



## *Antiaris toxicaria* (Moraceae) – a new distribution record to the Eastern Ghats

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### Introduction

Herbarium collections were made of a lofty tree from two different locations in the Eastern Ghats during the expedition trips primarily intended for medicinal plants' herbarium. The first collection was from Talakona forests in Seshachalam-Palkonda hill range, Andhra Pradesh and the second collection was from Pachchaimalais in Tamil Nadu. The specimens were later identified as *Antiaris toxicaria* (Pers.) Lesch., belonging to the family Moraceae. In India, this paleotropical species is so far known only from the Western Ghats and Andaman Islands. This is the first report for the Eastern Ghats providing up to date nomenclature, brief description and some notes on its distribution.

*Antiaris toxicaria* (Pers.) Lesch. in Ann. Mus. Natl. Hist. Nat. 16: 478. t. 22. 1810; Hook.f., Fl. Brit. India 5: 537. 1888; T.Cooke, Fl. Pres. Bombay 2: 656(3:156). 1907; C.E.C.Fisch., Fl. Pres. Madras 3: 1367(957). 1928; Corner in Dassan. & Fosb., Rev. Handb. Fl. Ceylon 3: 288. 1981; Saldanha, Fl. Karnataka 1: 109. 1984; K.M. Matthew, Ill. Fl. Palni hills t. 665. 1996; Sasidharan, Biodiv. Doc. Kerala 6: Fl. Pl. 437. 2004. *Ipo toxicaria* Pers., Syn. Pl. 2: 566. 1807. *Antiaris innoxia* Blume in Rumphia 1: 172, t. 54. 1835. *Lepurandra saccidora* Nimmo in Graham, Cat. Pl. Bombay 193. 1839. *Antiaris saccidora* (Nimmo)

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Dalz. in Hooker's J. Bot. Kew Gard. Misc. 3: 232. 1851; Wight, Icon. Pl. Ind. Orient. t. 1958. 1853; Bedd., Fl. Sylv. S. India t. 307. 1873. (Moraceae).

**Diagnosis:** Deciduous, monoecious trees, 30-50m tall; trunk 2-4m in girth, buttressed. Branches horizontal; outer bark brownish-grey, smooth, lenticellate; inner fibrous; blaze greenish, turning yellowish; wood white, soft; latex milky, pale yellow, turning brown. Leaves distichous, oblong or ovate-elliptic, c. 10 x 7cm, scabrid becoming glabrous above, subcoriaceous, subcordate at base, subacuminate at apex, entire or denticulate along margins; lateral nerves 8-12 pairs; petioles c 5mm long, velvety; stipules small, caducous. Inflorescence on new shoots; male heads discoid, c. 1.5cm across, subtended by confluent imbricate bracts; tepals 4, spatulate; stamens 4-8; female flowers minute, solitary in an involucre of many confluent bracts; perianth absent; styler arms 2, recurved. Drupes pyriform or subglobose, fleshy, reddish-brown, velvety, edible.

Flowering: January to March.

**Materials examined:** 29.i.2007, ± 650m, Chittoor district, Talakona, Andhra Pradesh, coll. K. Ravikumar & R. Vijaya Sankar, 105855 (Image 1). 31.iii.2007, ± 900m, Tiruchirapalli district, Pachchaimalais, Kannimar Solai, Tamil Nadu, coll. K. Ravikumar 106135 (FRLH).

**Remarks:** In India, this species has so far been reported from the Western Ghats of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andaman islands. The present collections record its presence for the first time in the Eastern Ghats as well as Andhra Pradesh.

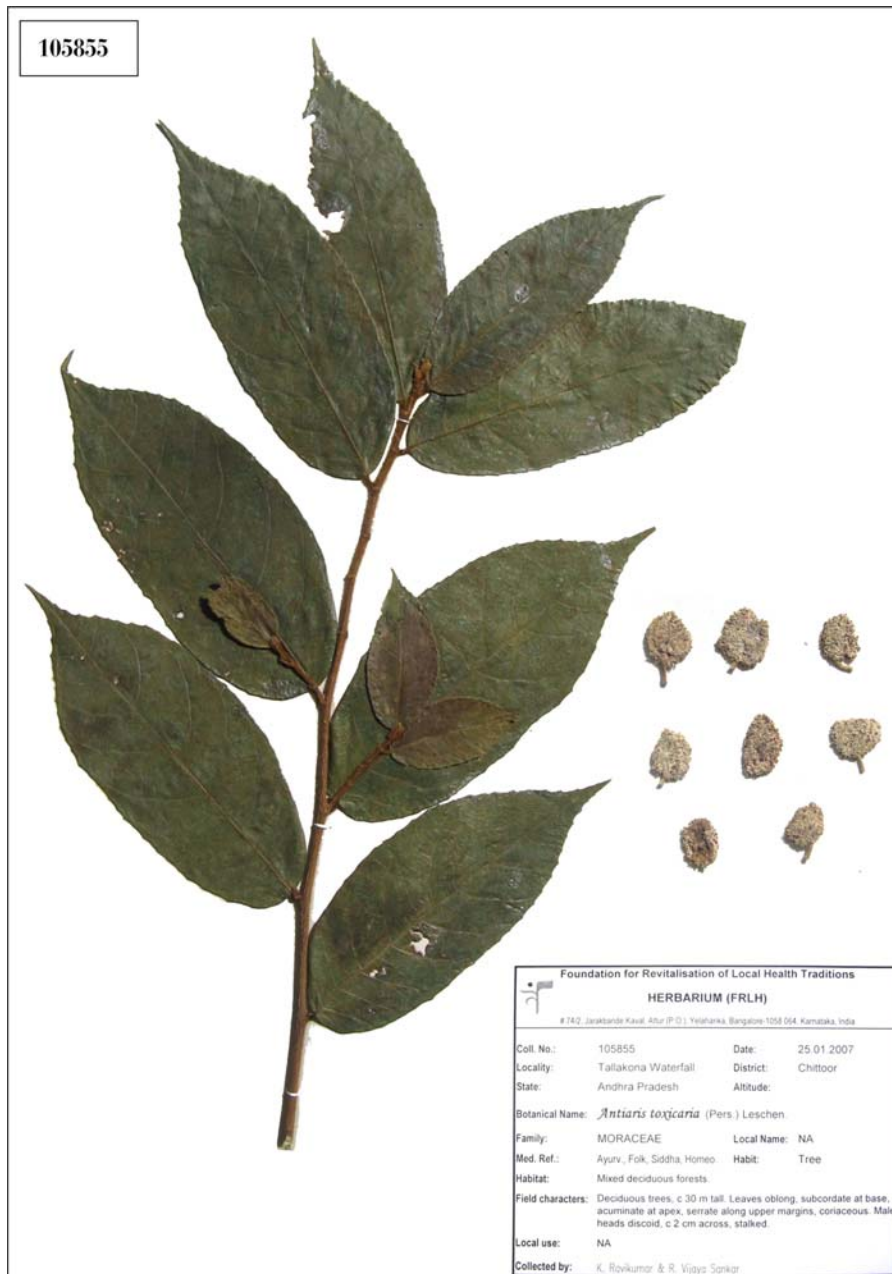
Only a single tree was observed in Talakona forest in association with *Anogeissus latifolia*, *Mallotus philippensis*, *Murraya paniculata* and *Sterculia urens*. The proximity of this tree to a giant *Entada pursaetha* liane can be a threat to its survival in the future. Population of this species is much better in Pachchaimalais with 12 trees counted in Kannimar solai near Ramanathapuram where moist deciduous vegetation is present. This species is found growing along with *Beilschmiedia bourdillonii*, *Celtis timorensis*, *Canarium strictum*, *Mangifera indica*, *Olea dioica*, *Schleichera oleosa*, *Streblus taxoides*, *Trema orientalis* and stragglers like *Morinda umbellata*, *Pisonia aculeata*, *Jasminum* spp., etc. This patch of forest is also a home for a good population of *Gnetum ula*. It is suggested that this area be declared as a heritage site worth conserving.

None of the published literature (Pullaiah & Moulali 1997; Pullaiah & Rani 1999; Thammanna et al. 1994) on the plant diversity of Andhra Pradesh has reported the occurrence of this species. It is also not recorded by Matthew (1983) who explored the Pachchaimalais.

This species is culturally important from a historical perspective as the bark was used as cloth in ancient times. Botanically it is important that this tree from peninsular India is the tallest of this region. Fischer (1928) concurs with Beddome's statement: "The largest tree of South India, attaining 250ft. in height".

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Image 1. Herbarium of *Antiaris toxicaria* from Eastern Ghats (FRLH 105855).