**Gentianopsis paludosa** var. *alpina* (Gentianaceae), a new record for India from Ladakh, Trans-Himalaya

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**Abstract:** *Gentianopsis paludosa* (Hook.f.) Ma var. *alpina* T.N.Ho. is reported as a new record for India from the Trans-Himalayan region of Ladakh, Union Territory in India. The identification is confirmed based on diagnostic characters, such as branching from the base, oblong to elliptic-lanceolate cauline leaves, 5–20 flowers per plant, up to 20 cm long pedicels and white to creamy yellow corolla. A detailed taxonomic description with coloured photographs of its diagnostic features is provided to facilitate easy field identification.

**Keywords:** Biodiversity, Taxonomy, Trans-Himalaya.

**Introduction**

World over, the family Gentianaceae comprises about 100 genera and 1800 species (Pringle, 2014). In India, the family is represented by c. 20 genera, including *Gentianopsis* Ma (Garg, 1988). Until 1951, *Gentianopsis* was placed within *Gentianella* Moench, but later on it was recognised as a separate genus (Ma, 1951; Ilis, 1965). *Gentianopsis* can be easily distinguished from *Gentianella* on the basis of floral characters such as flattened ellipsoidal flower buds, dissimilar pair of calyx, distinct gynophores and enlarged stigma (Ma, 1951). Globally, *Gentianopsis* comprises c. 22 species, mainly distributed in temperate regions of the northern Hemisphere (POWO, 2019). Several species of *Gentianopsis* possess medicinal properties and are used in Tibetan traditional medicine (Xue & Li, 2011). During recent botanical surveys conducted in the Trans-Himalayan region of Ladakh, the authors collected hitherto unreported specimens of *Gentianopsis* taxa in India. After detailed morphological investigation of the collected specimens with the help of the relevant literature (Ho & Pringle, 1995), the specimens were identified as *G. paludosa* (Hook.f.) Ma var. *alpina* T.N.Ho, a taxon previously not discovered in this region, despite several floristic studies on the flora of the region (Gurmet, 2004; Chaurasia et al., 2008; Kala, 2011; Dvorsky et al., 2018; Dar & Khuroo, 2020). The new variety is also not reported from other regions of India (Garg, 1988). Therefore, *G. paludosa var. alpina* is reported here for the first time in India, from the Trans-Himalayan region of Ladakh.

**Materials and Methods**

Standard methods were used for collection, processing and preparation of the herbarium specimens (Bridson & Forman, 1998). Voucher specimens have been deposited at the University of Kashmir Herbarium (KASH). Identification was carried out by consulting Gentianaceae in the *Flora of China* (Ho & Pringle, 1995). The micro-morphological characters were analysed and photographed using a trinocular S9D stereo microscope integrated with 10 MP CMOS-camera and LASX image processing software (Leica, Wetzlar, Germany). The geo-coordinates were recorded with an eTrex 30x global positioning system (Garmin, New Taipei City, Taiwan).
Taxonomic Treatment

Gentianopsis paludosa (Hook.f.) Ma var. alpina
T.N.Ho, Acta Biol. Plateau Sin. 1: 41. 1982. Type: CHINA, Qinghai, Jiuzhi Xian, Alt. 3820 m, 23.07.1971, Qinghai Inst. Biol. Golog. Exped. 313 (holo NWBI!)

Fig. 1

Annual herbs, 3–40 cm tall. Stems erect, branched from the base. Leaves dimorphic; basal leaves 3–5 pairs, petiolate, petioles angled, 1.5–3 cm long, lamina spatulate, 0.5–4 × 0.5–1.5 cm, base cuneate, margins scabrous, leaf tip rounded; cauline leaves 1–4 pairs, opposite, sessile, 0.5–6.0 × 0.5–1.9 cm, lamina oblong to elliptic-lanceolate, base obtuse, margins scabrous, leaf tip obtuse, 1–3-veined. Flowers solitary, axillary and terminal, 5–20 per plant, bisexual, 3–6 cm long; pedicels 1.5–20 cm long, light green to creamy white. Calyx 1–3.5 cm long, 4-lobed; lobes unequal with membranous margins, outer lobes prominently triangular, inner lobes ovate, apex acute-acuminate, midvein of the lobe strong and conspicuously keeled. Petals 4, white to creamy yellow, tubular, corolla tube 1.5–3.5 cm long; lobes oblong, 1.5–2.5 cm long, apex rounded-truncate, free end of the lobes proximally fringed. Stamens 4, introrse, epipetalous; filament length 1–3.5 cm, 2.5 cm basally attached to the corolla tube and 0.5–1.5 cm free, white-transparent; anthers versatile, 2–3 mm in length. Nectaries 4, alternate with stamens, 4–6 mm above the base of corolla, suborbicular. Ovary monocarpellary, fusiform, 1.5–3.5 cm; style 1–1.4 mm long; stigma bi-lobed, semi-elliptic, 1–1.3 × 1–1.6 mm. Capsule ellipsoid with tapering ends, 2–6.5 cm × 2–4 mm. Seeds ovoid to lanceoloid-ellipsoid, 0.5–1.5 × 0.3–0.6 mm, golden-brown.

Flowering & fruiting: Flowering from June to July and fruiting from August to September.

Habitat: Mountain stream banks, alpine meadows, moist mountain slopes.

Distribution: China, now also in India; between 3100 to 4000 m altitude (Fig. 2).

Specimens examined: INDIA, Ladakh, Kargil district, Bhimbat, N 34°26'50.59", E 75°49'34.12", 3191 m, 05.09.2020, S. Banoo, A.A. Khuroo & A.H. Ganie 45253; Gindial, N 34°25'50.17", E 75°50'57.52", 3197 m, 17.07.2019, S. Banoo, A.A. Khuroo & A.H. Ganie 45045; Goshan, N 34°26'38.75", E 75°44'49.82", 3219 m, 29.07.2020, S. Banoo, A.A. Khuroo & A.H. Ganie 45046; Matayen, N 34°21'57.76", E 75°35'22.19", 3285 m, 13.06.2019, S. Banoo, A.A. Khuroo & A.H. Ganie 45047; Mushkoo, N 34°26'16.31", E 75°39'48.71", 3205 m, 17.07.2020, S. Banoo, A.A. Khuroo & A.H. Ganie 45044; Pandrass, N 34°24'50.92", E 75°37'55.77", 3221 m, 12.07.2019, S. Banoo, A.A. Khuroo & A.H. Ganie 45048 (KASH).

Notes: Gentianopsis paludosa var. alpina can be distinguished from var. paludosa by many morphological characters. In the former the plants have 5–20 flowers, the corolla is white to creamy yellow, the pedicel light green to cream coloured and the branches arise from the base, whereas in the latter variety the plants are 1 or 2-flowered, the corolla blue, the pedicel brown-coloured and the branches arise much above the base (Fig. 3, Table 1).

The species, Gentianopsis paludosa is commonly known as “shi sheng bian lei” in China, and has been reported to be used for the treatment of conjunctivitis, hypertension, haemorrhoids, hepatitis, nephritis, gastroenteritis, dyspepsia, fever, influenza, and diarrhoea (Guo, 1987; Xue & Li, 2011). Phytochemical studies have shown that it contains xanthones, terpenoids and flavonoids (Zhang et al., 1980; Wang et al., 2004, 2006). The present distribution record of G. paludosa var. alpina from the remote mountainous region of Ladakh in India expands its range, and the variety merits further research to investigate its potential phytochemical constituents and pharmacological applications. During the present study, it was observed that the plant is locally consumed as a wild vegetable...
Fig. 1. *Gentianopsis paludosa* (Hook.f.) Ma var. *alpina* T.N.Ho: a. Habit; b. Habit showing branching from the base; c. Basal leaf; d. Cauleine leaf; e. Flower; f. Calyx lobes showing membranous margins; g. Nectaries alternating with stamens; h. Anther; i. Carpel with short style and lobed stigma; j. Fruit; k. Seeds (from S. Banoo, A.A. Khuroo & A.H. Ganie 45044; photos by S. Banoo).
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Fig. 2. Map of the study area and collection localities of Gentianopsis paludosa (Hook.f.) Ma var. alpina T.N.Ho in Ladakh (QGIS Version 3.18, 2020).

Table 1. Comparison of diagnostic characters between Gentianopsis paludosa var. alpina and G. paludosa var. paludosa

| Diagnostic characters | G. paludosa (Hook.f.) Ma var. alpina T.N.Ho | G. paludosa (Hook.f.) Ma var. paludosa |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Stem                  | Branched from the base                      | Branched much above the base           |
| No. of flowers per plant | 5–20                         | 1 or 2                                |
| Corolla               | Whitish to creamy yellow                  | Bright blue, sometimes pale yellow at base |
| Pedicels              | 1.5–20 cm long, light green to creamy white | 2–12 cm long, brown                   |

during the early vegetative stage. Furthermore, it has been observed that this taxon shows a restricted distribution and occurs only in a few localities in relatively small populations. However, its conservation status in India needs further detailed population level studies at much larger spatial scale across the region.

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Fig. 3. Comparison of diagnostic characters of *Gentianopsis paludosa* (Hook.f.) var. *alpina* T.N.Ho (*a*1–*c*1) and *G. paludosa* (Hook.f.) var. *paludosa* (*a*2–*c*2): *a*. Stem branching; *b*. Corolla; *c*. Pedicel (*a*1–*c*1 from S. Banoo, A.A. Khuroo & A.H. Ganie 45044, and *a*2–*c*2 from S. Banoo, A.A. Khuroo & A.H. Ganie 45054; photos by S. Banoo).
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