



## A new variety of *Bauhinia bassacensis* (Leguminosae: Caesalpinioideae) from Great Nicobar Island, India

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### Abstract

*Bauhinia bassacensis* var. *nicobarica*, described here as a new variety from Great Nicobar Island, India. Diagnostic characters for the variety *nicobarensis* include exstipulate leaves and obtuse lobes of leaflets, bracts ovate rusty tomentose, corolla deltoid and blade margin undulating and pods rusty tomentose. A comparative table with diagnostic morphological features to distinguish between the following three varieties of *Bauhinia bassacensis*: var. *bassacensis* var. *backeri* and var. *nicobarica* is provided. A detailed description with nomenclature, distribution, photographs and an illustration of the species is also provided.

**Key words:** *Bauhinia bassacensis* var. *nicobarica*, new taxon, Great Nicobar Island, India

### Introduction

The genus *Bauhinia* Linnaeus (1753: 374) comprises a wide range of life-forms from shrubs to trees and lianas. It comprises ca. 300 species, distributed in the pantropical regions of the world (Shu 2010). There are about 47 species found in China (Shu 2010) and 69 species reported from flora Malesiana (Larsen & Larsen 1996). In India this genus is represented by 36 species and two varieties of which four species are endemic and 13 species are planted for their ornamental values (Baker 1879; Sanjappa 1992; Bandyopadhyay *et al.* 2005). These are generally confined to Eastern (Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and West Bengal) and Western Himalaya (Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand), Central India, Western & Eastern Ghats, Peninsular India and Andaman and Nicobar Islands. In Andaman and Nicobar Islands five species are reported (Hajra *et al.* 1999).

During a recent botanical survey conducted to Great Nicobar Island, many interesting collections of plants were made. One such species of *Bauhinia* Linnaeus (1753: 374), on critical study and a thorough literature screening came close to *Bauhinia bassacensis* Gagnepain (1912: 168) var. *backeri* Larsen (1974: 122), a taxon distributed in Malaysia and Java (Larsen & Larsen 1996), but markedly distinguished from it by having exstipulate and rusty tomentose leaves, with the lobes of leaflets obtuse at apex. Based on these distinct characters the new variety is named as *Bauhinia bassacensis* var. *nicobarica*.

An analysis of literature (Drury 1864, Baker 1878, Cooke 1901, Brandis 1906, Gamble 1915, Parkinson 1923, Haines 1925, Osmaston 1926, Kanjilal 1928, Kanjilal & Bor 1938, Matthew 1981, Chawdhery & Wadhwa 1984, Haridasan & Rao 1985, Saxena & Brahmam 1994, Hajra *et al.* 1996, Pullaiah & Chennaiah 1997, Dagar & Singh 1999, Sinha 1999, Khanna *et al.* 1999, Moorthy 2000, Singh *et al.* 2000, Pullaiah & Ramamurthy 2001, Singh 2002, Bandyopadhyay *et al.* 2005, Nayar *et al.* 2006) revealed that this new taxa is not been described so far. Further scrutiny of literature as well as consultation in different Indian herbaria confirmed that this taxon is new to science.

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