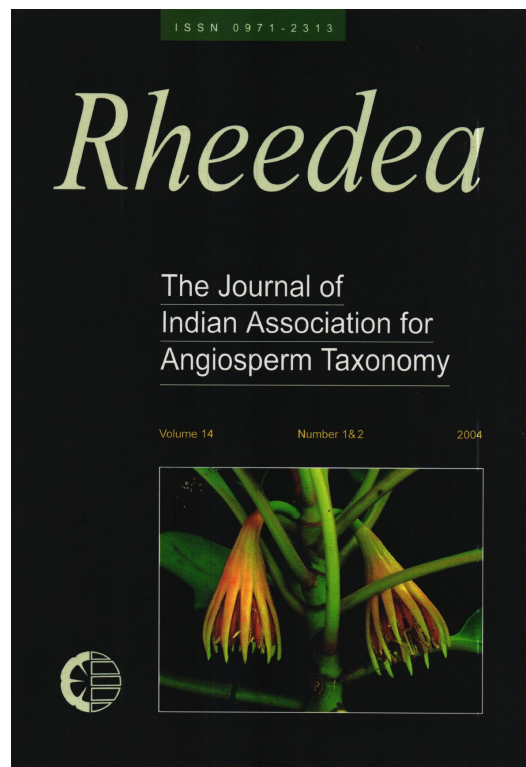




Book Review: Orchids of Orissa

Sarat Misra



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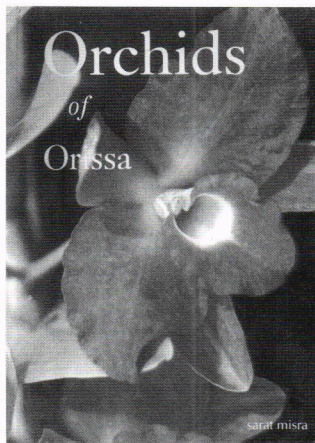
Book Review

Sarat Misra 2004

Orchids of Orissa

Bishen Singh Mahendra Pal Singh, Dehra Dun. 774 pp., 418 figures, 1 map, 2 graphs, 5 tables, keys to genera and species, 23 colour plates. Price. Rs. 3500. ISBN -81-211-0389-4.

Distributed by Bishen Singh Mahendra Pal Singh, 23-A, New Connaught Place, Dehra Dun.



Post-independent India witnessed publications of many orchid books but only a few like *Orchids of Bombay* by Santapau and Kapadia (1966), *Orchids of Nilgiris* by Joseph (1982) and *The Orchid Flora of North-West Himalaya* by Deva and Naithani (1986) were worth the name. Orchids of

Orissa by Sarat Misra (2004) can boast of this legacy. It combines the labour of love of a single individual whose untiring efforts and careful observations for three decades on orchids of Orissa have crystallized into a beautiful book like this. It is well written, profusely illustrated, beautifully organized and well produced

The book is divided into seven chapters— Geography, Ecology, Survey Works, Life Form and Morphology, Phenology of Flowering, Status and Conservation measures and Systematics.

The section on systematics takes a major share of the book. It begins with classification, an introduction to Orchidaceae, key to the subfamilies as represented in Orissa, keys to genera based on floral and field characters and genera-wise description from *Pectelis* to *Gastrochilus*. Every genus is given a description and wherever applicable key to the species and varieties, followed by species with correct name and relevant references, basionym if any, type details, descriptions, a minimum of 3 analytical sketches, flowering seasons, occurrence in Orissa, distribution and notes. Apart from the habit sketch, floral details including that of pollinaria are given separately to help the users.

What attracted me the most in this work are the quite pithy and very comprehensive descriptions and detailed analytical sketches, both unavailable in Indian books. Added to this are Misra's discovery of many supposedly South/South West Indian orchids like *Aerides maculosa*, *A. ringens*, *Cottonia peduncularis*, *Dendrobium herbaceum*, *D. macrostachyum*, *Habenaria grandifloriformis*, *H. gibsonii*, *H. gibsonii* var. *foetida*, *H. plantaginea*, *H. crassifolia*, *H. longicorniculata*, *Liparis elliptica*, *Oberonia proudlockii*, *Pecteilis gigantea*, *Peristylus lawii*, etc. in Orissa. In tune with the geographical position, the state of Orissa has a mixture of South and North Indian elements with less endemism.

An appended glossary of botanical terms adds up the use of this book by the lay folk. The systematics part contains very detailed descriptions and a minimum of 3 analytical drawings of 130 species of orchids in 48 genera. Endemics include *Cirrhopetalum panigrahianum*, *Eria meghasaniensis*, *Liparis espeeivijii*, *Habenaria panigrahiana* and its variety (*H. panigrahiana* var. *parviloba*), all discovered by Misra himself from Orissa.

While praising the book for its merits I should not close my eyes on the factual or pedantic errors, omissions and mistakes. These are a few. (1) Tim Smitinand was not a Danish botanist but a Thai forest officer. (2) Designation of 'holotype' of *Limodorum bracteatum* Roxb. (p. 519) is erroneous. It should be lectotype. (3) As per ICBN rules typical subspecies/ varieties/ forma will not carry author citation (see citation on p. 183 – *Habenaria gibsonii* var. *gibsonii*). (4) Adanson has been credited with the authorship of the family Orchidaceae contrary to the general acceptance of de Jussieu. (5) There is lack of uniformity in author citation- Swartz has been given two different initials at two places - O. Swartz on p. 411 and O. P. Swartz on p. 387. (6) Citation of publication of generic names such as *Vanda*, *Eria*,

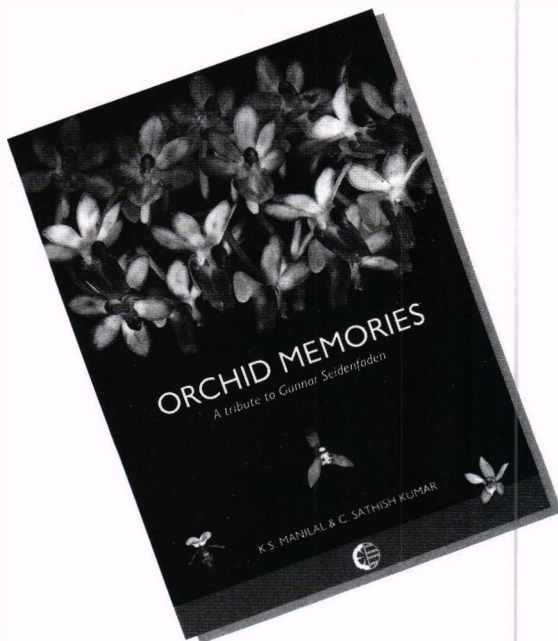
Dienia, *Cirrhopetalum*, *Calanthe* and *Eulophia* in Ker-Gawler seems incorrect. They are all independent publications. (7) Charles Parish is E. Parish on p. 231 while simply Parish on p. 627. (8) Journal abbreviations are also not uniform. e.g., *J. Asiat. Soc. Bengal* on p. 330 and *Journ. As. Soc. Bengal* on p. 496.

Dr Misra is an engineer by profession and was attracted to the world of orchids by chance. This is Dr Misra's life-time work, his *magnum opus* and he can very well be a contended man now as he has

done the job perfectly well. History of orchidology is with many amateurs like Pantling, Dunsterville, Seidenfaden and many others who made significant contributions. Dr Misra is the only Indian contingent in this long list. He has been rightly awarded with an honorary doctorate by Utkal University for his outstanding works in orchid taxonomy.

I welcome this book and recommend it wholeheartedly though it is heavily priced.

C. SATHISH KUMAR (Thiruvananthapuram)



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