

**CYCLEA BARBATA MIERS (MENISPERMACEAE): A NEW RECORD OF A
MEDICINAL PLANT FROM SOUTH INDIA**

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ABSTRACT: Cyclea barbata Miers is reported for the first time from south India (Silent Valley forests, Kerala). This is commonly used as a medicinal plant in Java, for stomach troubles and as a prophylactic against fever. Nomenclature, description ad other relevant notes are provided.

The specific name *Cyclea barbata* (Menispermaceae) was validly published by Miers in 1871 (Contrib. Bot. 3: 237), based on plant collections made by Wallich from Burma and Taong Dong (wall. Cat. No. 4978 Aa and 4978E respectively, 1831-1832), as the types. Hooker and Thomson (1872) consider this as a heterotypic synonym of *Cyclea peltata* (Lam.) Hook .f. & Thoms. Diels (1910), Forman (1960) and many other later workers treat this as a separate species. *Cyclea barbata* is distributed in Malaysia and adjoining islands, Java, Burma, Siam, Cochinchina and is Assam in India.

During a study of the flora of silent Valley forests, Palghat District, Kerala, the present authors have collected *Cyclea barbata* from Walakkad at an elevation of about 1200 m, in the northern part of the Silent Valley. This is the first report of the species from South India and from outside Assam in India.

C. barbata Miers closely resembles *C. peltata* (Lam.) Hood. F. Thoms., from which

it can be easily distinguished by its deltoid-ovate, hispid leaves with acutely acuminate apex with finely mucronate acumen and long male and female inflorescence with dense capitates flowers.

This species is of some medicinal importance (Forman, 1960). In Java, the leaves of this are used to make a preparation in the form of a jelly which is consumed as a stomach medicine. A brew prepared from the dried roots is used as a prophylactic against fever.

A description of the plant is given below to facilitate its easy identification.

Cyclea barbata Miers (in Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist. 3.48: 19. 1866, nom. nud.) Contrib. Bot 3:237. 1871; Diels in Engl. Pflanz. Menisp. 314. 1916; Carib. F1. Indo- Chine 1:139. 1938, pro parte; Backer & Bekn. F1. Java (em.ed.) 3. fam 34:20 1941; Forman, Kew Bull. 14:76. 1960. *C. wallichii* Diels in Engl. Pflanz. Menisp. 315. 1916. *C. ciliate* Carib. In Kew Bull. 1922: 23. 1922 et F1. Siam Enum. 1:71.1925. *C. Peltata* (non

(Lam) Hook. F. & Thoms.) Miq., Fl. Ind. Bat. 1(2): 86. 1858, pro parte.

Climbing shrubs with tuberous root stock; stem slender, glabrescent; leaves very variable in size, 8-16 cm long and 4-12 cm broad, deltoid-ovate, acutely acuminate at apex with finely mucronate acumen, rounded, slightly emarginated at base, basally 7-9 nerved, chartaceous, hispid on both sides; petiole 3-6 cm long, hispid; male flowers yellowish-green, in dense, capitate, hairy clusters on 6-14 cm long axillary inflorescence, pedicels 1-2 mm long; calyx turbinate, 4-5 lobed, puberulous, lobes about half the length of the tube, petals connate, margin truncate, glabrous; synandrium 1-2

mm long, exserted; female flowers slightly longer than the male, yellowish-green, in dense sessile heads on 6-15 cm long, axillary in-florescence; sepals 2, obovate, pilose on outer surface; petals 2, obovate, pilose on outer surface; petals 2, opposite to sepals, glabrous; ovary curved-ellipsoid, 1 mm long, densely hairy, stigma 3-laciniate; drupe 5-7 mm long, subglobose, oblique, puberulous; endocarp with 3 rows of papiliform tubercles on both surfaces (fig.1). Specimens examined: Prasanna SV 10342 & Sabu SV 11302 Walakkad (1200m), Silent Valley, Palghat Dist., Kerala, CALI & K.

Flowering: February – June.



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