



***Murdannia satheeshiana*—a new species of Commelinaceae from the Western Ghats, India**

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Abstract

Murdannia satheeshiana (Comelinaceae) from Mathikettanshola National Park, Idukki District, Kerala, (Western Ghats, India) is described and illustrated. The new species can be distinguished from the similar species *M. pauciflora* by differences in the sizes of several parts of the plants and seed morphology. A key to the southern Indian species of *Murdannia* with axillary cymose inflorescences and orange-yellow flowers is also included.

Key words: Kerala, Mathikettanshola, axillary cymose inflorescence, grassland

Introduction

The genus *Murdannia* Royle (1840: 403; *Comelinaceae*) is pantropical and warm temperate in distribution and diversified in tropical Asia (Faden 2000). The genus has 59 species in total (Govaerts & Faden 2004) and 25 taxa (including 2 subspecies) in India (Karthikeyan *et al.* 1989), of which 18 are reported from the Western Ghats. Among the Western Ghats species viz. *Murdannia pauciflora* Brückner (in Engler & Prantl 1930: 173), *M. versicolor* Brückner (in Engler & Prantl 1930: 173), *M. lanuginosa* Brückner (in Engler & Prantl 1930: 173) and *M. crocea* subsp. *ochracea* (Dalz.) Faden (1977: 188) have axillary cymose inflorescences composed of 1–4 cincinni with orange-yellow flowers (Dalzell 1851; Wight 1853; Dalzell & Gibson 1861; Clarke 1881; Hooker 1894; Fisher, 1935). Later taxonomic studies on this genus (Nampy & Joby 2003, 2008) also noted the Western Ghats as one center of diversity. During floristic investigation in Mathikettanshola, a high elevation shola-grassland in the National Park in the Idukki district of Kerala state, Western Ghats region, a species of *Murdannia* with an axillary cymose inflorescences of 1–4 cincinni with orange-yellow flowers was collected. A detailed study with similar species including the type specimen of *Murdannia pauciflora* proved it as new to science; it is described and illustrated below.

Description

***Murdannia satheeshiana* Joby, Nisha & Unni, *sp. nov.* (Fig.1, A–N, & Fig.2, A, C, D, F–P)**

Murdanniae pauciflorae similis, surculis 2.5–10.0 cm longis (contra 20–60 cm), ramis erectis ad ascendentes (contra repentibus ad ascendentes), vaginis 0.2–0.3 cm longis (contra usque ad 0.5 cm). cincinnis 0.2–0.3 cm longis (contra 0.6–0.7cm), floribus 0.5–0.6 cm diam. (contra 1.0–1.2 cm), capsulis ovato-oblongis (contra ellipticis), seminibus rugosis cum cristis et sulcis, sulcis materia alba et granulis farinosis (contra scrobiculatis materia alba farinosa fasciculis rotundatis) differt.