



Salvia misella (Lamiaceae)—A new record for Asia from the southern Western Ghats of India

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The mint family, Lamiaceae is generally regarded as being one of the most highly derived plant families from the viewpoint of floral structures (Hedge 1992). The family is best known for their essential oils common to many members of the family and are a major source of culinary herbs. Within the subfamily Nepetoideae tribe Mentheae, the subtribe Salviineae includes 8 genera with about 954 species in the world (Harley *et al.* 2004). The genus *Salvia* L. (1753: 23) alone account for over 900 species in the subtribe and is the largest genera in Labiatae (Mabberley 2008). It is a tropical and subtropical genus mostly found in montane areas with the major diversity in Mediterranean, Central Asia, the highlands of Mexico and the Andes in South America (Rodrigues-Hahn *et al.* 1992).

In India, the genus is represented by 24 species (Hooker 1885, Mukerjee 1940) including many introduced species owing to their horticultural value and some are now naturalized in the wild. No species of *Salvia* has so far been reported as endemic to India. During one of our floristic exploration in Idukki districts of Kerala in November 2014, the authors were able to locate a population of an interesting species of *Salvia* with small blue flowers at Kattappana. Several populations were also noticed in full bloom in the nearby areas growing along roadsides and waste places. Information about this taxon was never being recorded in any of the published Flora from India or neighbouring Asian countries. Hence, a detailed search was conducted within taxonomic literature on neotropical *Salvia* (Wood & Harley 1989). The study enabled us to identify the species as *Salvia misella* Kunth (1818: 290), a native of tropical America. Type specimens of *S. misella* kept in K and P herbaria were compared against our collections to corroborate its identification. Popularly known as Silene, Blue Creeping Sage or River Sage (Richardson & Keng 2010), this species was not so far reported from Asia. The present collection forms a new record of this taxon for the Asian continent. Hence, a detailed description (prepared based on observations of living specimens collected during field trips), illustration and photographs are provided here for easy identification.

Taxonomy

***Salvia misella* Kunth (1818: 290).** Type:—MEXICO, *Humboldt & Bonpland s.n.* (holotype P! [sheet no. P00670423]; isotype P! [sheet no. P00136263]). Fig. 1, 2

=*S. riparia* Kunth (1818: 300). Type:—PERU, *Humboldt & Bonpland 3530* (holotype P! [sheet no. P00670440]).

=*S. obscura* Benth (1833: 245). Type:—JAMAICA, *Distin* (holotype K! [sheet no. K000479224]).

Annual or biennial herb, erect or ascending, 30–90 cm tall; stem acutely quadrangular, sulcate, slightly bulging above nodes, often rooting below, small dark brown spots all over and denser near nodes, profusely branching, minutely gland dotted, covered with hispidulous or pilose hairs up to 1 mm long. Leaves membranaceous, broadly ovate or rhombic-ovate, 2.5–6.5 × 1–4 cm, acute, margin serrate, base broad, abruptly contracted and decurrent upon the length of petiole, dull green, densely hispid on both sides with 1 mm long hairs, dense on lower veins; petiole not well demarkated. Inflorescence simple, terminal, racemes 10–20 cm. long, with 8–12 interrupted verticils of 2–3 flowers, peduncle 2–7 cm long, densely covered with glandular hairs throughout. Bracts persistent, broadly ovate, tip blunt with a point, margin entire, 3–3.5 × 2–2.5 mm, glabrous inside, glandular-pilose outside; flowers with 1–1.5 mm long pedicel, up to 3 mm long in fruits. Calyx campanulate, 4.5–5 mm long at anthesis, 6–6.5 mm in fruits, clothed with dense, 0.5 mm long gland tipped sticky hairs all over, and yellow punctiform glands dispersed on the surface, longitudinally 10–12 veined,