



The genus *Commelina* (Commelinaceae) in Andaman & Nicobar Islands, India with one new species and three new records

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Abstract

A synopsis of the genus *Commelina* in Andaman and Nicobar Islands is presented with one new species and three new records. The new species, *C. andamanica* is remarkable by its trailing habit without a definite base, solitary and terminal, cucullate spathe with a single cincinnus and two smooth seeds within a capsule. Of the seven species of *Commelina* recorded, *C. attenuata*, *C. clavata* and *C. longifolia* are new to the islands. An identification key to all the species reported from Andaman and Nicobar Islands is also provided.

Key words: Chidia Tapu, *Commelina andamanica*, *C. attenuata*, *C. clavata*, *C. longifolia*

Introduction

Commelina Linnaeus (1753: 40) is the largest genus of Commelinaceae and comprises ca. 170 species (Faden, 1998). Karthikeyan *et al.* (1989) reported 24 species and 1 variety for India. Among them, the occurrence of *C. avenaeifolia* Graham (1839: 224), *C. kotschyi* Hasskarl (1867: 207) and *C. clavata* var. *hohenackeri* Clarke (1881: 171) in India are doubtful. Similarly, the above list does not include *C. paludosa* Blume (1827: 2). Thus, including the present new species and another species *C. clavatoides* Nampy & S.M. Joseph (2012: 119) published recently, 25 species occur in India. It is the second largest genus of Commelinaceae, after *Murdannia* Royle (1840: 403), in India.

As part of the ongoing studies on the revision of *Commelina* in India, the authors made extensive field exploration in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. These islands are located far from the mainland of India, but are closer to some of the South-East Asian countries like Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand. Situated in the Bay of Bengal, between 6° 45'–13° 41' N and 92° 12'–93° 57' E, they comprise 306 islands with an area of 8,249 km². The islands are botanically very rich and estimated to have 2428 species of which 294 species, 12% are endemic (Pandey & Diwakar, 2008). Pandey and Diwakar enumerated only 3 widespread species of *Commelina*, viz. *C. benghalensis* Linnaeus (1753: 41), *C. caroliniana* Walter (1788: 68) (as *C. hasskarlii* Clarke 1874: 13) and *C. diffusa* Burmann (1768: 18) in their *Integrated checklist of flora of Andaman and Nicobar Islands*. In a recent scientific survey, spending 15 days in the field and consulting various Indian herbaria, the authors have recorded the following 7 species of *Commelina*, which include one new species and three new records.