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Description of a new evacanthine leafhopper species *Sophonia chandrai* sp. nov., with new record of *Chudania axona* (Hemiptera: Cicadellidae) from India

NARESH M. MESHARAM^{1,2} & V.V. RAMAMURTHY³

Division of Entomology, Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi 110012, INDIA.

E-mail: ¹nmmeshram@gmail.com, ³vvrento@gmail.com

²Corresponding author

Abstract

A new evacanthine leafhopper, *Sophonia chandrai* sp. nov., is described from Manipur, India. The Chinese species, *Chudania axona* Zhang and Yang is recorded from Meghalaya, India and redescribed. A detailed morphological description, illustrations and photographs are provided. Material is deposited in the National Pusa Collection, Division of Entomology, Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi, India. A key to the known species of *Chudania* from the Indian subcontinent is also included.

Key words: morphology, Nirvanini, identification, distribution, key

Introduction

The tribe Nirvanini of the subfamily Evacanthinae consists of depressed and brightly colored leafhoppers commonly found on shrubs, herbs and grasses. The group was revised by Viraktamath & Wesley (1988) from the Indian subcontinent and Dietrich (2004) reassigned the subfamily Nirvaninae of earlier workers to the subfamily Evacanthinae as a tribe. The group has recently attracted attention of several workers as one of the Oriental species, *Sophonia orientalis* (Matsumura) has been introduced into Hawaii, mainland USA (California), the Atlantic island of Madeira (North Africa) and French Polynesia and is reported to feed on a wide variety of plants (Webb & Viraktamath 2004). Recently, this invasive Indomalayan species has been observed throughout the southern USA including the states of California, Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, Georgia and Florida (Dietrich 2011). *Sophonia* is distinguished from the other Nirvanini genera by the shorter male plates and complex aedeagus with processes on the dorsal apodemes and apex of the shaft (Viraktamath and Wesley 1988). This genus was established by Walker (1870) with *Sophonia rufitelum* Walker as the type species. Recently, Li & Chen (2005) while describing two new species provided a checklist and key to the 22 known species from China. To date, 11 species are reported from India.

Chudania Distant is one of the five genera of Nirvanini occurring in the Indian subcontinent. It can be distinguished from the allied genera by the black dorsal colour of most of the head, pronotum, and scutellum, the tumid frontoclypeus and clypellus, and the Y shaped male connective (Viraktamath and Wesley 1988). Sixteen species of *Chudania* are known so far (Dai and Zhang 2005) of which the only previously known species from India is the type species of the genus, *C. delecta* Distant, found in the sub-Himalayan region (Distant 1908, Viraktamath & Wesley 1988).

In this paper, a new species *Sophonia chandrai* sp. nov. collected from Imphal (24°49'0"N 93°57'0"E, 786 M), Manipur, India is described and illustrated. Along with this, *Chudania axona* from Umkiang (25°6'29"N 92°21'42"E, 1379M), Jaintia Hill district, Meghalaya, India was collected and it is documented as a new record from India. Also the description of the only other species known so far from India *C. delecta* is updated and key to all these species provided.