



On Roxburgh's *Gelonium bifarium* (Euphorbiaceae) from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India

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Abstract

The taxonomic identity and diagnosis of *Suregada bifaria* (= *Gelonium bifarium*) is reviewed in comparison with *Suregada multiflora* (= *Gelonium multiflorum*), and the synonymy of the former with the latter, as found in Indian floras and the world checklist of Euphorbiaceae, is discussed. The distinct identity of *S. bifaria* and its presence in the Andamans is ascertained, and the name lectotypified.

Key words: Lectotypification, *Suregada bifaria*, *Suregada multiflora*, taxonomic identity

Introduction

Roxburgh, in his then unpublished Flora Indica manuscript, described three species under the unpublished genus *Gelonium* Roxb., namely *G. bifarium* Roxb., *G. lanceolatum* Roxb. and *G. fasciculatum* Roxb. Prior to Roxburgh's final publication of the Flora Indica (1832), Willdenow (1806: 831–832) validated the genus *Gelonium* Roxb. ex Willd. as well two species names in his *Species Plantarum* (*G. bifarium* Roxb. ex Willd. and *G. lanceolatum* Willd.). Only *G. fasciculatum* Roxb. was finally published by Roxburgh himself (1832: 832). All three taxa were distinguished by the shape of the lamina, number of stamens and nature of the capsules. Both *G. fasciculatum* (from the Circar mountains (Eastern Ghats) and Bengal) and *G. lanceolatum* (from the Deccan Peninsula) were described from known localities. On the other hand, Roxburgh was not aware of the exact locality of *G. bifarium* and described it from an introduced specimen in the erstwhile East India Company's Botanic Garden, Calcutta (now renamed as Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose Indian Botanic Garden). But Hooker (1887: 458–460) stated that the original collections of *G. bifarium* were from Penang (*Wallich*), Middle Andaman Islands (*Kurz*) and Perak in Peninsular Malaysia (no collector's name). *Gelonium multiflorum* was described by Jussieu (1824: 111) based on collections of Roxburgh from the Coromandel Coast. This species is widely distributed in Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, and Malaysia (as *Suregada*). Baillon (1858) shifted most species of *Gelonium* to *Suregada* Roxb. ex Rottler (1803: 206), since *Gelonium* Roxb. ex Willd. turned out to be an illegitimate name (a later homonym; Art. 53 ICN, McNeill *et al.* 2012). Hooker (1887: 459) merged *G. fasciculatum* under *G. multiflorum* while keeping the others as distinct species. In a study of trees of the Malayan flora (Whitmore 1973), the World Checklist of Euphorbiaceae (Govaerts *et al.* 2000) and the book on Euphorbiaceae of India (Balakrishnan & Chakrabarty 2007), *Suregada bifaria* (Roxb. ex Willd.) Baillon (1874: 120) also got synonymised under *Suregada multiflora* (A.Juss.) Baillon (1858: 396). The Plant List (2013) also accepted this synonymy with supporting references of the WCSP (World Checklist of Selected Plant Families) database. Their record (# 198579) reports it as a synonym based on Baillon (1874: 120), who referred a staminate flower of *S. multiflora* to *S. bifaria*.

Based on present collections of *Suregada* material from the North Andaman Islands and also on the review of the identities of earlier collections, the authors could re-establish *S. bifaria* and justify its distinct identity from other Indian species. *Suregada bifaria* was primarily distinguished by Roxburgh based on entire leaves, stamen number about fifteen and 2-celled capsules. Among these features, the nature of the capsule is very diagnostic, these being (usually) deeply dicocous. Roxburgh, hence, gave names (*nomina nuda in sched.*) such as *S. dicocca* Roxb. (*Wallich*