

A RARE AND INTERESTING SOLANUM (*S. HOVEI* DUN.) FROM  
WESTERN INDIA

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*Solanum hovei* was described by F. Dunal in 1852, in De Candolle's 'Prodromus Systematis...', volume 13(1), on page 311. Dunal's description was based on a single plant collected about 1788, by A. P. Hove at Dholka, in Gujerat, near the river Sabarmati. Hove's type specimen is preserved in the British Museum (Natural History) (BM), in the herbarium of J. Banks. There is no material of *S. hovei* Dun. either in the Calcutta Herbarium or in the Kew Herbarium.

C. B. Clarke in J. D. Hooker's 'Flora of British India', in 1883, did not report this species as occurring in India, nor did T. Cooke, in his 'Flora of the Presidency of Bombay', in 1905. No further collections of *S. hovei* are present in the British Museum. Nor has it been recorded in any of the later works on the flora of Western India or any other part of the subcontinent. Apparently it is an overlooked and forgotten element of the Indian flora.

Recently while going through some unnamed specimens of *Solanum* in the herbarium of the Industrial Section, Indian Museum (ISIM), at Calcutta, the author examined a specimen which on critical analysis was found to be remarkably similar to *S. hovei*. This unnamed specimen had been collected by I. H. Burkill in 1909, in West Khandesh, in Maharashtra. The authorities of the British Museum were contacted and they were kind enough to confirm the identification of this plant by comparison of a photograph and description with the type of *S. hovei*. They also furnished relevant data on the species, as well as a photograph of the type specimen for reference.

Further, among a set of plant specimens collected in Bombay Presidency by Joseph Fernandes, the author has found yet another specimen of *S. hovei*, which has been collected in 1950, from the dense evergreen forests of Mastani-Basantbail, east of the Goa boundary.

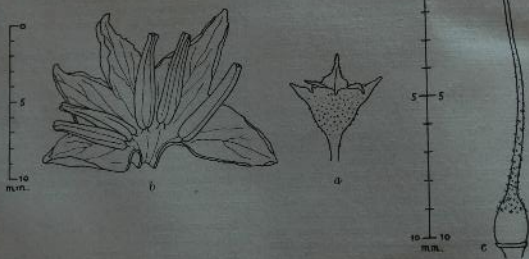
*S. hovei* is evidently a very rare and infrequent species, confined within the limits of and endemic to Western India. It is quite possible that there may be additional collections of this species among unidentified or wrongly identified material in the various herbaria of India and abroad.

*S. hovei* Dun. has close affinity to *S. carolinense* L., a tropical American species, from which it differs by its smaller calyx lobes and corollas, with shorter anthers and a pubescent style. *S. hovei* is also allied to *S. indicum* L. and *S. torrum* Sw. From *S. indicum*, which has a similar type of inflorescence, *S. hovei* can be distinguished by its scant pubescence, the unarmed nature of its inflorescence with recurved fruiting pedicels. From *S. torrum* it can be distinguished by its rhombic leaves, and unbranched, few-flowered inflorescence, with the pedicels drooping or recurved in fruit.

***Solanum hovei*** Dunal, in DC. Prodr. 13(1): 311. 1852.

*S. intermedium* Dun. MS. in herb. Banks. 1819, non Sendtn.

Plant an undershrub, c. 60 cm. high. Branches terete, scantily stellately pubescent, prickly; prickles 5-7 mm. long, more or less straight, laterally compressed. Leaves usually in pairs, 7-20 cm. long, 2.5-9.0 cm. wide, membranous, rhombic, narrowly rhombic or narrowly elliptic, margin angular-repand or shallowly lobed, apex sharply acute, base cuneate and slightly oblique; both surfaces stellately pubescent, scantily above, densely below; stellate hairs unequal-rayed above, equal-rayed below; older leaves glabrescent; lateral veins in 3-5 pairs; prickly on both surfaces on midrib and occasionally on lateral veins, prickles few to numerous, 1-9 mm. long, straight; petiole 0.5-2.5 cm. long, slender, pubescent, unarmed or sometimes prickly. Inflorescence a scorpioid



*Solanum foetidum* Dunal: a, calyx; b, corolla and stamens; c, pistil.



SOLANUM HOWELL DUNAL—Photographs of (left) the type specimen at the British Museum (BM), and (right) of Barkill's specimen at the Industrial Section, Indian Museum, Calcutta (ISM).



cyme, infra-axillary, 7-10 flowered; axis of cyme 0.5-4.0 cm. long, unbranched, erect, gradually thickened towards base. *Flowers* pedicellate; pedicel c. 7 mm. long, gradually thickened and more pubescent towards apex, in fruit  $\pm$  1.5 cm. long, clavate, recurved. *Calyx* campanulate, 2-3 mm. diam., pubescent, rarely prickly; lobes 0.5-1.5 mm. long, unequal, narrowly triangular, caudate-acuminate; in fruit c. 8 mm. diam., spreading. *Corolla* c. 1.5 cm. diam., violet; lobes spreading, 5 mm. long, 4 mm. wide, triangular, acute, margins involute, stellately pubescent on outer surface specially on mid-petaline regions. *Stamens*  $\pm$  equal, declinate; filaments scarcely 0.5 mm. long; anthers 5.5 mm. long, oblong-lanceolate. *Ovary* oblong-conical, 1 mm. diam., 1.5 mm. long, apical region stellately pubescent which extends to the basal portion of style; style 9 mm. long, glabrous above, longer than corolla and stamens; stigma subcapitate, oblique. *Berry* c. 1 cm. diam., subglobose, glabrous. *Seeds* compressed, 4.25 mm. long, 3.25 mm. broad, subreniform, minutely pitted.

\*TYPE SPECIMEN: Dolca near the Sabermatty, c. 1788, A. P. Howe s.n. (BM).

\*Specimens examined: **West Khandesh**—Akrani Plateau, Upper Astamba, 1200 m. 3rd October 1909, I. H. Barkill 33280 (ISIM).

**Region east of Goa boundary, lat. 15°-16°N**—Mastani-Basantbail evergreen forest, 23th November 1950, Joseph Fernandes 1865 (CAL).

(Also examined a photograph of the type specimen).

*Note:* Dunal described the leaves of *S. hovei* as 'lanceolate or oblong-lanceolate'. The leaves on the type specimen may appear so, because of the various folds on them, but on a

closer study it is evident that they are truly rhombic or elliptic in shape.

#### SUMMARY

*Solanum hovei* Dun., endemic to Western India, is a rare and infrequent species, hitherto overlooked and not mentioned in any of the Indian floristic works. Uptil now, it had been on record only from a single collection made by A. P. Howe in Gujerat, in 1788. *S. hovei* is now reported from Maharashtra State from two localities in Khandesh and the region east of Goa, where it had been collected in 1909 and in 1950, respectively. These later collections had remained unidentified till now.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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\*[BM]—Herbarium of the British Museum of Natural History, London.

(ISIM)—Herbarium of the Industrial Section, Indian Museum, Calcutta.

(CAL)—Herbarium of the Indian Botanic Garden (now known as Central National Herbarium), Howrah.