

A NEW VARIETY OF *PLEIONE HUMILIS* (ORCHIDACEAE) FROM DARJEELING DISTRICT OF WEST BENGAL, INDIA

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Abstract

Pleione humilis var. *amitii* is recorded as a new variety from Darjeeling district in West Bengal. It differs from *P. humilis* in pseudobulb and lip characters. This paper provide its discription, phenology and illustration for easy identification.

Introduction

DURING BOTANICAL forays in the Eastern Himalayan Region, a blooming orchid was collected from sub-temperate climates in Darjeeling district of West Bengal. It showed a close similarity to *Pleione humilis* (Smith) D. Don. from which it however, differed in having a sub-orbicular lip and narrowly ovoid, ridged, and green pseudobulbs flushed with light pink that tapered towards apex. A detailed examination together with literature (Banerji, 1982; King and Pantling, 1898; Lucksom, 2007; Pradhan, 1979) and herbarium (LBG, CAL) studies suggested it to be a new variety of *Pleione humilis*. It has been named as *P. humilis* var. *amitii* (var. *novum*). Its Latin diagnosis, detailed description, illustrations, and distinguishing features are as follows:

Species Description

Pleione humilis var. *amitii* Ram Pal, M. Dayamma & R. P. Medhi var. *nov.*

The varietas est foederatus ad *Pleione humilis* atquin differs in having ovoid ridged tapering erga apex flushed liburnica pink ferme dimidietas from base, orbicular labia adque presence of pink loculi adque stripes instead blatteus loculi adque stripes on labia.

Plant epiphytic or lithophytic, **pseudobulbs** 4.4 - 6.2 x 0.85 - 2.84 cm, ovoid, ridged tapering towards apex, smooth, green flushed with pink, coespitose, partly enveloped in long fibrous sheaths at base; **leaf** solitary, 8-12.5 x 3.2 - 3.8 cm, narrowly elliptic, acute, tapering to sessile base. **Inflorescence** erect raceme 6.4 - 7.2 cm long, from the base of pseudobulbs, basal part enclosed in long, tubular, scarious brown sheaths

closely adpressed to groove of pseudobulb; **peduncle**, long erect, tapering towards the base, terete, smooth; **pedicellate ovary** 2.9 - 3.3 x 0.21 - 0.32 cm slender, grooved, smooth, **floral bracts** 2.7 - 4.0 cm long tubular, translucent, whitish pink, veined dark pink. **Flowers**, 5.6 - 7.1 cm across, sepal to sepal distance 3.7 - 6.1 cm, petal to petal 5.5 - 7.5 cm and **dorsal sepal** to lip 3.4 - 4.1 cm. **Sepals**, sub equal, spreading, white slightly tinged pink at base; **dorsal sepal** 3.9 - 4.8 x 1.0 - 1.2 cm narrowly oblong, obtuse, with 5 very light purple nerves; **lateral sepals** 3.9 - 4.8 x 1.0 - 1.2 cm narrowly elliptic acute, 7 nerved. **Petals** 4.2 - 4.8 x 0.7 - 0.9 cm narrowly elliptic oblong, obtuse. **Lip** 3.9 - 4.4 x 3.8 - 5.6 cm, suborbicular, very shortly clawed, white with pink spots and stripes, without side lobes, concave in the lower part with dark pink spots but expanding in to a wide mouth with marginate apex, the posterior edges entire but interior margin fringed; the disc with 8 fimbriate keels, basal end adnate to the lower part of column. **Column**, 3.1 - 3.4 x 0.7-1.0 cm, apex expanded into a broad hood with truncate erose apex, rostellum broad, projecting, notched with slightly bifurcating front, 2 chambered, **Pollinia** 4, 2 on each half, clavate, yellow (Fig. 1). Distinguishing features of *Pleione humilis* and the variety *amitii* are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Distinguishing features of *Pleione humilis* and the variety *amitii* (var. *novum*).

Characters	<i>Pleione humilis</i>	<i>Pleione humilis</i> var. <i>amitii</i> (var. <i>novum</i>)
Pseudobulb	Narrowly ovoid, suffused with purple	Ovoid, tapering towards apex, flushed with pink at base
Petals	Narrowly oblong obtuse	Oblong, obtuse, narrowing towards base
Lip	Broadly elliptic, whitish yellow with brown stripes and spots, many purple spots in the lower half	Orbicular, white with pink spots and stripes
Column	Yellowish white with purple spots	White spotted pink



Fig.1a-k. *Pleione humilis* var. *amitii*: a, Habit; b, Pseudobulb; c, Inflorescence; d, Flower (front view); e, Dorsal sepal; f, Lateral sepal; g, Lateral petal; h, Column stigmatic cavity; i, Labellum; j, Labellum of *Pleione humilis*; k, Pollinia.

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Flowers: March – April

Fruits: January – February; fruits dehisce during or after flowering.

Distribution: Chatakhpur (Darjeeling), Rare

Habitat: Cool and humid

Homotypes: India, West Bengal, Chatakhpur. 1800m; Ram Pal, M. Dayamma, R. P. Medhi (Herb NRCO, Darjeeling Campus, CAL)

Etymology: The variety has been named after Lt. Amit

Singh who laid down his life during Kargil War.

References

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