OBERONIA HELFERI HOOK. F. (ORCHIDACEAE) - A NEW RECORD FOR INDIA FROM DIBANG VALLEY, ARUNACHAL PRADESH

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Hooker (Ic. Plant. t. 1785A. 1888) described *Oberonia helferi* Hook. f. based on collection of Helfer from Tenasserim in 1838. Seidenfaden (1968,1978) mentioned this species while working on *Oberonia* in mainland Asia and Thailand. Ansari & Balakrishnan (1990) revised *Oberonia* in the Indian context and recorded 41 species, Kumar & Manilal (1994) listed 53 species of this genus and Bose & al. (1999) enumerated 48 species, but none of these publications report *O. helferi* Hook. f. from India.

In course of our plant exploration in Dibang Valley, Arunachal Pradesh we collected an interesting species of *Oberonia*. It was later identified through literature and herbarium study as *Oberonia helferi* Hook. f. which turn out to be a new record for India. A brief description and line drawing based on our own collection are given here to facilitate its identification in the field.

Oberonia helferi Hook. f., Ic. Plant. t.1785A. 1888; Hook. f., Fl. Brit. India 6: 679. 1888; Seidenfaden in Dansk. Bot. Arkiv. 25(3): 95-96. 1968 & 33(1): 34-35. 1978. Type : Tenasserim, 1838, *Helfer s.n.* (K, n.v., Kew negative 5192 - CAL !).

Acaulescent, epiphytic herb, up to 9.5 cm long. Leaves 3-7, 0.8-2.3 × 0.2-0.6 cm, distichous, membranous, laterally compressed, acuminate, ensiform, green. Inflorescence longer than leaves. Spike 4.5-8.5 cm long, erect or curved, terete. Flowers 1.5-2 mm across, membranous, bracteate, pedicelled, loosely clustered, arranged irregularly or in rows, pale green. Bract 1-1.25 × 0.6-0.7 mm, triangular, entire, membranous, pale green. Sepals

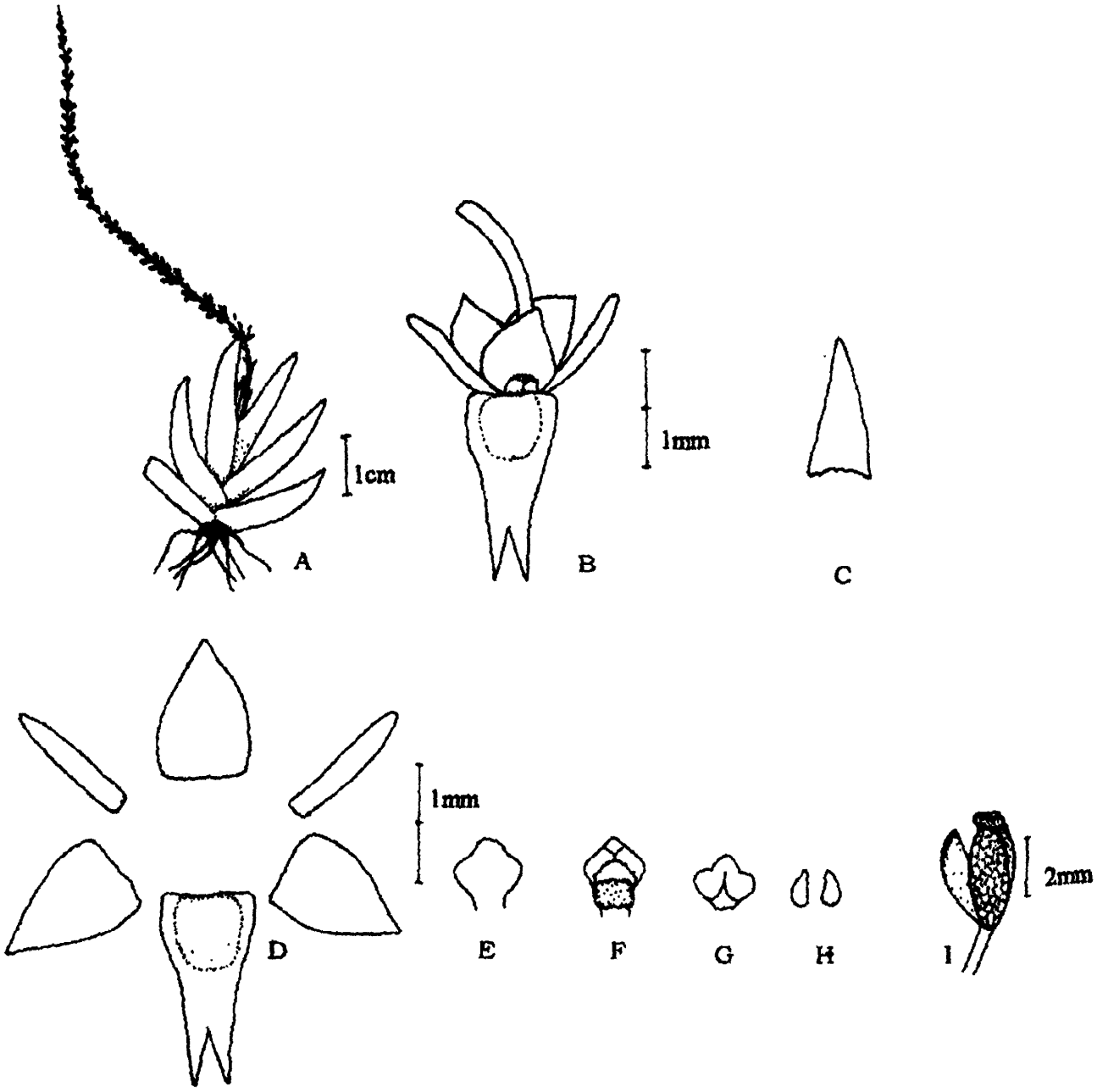


Fig.1. (A-I) *Oberonia helferi* Hook.f.
A. Habit; B. flower; C. Bract; D. Floral parts spread out; E. Column (front view); F. Column (back view); G. Operculum; H. Pollinia; I. Fruit

c. 0.75 × 0.5 mm, spreading, ovate, entire. Petals c. 1 × 0.5 mm, spreading, linear, blunt, entire. Lip c. 1.5 × 0.75 mm, entire, narrowed, 2-lobed at apex; lobes c. 0.5 mm, narrowed, acuminate. Column c. 0.5 mm long; clinandrium c. 0.5 mm across, membranous; rostellum distinct, triangular, margins irregular; operculum c. 0.5 × 0.5 mm, orbicular acuminate; pollinia 2, ovate 0.25-0.3 × 0.15-0.2 mm, pale green. Fruits 3-3.2 × 2.5-2.7 mm, pedicelled, cylindrical-clavate, ribbed.

Fl. & Fr.: August- September.

Distrib.: India- Arunachal Pradesh; Myanmar.

Specimens examined : - INDIA: Arunachal Pradesh, Dibang Valley, on way to Deshali, c. 700m, 24.8.2000, *Bhaumik & Pathak*- 3207 (CAL, ASSAM); MYANMAR: Yenaieng, Pegu, 1871, *Kurz.3279* (CAL).

Note : Our collection has been made after more than hundred years after those made in the type locality (Tenasserim,1838, Helfer s.n - K) and its adjoining region (Yenaieng, Pegu,1871, Kurz 3279 - CAL) in Burma (Myanmar).

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