Habenaria Nicobarica (Orchidaceae), A New Species From Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India

C. Murugan¹, Joju P. Alappatt², S. Prabhu³ and W. Arisdason⁴

Botanical Survey of India (BSI), Andaman and Nicobar Regional Centre, Port Blair 744 102, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India

Keywords: Habenaria nicobarica; India; Andaman and Nicobar Islands; Orchidaceae.

Abstract

A new species of terrestrial orchid Habenaria nicobarica Murugan, Alappatt, Prabhu & Arisdason sp. nov. is described from South Nicobar Islands. Key to species of Habenaria in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, illustration and photograph of the new species are also provided.

Introduction

Orchidaceae include c. 788 genera (Mabberley, 2008) and c. 25,971 species (Joppa et al., 2011) and distributed widely in the world. In India, orchids are represented by 184 genera and 1129 species (Jalal et al., 2008), of which 150 species belonging to 59 genera are found in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands in India is a repository of diverse species, including 25 endemic orchid species (Misra et al., 2012). The genus Habenaria Willd. is estimated to have approximately 750 species and distributed in every continent of the world (Comber, 1990). Among these, 100 species are recorded from India (Santapau and Henry, 1973) and only 1 species, namely H. andamanica Hook. f., is reported from Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Choudhury et al., 2011).

During the course of botanical explorations in Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve and Little Nicobar Tribal Reserve, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, from 2008 to 2011, the authors have collected few interesting specimens of Habenaria. On critical study of the specimens and perusal of literature (Hooker, 1890; Jayaweera, 1981; Comber, 1990; Chowdhery, 1998; Mathew, 1998; Sinha, 1999; Pandey and Diwakar, 2008), the authors found it as an undescribed species, which is very closely allied to Habenaria koodersii J. J. Sm., but differs in leaf, flower and lip characters (Table 1). Hence, it is described here as a new species, viz., Habenaria nicobarica along with key to species, illustration and photograph, for further collection and identification in the field.

Habenaria nicobarica Murugan, Alappatt, Prabhu & Arisdason, sp. nov. (Figs 1, 2 b-e).

Type: INDIA, Andaman and Nicobar Islands: South Nicobar, Little Nicobar Tribal Reserve, Pulopaha (E), 25.11.2008, C. Murugan 26630 (Holotype: CAL; Isotype: PBL).

Diagnosis: Habenaria nicobarica is closely related to H. koodersii J. J. Sm. but differs in bract size, flower colour and lip characters.

¹Corresponding author. E-mail: sivanthimurugan@rediffmail.com
²Forest Training Institute, Wimberligunj, Port Blair-744 206, South Andaman, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India
³Botanical Survey of India (BSI), Andaman and Nicobar Regional Centre, Port Blair-744 102, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India
⁴Botanical Survey of India, CGO Complex, Salt Lake City, Kolkata-711 064, West Bengal, India
Tuberous, terrestrial herbs, up to 1 m high. Stems terete. Leaves spiral, 5-8, confined to the middle of stem, oblong-lanceolate, 7-12 × 2-3 cm, rounded with auricled at base, entire at margin, acuminate at apex, 3-veined. Racemes terminal, 10-20 cm long, lax; peduncles terete, 10-25 cm long. Flowers lax, light brown; bracts linear, acuminate at apex, 1.5-2.0 × 0.2-0.3 cm. Dorsal sepal 10-17 mm long with 7 mm long filiform extension, 3-nerved; lateral sepals spreading, c. 10×4 mm with 9 mm long tail, 3-nerved. Petals 2, bilobed; posterior lobe shorter than sepals, erect, linear, c. 10.0 × 0.1 mm; anterior lobe short, acuminate at apex. Lip 3-lobed to the base, mid lobe c. 12 × 2 mm, flat; lateral lobe linear, c. 10 × 1 mm; spur cylindric, narrowed towards apex, up to 27 mm long. Gynostemium c. 4 mm long. Anther canal c. 2 mm long; lateral rostellar arms as long as anther canals, projecting forward; central lobe indistinct; auricle 2, prominent. Stigma processes large, c. 2.0 × 1.5 mm, rounded at apex. Ovary obconic, c. 2.3 × 0.2 cm, trigonous. Capsules oblong, c. 2.0 × 0.5 cm.

*Flowering and fruiting:* October - April.

*Distribution:* India (Nicobar Islands).


*Etymology:* The species is named after the Nicobar Islands, the type locality and one of the plant diversity hotspots in India.

**Table 1. Comparison of exomorphic characters among Habenaria koodersii, H. nicobarica sp. nov. and H. andamanica.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characters</th>
<th>Habenaria koodersii</th>
<th>H. nicobarica sp. nov.</th>
<th>H. andamanica</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plant height</td>
<td>40-60 cm</td>
<td>60-100 cm</td>
<td>70-80 cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of leaves</td>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>5-8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaf size</td>
<td>13.5-17.0 cm long</td>
<td>7-12 cm long</td>
<td>5-15 cm long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflorescence</td>
<td>21-31 cm long</td>
<td>10-20 cm long</td>
<td>25-40 cm long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peduncle</td>
<td>12-19 cm long</td>
<td>10-25 cm long</td>
<td>5-7 cm long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bract</td>
<td>c. 2.8 cm long</td>
<td>1.5-2.0 cm long</td>
<td>2-3 cm long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flower colour</td>
<td>Greenish white</td>
<td>Light brown</td>
<td>White with brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorsal sepal</td>
<td>1.1 cm with c. 4 mm long thread</td>
<td>1.0-1.7 cm with c. 7 mm long thread</td>
<td>1.2 cm without thread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petals</td>
<td>1.0-1.1 cm long, unlobed at base.</td>
<td>1 cm long, lobed at base</td>
<td>1.0-1.4 cm long, unlobed at base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lip</td>
<td>Mid lobe shorter than side lobe</td>
<td>Mid lobe (c. 1.2 cm long) longer than side lobe</td>
<td>Mid lobe linear, 3-fid (c. 1.5 cm long) longer than side lobe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spur</td>
<td>Tubular, narrow towards apex</td>
<td>Tubular, c. 2.7 cm long narrow towards apex</td>
<td>clavate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Key to species of Habenaria Willd. in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.*

1  Flowers white; sepals without filiform attachment near apex; lip laciniate.  
   - Flowers light brown; sepals with filiform attachment near apex; lip 3-fid.  
   
*H. andamanica*

*H. nicobarica sp. nov.*
Fig. 1. *Habenaria nicobarica* sp. nov. (Orchidaceae). a. habit; b. flower; c. bract; d-f. sepals; g-h. petals; i. lip; j-k. column; l. pollinaria; m. capsule.
Fig. 2a. *Habenaria andamanica* Hook. f. (Habit with inflorescence); b-e. *Habenaria nicobarica* sp. nov.

b. habit; c. inflorescence; d. flower; e. capsule.

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References

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