

A NOTE ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF SOME PLANTS IN BIRBHUM DISTRICT,
WEST BENGAL

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A B S T R A C T

The distribution of 24 taxa in Birbhum district of West Bengal has been recorded, the majority of which being reported from the State for the first time.

INTRODUCTION

Birbhum forms the northern-most district of the West Bengal plain, west of the Hooghly river. The district is a triangular tract bounded on the west by Santal Parganas, on the east by Murshidabad and on the south by Burdwan district. It stretches from the eastern fringe of the Chotanagpur plateau and gradually merges along the south-east into the alluvial plains of the Gangetic delta. The vegetation is characteristic of the alluvial rice plain, while in the drier west it is similar to Eastern Bihar. The information about the vegetation and flora of Birbhum district so far is very meagre.

Six exploration trips to different parts of the district were undertaken during the year 1966 and about 530 species were collected and identified. While studying the specimens, I found some of these were not reported previously from West Bengal (*Prain* 1903, 1905; *Culshaw* 1950 and others) and thus form new records for the State. A list of such plants with notes on their distribution is given below. In the list, I have also mentioned a few species from the North Bengal area (*Prain* 1903), as only a part of that vast tract is now included in West Bengal. The present note thus records an extension of their distribution in West Bengal proper. The herbarium sheets of all these specimens are deposited in the Calcutta Herbarium (CAL) for reference.

ENUMERATION

HYPERICACEAE

Hypericum japonicum Thunb. Fl. Jap. 295, t. 31, 1784; Fl. Brit. India 1: 256, 1874.

Baidyanathpur. In paddy fields near forest area along with *Drosera burmanni* Vahl, locally common, fl. & fr., March 22, 1966, *Basak* 34.

Distributed in the Subtropical Himalayas, Assam and Peninsular India. *Prain* (1903) reported it from

Chotanagpur, Trihut, North and East Bengal. This is the first report of the plant from the plains of West Bengal.

MALVACEAE

Abelmoschus manihot (Linn.) Medic. ssp. ***tetraphyllus*** var. ***tetraphyllus*** Borss. Waalkes in *Blumea* 14: 98, 1966. *Hibiscus tetraphyllus* Roxb.; Fl. Brit. India 1: 341, 1874.

Barsa. On way to Sultanpur, in thickets on dry waste lands, occasional, fl. & fr., December 17, 1966, *Basak* 691.

Distributed in Peninsular India and Bihar. *Prain* (1903) doubted about its distribution near Calcutta since Roxburgh's time (1814). It forms a new record for West Bengal.

PAPILIONACEAE

Atylosia volubilis (Blanco) Gamble, Fl. Pres. Madras 369, 1918. *A. mollis* Benth.; Fl. Brit. India 2: 213, 1876 (in part).

Bhabanandapur. Near Nalhati, on bushes in forest plantation, occasional, fl. & fr., with petals persisting in pods, December 18, 1966, *Basak* 703.

Distributed in Garhwal and Kumaon to Nepal and South India. *Prain* (1903) reported it from Chotanagpur and Bihar. It is a new record for West Bengal.

Desmodium pulchellum (Linn.) Benth. in Fl. Hongk. 83, 1861; Fl. Brit. India 2: 162, 1876.

Dhamra. Near Ganpur, in forest area, occasional, fl., August 25, 1966, *Basak* 561. Ganpur. fr., December 22, 1966, *Basak* 746.

Distributed in Eastern Himalayas and through India southwards to Ceylon. *Prain* (1903) described this species from Chotanagpur, East Bengal and Chittagong. He (1905) doubted about its occurrence in Serampur, as reported earlier by Voigt (1845). There is no mention about this species in later pub-

lications on the flora of West Bengal. It forms a new record for the State.

Indigofera pulchella Roxb. [Hort. Beng. 57, 1814, nom. nud. &] Fl. Ind. 3: 382, 1832; Fl. Brit. India 2: 101, 1876.

Dhamra. Near Ganpur, in open forest area, locally common, fl., December 20, 1966, *Basak* 730.

Distributed in Himalayas and hilly areas of India. Prain (1903) reported it as very common in Chotanagpur and Orissa. It is a new record for West Bengal.

RUBIACEAE

Canthium parvifolium Roxb. [Hort. Beng. 15, 1814, nom. nud. &] Fl. Ind. 1: 534, 1832; Fl. Brit. India 3: 135, 1880.

Abada. Near Kirnahar, in bushes on bank of river Kopai, locally common, fl. & fr., June 22, 1966, *Basak* 285.

Distributed in Khasia hills, Chittagong and Bihar. Prain (1903) mentioned its distribution in Bihar and Chittagong. Later he (1905) recorded it near Calcutta as an introduction from Chittagong in the year 1814. Since then its occurrence has not been recorded in West Bengal. It is interesting to find it wild in Birbhum.

Gonotheca ovatifolia (Cav.) Sant. & Wagh in Bull. bot. Surv. India 5: 107, 1963. *Oldenlandia nudicaulis* Roth; Fl. Brit. India 3: 70, 1880.

Seramatpur. Near Patelnagar, in moist waste places, occasional, fl. & fr., August 26, 1966, *Basak* 573.

Distributed in Tropical Himalayas, Assam and Mysore. Prain (1903) recorded it from Bihar and Chotanagpur. It is a new record for West Bengal.

Oldenlandia umbellata Linn. Sp. Pl. 119, 1753; Fl. Brit. India 3: 66, 1880.

Daikota. Near Sainthia, in paddy fields, common, fl. & fr., June 28, 1966, *Basak* 398.

Distributed in Peninsular India from Orissa southwards to Ceylon. It is a plant from Orissa (Prain 1903), which has now extended to West Bengal and forms a new record for the State.

COMPOSITAE

Blainvillea acmella (Linn.) Philip. in Blumea 6: 350, 1950. *B. latifolia* DC.; Fl. Brit. India 3: 305, 1881. Ganpur. In open forest area, occasional, fl., August 23, 1966, *Basak* 532.

Distributed in the Upper Gangetic Plain and westwards. Prain (1903) reported it only from Chotanagpur. It is a new record for the State.

Vernonia teres Wall. ex DC. Prodr. 5: 15, 1836; Fl. Brit. India 3: 229, 1881.

Ganpur. In open forest areas, common, fl. & fr., December 19, 1966, *Basak* 723.

Distributed in Tropical Himalayas, Central India and Bihar. Prain (1903) mentioned this species from Chotanagpur and Bihar. It is a new record for West Bengal.

LOGANIACEAE

Mitrasacme pygmaea R. Br. var. **malaccensis** (Wight) Hara in J. Jap. Bot. 30: 23, 1955. *M. polymorpha* (non R. Br.) Clarke in Fl. Brit. India 4: 80, 1883.

Dhamra. Near Ganpur, on damp moist soil under shade of Sal forest, locally common, fl., August 25, 1966, *Basak* 562.

Distributed in Nepal and Deccan Peninsula. Mooney (1950) and Bressers (1951) collected this species from the hills of Orissa and Ranchi. This is a new record for West Bengal.

CONVOLVULACEAE

Argyrea strigosa (Roth) Roberty in Candollea 14: 44, 1952. *Lettsomia setosa* Roxb.; Fl. Brit. India 4: 194, 1883.

Dhamra. Near Ganpur, large climber on trees in forest area, occasional fr., December 20, 1966, *Basak* 733.

Distributed in Tropical and Subtropical India. Prain (1903) reported it from North and East Bengal, Chittagong and Tippera. The present record in Birbhum district is an extension of its known distribution. This is the first report of the plant from the plains of West Bengal.

Porana paniculata Roxb. Fl. Brit. India 4: 222, 1883.

Dhamra. Near Ganpur, climbing on bushes in scrub forest area, rare, fl. & fr., December 20, 1966, *Basak* 729.

Distributed all over India in forests, Western Himalayas and Assam. Prain (1903) described it from Bihar, North and East Bengal. Later Prain (1905) and Sen & Naskar (1965) recorded it in gardens of Calcutta. This is the first report of its occurrence in the plains of West Bengal in a wild state.

SOLANACEAE

Solanum surattense Burm. f. Fl. Ind. 57, 1768 (excl. syn. Pluk. & Raj.). *S. xanthocarpum* Schrad. & Wendl.; Fl. Brit. India 4: 236, 1883.

Nanoor. In paddy fields, near junction of metal-
led roads, rare, fl., white, June 24, 1966, *Basak* 335.

Seramatpur. Near Patelnagar, roadside weed on
bank of Mor river, fl., white, August 26, 1966, *Basak*
580.

Distributed all over India usually with violet or
blue flowers. This rare white flowered form has
hardly been reported. Maheshwari (1963) mention-
ed that it is rare in Delhi. A study of morpholo-
gical characters does not show any variation in two
forms. A meiotic study of flower buds shows $n=12$,
which is a stable number for the genus *Solanum*.
Pollen morphological characters are also similar in
the two forms. However, it is interesting to note
its occurrence in West Bengal for the first time.

SCROPHULARIACEAE

Angelonia grandiflora C. Morr. in Ann. Soc. Hort.
Gand. 3 : 93, t. 119, 1847.

Seramatpur. Near Patelnagar, on moist soil near
heaped bricks and over them, rare, fl. & fr., August
26, 1966, *Basak* 574.

A Brazilian species, commonly cultivated in
gardens, has possibly naturalized and running wild
in Birbhum. The plant was also found by Prain
(1903a) similarly established in Kakdwip near
Sundribun, though there was no garden in that area.

ACANTHACEAE

Synnema uliginosum (Linn. f.) O. Ktze. Rev. Gen.
Pl. 2. : 500, 1891. *Cardanthera uliginosa* (Linn. f.)
Buch.-Ham. ex Clarke in Fl. Brit. India 4 : 403,
1884.

Chatra. On way to Sultanpur, in a marshy field
with stem immersed under water, locally abundant,
fl. & fr., December 17, 1966, *Basak* 693.

Distributed in rice swamps in Madras and Sikkim
Terai. Prain (1903) described it from swamps of
Duars area in North Bengal. It has many vari-
able forms and my specimen agrees with the col-
lection of Griffith (s. n., CAL) from Sikkim Hima-
layas and Darjeeling. It is a new record from the
plains of West Bengal.

VERBENACEAE

Clerodendrum phlomidis Linn. f. Suppl. 292, 1781;
Fl. Brit. India 4 : 590, 1885.

Sultanpur. Near Chatra, hedge plant in village,
rare, fl., December 17, 1966, *Basak* 692.

Distributed in North-west Himalayas from Terai
to Ceylon. Prain (1903) recorded it from Chotanag-

pur, Bihar and Orissa. This is a new record for
West Bengal.

Premna mucronata Roxb. [Hort. Beng. 95, 1814,
nom. nud. &] Fl. Ind. 3 : 80, 1832. *P. latifolia*
Roxb. var. *mucronata* (Roxb.) Clarke in Fl. Brit.
India 4 : 578, 1885.

Nanoor. Roadside tree, rare, fl. & fr., June 24,
1966, *Basak* 330.

Distributed in North India from Kumaon to
Bhutan, Khasia hills, and Bengal plains. Prain
(1903) and Mukerjee (1965) reported it from North
Bengal. The present note is the first report of its
occurrence in the alluvial plains of West Bengal.

Vitex glabrata R. Br. Prodr. 512, 1810; Fl. Brit.
India 4 : 588, 1885.

Ilambazar. On bank of Ajoy river, rare, fl., April
25, 1966, *Basak* 243.

Distributed in Cachar, Assam and Bihar. Prain
(1903) reported it from East Bengal and Chittagong.
It is a new record for West Bengal.

LABIATAE

Moschosma polystachyum (Linn.) Benth. in Wall.
Pl. As. Rar. 2 : 13, 1831; Fl. Brit. India 4 : 612,
1885.

Muradihi. Near Sainthia, in shady moist places,
occasional, fl., July 22, 1966, *Basak* 421.

Distributed in Deccan Peninsula and East Bengal.
Prain (1903) reported it earlier only from East
Bengal and later he (1905) recorded it from Goghat
subdivision of Hooghly district. There is only one
specimen in Calcutta Herbarium collected by Hos-
sein (s. n., 1902) from Goghat. Since then it has
not been reported from West Bengal again. It is
interesting to find its distribution in West Bengal
for the second time after 65 years.

EUPHORBIACEAE

Jatropha heynei Balak. in Bull. bot. Surv. India 3 :
40, 1961. *J. heterophylla* Heyne ex Hook. f. (non
Steudel, 1840); Fl. Brit. India 5 : 382, 1887.

Baidyanathpur. In shade under low Sal forests,
locally common, fl., July 29, 1966, *Basak* 522.

Distributed in Deccan Peninsula and Orissa. It
is a new record for West Bengal.

MORACEAE

Ficus heterophylla Linn. f. var. *heterophylla*; Cor-
ner in Gard. Bull. 21 : 73, 1965. *F. heterophylla*
Linn. f. var. *scabrella* (Roxb.) King; Fl. Brit.
India 5 : 519, 1888.

Seramatpur. Near Patelnagar, on bank of Mor river with receptacles, rare, August 26, 1966, *Basak* 585.

Distributed in hotter parts of India near water. Prain (1903) recorded it from North and East Bengal. The present note is the first record of this variety from West Bengal proper.

ORCHIDACEAE

Acampe praemorsa (Roxb.) Blatter & McCann in J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc. 35 : 495, 1932. *Saccolabium praemorsum* Hook. f. Fl. Brit. India 6: 62, 1890; *S. wightianum* Hook. f. Fl. Brit. India 6: 62, 1890.

Kotasur. Epiphytic on *Mangifera indica* Linn. near junction of metalled roads, occasional, fl. & fr., July 23, 1966, *Basak* 451.

Distributed in Peninsular India, Western Ghats and Bihar. Prain (1903) described it only from Chotanagpur. It is a new record for West Bengal.

CYPERACEAE

Cyperus platystylis R. Br. Prodr. 214, 1810; Fl. Brit. India 6 : 598, 1893.

Dhangao. Near Suri, on edge of pond near mar-

shy land, occasional, fl., March 23, 1966, *Basak* 87.

Distributed in India from Bengal to Ceylon. Prain (1903) recorded this species from Bihar, Trihut, North and East Bengal. This is the first report of the plant from the plains of West Bengal.

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