Chhattisgarh state), a recently described species in subgenus *Urostigma*. It was hitherto recorded only from Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh & Telangana states in South India [1-3]. There is no record of occurrence in Central India. Therefore, the present collection forms a new distributional record to the flora of Central India.

Materials and Methods

While assessment of forest resources in Chhattisgarh state, the author has collected few collections of *Ficus* species from Palari village, Kondagaon Mandal, Kondagaon district, Chhattisgarh state. On critical examination of the fresh and

dried specimens with relevant literature and herbarium, were later identified as *Ficus middletonii* Chantaras., belonging to subgenus *Urostigma*. Published literature reveals that 26 ficus species have been reported so far from Central India [4,5]. Voucher specimens are deposited in the Herbarium of Nagpur University, Nagpur, Maharashtra. A detailed description and Photo plate are provided for facilitating the easy identification.

Taxonomic Treatment

Ficus middletonii Chantaras., Syst. Bot. 38 (3): 669. 2013; Sudhakar & Murthy, *Indian J. Forestry* 39 (3): 255. 2016; Paramesh, Sudhakar & Vijaya Bhasker Reedy, *Nelumbo* 64(1): 329-331. 2022 (Figure 1).



Figure 1: *Ficus middletonii* Chantaras.: A-Young branches; B-Young reddish leaves; C. Stipules in young shoot; D. Figs in pairs; E. Section of Fig; F. Male flowers near ostiole; G. Female flower.

Tree, up to 11 m tall, deciduous, monoecious; aerial roots absent; branchlets glabrous, young branches puberulous; latex present, milky white; bark greyish, smooth; wood moderately hard. Leaves alternate, broadly ovate, symmetric, 4-8.5 × 3-5 cm, sub-cordate to round at the base, entire or undulate along margins, acute to bluntly acuminate at apex, acumen up to 0.4 cm long, sub-coriaceous, light to dark green above, pale or whitish beneath, reddish when young, glabrous; petiole 3-6 cm long, slender, glabrous, sparsely puberulous, epidermis persistent, articulated near leaf base, 1-2 mm thick; leaf base 3-nerved, midrib prominent beneath, waxy glandular; lateral veins 7-9 pairs, looped at margin; tertiary venation reticulate; cystoliths present only on lower surface of leaves. Stipules lanceolate or broadly ovate to lanceolate, 0.6-1.2 cm long, sometimes up to 2.2 cm long at shoot apices, often forming terminal buds, white puberulous when young, persistent. Figs axillary or just below the leaves, or on old wood, in pairs or solitary, subsessile to peduncled; peduncle 3-5 mm long, puberulous; basal bracts 3, free, ovate-obtuse, 1.4-2.4 × 1.8-2.8 mm, brownish, puberulous, ciliate along margins, persistent; receptacle globose, 0.4-1.3 cm in diam., white or creamy, with pink or orange dots

when ripe, pubescent to tomentose when young, glabrous at maturity; ostiole prominently raised, c. 2 mm in diam.; ostiolar bracts 3, broadly triangular, 0.6-1.3 × 0.8-1.9 mm, brownish, glabrous, ciliate along margins; internal ostiolar bracts oblong or lanceolate, 0.6-1.5 × 0.3-1 mm, brownish, glabrous; internal hairs many, linear or linear to lanceolate, 0.7-1 × 0.2-0.3 mm, translucent, glabrous. **Male flowers:** few, near ostiole, sessile, 0.7-0.8 mm long; tepals 3 or 4, free or connate at base, broadly ovate, 0.5-0.8 × 0.2-0.3 mm, brown, glabrous; stamen 1, ca. 0.6 mm long, inserted in perianth; anthers oblong, white, ca. 0.4 mm; filaments short. **Gall flowers:** many, dispersed in the cavity, 1.2-1.8 mm long, shortly pedicellate, glabrous, tepals 3, free, lanceolate, brownish, glabrous; ovary stipitate, obovoid, 0.8-1 mm long, reddish brown, smooth, style lateral, 0.3-0.4 mm long, brownish; stigma simple. **Female flowers:** many, scattered along with gall flowers, sessile, 1.5-2 mm long; tepals 3 or 4, free, lanceolate, 0.6-1 × 0.2-0.3 mm, white with brownish tinge, glabrous; ovary ovoid or globose, 0.7-1 mm in diam., reddish brown, smooth; style lateral, 0.8-1 mm long, brownish, glabrous; stigma simple. Achenes ovoid to obovoid, 1.2-1.4 mm in diam., reddish brown, surface

smooth or smooth at top reticulate at base.

Flowering & Fruiting: January - March.

Distribution and Habitat: Few individuals have been noticed along water bodies during survey in Chhattisgarh state. It is rarely distributed in South India (Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu & Telangana) & Thailand, now from Chhattisgarh state.

Specimens Examined: Chhattisgarh: near pallari village, Kondagaon mandal, Kondagaon district, 19°61'57.89"N, 081°67'63.46"E; alt. 604 m.a.s.l, 11.02.2024, Chandramohan 008.

Note: It is highly variable species and closely allied to *Ficus virens* but differs in having leaves with short acumen, white puberulous stipules, shorter basal bracts, tomentose, ostiolar bracts glabrous and margins ciliate.

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