II. THE HOST
(Plate I, Figs. 1-3, Text-Fig. 1)

A. Distribution

*Diospyros embryopteris* Pers. is well known mainly as a tropical species and is widely distributed in both the hemispheres. In India, it is also found in the sub-himalayan tracts extending from the Jamna to the Tista valleys chiefly in the ravines and in shady places. It is common in all the states of India (Prain 1903). India, Ceylon and Burma have abound with such vegetation. A remarkable feature is that it is completely absent in the Eastern Himalayas (Text-Fig. 1). The flowering time of this plants lies between March to August (Sastri, 1952; Jane, 1956; Gamble, 1972).

B. Economic importance

It is also known as 'Ebony' tree for the production of reddish ebony coloured timber. This tree is also well reputed for its edible fruits. The pulp of the unripe fruit is used as gum for paying the seams of the boats in place of tar. The gum is also used in the fishing net for its anti-corroding effects. It is often used as an ornamental tree for its handsome lustrous foliage forming a green canopy and decorative fruits (Plate I, Fig. 1). The sapwood is of light colour, turning reddish brown on exposure. It can be dried easily, but not durable under shock resistance. The wood is valuable commercially but
according to Pearson and Brown (1932) belongs to lower category in comparison to other ebony timber.

C. Structure of the wood

In order to obtain a clear understanding about the relationship that exists between the pathogen and the host tissues a knowledge of the structure of the wood appears to be essential. The major peripheral portion of the sapwood which is moderately heavy, straight-grained, even, median in textured, yellowish brown to reddish brown in colour, and frequently streaked with dark zones. Longitudinally the heartwood is merely represented by a narrow, reddish black central cylinder (Gamble, 1972). Growth rings are wanting or scarcely indistinct, when present being delimited by somewhat denser fibrous tissues in their outer portions. The vessels are large, medium or small in diameter, the orifices of the larger vessels being scarcely visible to the naked eyes. The largest vessels are present in the central portion of the ring but sometimes in the outer zone. The smallest ones are only present, in the peripheral region of the ring and exhibiting no great variation in size. The paratracheal and metatracheal parenchyma are present in sparse, being restricted to a few cells which are mostly contiguous to tangential walls of the vessel. The metatracheal parenchyma are very abundant in parts being diffused through the fibrous tracts. They are in most part concentric, fine, close, and 1-3 (mostly 1) seriate. The fibres are semilibriform to libriform, more or less undulated, 4-8 seriate, alternating with narrow line of
zonate parenchyma, which are thick-walled, non-gelatinous, non-septate, bordered with small court and slit-like steeply oblique orifices. The lumina of the fibres are however, empty. The rays are very fine, often appearing as narrow whitish (crystals) lines which is found to be continuous with the vessels. Heterogenous crystals are found abundantly. Large, solitary and crystalliferous cells are present with little gum (Plate I, Figs. 2-3).

The entire wood is externally surrounded by a bark which is thin, grey or greyish black in colour becoming rough when old and exfoliating small scales.