

**A PLEA FOR THE CONSERVATION OF  
*DENDROBIUM APHYLLUM* (ROXB.) FISCHER (ORCHIDACEAE)**

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India has a very diverse floral wealth with an estimated 50,000 species of which c. 17,000 are flowering plants. Out of these, c. 5000 species are endemic to India. But today it is a matter of great concern that many of these flowering plants, which have economic values, are becoming endangered due to their uncontrolled trade. Along with other economically important plants, Indian orchids are also traded worldwide as ornamental plants.

Kataki (1976) and Pradhan (1977) mentioned 63 and 35 species of Orchids respectively, as seriously threatened and eventually 14 species are common to both of

their lists. Orchids are traded at a rate ranging from Rs. 5 to Rs. 100 depending upon the quality of the flower (Chakraborty, 1995). The rates are much more in abroad. A single inflorescence of hybrid *Dendrobium* is sold at a price between Rs.60 to Rs.100 in Kolkata. Among horticulturally important orchids, genera like *Aerides*, *Rhynchostylis*, *Paphiopedilum*, *Dendrobium*, etc. are highly priced.

Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal, especially the Buxa Tiger Reserve (BTR) forest area is rich in orchids. Some observations in BTR area of Jalpaiguri district revealed that the



Fig. 1 *Dendrobium aphyllum* (Roxb.) Fischer  
(Inset—Close up of the flower)

pseudobulbs (stems) of *Dendrobium aphyllum* (Roxb.) Fischer, locally known as 'Sonakhari' is being extensively collected from the wild and sold in Siliguri as ornamental plant to the local florists at a rate of Rs. 200-250 per gunny bag. The decline in the population of the above mentioned species has been observed in BTR area during the last few years due to the reason stated above. A small description and colour photograph of the species provided, so that the authorities could identify the species easily and regulate its collection from the wild.

***Dendrobium aphyllum*** (Roxb.) Fischer in Gamble, Fl. Pres. Madras: 1416. 1928.

Stems 60-90 × 6-10 cm, slender, pendulous, leafy. Leaves up to 15 cm long and 4 cm broad, ovate-lanceolate, acuminate. Inflorescences abbreviated, 1-3 flowered at each node, borne on old stems. Bracts oblong, acute. Flowers c. 5 cm across, fragrant, fragile in texture, pale rose, lip yellow; sepals 2.5 - 3 × 0.6 - 0.8 cm, oblong-lanceolate, subacute; petals broader, about 2.5 cm long and 1.5 cm broad, oblong; Lip shortly clawed, suborbicular, pubescent and ciliate, base tubular by the incurving sides, purple veined or marked at base; column short, up to 0.9 cm long.

*Fl.*: April-May.

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