THE IDENTITY OF 'CHAMPAKKAD LARGE' GOOSEBERRY IN CHINNAR WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, KERALA

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Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary situated along the rain shadow region of the Western Ghats in the Idukki District of Kerala is characteristic with the dominance of dry deciduous forests and scrub jungles. The Sanctuary has a variety of non-wood forest products (NWFPs). Among the NWFPs collected, gooseberry is a major item. The large-sized gooseberry found in the Champakkad-Mangappara areas of the Sanctuary fetches a higher price for the collectors. Sreekumar *et al*. (1984) named the large-sized gooseberry as 'Champakkad large' under *Phyllanthus emblica*. The fruits and other propagules collected from the Sanctuary were since then distributed for cultivation by the Kerala Agricultural University, Thrissur. The same variety is also planted as *Phyllanthus emblica* in the campus of the Pharmaceutical Corporation of Kerala, Thrissur (Nair *et al*., 2000). During the study on the flora of Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary it was found that the leaves of the 'Champakkad Large' gooseberry are quite distinct from *Phyllanthus emblica* by their larger size with retuse or rounded apex. Further studies with flowering and fruiting specimens proved that the 'Champakkad Large' variety is actually *Phyllanthus indofischeri.*

Gamble described *Emblica fischeri* based on the specimens collected by C.A. Barber from Anaimalai Hills in 1908 and from Dhimbam Ghats in 1910; by C.E.C. Fischer from Kambakam Hills, Chinglepet in 1913 and from Veligonda Hills, Nellore by Rangachari in 1914. Gamble distinguished *E. fischeri* from the allied *E. officinalis* Gaertn. by the larger sized and fewer number leaves in the branchlets (*ca*. 50), elliptic-oblong, with rounded or retuse apex of leaves and slender style arms of the pistil. He did not describe the fruit as it was not available to him. Subramanian (1965) provided detailed descriptions of the vegetative, floral and fruit characters with illustrations of *E. fischeri* based on specimens collected from Avaraihalle Reserve Forests of Nilgiri Forest Division. The fruit is often termed as drupe because of the fleshy pericarp. The fruit dehisces into three, bivalved cocci on drying and is basically a capsule. In trade the fruit of *Phyllanthus indofischeri* is not distinguished from the fruits of *P. emblica* which vary very much in the size, taste and thickness of the edible 'pulp'.

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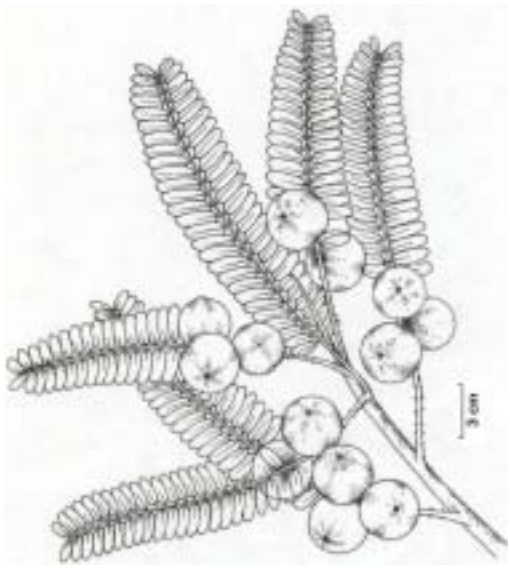

Phyllanthus indofischeri Bennet - a fruiting twig.

Following the wider concept of the genus *Phyllanthus* L., *Emblica* Gaertn. is now treated as congeneric with *Phyllanthus* L. Accordingly, the correct nomenclature is as follows.

Phyllanthus indofischeri Bennet, Indian For. 109. 221. 1983.
Emblica fischeri Gamble, Kew Bull. 1925: 330. 1925 & Fl. Pres. Madras 1295. 1925.
Phyllanthus fischeri (Gamble) Ellis, Bull. Bot. Surv. India 22: 193. 1982, non Pax 1894.
Phyllanthus cecilfischeri Ellis, Bull. Bot. Surv. India 24: 209. 1983.

This small to medium sized trees are fairly common in Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary. It has not been reported earlier from Kerala, so the present collection from the Sanctuary is an addition to the flora of Kerala.

Specimen examined: Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary. *Sasidharan* 18299 (KFRI)

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