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Shakya L.R.



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On reinstatement of *Oberonia ritaii* King & Pantling (Orchidaceae)

L.R. Shakya

Department of Botany, Amrit Science Campus
Tribhuvan University, Thamel, Kathmandu, Nepal

Abstract

A re-investigation of *Oberonia ritaii* King and Pantling, an endemic species restricted to Meghalaya, and comparison with its closely related species *Oberonia myriantha* Lindl. enable to reinstate the former as a good species. An illustrated account is given

INTRODUCTION

Oberonia ritaii is a little known species proposed by King & Pantling based on collections made by S.E. Rita, Mann and G.A. Gammie from Khasia Hills at Jowai (Meghalaya).

Seidenfaden (1968) who studied Gammie's specimens (Gammie 482 CAL, K), considered the specimens very much like *O. myriantha*, but he preferred this species separate entity in his study supposing that King & Pantling knew *O. myriantha* very well. Ansari and Balakrishnan (1990) in their recent revision consider this species as synonym of *Oberonia myriantha* Lindl. (Ansari and Balakrishnan, 1990).

In the course of the revision of the genus *Oberonia* from the Himalayas, 85 herbarium specimens from different Indian herbaria (ASSAM, BSD, CAL, DD) identified as *O. myriantha*, *O. acaulis* and *O. ritaii* were studied. Besides, the living plant in flowering condition grown in Orchidarium of Botanical Survey of India, Shillong (ASSAM) was also studied carefully. Out of these specimens, the specimens collected from Jaintia and Khasia Hills, Meghalaya, on careful examination, 13 specimens turned out to be *Oberonia ritaii*.

The gross morphological appearance of *Oberonia ritaii* King & Pantling is similar to that of *Oberonia myriantha* Lindl. Both species can readily be distinguished from each other having following characters :

Oberonia ritaii King & Pantling in J.As. Soc. Beng. 66 (3) : 579 (1897) - Seidenfaden in Trns. Dansk Bot. Ark. 25 (3) : 58 (1968).

A medium sized, caespitose, usually pendulous, herb. Leaves 4-6, 1-13 x 0.4 to 1 cm,

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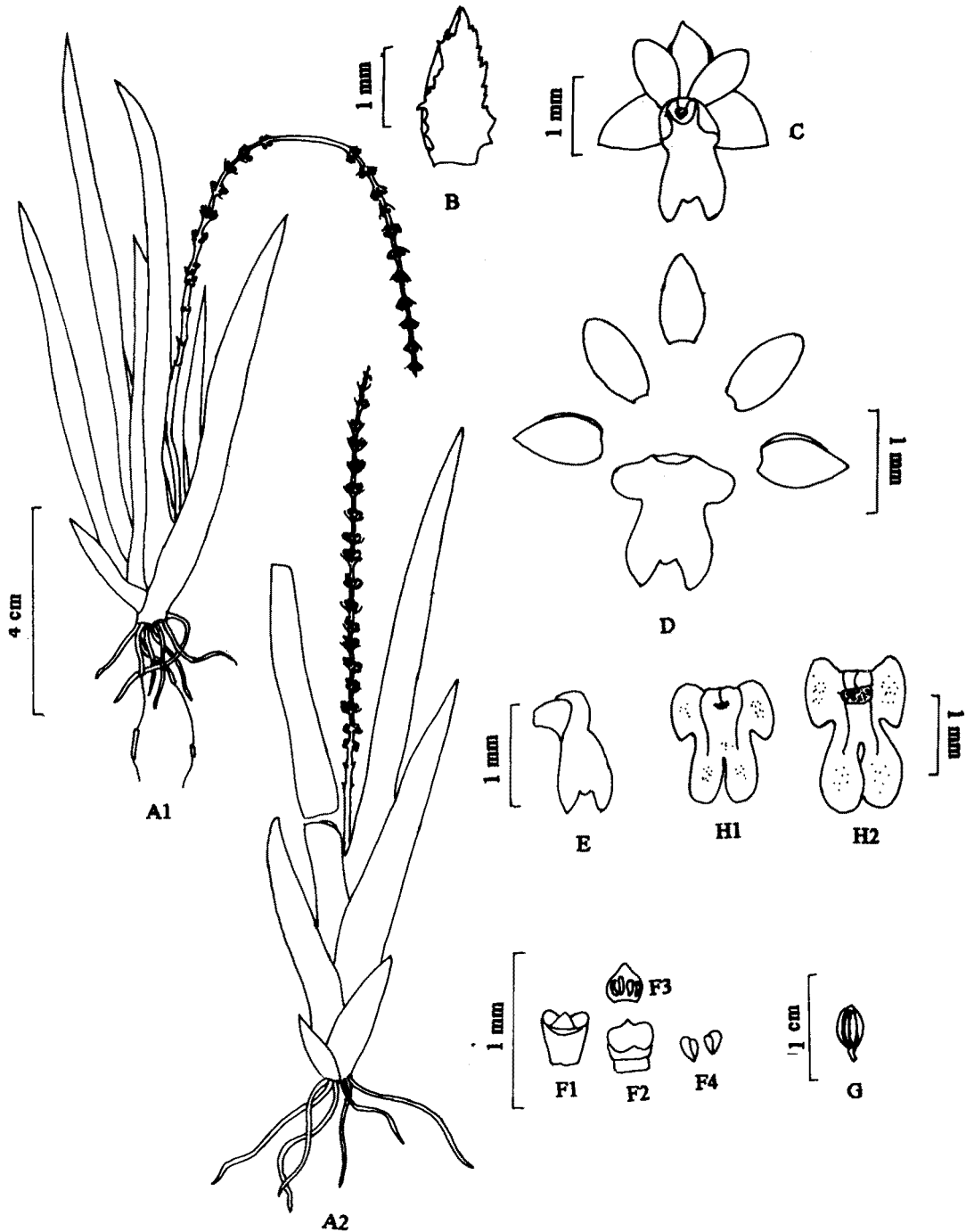


Fig 1. *Oberonia ritaii*: A1. Habit (Rita 599; CAL); A2. Habit (Mann 5/1884; CAL); B. Bract; C. Flower; D. Outer three sepals, inner two petals and the lip spread out; E. Lateral view of the lip; F1. Column (front view); F2. Column (back view), F3. Operculum; F4. Pollinia; G. Fruit; *Oberonia myriantha*; H1, H2. Lip

Reinstatement of *Oberonia ritaii*

distichous, equitant, laterally compressed, linear-ensiform, acuminate, green. Inflorescence longer than the leaves, decurved. Scape 5-6 cm long, terete. Spike 7 cm long, sometimes more than 7 cm long, densely flowered, terete. Flowers bracteate, shortly pedicelled, 2 mm across, arranged in verticels, whitish green to pale green. Sepals 0.8-0.9 x 0.48 mm, spreading, ovate, entire. Petals 0.9 x 0.48 mm, spreading, ovate, blunt, entire. Lip 1.2 x 1.2 mm (when spread out), entire, 3-lobed; basal lobes rounded or slightly pointed, entire or slightly crenulate, erect or slightly incurved, presence of semi-lunar shaped nectary at the base; midlobe large, broad, obreniform, 2-lobuled; lobules short, rounded or sub-triangular, lobules separated by the broad sinus with rounded or sub-triangular protuberance. Column 0.3 mm long, disciform; clinandrium 0.3 mm across, sub-dorsal to dorsal, orbicular, surrounded by short wing; rostellum distinct triangular; operculum 0.3 x 0.3 mm, ovate-orbicular, acute; stigma laterally elongated; pollinia 4, 0.15 mm long, obovoid. Fruit 5 x 1.7 mm, pedicelled, ribbed, cylindric clavate.

Flowering : July to November

Distribution : Khasia and Jaintia Hills, Meghalaya (India).

Typus : Jowai, Rita 599 (Holo-CAL!)

Specimens examined : Meghalaya : Khasia Hills, Gammie 482 (CAL); Jaintia Hills, Mann 5/1884 (CAL); Jaintia Hills, Prain's Collector 5 (CAL); Mawmloo, Kanjilal 8875 (ASSAM); Cherrapunji, Bor 19789 (ASSAM); Sohrarim, Sharma 9341 (ASSAM); Jarin Jowai, Balakrishnan 42760 (ASSAM); Mawmloo Forest, Deka acc. 35361 (ASSAM); Cherrapunji, Panigrahi 3728 (ASSAM); Jarain, Balakrishnan 46742 (ASSAM); Jarine, Hynnewetia 53073 (ASSAM); Jarine, Balakrishnan 46845 (ASSAM).

	<i>O. ritaii</i>	<i>O. myriantha</i>
Flower	Whitish green to pale green	Brown
Lip	Nerves absent basal lobes rounded, erect, or incurved Midlobe broad, obreniform with rounded to sub-triangular short lobules separated by the broad sinus with rounded or sub- triangular protuberance	3-nerved basal lobes oblong and pointing forward, spreading or basal margin slightly bent upward Midlobe long, with two oblong lobules having rounded apex and separated by narrow sinus without any protuberance

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