

NOTES ON *MEDINILLA* GAUDICH. (MELASTOMATACEAE) FROM GREAT NICOBAR ISLAND, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

A new species viz. *Medinilla balakrishnanii*, allied to *M. coriacea* Merr., is described. *Medinilla speciosa* (Reinw. ex Blume) Blume is reported for the first time as an addition to the Flora of India. Detailed descriptions, ecological notes with illustration are provided.

Keywords : New species, New record, Great Nicobar Island, India.

INTRODUCTION

The genus *Medinilla* Gaudich. comprises epiphytic and terrestrial shrubs and climbers and includes about 400 species. It is found throughout tropical Africa, India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, South China, Islands of South-East Asia, New Guinea, Northern Australia, Micronesia, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Fiji with its maximum diversity in the Malaysian region (Regalado 1990, 1995). In India, this genus is represented by 7 species namely *Medinilla erythrophylla* Lindl., *M. beddomei* C.B. Clarke, *M. himalayana* Hook. f., *M. pauciflora* Hook. f., *M. malabarica* Bedd., *M. sahyadrica* Sasidh. & Sujanapal and *M. anamalaiana* Sasidh. & Sujanapal distributed in the Himalayan and Peninsular regions (Sasidharan & Sujanapal, 2005).

During the floristic survey of Mt. Thullier, Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve, a beautiful epiphytic shrub was collected from the dense evergreen forests. On studying the specimens it is found to be different and distinct from the alliance of *M. coriacea* Merr., of Philippines and hence described as new species. *Medinilla speciosa* (Reinw. ex Blume) Blume is reported as an addition to the Flora of India. Descriptions and illustrations are provided for easy identification of these species.

1. *Medinilla balakrishnanii* Jayanthi, Karthigeyan, Sumathi & Diwakar **sp. nov.** (Fig. 1).

Medinillae coriaceae proxima, petiolis et inflorescentiss hypanthiisque furfuraceis, laminis elliptico-oblongis apice acuminato nervis supra impressis venis transversalibus prominentibus, petiolis floribusque majoribus differt.

Type : India, Andaman & Nicobar Islands : Great Nicobar, Mt. Thullier, Evergreen forest, $\pm$ 600 m, 2 June 2002, J. Jayanthi, K. Karthigeyan & R. Sumathi 19354 (Holo. : CAL, Iso. : PBL).

Closely allied to *M. coriacea* Merr., differing in the furfuraceous petioles, inflorescences and hypanthium, longer elliptic-oblong leaves, acuminate at apex, nerves impressed above, transverse veins prominent, larger petioles and larger flowers.

Epiphytic, scandent shrub, 3-5 m high; bark whitish; branches terete, glabrous, lenticellate, c. 1 cm in diam.; young branchlets slightly quadrangular, setose. Leaves opposite or ternate, elliptic-oblong, 10-18 $\times$ 5-9 cm, exstipulate, coriaceous, drying greyish-blackish green above, chocolate brown below, acuminate at apex, entire along margins, cuneate at base, 5-7-nerved, nerves impressed above, raised below; transverse veins prominent on both surfaces; petioles ridged, 1.8-5 cm long, slightly furfuraceous. Inflorescence axillary, fascicled, few-flowered cymes, arising on leafless nodes; peduncles ridged, reddish-brown furfuraceous, 1-2.3 cm long. Flowers creamy white, c. 3 $\times$ 2.5 cm, 5-merous. Pedicels ridged, pink, 3-5 mm long, reddish-brown furfuraceous. Hypanthium campanulate, green with pinkish tinge, reddish-brown furfuraceous, 1-1.3 $\times$ 0.8-1 cm, 5-denticulate. Petals 5, creamy white with pink tinge along margins, membranous, imbricate, obliquely broadly elliptic-obovate, 2.5-2.8 $\times$ 1-1.5 cm. Stamens 10, unequal, isomorphic; short stamens 5; filaments

c. 1.4 cm long; anthers c. 1.2 cm long, with 2.5-3 mm long lateral appendage and c.3 mm long plectrum; longer stamens 5; filaments c. 1.7 cm long; anthers c. 1.8 cm long with c. 2 mm long lateral appendage and c. 2 mm long plectrum. Ovary 5-6-celled, placentation axile; style c. 1.5 cm long, 1-2 mm wide; stigma punctiform. Fruits not seen.

Fl. : May - June.

Habitat : Found in dense evergreen forests, exposed to partial sunlight, climbing on *Knema andamanica* (Warb) de Wilde at an elevation of $\pm$ 600 m.

The difference between *Medinilla balakrishnanii* and *M. coriacea* are elucidated below :

Characters	<i>Medinilla balakrishnanii</i>	<i>Medinilla coriacea</i>
Indumentum	Petioles, inflorescences and hypanthium furfuraceous.	Petioles, inflorescences and hypanthium glabrous.
Leaves	10-18 $\times$ 5-9 cm, elliptic-oblong, acuminate at apex.	11-12 $\times$ 5.5-6.5 cm, broadly elliptic-ovate to suborbicular, rounded to apiculate at apex.
Venation	Nerves impressed above, transverse veins prominent.	Nerves faint above, transverse veins inconspicuous.
Petioles	2.5-2.8 cm long.	Up to 1.2 cm long.
Flower	c. 3 $\times$ 2.5 cm.	c. 2 $\times$ 1.5 cm.

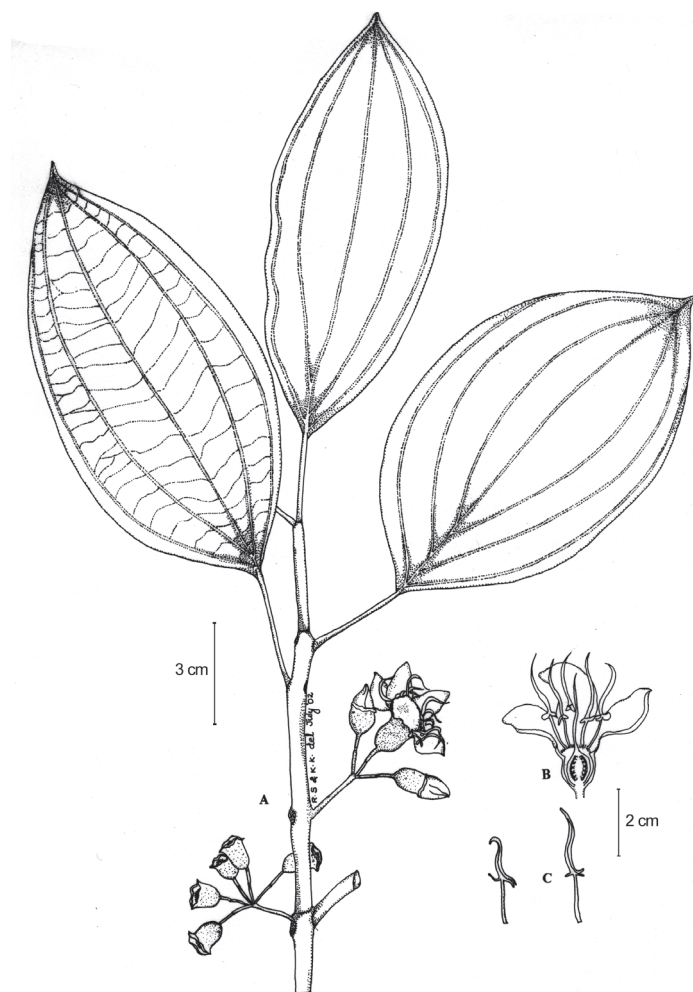


Fig.1. : *Medinilla balakrishnanii* Jayanthi, Karthigeyan, Sumathi & Diwakar sp. nov. :
A. Habit; B. L.S. of flower; C. Short and long stamens.

Etymology : This species is named after Dr. N.P. Balakrishnan who has greatly contributed to the flora of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

2. *Medinilla speciosa* (Reinw. ex Blume) Blume in H.C. Hall, Bijdr. Nat. Wet. 6:256. 1831; Maxwell in Gard. Bull. Singapore 31:185. 1978; Regalado in Blumea 35:19. 1990. *Melastoma speciosa* Reinw. ex Blume in Flora 14:515. 1831. (**Fig. 2**).

Epiphytic shrub, 2-3 m high. Branches terete to slightly angular, c. 7 mm in diam., glabrous, bark whitish; nodes covered with stiff setaceous bristles. Leaves ternate or quaternate, thickly coriaceous, exstipulate, narrowly to broadly elliptic, 5.5-15 × 2-7 cm, acute-acuminate at apex, entire along margins, cuneate and slightly unequal at base, decurrent to petiole, 5-nerved; nerves raised above and below, slightly winged above; transverse veins faintly visible on lower surface; petioles 0.6-1 cm long. Inflorescences terminal or sometimes axillary panicles of cymes, many-flowered, up to 17 cm long and 7 cm across; rachis and side branches dark pink, quadrangular, winged; peduncles 5-7 cm long, quadrangular, winged, dark pinkish. Bracteoles linear, c. 1 mm long. Flowers not seen. Berries globose, dark pink-purplish, c. 1 cm across; stalk 4-7 mm long, slightly angular. Seeds numerous, embedded in pulpy mass, less than 1 cm long.



Fig. 2. *Medinilla speciosa* (Reinw. ex Blume) Blume : A. Habit; B. Fruit; C. Seeds.

Fl. & Fr. : May - June.

Habitat : Found abundantly in the evergreen forest at an altitude of ± 600 m.

Specimen examined : India, Andaman & Nicobar Islands : Great Nicobar, Mount Thullier, 2 June 2002, J. Jayanthi, R. Sumathi & K. Karthigeyan 19354 (PBL).

Notes : *Medinilla speciosa* Blume is known to be distributed in Malay Peninsula, Sumatra, Java, Lesser Sunda Islands, Sulawesi, Moluccas and Borneo (Maxwell, 1978). Occurrence of this species in Great Nicobar extends its range of distribution to India. It is to be noted that the Great Nicobar specimens are smaller when compared to that of Bornean counterpart. This plant could be cultivated as an ornamental for its dense panicle of delicate pink flowers.

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ग्रेट निकोबार द्वीप, भारत में मेडिनिला गॉडिच (मेलासटोमाटेसी) पर नोट

जे. जयन्थी, के कार्तिग्येन, आर. सुमथी व पी.जी. दिवाकर

सार संक्षेप

मेडिनिला कोरिएसिया मेरिल की समवर्गी एक नई जाति अर्थात मेडिनिला बालकृष्णनाई का वर्णन है। भारत के वनस्पति जात में योगदान के रूप में प्रथम बार मेडिनिला स्पेसिओसा (रेनवर्ट एक्स ब्लूम) ब्लूम का विस्तृत, सचित्र वर्णन एवं पारिस्थितिकीय नोटस प्रस्तुत किए गए हैं।