

A Class of Projectively Flat Spherically Symmetric Finsler Metrics

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Abstract In this paper, we study spherically symmetric Finsler metrics. Analyzing the solution of the projectively flat equation, we construct a new class of projectively flat Finsler metrics.

Keywords projectively flat; Finsler metric; spherically symmetric

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1. Introduction

It is an important problem in Finsler geometry to study and characterize projectively flat Finsler metrics on an open domain in \mathbb{R}^m . Hilbert's 4th Problem is to characterize the distance functions on an open subset in \mathbb{R}^m such that straight lines are geodesics [5]. Regular distance functions with straight geodesics are projectively flat Finsler metrics. A Finsler metric $F = F(x, y)$ on an open subset $U \subset \mathbb{R}^m$ is projectively flat if and only if it satisfies the following equation:

$$F_{x^i y^j} y^j = F_{x^i}. \quad (1.1)$$

Shen discussed the classification problem on projective Finsler metrics of constant flag curvature [14], the first author provided the projective factor of a class of projectively flat general (α, β) -metrics [12] and studied a necessary and sufficient condition for a class of Finsler metric to be projectively flat [13]. Li proved that locally projectively flat Finsler metrics with constant flag curvature \mathbf{K} are totally determined by their behaviors at the origin by solving some nonlinear PDEs. The classifications when $\mathbf{K} = 0$, $\mathbf{K} = -1$, $\mathbf{K} = 1$ are given in an algebraic way [15].

On the other hand, the study of spherically symmetric Finsler metrics has attracted a lot of attentions. Many known Finsler metrics are spherically symmetric [1,4,7,14,15]. A Finsler metric F is said to be spherically symmetric (orthogonally invariant in an alternative terminology in [6]) if F satisfies

$$F(Ax, Ay) = F(x, y) \quad (1.2)$$

for all $A \in O(m)$, equivalently, if the orthogonal group $O(m)$ acts as isometrics of F . Such metrics were first introduced by Rutz [16].

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It was pointed out in [6] that a Finsler metric F on $\mathbb{B}^m(\mu)$ is a spherically symmetric if and only if there is a function $\phi : [0, \mu) \times \mathbb{R} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ such that

$$F(x, y) = |y| \phi(|x|, \frac{\langle x, y \rangle}{|y|}) \tag{1.3}$$

where $(x, y) \in T\mathbb{R}^m(\mu) \setminus \{0\}$. Additionally, the spherically symmetric Finsler metric of the form (1.3) can be rewritten as the following form [8]

$$F = |y| \phi(\frac{|x|^2}{2}, \frac{\langle x, y \rangle}{|y|}).$$

Spherically symmetric Finsler metrics are the simplest and most important general (α, β) -metrics [4]. Mo, Zhou and Zhu classified the projective spherically symmetric Finsler metrics with constant flag curvature in [2, 9, 10]. A lot of spherically symmetric Finsler metrics with nice curvature properties had been investigated by Mo, Huang and et al [3, 6–11].

An important example of non-Riemannian projectively flat Finsler metrics is the Funk metric

$$\Theta = \frac{\sqrt{(1 - |x|^2) |y|^2 + \langle x, y \rangle^2}}{1 - |x|^2} + \frac{\langle x, y \rangle}{1 - |x|^2} \tag{1.4}$$

on the unit ball $\mathbb{B}^m(1)$ where $y \in T_x\mathbb{B}^m \subset \mathbb{R}^m$. Here $|\cdot|$ and $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$ denote the standard Euclidean norm and inner product respectively. By simple calculation, the Funk metric Θ could also be expressed in the form $\Theta = \Theta_1 + \Theta_2$, where

$$\Theta_1 = |y| h(t)s, \quad \Theta_2 = |y| \sqrt{g(t) + g'(t)s^2}$$

where

$$g(t) = h(t) = \frac{1}{1 - 2t}, \quad t = \frac{|x|^2}{2}, \quad s = \frac{\langle x, y \rangle}{|y|}.$$

We can verify that Θ_1 and Θ_2 satisfy (1.1) by direct calculations. It is easy to see that if Θ_1 and Θ_2 satisfy (1.1), then $a\Theta_1 + b\Theta_2$ is also a solution of (1.1) where a, b are non-negative constants.

Inspired by the above statements, we try to find the solutions of the projectively flat Eq. (1.1) in the following forms:

$$F = |y| \phi(\frac{|x|^2}{2}, \frac{\langle x, y \rangle}{|y|}),$$

$$\phi(\frac{|x|^2}{2}, \frac{\langle x, y \rangle}{|y|}) = \sum_{i=0}^n \phi_i(\frac{|x|^2}{2}) \frac{\langle x, y \rangle^i}{|y|^i} + \sum_{r \neq 0,1} [\sum_{j=0}^l \phi_j(\frac{|x|^2}{2}) \frac{\langle x, y \rangle^j}{|y|^j}]^{\frac{1}{r}}.$$

Through calculations, we have the following conclusion:

Theorem 1.1 *Let $\phi(t, s)$ be a function defined by*

$$\begin{aligned} \phi(t, s) = & \phi_0(t) + \phi_1(t)s + \frac{1}{2}\phi'_0(t)s^2 + \sum_{j=2}^n (-1)^{j-1} \frac{(2j-3)!!}{(2j)!} \phi_0^{(j)}(t)s^{2j} + \\ & b \sum_{r \neq 0,1} (h_0(t) + \frac{1}{2}h'_0(t)s^2)^{\frac{1}{r}}, \quad n \in \{1, 2, \dots\}, \quad r \in Z \end{aligned}$$

where b, C_1, C_2 are constants and h_0 is a differentiable function which satisfies

$$h_0(t) = \left(\frac{r}{-3C_1tr + 4C_1t - 3C_2r + 4C_2} \right)^{\frac{r}{3r-4}}$$

and ϕ_1 is any continuous function, ϕ_0 is a polynomial function of degree N where $N \leq n$ which satisfies

$$\begin{aligned} & \phi_0(t) + \phi_0'(t) \left(t - \frac{3}{2} s^2 \right) + \sum_{j=2}^n (-1)^{j-1} \frac{(2j-3)!!}{(2j-2)!} \phi_0^{(j)}(t) s^{2j-2} \left(t - s^2 \frac{1+2j}{2j} \right) + \\ & b \sum_{r \neq 0,1} \left(h_0(t) + \frac{1}{2} h_0'(t) s^2 \right)^{\frac{1}{r}-2} \left(h_0^2(t) + \frac{h_0(t)h_0'(t)}{r} t \right) + \\ & b \sum_{r \neq 0,1} \left(h_0(t) + \frac{1}{2} h_0'(t) s^2 \right)^{\frac{1}{r}-2} \left(\frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{r} \right) s^2. \\ & [2h_0(t)h_0'(t) + (h_0'(t))^2 s^2 \left(\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{r} \right) - \frac{(h_0'(t))^2}{r} t] > 0 \end{aligned} \tag{1.5}$$

when $m = 2$. Moreover, the additional inequality holds

$$\begin{aligned} & \phi_0(t) - \frac{1}{2} \phi_0'(t) + \sum_{j=2}^n (-1)^{j-1} \frac{(2j-3)!!}{(2j-1)!} \phi_0^{(j)}(t) s^{2j} \left(\frac{1}{2j} - 1 \right) + \\ & b \sum_{r \neq 0,1} \left(h_0(t) + \frac{1}{2} h_0'(t) s^2 \right)^{\frac{1}{r}-1} \left[h_0(t) + \left(\frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{r} \right) h_0'(t) s^2 \right] > 0 \end{aligned} \tag{1.6}$$

when $m \geq 3$. $\phi_0^{(j)}$ denotes the j -order derivative for $\phi_0(t)$ and then the following spherically symmetric Finsler metric on $\mathbb{B}^m(\mu)$, $F = |y| \phi \left(\frac{|x|^2}{2}, \frac{\langle x, y \rangle}{|y|} \right)$ is projectively flat.

Remark 1.2 Let us take a look at a special case, namely when $b = 1, n = m = 2$. After setting $\phi_0(t) = 0, \phi_1(t) = h_0(t) = \frac{1}{1-2t}$, we obtain the Funk metric.

2. Solutions of the PDE

In this section, we are going to construct a lot of projectively flat Finsler metrics which contain the Funk metric. From [8], we have the following lemma.

Lemma 2.1 Let $F = |y| \phi \left(\frac{|x|^2}{2}, \frac{\langle x, y \rangle}{|y|} \right)$ be a spherically symmetric Finsler metric on $\mathbb{B}^m(\mu)$. F is projectively flat if and only if ϕ satisfies

$$s\phi_{ts} + \phi_{ss} - \phi_t = 0 \tag{2.1}$$

where $t = \frac{|x|^2}{2}$ and $s = \frac{\langle x, y \rangle}{|y|}$.

Consider the spherically symmetric Finsler metric $F = |y| \phi \left(\frac{|x|^2}{2}, \frac{\langle x, y \rangle}{|y|} \right)$ on $\mathbb{B}^m(\mu)$ where $\phi = \phi(t, s)$ is given by $\phi(t, s) = \sum_{j=0}^l \phi_j(t) s^j$. By a direct calculation we get

$$\phi_t(t, s) = \sum_{j=0}^l \phi_j'(t) s^j, \tag{2.2}$$

$$\phi_{ts}(t, s) = \sum_{j=0}^l j\phi'_j(t)s^{j-1}, \quad (2.3)$$

$$\phi_{ss}(t, s) = \sum_{j=0}^l j(j-1)\phi_j(t)s^{j-2}. \quad (2.4)$$

Substituting (2.2), (2.3) and (2.4) into (2.1) yields the following equation

$$\sum_{j=0}^l (j-1)\phi'_j(t)s^j + \sum_{j=0}^{l-2} (j+2)(j+1)\phi_{j+2}(t)s^j = 0, \quad (2.5)$$

which is equivalent to

$$\sum_{j=0}^{l-2} [(j-1)\phi'_j(t) + (j+2)(j+1)\phi_{j+2}(t)]s^j + \sum_{j=l-1}^l (j-1)\phi'_j(t)s^j = 0. \quad (2.6)$$

By (2.6), $F = |y| \phi\left(\frac{|x|^2}{2}, \frac{\langle x, y \rangle}{|y|}\right)$ is projectively flat if and only if

$$\begin{cases} (j-1)\phi'_j(t) + (j+2)(j+1)\phi_{j+2}(t) = 0, & j = 0, 1, 2, \dots, l-2, \\ (j-1)\phi'_j(t) = 0, & j = l-1, l. \end{cases} \quad (2.7)$$

When $j = 0$, from the first equation of (2.7) we get

$$\phi'_0(t) = 2\phi_2(t). \quad (2.8)$$

Similarly, taking $j = 1$ and $j = 2$ gives

$$\phi_3(t) = 0, \quad \phi'_2(t) + 12\phi_4(t) = 0. \quad (2.9)$$

If $k = j + 2$, the first equation of (2.7) is equivalent to

$$k(k-1)\phi_k(t) + (k-3)\phi'_{k-2}(t) = 0. \quad (2.10)$$

It is easy to see the recurrence formula on $\phi_k(t)$ and $\phi'_k(t)$ satisfies

$$\phi_k(t) = -\frac{k-3}{k(k-1)}\phi'_{k-2}(t). \quad (2.11)$$

If $k = \text{odd}$, $k \geq 3$, then by (2.11) we have

$$\phi_k(t) = (-1)^{\frac{k-3}{2}} \frac{(k-3)(k-5)\cdots 2}{k(k-1)\cdots 4} \phi_3^{(\frac{k-3}{2})}(t) = 0. \quad (2.12)$$

If $k = \text{even}$, $k \geq 4$, then we have

$$\phi_k(t) = (-1)^{\frac{k-4}{2}} \frac{24(k-3)!!}{k!} \phi_4^{(\frac{k-4}{2})}(t) = (-1)^{\frac{k-2}{2}} \frac{(k-3)!!}{k!} \phi_0^{(\frac{k}{2})}(t). \quad (2.13)$$

Then we discuss (2.13) in two different cases.

Case 1 If $k = \text{odd} \geq 5$, setting $l = 2n + 1$, by the second equation of (2.7) we have

$$\phi_{2n+1}(t) = 0, \quad \phi_{2n}(t) = \text{constant}. \quad (2.14)$$

From (2.1), (2.12), (2.13), (2.14) we have

$$\phi(t, s) = \phi_0(t) + \phi_1(t)s + \phi_2(t)s^2 + \cdots + \phi_{2n-1}(t)s^{2n-1} + \phi_{2n}(t)s^{2n} + \phi_{2n+1}(t)s^{2n+1}$$

$$= \phi_0(t) + \phi_1(t)s + \frac{1}{2}\phi_0'(t)s^2 + \sum_{j=2}^n (-1)^{j-1} \frac{(2j-3)!!}{(2j)!} \phi_0^{(j)}(t)s^{2j}. \tag{2.15}$$

Case 2 If $k = \text{even} \geq 4$, setting $l = 2n + 2$, by the second equation of (2.7) we have

$$\phi_{2n+2}(t) = \text{constant}, \quad \phi_{2n+1}(t) = 0. \tag{2.16}$$

From (2.1), (2.12), (2.13), (2.16) we have

$$\phi(t, s) = \phi_0(t) + \phi_1(t)s + \frac{1}{2}\phi_0'(t)s^2 + \sum_{j=1}^n (-1)^j \frac{(2j-1)!!}{(2j+2)!} \phi_0^{(j+1)}(t)s^{2j+2}. \tag{2.17}$$

The case $l \in \{1, 2, 3\}$ is similar. Through the above analysis, we obtain the following proposition.

Proposition 2.2 Let $F = |y| \phi(\frac{|x|^2}{2}, \frac{\langle x, y \rangle}{|y|})$ be a spherically symmetric Finsler metric on $\mathbb{B}^m(\mu)$. $F = |y| \phi(\frac{|x|^2}{2}, \frac{\langle x, y \rangle}{|y|})$ in the form $F = |y| \sum_{j=0}^l \phi_j(t)s^j$ is a solution of the projectively flat Eq.(2.1) if and only if $\phi(t, s)$ satisfies

$$\begin{aligned} \phi(t, s) &= \phi_0(t) + \phi_1(t)s + \phi_2(t)s^2 + \dots + \phi_l(t)s^l \\ &= \phi_0(t) + \phi_1(t)s + \frac{1}{2}\phi_0'(t)s^2 + \sum_{j=2}^n (-1)^{j-1} \frac{(2j-3)!!}{(2j)!} \phi_0^{(j)}(t)s^{2j} \end{aligned}$$

and $\phi_0^{(n)} = \text{constant}$.

If the solution of (2.1) has the following form

$$\phi(t, s) = \left(\sum_{j=0}^l h_j(t)s^j \right)^{\frac{1}{r}}, \quad h_l \neq 0, \quad r \in Z - \{0, 1\}, \tag{2.18}$$

we have

$$r\phi^{r-1}\phi_t = \sum_{j=0}^l h_j'(t)s^j, \tag{2.19}$$

$$r\phi^{r-1}\phi_s = \sum_{j=0}^l jh_j(t)s^{j-1}, \tag{2.20}$$

$$r(r-1)\phi^{r-2}\phi_s\phi_t + r\phi^{r-1}\phi_{ts} = \sum_{j=0}^l jh_j'(t)s^{j-1}. \tag{2.21}$$

Putting together (2.19), (2.20), (2.21), we have

$$\begin{aligned} r\phi^{2r-1}\phi_{ts} &= \phi^r \sum_{j=0}^l jh_j'(t)s^{j-1} - \left(1 - \frac{1}{r}\right) \left(\sum_{j=0}^l h_j'(t)s^j\right) \left(\sum_{i=0}^l ih_i(t)s^{i-1}\right) \\ &= \left(\sum_{i=0}^l h_i(t)s^i\right) \left(\sum_{j=0}^l jh_j'(t)s^{j-1}\right) - \left(1 - \frac{1}{r}\right) \left(\sum_{j=0}^l h_j'(t)s^j\right) \left(\sum_{i=0}^l ih_i(t)s^{i-1}\right) \\ &= \sum_{k=1}^{2l} \sum_{i+j=k} \left[j - \left(1 - \frac{1}{r}\right)i\right] h_i(t)h_j'(t)s^{k-1}, \end{aligned} \tag{2.22}$$

here we used the following lemma.

Here we focus on a special case $l = 2$ and $h_1(t) = 0$, then

$$\begin{cases} h_0(t)h'_0(t) - 2h_0(t)h_2(t) = 0, \\ h_0(t)h'_2(t) + (-2 + \frac{4}{r})h_2^2(t) + (-3 + \frac{2}{r})h_2(t)h'_0(t) = 0. \end{cases} \quad (2.26)$$

From the first equation of (2.26), we know $h_0(t) = 0$ or $h'_0(t) = 2h_2(t)$. If $h_0(t) = 0$, then $\phi(t, s) = 0$, thus we consider $h'_0(t) = 2h_2(t)$. In this situation we have

$$\phi(t, s) = (h_0(t) + \frac{1}{2}h'_0(t)s^2)^{\frac{1}{r}} \quad (2.27)$$

and from the second equation of (2.26), we know that $h_0(t)$ satisfies

$$\frac{1}{2}h_0(t)h''_0(t) + (-2 + \frac{2}{r})(h'_0(t))^2 = 0. \quad (2.28)$$

The general solution $h_0(t)$ of (2.28) is given by

$$h_0(t) = (\frac{r}{-3C_1tr + 4C_1t - 3C_2r + 4C_2})^{\frac{r}{3r-4}} \quad (2.29)$$

where C_1, C_2 are constants. Combining Proposition 2.2, (2.27) and (2.29), we have the following proposition by applying the fundamental property of projectively flat equation.

Proposition 2.4 *Let $F = |y| \phi(\frac{|x|^2}{2}, \frac{\langle x, y \rangle}{|y|})$ be a spherically symmetric Finsler metric on $\mathbb{B}^m(\mu)$. $\phi(t, s) = \sum_{i=0}^n \phi_i(t)s^i + \sum_{r \neq 0,1} (\sum_{j=0}^l h_j(t)s^j)^{\frac{1}{r}}$ is a solution of the projectively flat Eq. (2.1) if and only if*

$$\phi(t, s) = \phi_0(t) + \phi_1(t)s + \frac{1}{2}\phi'_0(t)s^2 + \sum_{j=2}^n (-1)^{j-1} \frac{(2j-3)!!}{(2j)!} \phi_0^{(j)}(t)s^{2j} + b \sum_{r \neq 0,1} (h_0(t) + \frac{1}{2}h'_0(t)s^2)^{\frac{1}{r}}$$

and

$$h_0(t) = (\frac{r}{-3C_1tr + 4C_1t - 3C_2r + 4C_2})^{\frac{r}{3r-4}}$$

where b, C_1, C_2 are constants.

3. Proof of the Theorem

In Proposition 2.4, $\phi(t, s)$ cannot ensure that $F = |y| \phi(\frac{|x|^2}{2}, \frac{\langle x, y \rangle}{|y|})$ is a Finsler metric. In order to obtain projectively flat Finsler metric, $\phi(t, s)$ in Proposition 2.2 needs to satisfy the necessary and sufficient condition for $F = \alpha\phi(\|\beta_x\|_\alpha, \frac{\beta}{\alpha})$ to be a Finsler metric for any α and β with $\|\beta_x\|_\alpha < b_0$ given by Yu and Zhu [4]. In particular, considering $F = |y| \phi(\frac{|x|^2}{2}, \frac{\langle x, y \rangle}{|y|})$, then F is a Finsler metric if and only if the positive function ϕ satisfies

$$\phi - s\phi_s > 0, \quad \phi - s\phi_s + (t - s^2)\phi_{ss} > 0$$

when $m \geq 3$ or $\phi - s\phi_2 + (t - s^2)\phi_{ss} > 0$, when $m = 2$. By a direct calculation we have

$$\begin{aligned} \phi - s\phi_s &= \phi_0(t) - \frac{1}{2}\phi'_0(t) + \sum_{j=2}^n (-1)^{j-1} \frac{(2j-3)!!}{(2j-1)!} \phi_0^{(j)}(t)s^{2j} (\frac{1}{2j} - 1) + \\ & b \sum_{r \neq 0,1} (h_0(t) + \frac{1}{2}h'_0(t)s^2)^{\frac{1}{r}-1} [h_0(t) + (\frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{r})h'_0(t)s^2], \end{aligned} \quad (2.30)$$

$$\begin{aligned}
& \phi - s\phi_s + (t - s^2)\phi_{ss} \\
&= \phi_0(t) + \phi'_0(t)(t - \frac{3}{2}s^2) + \sum_{j=2}^n (-1)^{j-1} \frac{(2j-3)!!}{(2j-2)!} \phi_0^{(j)}(t) s^{2j-2} (t - s^2 \frac{1+2j}{2j}) + \\
& \quad b \sum_{r \neq 0,1} (h_0(t) + \frac{1}{2} h'_0(t) s^2)^{\frac{1}{r}-2} (h_0^2(t) + \frac{h_0(t)h'_0(t)}{r} t) + \\
& \quad b \sum_{r \neq 0,1} (h_0(t) + \frac{1}{2} h'_0(t) s^2)^{\frac{1}{r}-2} (\frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{r}) s^2 [2h_0(t)h'_0(t) + (h'_0(t))^2 \times \\
& \quad s^2 (\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{r}) - \frac{(h'_0(t))^2}{r} t]. \tag{2.31}
\end{aligned}$$

The proof of the Theorem is completed by combining proposition 2.4, (2.30), (2.31) and the fundamental property of the projectively flat equation (1.1). \square

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