



A new species of *Sonerila* Roxb. (Melastomataceae) from Kerala, India

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Abstract

Sonerila veldkampiana, a new species of Melastomataceae collected from an exposed, high-elevation rocky grassland in Kerala, India is described and illustrated. It resembles *S. rotundifolia*, but differs in having several important characters like pilose leaf-lamina, terete and glabrous peduncle, inflorescence with 10–35 flowers in branched or unbranched scorpioid cymes, an obscurely ridged hypanthium, long acuminate anthers with a deeply cordate base, and seeds with a sub-excurrent raphe.

Key words: Endemic species, Melastomataceae, Sonerileae, *Sonerila veldkampiana*, Wayanad District

Introduction

The genus *Sonerila* Roxburgh (1820: 180) (Melastomataceae) belongs to the tribe Sonerileae Triana (1866: 457). The ca. 175 species (Lundin & Nordenstam 2009) of *Sonerila* are distributed from Sri Lanka and India to the Indo-Pacific (Cellinese 1997), and include caulescent and acaulescent herbs. *Sonerila* is a large and poorly understood genus, easily diagnosed by having mostly uniparous (scorpioid) cymes, prevalently trimerous flowers with one or rarely two whorls of stamens. They are herbs of shady habitats, often with a whorl of large, somewhat turgid leaves, sometimes with tubers, and grow low on trunks or fallen logs, or in moist rocky crevices.

In India, *Sonerila* is represented by about 35 species. Clarke (1879) recognized 43 Indian species and also provided names for three doubtful species. Out of the 43 species, eight were acaulescent of which only three, *S. rotundifolia* Beddome (1861: 74), *S. scapigera* Dalzell (1848: 672), and *S. wallichii* Bennett (1838: 215), were from Peninsular India. Gamble (1919) included the above three acaulescent species among the total of 13 species of *Sonerila* in his *Flora of the Presidency of Madras*. Later workers (Fischer 1932, 1935, 1938; Nayar 1969, 1976; Giri & Nayar 1985a, b, 1986a, b; 1987a; Prakash & Mehrotra 1988; Gopalan & Henry 1989; Giri *et al.* 1992; Ravikumar 1999; Murugan & Manickam 2002; Josephine *et al.* 2003; Lundin & Nordenstam 2009; Murugesan & Balasubramaniam 2011) have described new species and varieties (Giri & Nayar 1986c; 1987b) from India, and also reported distribution extensions for several taxa (Yoganarasimhan *et al.* 1976). Lundin (1998) made an extensive study of the Melastomataceae with special emphasis on the Ceylonese and South Indian species.

In the Western Ghats of Peninsular India, there are about 25 species and two varieties of *Sonerila* (Ravikumar 1999; Murugesan & Balasubramaniam 2011). During the study of flowering plants of the