

SIRHOOKERA LATIFOLIA (WIGHT) O. KUNTZE (ORCHIDACEAE) - A NEW RECORD FOR THE EASTERN GHATS, INDIA

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The Eastern Ghats are situated along the eastern peninsular India extending over 2000km with an average width of about 100km, situated between 11°03'00"-22°03'04"N & 77°02'02"-87°02'09"E. These are long chains of broken hills and elevated plateaus, running along the Indian east coast and pass through partially in the states of Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and two districts of Karnataka. The number of flowering plant taxa occurring in the Eastern Ghats is estimated to be about 3200 (Reddy *et al.*, 2006a). So far, 190 species of orchids under 54 genera were reported from the Eastern Ghats (Reddy *et al.*, 2006b).

The Sambarikonda hill is situated in Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh, well known for its tropical semi-evergreen and moist deciduous luxuriant forests. The highest peak of the hill is 1527m. It is the highest peak in Andhra Pradesh part of the Eastern Ghats, possessing undulating steep terrains with rocky boulders at the hill top. According to Champion and Seth's classification (1968), two distinct forest types are found in this region, *viz.*, southern tropical moist deciduous forest and in Orissa semievergreen forest. During botanical exploration of Sambarikonda, some interesting orchids were collected which were identified as *Sirhookera latifolia* (Wight) O. Kuntze.

Sirhookera latifolia (Wight) O. Kuntze has not been reported from Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and the Eastern Ghats part of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka in any of the earlier publications. It is distributed in Western Ghats and Sri Lanka (Matthew, 1999). Only two species are described under the genus *Sirhookera* in the world. *viz.* *Sirhookera latifolia* (Wight) Kuntze and *Sirhookera lanceolata* (Wight) Kuntze. Therefore, the species is enumerated here with distribution, brief description, habitat and phenological data. The voucher specimens are deposited at Herbarium of Botany Department, Kakatiya University (KUH), Warangal, Andhra Pradesh.

***Sirhookera latifolia* (Wight) O. Kuntze**

1891, Revis. Gen. Pl. 2: 681; 1851, *Josephia latifolia* Wight, Icon. Pl. Ind. Orient. 5(1): 19. t. 743; 1890, Hook.f. Fl. Brit. India 5: 823; 1976, Saldanha in Saldanha & Nicolson 849; 1235, Seidenfaden in Matthew 199; 1928, Fischer, Fl. Pres. Madras 3: 1428(999). (Orchidaceae).

Description: Epiphytic, short stemmed tufted herbs with stout root fibres. Pseudobulbs small, covered with membranous sheaths. Leaf radical, solitary, 4-7 x 2-2.6cm, coriaceous, elliptic-oblong, acute or obtuse at apex, narrowed into 1.5-3cm long-channeled petiole. Inflorescence much longer than leaves. Flowers small, whitish-yellow with purple stripes, in 8-13cm long spreading panicles. Sepals 1.5-1.75mm across, suborbicular, concave. Petals shorter than sepals, linear. Lip erect, fleshy, cymbiform, purple streaked, adnate to the base of the column, three-lobed, mid-lobe minute; laterals incurved. Column erect, about as long as sepals, minutely winged. Pollinia four, in two pairs, parallel, subclavate attached to the rostellum by a viscus.

Specimen examined: (Image 1^w) C.S. Reddy & C. Pattanaik 3054 in Sambarikonda hill, Visakhapatnam district, RV Nagar Range, on 20.iii.2006, ±1250m altitude. These specimens were found growing on *Michelia champaca*.

Distribution: Western Ghats (Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu) and Sri Lanka.

Phenology: Flowering and fruiting between February and May.

Habitat: On tall trees of *Michelia champaca* in semi-evergreen forests.

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^w See Images in the web supplement at www.zoosprint.org

