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# Molecular Markers Linked with Sterility Mosaic Resistance in Pigeonpea (*Cajanus cajan* L. Millsp.)

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# ABSTRACT

Background: Pigeonpea is an important protein-rich legume and one of the potential crops for rainfed agriculture in many parts of the semi-arid tropics. Worldwide, India ranks first both in area and production. Despite that, the productivity levels in India are low because of various biotic and abiotic stresses, out of which Sterility mosaic disease (SMD), which is caused by Pigeonpea Sterility Mosaic Virus (PPSMV), is a severe constraint during crop production. In the context of the above facts, resistant breeding is one of the most economical and eco-friendly approaches. The present investigation aimed to identify microsatellite markers linked to SMD resistance and potential resistant genetic resources. In this field-laboratory investigation carried out during 2017-2018, thirty genotypes and susceptible check ICP 8863 were evaluated in a randomized block design (RBD) with two replications in SMD sick plots. Observations were recorded based on visual symptoms for SMD incidence, and percent disease incidence (PDI) was calculated. In addition, a molecular study for the same genotypes was carried out with a total of 20 SSR markers. Out of 20 SSR primers, only 16 were amplified, from which only a single SSR marker (AHSSR20) showed polymorphism while the remaining 15 were monomorphic. The marker AHSSR20 have the potential to discriminate resistant and susceptible genotypes. AHSSR 20 primer assign 160 bp bands in resistant genotypes viz., BDN-711, PT-04-281, and PT-704-1-2 while ever, 172 bp bands assign in susceptible genotypes viz. ICP-8863, PT-04-378, PT-012-20, and PT-016-3. Accordingly, we conclude that AHSSR20 is a potent marker that can be helpful to discriminate between susceptible and resistant genotypes and can be used for direct selection of resistant genotypes during early segregating generation and marker-assisted breeding.

Keywords: Pigeonpea, Sterility Mosaic, Molecular Marker, SSR, SMD, PDI.

# Introduction

Pigeonpea (Cajanus cajan L. Millsp.) is one of the

most important and potential legume crops for rainfed agriculture, particularly in the semi-arid tropics. It belongs to the sub-tribe *Cajaninae*, having a diploid genome with eleven pairs of chromosomes (2n = 2x = 22) and genome size around 833.07 Mbp (Greilhuber and Obermayer, 1998, Varshney et al., 2011). It is cultivated either as the sole crop or mixed with maize, sorghum, pearl millet, or with short duration legumes like groundnut in more than 25 tropical and sub-tropical countries. Pigeon pea plays an important role in food security, as a balanced diet, and in alleviating poverty because of its diverse usages as food, fodder, and fuel (Rao et al., 2002). Moreover, it is a versatile crop that is a rich source of protein (20-23%) and thus an important source of income for smallholder farmers. Also, it helps to improve soil fertility by naturally fixing atmospheric nitrogen. Globally, India ranks first both in the area under cultivation (5.06 Mha) and in production (3.29 Mt) (http://faostat3. fao.org/home/, as of August 2016). Pigeonpea is the second most important pulse crop next to chickpea in India. In India, during 2019-20 Pigeonpea cultivated over the area of 4.6 Mha and production of around 3.75 Mt with overall productivity of 751 kg/ha (Directorate of Economics and Statistics, 2020 a 3rd advance estimate). At a regional level, Maharashtra ranks second both in respect of area 1.21 Mha and production 0.68 Mt, which contribute to 25.33% and 19.09% of total Pigeonpea area and production in India, followed after Karnataka (1.52 Mha ha and 0.98 Mt) respectively (Directorate of Economics and Statistics, fourth advance estimate, 2018-19).

Despite a more extensive area under Pigeonpea in India, the production levels are low because of various biotic and abiotic stresses. Pigeonpea sterility mosaic virus (PPSMV) caused Sterility mosaic disease (SMD) (Kumar et al., 2000; Jones et al., 2004) is considered to be one of the significant biotic constraints in Pigeonpea cultivation. In India and Nepal, SMD accounts for economic losses of around >US\$ 300 million annually. The SMD virus belongs to the genus Emaravirus (Patil and Kumar, 2015) and is transmitted by an eriophyid mite (Aceriacajani, Channabasavanna) (Kulkarni et al., 2002). The characteristic symptoms like the bushy and pale green appearance of plants followed by a reduction in size, increase in the number of secondary branches, and mosaic mottling of leaves during disease development and finally results in a partial or complete cessation of reproductive structures. In some cases, only part of the plant may show symptoms, while other parts may remain unaffected (Kumar et al., 2003).

Among the critical diseases, sterility mosaic disease (SMD) is considered one of the most destructive diseases of Pigeonpea in India and can cause yield loss of up to 95 percent (Reddy and Nene, 1981; Kannaiyan *et al.*, 1984). The development of resistant varieties seems to be quite tricky and complicated because of the genetic plasticity of the pathogen. So, because of such a dynamic nature of the SMD pathogen, there is a need to use strain-specific sources of resistance in crop improvement. Therefore, to develop resistant lines or varieties, there is a need to focus on identifying strain-specific sources of resistance. Also, disease inheritance patterns should be studied for a better understanding.

To reduce crop losses, development for resistant varieties is considered one of the most effective and economical methods that have received top priority as Pigeonpea is a long-duration crop and has an out crossing nature, which creates a problem to screen varieties and breeding populations for SMD resistance. Identification of molecular markers linked to sterility mosaic disease allows screening of cultivars and segregating generations at the seedling stage, which reduces the time and efforts for maintaining virulent isolates of the pathogen and; subsequently, the potential marker can be used in marker-assisted selection. However, due to the scarcity of markers linked to SMD resistance, there is a need to identify tightly linked markers in different Pigeonpea genotypes before applying these markers for marker-assisted selection (MAS) of SMD resistance breeding. In this study, we used 20 molecular markers that screened with thirty-one genotypes to identify a linked marker for SMD resistance and the SMD resistant genotypes in Pigeopea breeding programs.

#### Materials and Methods

#### **Plant materials**

For the present investigation, a set of 31 Pigeonpea genotypes, including one susceptible check obtained from the Pulses Improvement Project, MPKV, Rahuri, was used for the study (Table 1). The experiment was laid in a randomized block design with two replications in SMD sick plots at Pulses Improvement Project, MPKV, Rahuri during *Kharif*, 2017. The gross plot size was taken up as 5 m X 3 m. In each replication, the genotypes were grown in 3 m long rows with 60 × 20 cm spacing for a row to row and plant to plant, respectively. Within a row,

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Sr.	Genotype	PDI	Arcsine	Value
No.		(%)	Transformed	Remark
1	ICP-8863 (Check)	33.67	35.47	S
2	PT-0012	28.17	39.91	MR
3	BDN-716	27.27	31.4	MR
4	PT-04-378	31.81	34.33	S
5	PT-705-4-1-2	16.66	24.09	MR
6	ICP-2376	16	23.57	MR
7	Vipula	22.22	28.12	MR
8	ICPL-87	11.54	12.93	MR
9	BDN-711	9.67	18.12	R
10	PT-723-1-2-3	19.35	26.1	MR
11	PT-04-281	9.09	17.54	R
12	PT-704-1-2	9.52	17.97	R
13	PT-711-1-2	18.18	25.23	MR
14	PT-04-111	13.8	21.88	MR
15	PT-04-146-1-2	11.4	19.75	MR
16	PT-04-175	14.28	22.20	MR
17	PT-04-360-1	26.92	31.25	MR
18	PT-04-104-1	25	30.02	MR
19	PT-03-129-2	12.5	20.70	MR
20	PT-012-1	13.79	21.80	MR
21	PT-012-9	16	23.57	MR
22	PT-012-10	21.73	27.79	MR
23	PT-012-11	13.79	21.80	MR
24	PT-012-12	27.27	31.48	MR
25	PT-012-16	19.04	25.87	MR
26	PT-012-20	45.83	42.60	S
27	PT-012-23	24	29.33	MR
28	PT-012-21	23.80	29.20	MR
29	PT-012-27	20	26.56	MR
30	PT-012-22	40.90	39.76	S
31	PT-016-3	30.77	33.69	S

 Table 1. Sterility Mosaic Percent Disease Incidence (PDI)
 of different Pigeonpea Genotypes

seeds were hand dibbled at 20 cm apart. Genotype ICP-8863 (Maruti) was placed after every five genotypes as SMD susceptible check. A standard package of practices was followed during the experiment to raise the crop.

#### **Field evaluations**

Screening of genotypes was performed by following the "Leaf Stapling Technique" (Nene and Reddy, 1981). The test entries were phenotyped for resistance to Banglore SMD isolate at Pulse Improvement Project, Rahuri (Sharma *et al.*, 2015). At the 2-3 leat stage of the test entries, each of the two primary leaves of the test seedlings was stapled with one or two SMD infected leaves. When the stapled leaflets from the infected plants get dried, mites from the infected leaves migrate to healthy leaves and inoculate the virus. Incidence of SMD was observed at 15 days intervals up to 75 days done by counting the healthy plants (no mosaic symptoms) and diseased plants (with mosaic symptoms), and scoring was done as per the scale followed in the All India Co-Ordinated Research Project on Pigeonpea for sterility mosaic. The plants were characterized as resistant (0–10% of plants infected), moderately resistant (10.1–30% of plants infected) and susceptible (> 30.1% of plants infected). The percent disease incidence was calculated, and the genotypes were grouped according to disease reaction (Table 2).

#### Extraction and purification of genomic DNA

DNA was extracted from individual plants from the experiment conducted in SMD sick plot. Leaves from 3-4 weeks old plants were collected from the field, sterilized with 70 percent alcohol, and frozen in liquid nitrogen. The leaf samples were stored at – 80 °C until further use. The genomic DNA was extracted following the standard CTAB method (Krishna and Jawali, 1997) with minor modifications.

#### **PCR** Amplification

In the present investigation, a set of twenty SSR primer pairs were used to identify whether these markers are linked to SMD resistance. The primers were selected based on previous studies on SMD resistance in Pigeonpea. The sequence of primers was compiled from the literature and synthesized by Custom Oligo Synthesis Division, Merck Specialties Pvt. Ltd., Bangalore. The details of the SSR primers used in the present investigation are given in Table 3.

The Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) reaction was carried in a 0.2 ml sterile thin-wall PCR tube, and the following components were mixed as each tube (20 µl) consisting 2 µl 50 ng/µl DNA template, 2 pmol of primer, 1.2 µlof 25 mM MgCl<sub>2</sub>, 1.6 µl of 10 mM (2.5mM each) dNTPs mix, 0.2 µl of Genei *Taq* DNA polymerase 5U/µl and 11µl sterilized distilled water.

The PCR reaction was performed in a Korbett Research master cycler in a 96 well plate. Temperature cycling was done by the "Touchdown" method (Mellersh and Sampson, 1993). In touch-down PCR, the amplification of the non-specific sequences can be avoided by adapting high annealing temperature during the earliest steps of a touchdown polymerase chain reaction cycle. Therefore, a touchdown PCR

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PDI (%)	Reaction	Genotypes
0-10	Resistant (3)	BDN-711, PT-04-281, PT-7041-2
10.1-30	Moderately Resistant (23)	PT-0012, BDN-716, PT-705-4-1-2, ICP-2376, Vipula, ICPL-87, PT-723-1-2-3, PT-711-1-2, PT-04-111, PT-04-146-1-2, PT-04-146-1-2, PT-04-175, PT-04-360-1, PT-04-104-1, PT-03-129-2, PT-012-1, PT-012-9, PT-012-10, PT-012-11, PT-012-16, PT-012-23, PT-012-21, PT-012-27
30.1-100	Susceptible (4)	PT-04-378, PT-012-20, PT-012-22, PT-016-3

Table 2. Classification of Pigeonpea genotypes based on PDI (%)

Table 3. List of genic SSR primers used in the present investigation for marker-trait association

Sr. No.	SSR marker	Primer	Sequence (5'-3')	Ta (%C)	Reference
1	CcM0416	F	AAATTTAAAAATACTCATGTCGAAGAA	54	B. N. Ganesh., et al.(2011)
2	$C \sim M0469$	K E		E6	P N Canach <i>et al</i> (2011)
Ζ	CCIVI0400	Г D		36	B. IN. Ganesh., <i>et ut</i> .(2011)
3	$C_{c}M0588$	F		55	B N Capesh et al (2011)
5	CCIVI0500	R		55	D. 14. Gallesil., <i>et ut</i> .(2011)
4	$C_{c}M0970$	F	ΤΤΑ Α Α ΑΤΟ Α Ο ΑΤΟ ΤΤΑ Ο Ο Α Α Α Ο ΑΤΑ Α Α	55	B N Capesh et al (2011)
т	CCIVIO//O	R	ΔCGΔCΔTΔCGTTCCΔΔΔΔTTGΔ	55	D. 14. Gallesil., <i>et ut</i> .(2011)
5	CcM1447	F	CTTTCCACGGTCCAGTCAAT	56	B N Ganesh et al (2011)
0	Celvii+	R	TCCATTTGACATGTAAACAATGAAC	50	D. 14. Galicsii, <i>et ut</i> .(2011)
6	CcM1825	F	TGAAGTTGGCGGAAAAACAT	56	B N Ganesh <i>et al</i> (2011)
0	0000020	R	TCGGACGAAAAACATACTTGC	00	2011) Suitebili, et un (2011)
7	CcM1895	F	GAGGAGAGGAGGCAGAGGT	56	B. N. Ganesh., <i>et al.</i> (2011)
-		R	GTGTCCAGGATTGTAGGGGA		
8	CcM1982	F	TATCAAACCTGGCGATCACA	54	B. N. Ganesh., et al. (2011)
-		R	ATTCCGCAAACACATCACAA		, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,
9	CcM2149	F	TGTACAGGGCTGTAGGTTCG	53	B. N. Ganesh., et al. (2011)
		R	TCATTTTGACCCTTTTTAGATTCC		
10	CcM2337	F	TTGTGATAATTTTATATGTGGAAACG	55	B. N. Ganesh <i>et al.</i> (2011)
		R	GGACCCAGCAAGAAATTTGA		
11	CcM2485	F	TGTAGAACATGAGTTATTGAACGGA	57	B. N. Ganesh <i>et al.</i> (2011)
		R	ATTGGGTCCCAGTTTGATTG		
12	CcM2781	F	TCGTAGTCAAACCAAATCCCT	56	B. N. Ganesh <i>et al.</i> (2011)
		R	AAAGTGATTCATCCATAAAAAGTTTG		
13	AHSSR20	F	AATGTTCTATTGTTTTACGAGTG	55	P. Patil <i>et al.</i> (2016)
		R	AATTTCTCGTGTGATTGTGAT		
14	AHSSR34	F	TCTTGAGTAAGTGAACATTCAAA	54	P. Patil <i>et al.</i> (2016)
		R	GGTGAAACTCAACTCAACACT		
15	AHSSR50	F	AGTTTTTGTGTTTTCAACCTG	55	P. Patil <i>et al.</i> (2016)
		R	GAGCAAATAATCATTCAAACAC		
16	Ccac036	F	ATCGGCTTTTGTCTTGATGA	53	R.K. Saxena, et al. (2009)
		R	AAGCTACAAGGGATACACATGC		
17	CcB10	F	CCTTCTTAAGGTGAAATGCAAGC	56	R. K. Saxena <i>, et al.</i> (2009)
		R	CATAACAATAAAAGACCTTGAATGC		
18	CCttc006	F	GTAGAGGAGGTTCCAAATGACATA	52	R. K. Saxena <i>et al.</i> (2009)
		R	ATCTGTCTGGTGTTTTAGTGTGCT		
19	CCttc008	F	TCACAGAGGACCACACGAAG	55	R. K. Saxena <i>et al.</i> (2009)
-	~~ ~~	R	TGGACTAGACATTGCGTGAAG		
20	CCttc033	F	AAATTTAAAAATACTCATGTCGAAGAA	56	R.K. Saxena <i>et al.</i> (2009)
		R	CCGTGAGTGTTAATGGACTAATATG		

profile with 4 min initial denaturation cycle followed by first five cycles of 94  $^{\circ}$ C for 30 secs, 60  $^{\circ}$ C for 30 secs, 72  $^{\circ}$ C for 30 secs with 1  $^{\circ}$ C decrease in annealing temperature depends upon Tm of primer for 30sec and 72  $^{\circ}$ C for 30 sec followed by final extension for 20 min at 72  $^{\circ}$ C were adopted.

#### Agarose gel electrophoresis

The amplified PCR products were checked on 1.2% agarose gel. The amplified product was fractionated using capillary electrophoresis. Allele sizing of electrophoretic data was obtained from the UV trans-illuminator/ Gel documentation unit (KODAK Molecular Imaging Software with a TWAIN Device).

#### **Results and Discussion**

#### **Identification of Resistant Genotypes**

The observations were recorded on SMD incidence in each plant from 15 DAS to 75 DAS. The per cent disease incidence was calculated based on morphological symptoms, and genotypes were grouped according to a standard scale for PDI into the susceptible, moderately resistant, and resistant categories. In this investigation, out of 30 genotypes along with check ICP 8863, the total genotypes were categorized as 3 (10%) resistant (R), 23 (76.66%) moderately resistant (MR), and 4 (13.33%) susceptible (S).

Out of thirty genotypes, only three genotypes viz., BDN-711, PT-04-281, and PT-7041-2 showed resistance to SMD. A similar kind of results was reported in earlier studies where 52 AICRP Pigeonpea genotypes and checks were screened for SMD, and out of that, only eight entries viz. ICPL-87119, ICPL-2376, BDN-2, PT-4-307, CORG-9701, BSMR-736, GRG-811, and BSMR-853 were resistant entries (Bhaskar, 2016). In the past study, 61 Hyderabad accessions were tested against SMD, only two entries viz. ICPL99095 and ICP7035 showed a resistant reaction, and only a single entry ICPL20123 showed moderately immune response while the rest of the entries were showed susceptible responses (Prabhavathi et al., 2018). Therefore, genotypes (BDN-711, PT-04-281, and PT-7041-2) screened out in the present study can be used as a potent source of SMD resistance in future hybridization programs. From the observations, it was clear that many plants were classified into moderately resistant and susceptible groups. While only a few plants were classified into the resistant group. It indicates a need to find the more potent source for SMD resistance as there is the involvement of a large number of segregating genes, with the majority of them having increasing effects.

#### Molecular analysis

Agarose gel electrophoresis showed polymorphism in the DNA banding pattern. Out of 20 SSR primers, only 16were amplified, and only a single primer (AHSSR20) showed polymorphism while the remaining 15 were monomorphic. The size of the amplified product ranged from 91-389 bp (Table 4). Similar reports were also reported where 32 Pigeonpea accessions were screened with 30 microsatellite markers; out of that 23 showed polymorphism (Saxena *et al.*, 2009).

The marker profile of AHSSR 20 was helpful to

 
 Table 4. Details of the SSR primers used for amplification of genomic DNA of Pigeonpea

Sr. No.	Particulars	Observation
1.	Total number of primers used	20
2.	Number of primers amplified DNA	16
3.	Total number of polymorphic markers	1
4.	Percentage of polymorphic markers	6.25%
5.	Size of the amplified product range	91-389 bp

differentiate between SMD susceptible and resistant genotypes. Among the primers, the only primer AHSSR20 was found linked to SMD resistance in Pigeonpea. Only one SSR marker, i.e. AHSSR20 amplified PCR product of 160 bp in resistant genotypes viz., BDN-711, PT-04-281, and 172 bp present in susceptible genotypes viz.ICP-8863, PT-04-378, PT-012-20, PT-016-3 (Fig.1) may be useful for a marker-trait association for SMD resistance in studied genotypes. Rest markers were not able to distinguish the resistant and susceptible genotypes. The Primer AHSSR20 shows a good variation between resistance and susceptible genotypes.

In some genotypes (ICPL-87, PT-012-12, and PT-012-16), both bands were reported which shown moderate resistance based on PDI, which are in agreement with earlier studies where it was reported that dominant genes govern susceptibility, while resistance under recessive gene control (Nagraj *et al.* 2004 and Ganapathy *et al.*, 2009).

In the present investigation, the information obtained from the molecular profile of AHSSR 20 correlates with field data as that of field PDI data and



Fig. 1. SSR primer AHSSR20 based DNA polymorphism of Pigeonpea genotype

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Lane	Genotypes	Lane	Genotypes
1	PT-0012	16	PT-04-175
2	BDN-716	17	PT-04-360-1
3	PT-04-378	18	PT-04-104-1
4	PT-705-4-1-2	19	PT-03-129-2
5	ICP-8863 (Check)	20	PT-012-1
6	ICP-2376	21	PT-012-9
7	Vipula	22	PT-012-10
8	ICPL-87	23	PT-012-11
9	BDN-711	24	PT-012-12
10	PT-723-1-2-3	25	PT-012-16
11	PT-04-281	26	PT-012-20
12	PT-704-1-2	27	PT-012-23
13	PT-711-1-2	28	PT-012-21
14	PT-04-111	29	PT-012-27
15	PT-04-146-1-2	30	PT-012-22
		31	PT-016-3

marker profile had shownnearly similar pattern to discriminate lines for resistance and valuable in the identification of susceptible and resistant lines. So AHSSR20 needs to be validated through Bulk Segregant Analysis (BSA) or Single Marker Analysis (SMA) by using proper mapping populations like RIL or NIL, and after that, it can be used in the future breeding program for transferring SMD resistant gene/QTL to susceptible lines through markerassisted breeding.

In the previous study, based on the similarity coefficient for inter-genotype, seven genotypes were clustered into different groups with the help of 61 SSR markers which segregate genotypes clearly as resistant and susceptible categories. This study supports the potential application of microsatellite markers in the differentiation of genotypes with a contrasting expression for response to Pigeonpea sterility mosaic disease infection. They had reported thirteen out of 46 polymorphic markers like CCttc003, CCttc006, CCttc008, CCat011, CCtc012, CCttc033, CCac036, ICPM1D10, ICPM1E04, ICPM1H01, ICPM2B08, PB1, and PB12 could be helpful in discrimination of SMD resistant and susceptible genotypes into different groups (Naik *et al.* 2012).

Cultivated Pigeonpea is understood to possess shallow genetic diversity exhibited at the DNA level(Yang *et al.*, 2006). Hence, it is vital to generate additional genomic resources, especially SSR and SNP markers, for their utilization in molecular breeding. Identifying DNA markers linked to important traits such as Fusarium wilt, SMD, submergence, and drought tolerance will go a long way in the Pigeonpea improvement. Most of these traits remain to be studied in detail for their inheritance and trait governance. Reasonably often, not breeders/researchers develop mapping populations involving parents contrasting for the trait(s) targeted for mapping without considering their polymorphism level.

#### Conclusion

The present study was conducted with objectives, identification of molecular markers linked with SMD resistance and potential resistant genotypes. In the present study, 30 genotypes and a susceptible check were screened with 20 microsatellite markers. Out of the 20, SSRs used, only 16 get amplified, while the single SSR (AHSSR 20) was polymorphic. Therefore, it can be effectively used to characterise Pigeonpea genotypes for SMD resistance and susceptibility. Out of thirty genotypes, only three viz., BDN-711, PT-04-281, and PT-704-1-2 were identified as resistant to SMD based on a single SSR (AHSSR 20) amplified product of 160bp. Conclusively, AHSSR 20 marker will be helpful for direct selection of resistant Pigeonpea genotypes in early segregating generations and marker-assisted backcross breeding for SMD resistance.

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## Author'S Contribution

N.S. Kute and P.L. Kulwal designed the experiments. K.G. Kandarkar conducted an investigation involved in genotyping and field screening. K.S. Raghuwanshi helped in data analysis for screening. K.G. Kandarkar and S. A. Tajnewrote the paper. N.S. Kute and P.L. Kulwal reviewed the manuscript. All authors read and approved the manuscript.

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