

A NEW SPECIES OF SONERILA ROXB. (MELASTOMATACEAE) FROM INDIA

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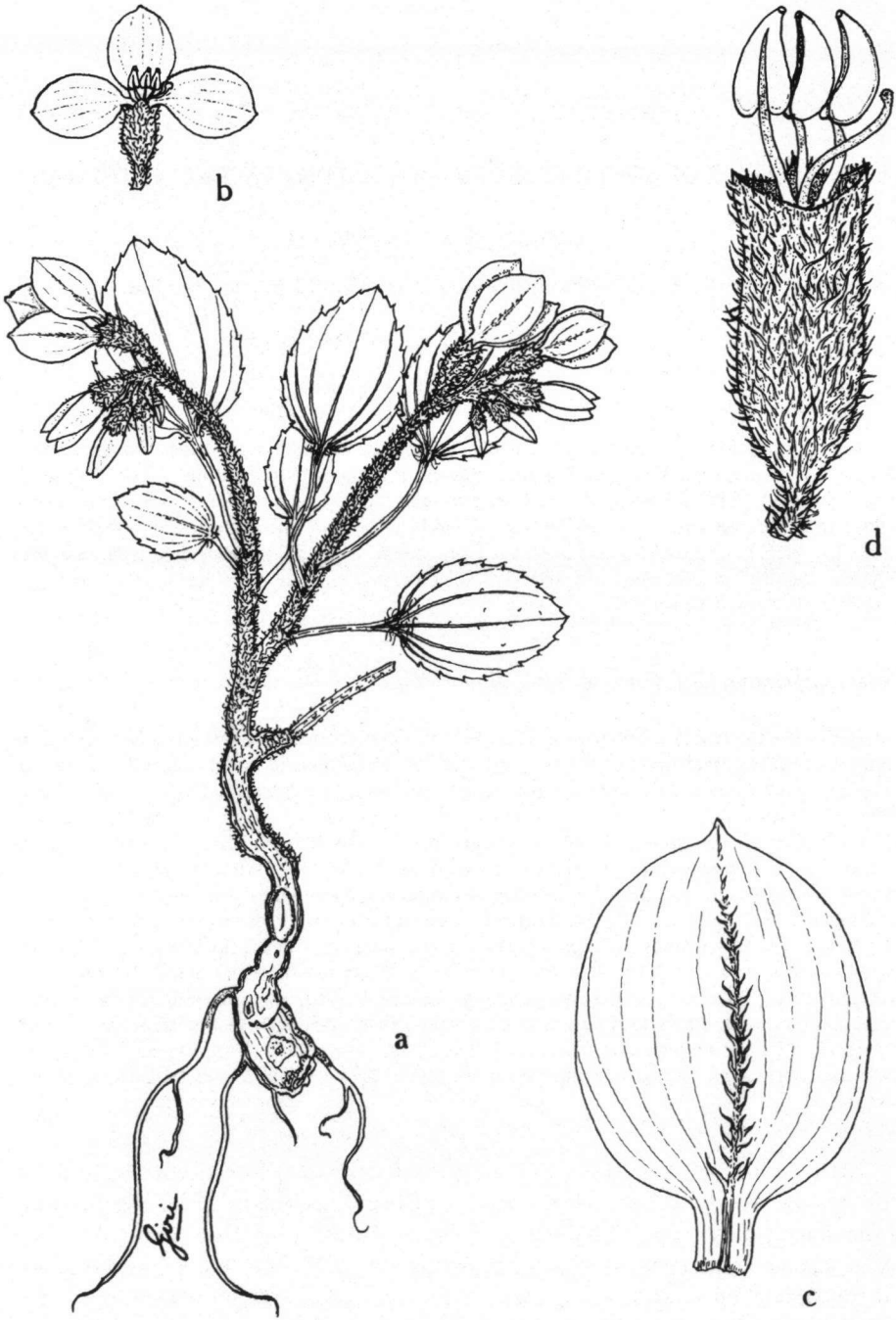
SUMMARY

During study of the materials of the genus *Sonerila* Roxb. (Melastomataceae) in the Central National Herbarium (CAL) of the Botanical Survey of India the authors came across some specimens collected from different parts of Southern India. These specimens after critical study come closer to *S. wightiana* Arn., a Ceylonese species, but can be easily distinguished by several characters. The distinguishing characters are keyed out below. The new taxon is described here with illustrations. The species is named after its collector, J. S. Gamble, who has made an eminent work on the flora of South India.

Sonerila gamblei Giri & Nayar, *spec. nov.* — Fig. 1.

Herba, 8–16 cm alta, ramosa, caulis ad pars superiore dense squamato-pilosus, ad inferiore lignosus, plus minusve compressus, saepe irregulariter articulatus, ad nodos radicans; interdum strigillosus vel glabratus. Folia irregulariter disposita in caule, lamina ovata (0.6–)1.5–2(–2.5) × (0.5–)1–1.5(–1.8) cm, ad basin subrotundata vel subcordata, ad apicem acuta, margine serrata, 5- vel 7-plinervia, nervis centralibus conspicuis, pagina superiore et inferiore glabra vel sparse setosa, minute punctata, membranacea; petiolus (5–)12–18(–25) mm longus, tenuissimus, glaber vel sparse pilosus ad basin laminae. Inflorescentia terminalia, scorpoidea, 4–6 flores, pedunculus 3–6 cm longus, dense brunneus squamato-pilosus. Pedicellus 1–2.5 mm longus, dense setosus. Calycis tubus anguste urceolatus, 5–7.5 mm longus, dense squamato-setosus; dentes 3, late triangulares 1.5–2.5 × 2–3 mm, brunnei squamato-setosi pagina dorsali, glabri pagina ventrali. Petala 3, oblonga vel obovato-oblonga 12–15 × 8–10 mm, apice mucronata, margine integra, nervis centralibus distinctis, venulis transversalibus indistinctis, glabra, ad nervos squamata, rosea. Stamina 3, filamentis 2–3 mm longis, glabris, antheris 2–3 mm longis, ovatis, non-rostratis, porosis ad apicem. Ovarium glabrum; stylus 3.5–4.5 mm longus, stigma capitatum. Capsula ovoideo-oblonga, distincte costata; semina numerosa, minute tuberculata. — *Holotypus*: *Gamble 13454* (CAL), Nilgiri, Tamil Nadu.

Herbs, 8–16 cm high, branched, upper parts densely clothed with scaly hairs, lower parts woody, more or less compressed, often irregularly articulated, rooting from nodes, sometimes strigillose or glabrate. *Leaves* irregularly arranged on the stem, lamina ovate (0.6–)1.5–2(–2.5) × (0.5–)1–1.5(–1.8) cm, base subrounded to subcordate, apex acute, margin serrate, 5–7-nerved, midrib prominent, upper and lower surfaces of leaves glabrous or sparsely hairy, minutely spotted, membranous, petioles (5–)12–18(–25) mm long, ribbon-like, glabrous or very sparsely hairy at



the base of lamina. *Inflorescence* terminal, scorpioid, 4–6-flowered, peduncles 3–6 cm long, densely clothed with brownish scaly hairs. Pedicels 1–2.5 mm long, densely setose. *Calyx tube* narrowly urceolate, 5–7.5 mm long, densely covered with scaly hairs; lobes 3, broadly triangular, 1.5–2.5 × 2–3 mm, brownish scaly hairy on dorsal side, glabrous on ventral side. Petals 3, oblong or obovate-oblong, 12–15 × 8–10 mm, apex mucronate, margin entire, midrib distinct, other nerves indistinct, glabrous, scaly on midrib, rose-coloured. *Stamens* 3, filaments 2–3 mm long, glabrous; anthers 2–3 mm long, without beak, pore apical. *Ovary* glabrous, style 3.5–4.5 mm long, stigma capitate. *Capsule* ovoid-oblong, distinctly ribbed, seeds many, minutely tuberculate.

Distribution. India: Tamil Nadu, Kerala.

Exsiccata. Nilgiri, Tamil Nadu, Gamble 13454 (holotype CAL); Sispara, Tamil Nadu, Nov. 1883, sine coll. s.n. (MH 21408); Sispara, Nov. 1890, sine coll. s.n. (MH 21410); Anaimudi adjoining hill, Kottayam Dist., Kerala, 2300 m, 9 Nov. 1965, Shetty 26548; without precise locality, Wight s.n. (MH 21402).

Ecology. Grows in damp or wet soil in open areas or in rock crevices and has been collected up to an altitude of 2300 m.

Affinities. The species is closely related to *Sonerila wightiana* Arn., a species endemic to Ceylon. However, by the nature of the habit it is related to the Indian species *S. speciosa* Zenk. But the new taxon can be easily differentiated by the following key:

- 1 a. Stem fleshy; stem and branches glabrous; anthers with a long and distinct narrow beak **S. speciosa**
- b. Stem woody; stem and branches densely hairy; anthers ovate, without a beak **2**
- 2 a. Plant attaining 20–50 cm or more height, erect, round. Leaves opposite, usually unequal-sided, petioles densely clothed with rusty brown hairs, both surfaces of leaves densely hairy particularly on the nerves beneath, leaves pinnately veined. Inflorescence without a distinct peduncle; petals 6–8 mm long
S. wightiana
- b. Plant attaining 8–16 cm height, lower portion often creeping, articulated, compressed. Leaves irregularly arranged on the stem, spiral, whorled or fasciculate, equal-sided, petioles glabrous or with few soft hairs at the base of lamina, both surfaces glabrous or with very few scattered hairs. Inflorescence with a distinct peduncle 3–6 cm long; petals 12–15 mm long **S. gamblei**

Fig. 1. *Sonerila gamblei* Giri & Nayar. a. Habit, × 1; b. flower splitted open to show the anthers, × 1; c. single petal, × 0.2; d. flower, petals taken out, × 0.2.