

A NEW VARIETY OF *CROTON CAUDATUS* GEISEL. (EUPHORBIACEAE) FROM PENINSULAR INDIA

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During the course of revision of genus *Croton* L. for Indian subcontinent the authors observed that the specimens of *Croton caudatus* Geisel. from the states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu deserve distinct varietal recognition as they differ sharply from all other known varieties of this species in the obovoid capsule and ovary. The same is described and illustrated.

Croton caudatus Geisel. var. **obovoideus** Balakr. & T. Chakrab. var. nov. a var. *caudato* ovariiis et capsulis obovoideis differt. HOLOTYPUS : *Sebastine* 25343 A (MH); ISOTYPI : *Sebastine* 25343 B, 25343 C et 25343 D (MH).

Scandent or scandent shrubs; young shoots ochraceous stellate-tomentose to hirtellous-tomentose; branchlets scattered stellate scabrid-pubescent. *Leaves* narrowly to broadly cordate to ovate or ovate-elliptic or ovate-oblong, 6-18 cm long, 2-10 cm broad, cordate, truncate to rounded at base, coarsely denticulate-serrulate to subserrulate at margin, acuminate to acute or obtuse at apex, membranous, scattered stellate-hispidulous, scabrid-pubescent to subglabrous (with hairs only on nerves) above, scattered scabrid-pubescent or softly tomentellous beneath, strongly 3-nerved at base with 1-2 accessory nerves per side; lateral nerves more or less prominent above, distinct beneath, 3-6 pairs above the basal;

nervules indistinct to prominent above, more or less prominent beneath; glands at base 2-4, stipitate, scattered at margin; petioles 0.5-5 cm long, 1-3 mm thick, scattered stellate-scabrid-pubescent or tomentellous; stipules lacinate with glandular tips, 6-13 mm long. *Racemes* terminal and lateral, androgynous or entirely male or female, 12-30 cm long, more or less stellate-tomentellous; bracts subulate, lanceolate to linear, 1-5 mm long, fringed with subsessile glands at margin. MALE FLOWERS: 1-5 in fascicles, somewhat stellate-tomentellous; pedicels 3-9 mm long; sepals 5, triangular-oblong or ovate to ovate-oblong, 2-3.5 mm long, 1-3 mm broad; petals 5, narrowly elliptic, oblong, obovate to oblanceolate or elliptically to orbicularly subspathulate, 2.5-4 mm long, 1-2.5 mm broad; stamens 20-36, 3.5-5 mm long; anthers oblong or obovoid. FEMALE FLOWERS: solitary, somewhat stellate-tomentellous; pedicels 2-4.5 mm long; sepals 5, oblong to ovate or triangular-oblong, 2.5-4.5 mm long, 1-2.5 mm broad, stellate-villous at base inside, fringed with or without subsessile glands at margin; petals 0-5, filiform; ovary obovoid, 3-4 mm long, densely ochraceous stellate-hispidulous, hirsute to hirsute-tomentose; styles 3, bifid, 6-9 mm long. *Capsules* obovoid, 1.9-2.3 cm long, 1.5-1.9 cm diam., bluntly 3-angled, submuciculate, subtruncate at apex, scattered stellate-scabrid-pubescent; seeds oblong, 12-15 mm long 7-9 mm broad, brown, sparsely stellate-pubescent (Fig. I.)

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Flowering : Mar.-Oct. *Fruiting* : May-Nov.

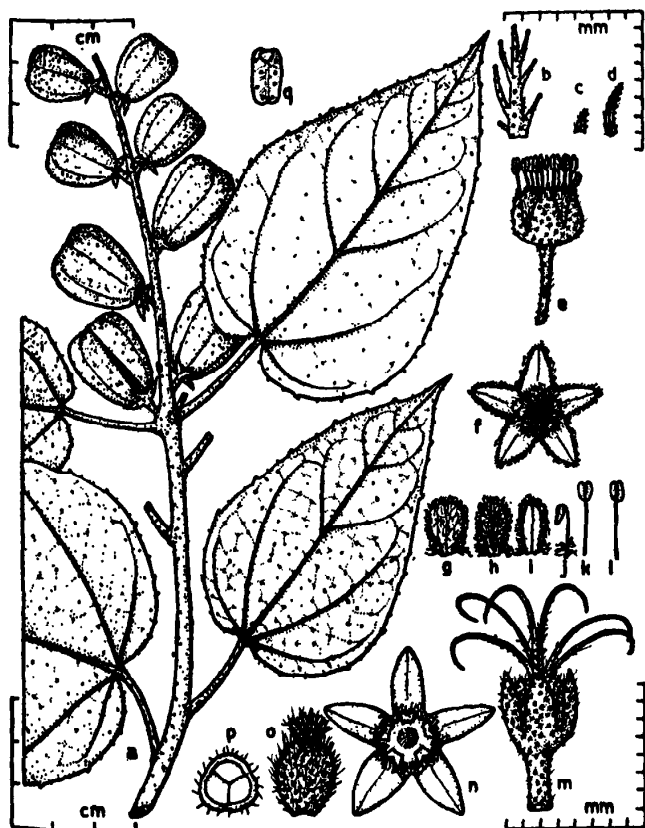


Fig. 1: *Croton caudatus* Geisel. var. *obovoideus* Balakr. & T. Chakrab.

a. Fruiting branch. b. stipule. c-d. Bracts. e-l. Male. e. Flower. f. Calyx viewed from above. g-i. Petals. j-l. Stamens. m-p. Female: m. Flower. n. Calyx viewed from above. o. Ovary. p. T. St. Ovary. q. Seed. (a and q from *Sebastine* 25343A and all others from *Sharma* 43952).

Specimens : **HOLOTYPE** : KERALA : *Kottayam Dist.* : Velara, 525 m, 21 Aug. 1965, *Sebastine* 25343 A(MH), **ISOTYPES** : *ibid.*,

Sebastine 25343 B-D (MH). **PARATYPES** : KERALA : *Dist. unknown* : Kuzhuthuruthy River Bank, 4 May 1961, *Subramaniam* 70886 (BSI); Travancore, 26 Apr. 1896, *Bourdillon* 826 (CAL); *ibid.*, no date, *Calder* & *Ramaswami* 1345 (CAL); *ibid.*, Achankoil to Makona, 5 Sept. 1913, *Rama Rao* 1594 (CAL); *Idikki Dist.* : Pamba Valley, 22 Mar. 1973, *Sharma* 43952 (MH); Triveny, 11 Oct. 1972, *Sharma* 42473 (MH). *Kottayam Dist.* : Mudurapalai, Riverside, 13 June, 1963, *Sebastine* 16432 (MH); Peruvanthanam to Pulluparai, 22 May 1965, *Vivekananthan* 23946 (MH). *Trichur Dist.* : Adirapilli Reserve, 13 Sept. 1976, *Ramamurthy* 48499 (MH); Orukombankutty to Parambikulam, 18 Apr. 1977, *Ramamurthy* 49359 (MH); Pullankandam R.F., 11 Apr. 1977, *Ramamurthy* 49293 (MH). TAMIL NADU : *Coimbatore Dist.* : Anaimalai Hills, 30 Aug. 1913, *Fischer* 3638 (CAL). *Tirunelveli Dist.* : Shencottah to Aryankavu, 8 Sept. 1913, *Calder* & *Ramaswamy* 685 (CAL).

Distribution : India (Endemic to Western Ghats of Kerala and Tamil Nadu).

Habitat : Scattered in the evergreen forests ascending up to about 900 m.

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