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***Gymnanthemum amygdalinum* (Delile) Sch. Bip. ex Walp (Asteraceae) – A new report to the flora of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India**

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ABSTRACT

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands host a variety of unique species; however, their diversity and ecology have yet to be explored. We are reporting *Gymnanthemum amygdalinum* (Delile) Sch. Bip. ex Walp., an angiosperm species belongs to family Asteraceae, the genus is hitherto unknown from Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which is reported here. *Gymnanthemum amygdalinum* (Delile) Sch. Bip. ex Walp., previously known from sub-Saharan Africa, US, Southern Asia, has been recently collected from Gandhi Nagar, Great Nicobar Island, India. It represents the first record of this genus in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India. A description and illustration, as well as a brief discussion, are provided.

Key words: Angiosperm, Asteraceae, new reports, Great Nicobar Island.

INTRODUCTION

The genus *Gymnanthemum* (Family: Asteraceae) which comprises c.49 species in the world (The Plant List 2013). The genus is commonly distributed in tropical Africa, America, and tropical Asia. In mainland India, the genus *Gymnanthemum* is represented by three species *G. extensum* (Wall. ex DC.) Steetz, *G. pectiniforme* (DC.) H. Rob., and *G. amygdalinum* (Delile) Sch. Bip. ex Walp.

During floristic survey of Great Nicobar Island, the authors collected a species from Gandhi Nagar village area (Fig. 1) in its flowering and fruiting stage. Later it's confirmed as *Gymnanthemum amygdalinum* (Delile) Sch. Bip. ex Walp., well known by its previous name *Vernonia amygdalina* Delile. Plant is commonly known as Bitter-leaf tree and its native to Africa. In India *G. amygdalinum* (Delile) Sch. Bip. ex Walp was reported from Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha and Telangana (Bhattacharjee *et al.*, 2013; Swamy *et al.*, 2015). Based on the available literature

(Pandey and Diwakar 2008; Shina 1999; Lakshminarasimhan and Rao 1996; Prasad *et al.*, 2009) the genus is hitherto unknown from Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which is reported here. A thorough description and color photographs are provided to assist identification in the field.

TAXONOMIC TREATMENT

Gymnanthemum amygdalinum (Delile) Sch. Bip. ex Walp., Repert. Bot. Syst. (Walpers) 2: 948. 1843. *Vernonia amygdalina* Delile, Cent. Pl. Afr. Voy. Meroe: 41. 1826. *Keringa amygdalina* (Delile) Raf. Sylva Tellur. 144. 1838. (Fig. 2).

Shrubs or small trees, grows upto 1.5-4 m tall; stem striate, fissured, light grey or brown, branches terete, older one almost glabrous, young one densely glandular pubescent. Leaves alternate, lanceolate-oblongate, or ovate-elliptic, c. 5-15 × 2-5 cm, apex acute to sub-acuminate, base cuneate, margins sub-

entire or serrate, adaxial surface glabrous or sparsely pubescent and abaxial surface densely pubescent, lateral veins 5-13 pairs, petioles 1-4 cm long, pubescent. Inflorescence capitulum, flowers sweetly scented; bracteoles 1-2, c. 0.1-0.2 cm long, peduncle short, densely puberulent and glandular. Florets 17-18 in each capitulum, pedicles 0.2-0.5 cm long. Corolla small creamy white, c. $7-9 \times 1-1.2$ mm, tubular, 5-lobed. Stamens 5, epipetalous, c. 5 mm long, filaments

glabrous, c. 2 mm long, anther 3-4 mm long, linear to linear-lanceolate. Ovary $1.5-2 \times 0.2-0.6$ mm, hairy; style 5-7 mm long, apex hairy, base glabrous, stigma hairy, c. 3-3.5 mm long. Cypselas oblong-ellipsoid, c. 2-4 mm long, 10-ribbed, with glands and bristly hairs. Pappus in 2-rows of capillary bristles, outer one short, c. 2-3 mm long, inner bristles 5-7 mm long, cream to pale yellowish-brown.

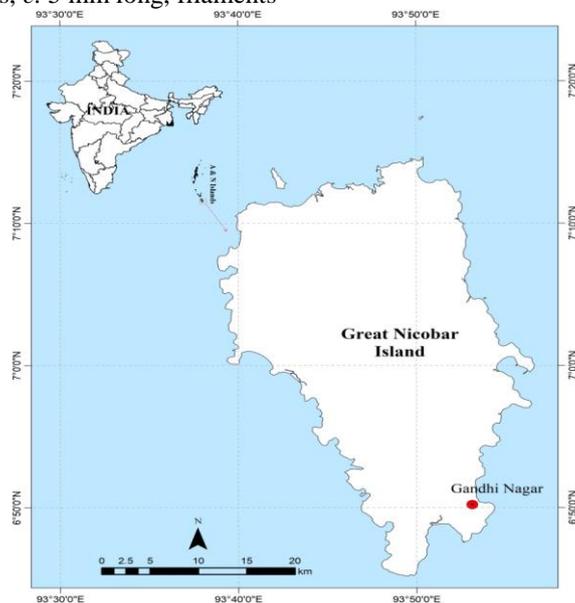


Fig. 1: Distribution of *Gymnanthemum amygdalinum* (Delile) Sch. Bip. ex Walp., in Great Nicobar Island



Fig. 2: *Gymnanthemum amygdalinum* (Delile) Sch. Bip. ex Walp. (Asteraceae): A- Habit; B- Leaf blade; C- Flowering twig; D-Head; E-Inflorescence.

Phenology: November–April.

Habitat: Rare along the road side near the habitation mask of Great Nicobar Island.

Distribution: Native to tropical Africa, apparently introduced in India (Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, West Bengal, Telangana) now from Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Brazil, Madagascar, southern Asia, America and Australia.

Specimen examined: India: Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Great Nicobar Island, Gandhi Nagar (6°50'17.54"N & 93°53'23.57"E), 03rd April, 2019. Apurba Kumar Das 004149 (ZSI).

Ethnomedicinal uses: The plant is traditionally used in the treatment of diabetes in Africa (Atangwho *et al.* 2012). The plant is also used by the traditional medical practitioners to cure malaria, helminth, laxative, digestion, wounds, appetizer and febrifuge (Ijeh & Ejike 2011).

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