



A new species of *Oberonia* (Orchidaceae) from Meghalaya, India

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A new species of *Oberonia* (Orchidaceae) from Meghalaya, India

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Abstract

Oberonia raoii L.R. Shakya et R.P. Chaudhary (Orchidaceae), a new species from Meghalaya, India is described and illustrated.

INTRODUCTION

The genus *Oberonia* Lindl. consists of about 300 species distributed from South Africa through Asia to the Pacific. In India it is reported to have 53 species of which 22 are endemic (Sathish Kumar & Manilal, 1994).

Seidenfaden (1968) recorded 10 species and Ansari and Balakrishnan (1990) recorded 14 species of *Oberonia* from Meghalaya, India. King and Pantling (1897) established *Oberonia ritaii* based on the specimen collected by S.E. Rita from Jowai, Meghalaya, India.

During the course of revisionary studies on the genus *Oberonia* of the Himalayas and adjoining areas, we came across an herbarium specimen collected by Sir Robert Pantling housed at the Central National Herbarium (CAL), Howrah, India. It is labelled as '*Oberonia ritaiiana* King & Pantling' in Robert Pantling's handwriting. But, it was never validly published. On critical examination it is found that the specimen marked as *O. ritaiiana* is much different from *O. ritaii* King & Pantling.

The species named as *O. ritaiiana* and left unpublished by King and Pantling is related to *O. myriantha* Lindl. and is described here as a new species viz., *O. raoii*. As the name *O. ritaiiana* proposed by King & Pantling may bring ambiguity, is not accepted here (Art 53.4, ICBN, Greuter et al., 1994).

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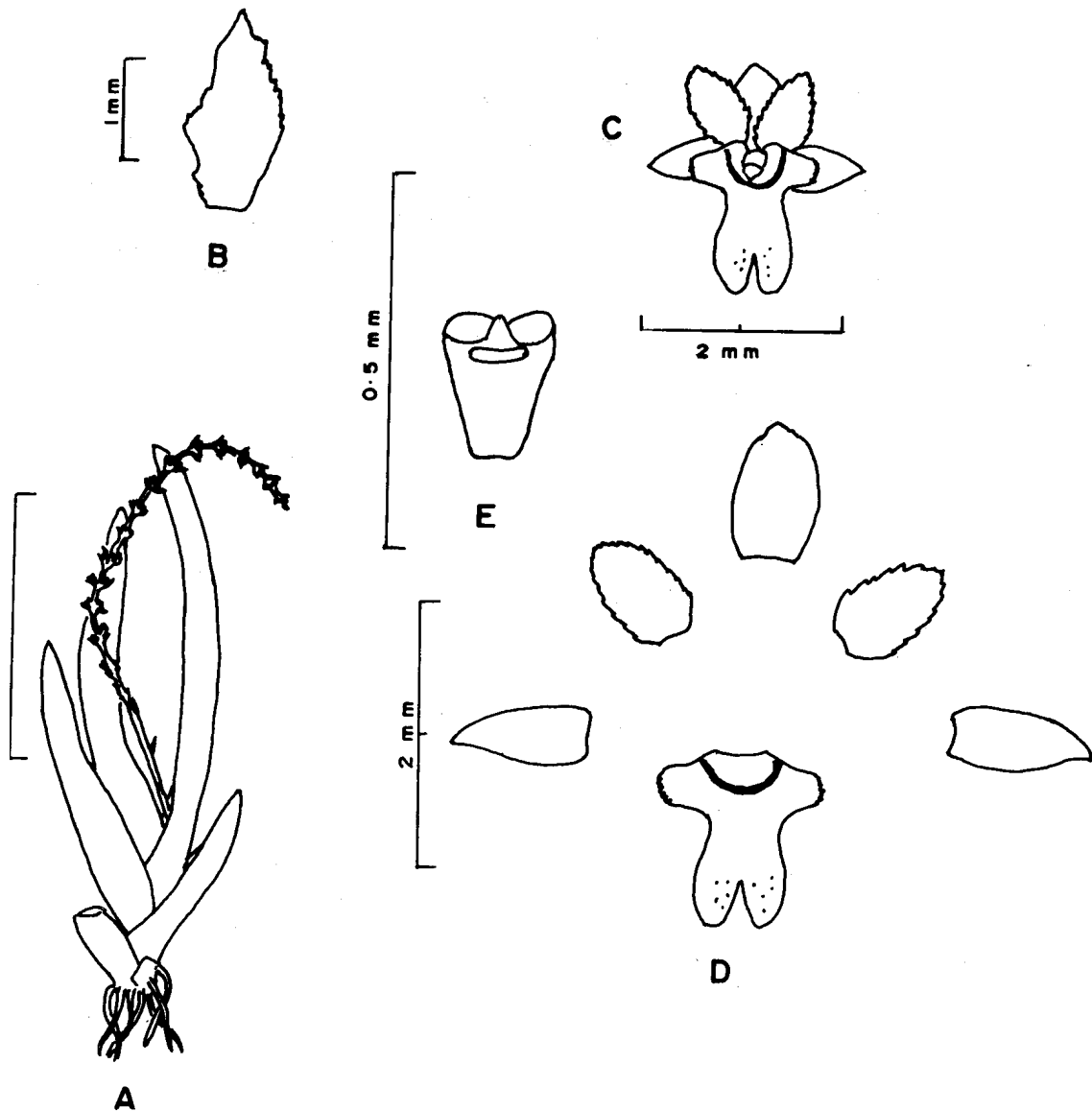


Fig. 1. *Oberonia raoii* L.R. Shakya et R.P. Chaudhary. A. Habit; B. Bract; C. Flower, D. Outer three sepals, inner two petals and the lip spread out; E. Column (All from Pantling 449798).

A new species of *Oberonia*

Oberonia raoii L.R. Shakya *et* R.P. Chaudhary, *sp. nov.* (Fig. 1).

Oberonia myriantha Lindl. affinis, sed differt habitus parvus, petalis ovatis, fimbriatis, labello nullinervis, laterio labello lobo quadranto cum minusculo erosus polus spicalis.

Type: India, Meghalaya, Khasia Hills, Nongpoh, alt. 4000 ft. (1219 m), August 1897, *Pantling 449798* (Holo-CAL).

Acaulescent caespitose, epiphytic herbs. Leaves 5, 1.5-8.2 x 0.4-0.5 cm, distichous, equitant, linear, acute, subfalcate, basal ones smaller. Scape *ca.* 4.5 cm long, 0.5 mm broad, with few sterile bracts below inflorescence, not adnate to the terminal leaf. Inflorescence *ca.* 5 cm long, longer than longest leaf, slightly decurved; rachis not fleshy, ribbed; flower-verticels 1.5-2 mm apart, each 4-6-flowered. Flowers bracteate, subsessile, *ca.* 2.2 mm across. Bracts *ca.* 2 x 1 mm, slightly longer than pedicel and ovary, lanceolate, margin irregularly fimbriate. Dorsal sepal *ca.* 1 x 1.7 mm, oblong, obtuse, entire; lateral sepals *ca.* 1.0 x 0.5 mm, induplicate, oblong, acute, entire. Petals *ca.* 0.75 x 0.6 mm, spreading, ovate, subacute to obtuse, margin finely serrate. Lips *ca.* 1.25 x 1 mm, 3-lobed, lateral lobes quadrate, *ca.* 0.3 mm broad, laterally spreading, apical margin finely erose; terminal lobe divided into two blunt lobes, each lobule *ca.* 0.4 mm long, apex obtuse or truncate, gland-dotted, entire. Column *ca.* 0.25 mm long, cylindrical, without lateral appendages; clinandrium *ca.* 0.2 mm across, apical, clinandrial wing distinct, membranous, uniformly surrounding the clinandrium; rostellum minute, attached to the clinandrial wing; pollinia 4, *ca.* 0.15 mm long, obovoid.

Flowering: August.

Etymology: The specific epithet of the new taxon is in honour of Dr. R.R. Rao, Senior Scientist, National Botanical Research Institute, India and ex-Deputy Director, Botanical Survey of India, Eastern Circle, Shillong, India.

Oberonia raoii is related to *O. myriantha* Lindl. from which it can easily be distinguished by its finely serrate petals against entire petals, veinless lip with quadrate lateral lobes with finely erose apical margins in contrast to 3-veined lip with forward-pointing oblong, entire lateral lobes.

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