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Taxonomic delimitation and phylogenetic analysis of *Ficus virens* complex (Moraceae) in the Western Ghats

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Ficus L. is the most abundant genus in the family Moraceae and comprises around 750 species in the world. The latest infrageneric classification divides the genus into six subgenera. Majority of the species belongs to the subgenus *Urostigma* and includes many of the morphologically cryptic species. The morphological variability in the vegetative characters makes the identification of the species highly problematic. A systematic revision of *Ficus* in the Western Ghats region based on vegetative, floral, syconium and molecular characters contributed to the identity of *Ficus virens* Aiton complex coming under the subgenus *Urostigma* and comprising many closely related and morphologically similar species. From the Western Ghats region, *F. virens* complex includes six taxa viz., *Ficus virens* var. *virens*, *F. virens* var. *matthewii*, *F. virens* var. *dispersa*, *Ficus caulocarpa* (Miq.) Miq., *Ficus superba* (Miq.) Miq. and *Ficus middletonii* Chantaras. The phenetic analysis using PAST ver 4.03 software comprising 605-character states separated all the taxa distantly. *F. caulocarpa* and *F. superba* were the most closely related taxa based on the morphology with 83% similarity. *F. virens* var. *matthewii* showed more similarity with *F. virens* var. *virens*. Phylogenetic analysis using ITS region provided less resolution in separating the members in *F. virens* complex, while *trnH-psbA* region provided much clear resolution even for separating the varieties of *F. virens*. The result of the combined phylogenetic analysis using both the markers was congruent with the results of phenetic analysis. All the three varieties of *F. virens* were found as separate taxa forming a common lineage with *F. middletonii*. It is concluded that, all the taxa