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Euphorbia chalamensis (Euphorbiaceae), a new species from the Gundla Brahmeswaram Wildlife Sanctuary, Andhra Pradesh, India

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ABSTRACT: *Euphorbia chalamensis* is described as a new species from Gundla Brahmeswaram Wildlife Sanctuary, Nandyal district of Andhra Pradesh, India. It belongs to the subgenus *Chamaesyce* sect. *Anisophyllum*, subsect. *Hypericifoliae*. It is closely allied to *E. concanensis* but differs in many attributes which are discussed here. A key to the related species of *Euphorbia* in India is provided for easy identification.

KEY WORDS: Eastern Ghats, *Euphorbia concanensis*, section *Anisophyllum*, subgenus *Chamaesyce*, subsection *Hypericifoliae*.

INTRODUCTION

Euphorbia L. is the largest genus in the family Euphorbiaceae and is also among the largest genera of angiosperms with about 2000 species distributed throughout the world, with the highest diversity found in arid and semi-arid regions of the tropics and sub-tropics (Mabberley, 2017; Steinmann *et al.*, 2026). In India, the genus is represented by 92 species of which 39 are endemic (Binojkumar and Balakrishnan, 2010, 2012; Swamy and Prasad, 2022). The genus includes geophytes, herbs, shrubs, trees, and a host of succulent and xerophytic forms and is characterized by a distinctive morphological synapomorphy: the cyathium inflorescence (Horn *et al.*, 2012). During recent floristic explorations in the Gundla Brahmeswaram Wildlife Sanctuary (Nallamala hills) from the Eastern Ghats of Andhra Pradesh, authors have collected interesting population of *Euphorbia*. After critical examination of the specimens, it is revealed that characters like a non-succulent and leafy herbaceous habit, presence of interpetiolar stipules, opposite leaves with oblique base, presence of petaloid appendages and ecarunculate seeds confer its position in the subgenus *Chamaesyce* Raf., sect. *Anisophyllum* Roeper, subsect. *Hypericifoliae* Boiss. (Boissier, 1862; Binojkumar and Balakrishnan, 2010; Yang *et al.*, 2012). This subsection consists of around 365 species and have worldwide distribution (Yang *et al.*, 2012). In India, subgenus *Chamaesyce* is represented by 37 taxa, including recently described species, *Euphorbia kadapensis* Sarojin. & R.R.V.Raju, *E. telanganensis* Sadas., K.Prasad & A.Ramakrishna, *E. vasudevaraoi* Hanum., Sarojin. & Raja Kullayisw., *E. yadgirensis* Sarojin. & Raja Kullayisw. and *E. acolumella* Sarojin. & Raja Kullayisw. (Binojkumar and Balakrishnan, 2010, 2012; Sarojinidevi and Raju, 2014; Sadasivaiah *et al.*, 2022; Sarojinidevi and Swamy, 2023, 2024; Swamy *et al.*, 2023). After a critical examination, the collected specimens were found to be morphologically most similar to *E. concanensis* Janarth. & S.R.Yadav, but they differ in certain characters. Based on the morphological analysis we described here a new species of *Euphorbia* under subsection *Hypericifoliae* (subgen. *Chamaesyce*, sect. *Anisophyllum*).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

During floristic surveys conducted in the Gundla Brahmeswaram Wildlife Sanctuary (Nallamala hills) from the Eastern Ghats, Andhra Pradesh, a population of *Euphorbia* was observed in grassy patches of the Chalama forest range, Nandyal district. Specimens were collected from dry deciduous forest and treated with ethanol, and herbarium specimens were prepared following the standard methods. Cyathia and fruits were preserved in 70% ethanol and later used for microscopic observations and imaging. Online databases, protologues, and herbarium specimens both virtual and physical were consulted from various sources, including Kew, JSTOR Global plants, GBIF, POWO, and Botanical Survey of India herbaria (BSID, CAL, MH, SKU), and also comparison with recently published taxa. The conservation status proposed here follows the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria (IUCN, 2024).

TAXONOMIC TREATMENT

Euphorbia chalamensis Nagendra, K. Prasad & A.M.Reddy, ***sp. nov.*** **Figs 1 & 2**

Type*:* INDIA, Andhra Pradesh, Nandyal district, Gundla Brahmeswaram Wildlife Sanctuary, Chalama forest, 315 m, 07 September 2024, *C. Nagendra, Sake Akkulanna & K. Prasad 5363* (holotype: CAL; isotypes: BSID, YVU).