

Scientists find new tree species in southern Western Ghats

12 MAY 2020



The tree belonging to cinnamon family is found at Malakkappara, Parambikulam

Scientists have discovered a new tree species, *Cryptocarya sheikelmudiyana*, belonging to cinnamon family in the Western Ghats.

Distributed in the wet evergreen forests of southern Western Ghats, the tree has been located in two locations at the Anamalai landscape near the Valparai plateau: Sheikelmudi of the Parambikulam Tiger Reserve and the high forest area of Malakkappara in Kerala.

The new species is a buttressed top canopy tree seen along the hilltops of wet evergreen forests. It has been named after the type locality, Sheikelmudi, in the northwest of the Valparai plateau. The name has its origin from the Kadar indigenous community language: 'Shekel' means 'sacred' and 'mudi' means mountain top.

13 trees located

A team of scientists located 13 trees – 12 at Sheikelmudi and one at Malakkappara.

The scientists included P.K. Fasila, K.H. Amitha Bachan and T.P. Girija of the Research Department of Botany, MES Asmabi College, Kodungalloor, and A.K. Pradeep of Department of Botany, University of Calicut, Tenhipalam.

Cryptocarya sheikelmudiyana bears flowers and fruits from September to April. Leaves are simple and alternate. They are greenish when fresh and blackish when dry. Fruits are glabrous and light-green when young and black when mature and are single seeded.

The dispersal of seeds is by birds such as hornbill and mammals such as lion-tailed macaque and civets.

The genus *Cryptocarya* brown, evergreen trees belonging to laurel family Lauraceae, comprises around 300 species distributed in warm tropical regions, especially in Asia. Most of the species are found in wet evergreen forests, sometimes in moist deciduous forests, warm broad-leaved forests, and inland hill forests or sholas -- montane subtropical evergreen forests. In India, *Cryptocarya* is represented by 15 species, of which 10 are endemic.

The team carried out a comparative study with specimens of five morphologically similar and sympatric species, (distributed in the evergreen forest of southern Western Ghats) such as *C. anamalayana* Gamble, *C. stocksii* Meisn. *C. wightiana* Thwaites, *C. lawsonii* Gamble, and *C. praetervisa* Gangop., Chakrab & A.S. Chauhan. And the new species showed 52% dissimilarity with its closest allies.

Source:<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/scientists-find-new-tree-species-in-southern-western-ghats/article31569193.ece>