

Corchorus pseudo-olitorius Islam and Zaid – A new addition to Indian flora

Under the aegis of the National Agricultural Technology Project of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, an exploration was conducted in the southern part of Kerala and Tamil Nadu during January 2002 in collaboration with the Regional Station of National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources, Thrissur for the collection of germplasm of jute and allied fibre crops including their wild relatives and germplasm of medicinal plants, and other crops as well.

Corchorus pseudo-olitorius Islam and Zaid was collected from Kambani village of Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu, India in flowering and fruiting condition. This species was known to occur and was collected from Hala, 25 miles north of Hyderabad (Sind) of Pakistan¹ and was stated to be endemic to Pakistan². Later it was collected from Somalia, Kenya and Tanzania also³.

So far, in India the genus *Corchorus* L. is known by its eight species⁴⁻⁷ in-

cluding two of the most important fibre yielding species, *C. capsularis* L. and *C. olitorius* L. This newly collected species *C. pseudo-olitorius* is very close to *C.*

olitorius L. in some characters but can be differentiated by shorter plants, smaller size and width of leaves and fruits. Moreover, the fruit of *C. olitorius* L. is



Figure 1. Herbarium specimens of *C. pseudo-olitorius* collected from India.



Figure 2. *C. pseudo-olitorius* Islam and Zaid. *a*, Normal size of the fruiting twig; *b*, Fruit enlarged double of the original size.

distinguishable from that of *C. pseudo-olitorius* and other species of this genus by the presence of longitudinal ridges and furrows, while *C. pseudo-olitorius* Islam and Zaid does not exhibit such features. A short description of collected species^{1,3} (both living and dried plants), *C. pseudo-olitorius* Islam and Zaid is presented below (Figures 1 and 2).

C. pseudo-olitorius Islam and Zaid in *Biologia, Lahore*, 1969, **6**, 174; Edmonds in *Herbarium Survey of African Corchorus species*; 1990, **35**, 80.

An annual erect herb, 25 to 80 cm tall, unbranched or scarcely branched; stem cylindric, glabrous; leaves oblong, oblong lanceolate, 3–4.3 × 0.8–1.2 cm, acute, serrate, cuneate, usually with a pair of basal setae, 1–2 mm long; petioles slender, 5–7 mm long, glabrous; stipules subulate, 1–2 mm long; flowers axillary, usually solitary or 2–3 in cluster; sepals 5, linear oblong, about 4 mm long, finely ciliate along margin, torulose; petals 5, obovate, 4–5 mm long, ciliate at base; stamens many, about 20; ovary linear, 2–2.5 mm long, setulose; capsules cylindric, 2–3 cm long, setulose, straight or slightly curved, splitting into 3 valves, tapering into a short apical beak; seeds many, angular, verrucose; brownish black.

The plant grows on somewhat black soil on the raised boundary of a rice field. Dried plants are also found as

weeds in sugarcane fields along with other weeds dominated by grasses. It prefers wet or moist habitat condition and can survive for a longer time from April to January as a potential weed in a crop field. Flowering occurs in May to December while fruiting takes place in June to January. The voucher specimen has been deposited in the Central National Herbarium (CAL) of the Botanical Survey of India, Howrah, West Bengal.

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Paragonimus and paragonimiasis – A new focus in Arunachal Pradesh, India

Paragonimiasis is potentially a serious disease in many countries of the world and is caused by the lung fluke genus *Paragonimus* belonging to the family Troglotrematidae. *Paragonimus* infection in man is caused by eating of undercooked/raw, infected crabs and crayfishes, and affects at least 22 million people throughout the world¹. The public health and economic impact of paragonimiasis is considerable, in terms of morbidity and loss of productivity. It is often misdiagnosed as tuberculosis because of overlapping clinical manifesta-

tions including chest pain, cough and haemoptysis and confusing radiological findings in chest X-rays². No data are presently available on the occurrence of paragonimiasis in India except in Manipur. In Manipur human paragonimiasis is caused by *P. westermani*³. During our survey on food-borne trematodes, we observed the habit of eating raw and undercooked crabs among the people of Arunachal Pradesh. On enquiry from local doctors, long-term treatment failures among clinically and radiologically diagnosed tuberculosis cases were re-

ported. This prompted us to undertake the study on paragonimiasis in the state and we detected a new focus of this disease. Considering the public health importance of paragonimiasis and also its rarity the present report has been prepared.

A community-based survey was carried out in the Changlang District of Arunachal Pradesh during May–June 2002. It was found that 95% of local inhabitants had the habit of consuming crabs and crayfishes. These crabs were eaten mostly after roasting though occa-