BOOK REVIEW

Gentianaceae of the North West Himalaya—A Revision. (Intern. Biosci. Monogr.-17). by Garg, (nee' Agrawal) Dr. (Mrs.) Sunita. 1987. 22 × 29 cm ; pp. i-iv, 1-342 ; 27 maps, 51 plates of line drawings and 12 of halftones. Today and Tomorrow, New Delhi-4. Price : Rs. 595.00 or $ 79.00.

The family Gentianaceae includes many plants of medicinal, as well as ornamental value. The family occurs in India mainly in the northwestern region, a revisionary account of the taxa occurring in the northwest Himalayas sorts out the taxonomic and nomenclatural anomalies in the majority of genera and disputed species of India.

The work is based on the doctoral dissertation of the author and has, therefore, been accomplished with critical approach. About 3000 specimens are said to have been examined during this study, which means a very substantial part of total holdings in India.

The work provides a brief description of topography and climate of northwest Himalaya, a historical account of the taxonomic work on the family in India, particularly in the area of study, the methodology, morphology of the family, basis of taxonomic concepts and conclusions, phytogeographic analysis and comparison with neighbouring as also with some distant regions. A detailed taxonomic treatment of four tribes, fourteen genera and eighty two species and varieties, with well drawn dichotomous keys, exhaustive citations, types, synonymy, local names, descriptions, distribution, ecology, uses, cultivation, and exsiccatae form the main text of the book.

The work is different from usual taxonomic treatments, in that several biosystematic and biological aspects, like cytology, chemotaxonomy, anatomy, pollination, embryology and diseases are discussed. The work also has a section of use in conservational aspects, and a list of rare, threatened or insufficiently known taxa, as also of the endemics, in the family from the region of study, is provided. This list can from the basis for search of rarely collected taxa and their conservation by introduction in gardens or even in original habitats.

The salient findings include one new sp., *Swertia alpina*, two new series, *Swertia* sect. *Ophelia*, ser. *Ciliatae* and ser. *Racemosae*, five new records for India, three new records for northwest India and nine changes in nomenclature and taxonomic concepts. The work is profusely illustrated with line drawings, photographs and maps for distribution of species. Dr. Garg deserves congratulations for this useful contribution to literature on Indian plant taxonomy.

The printing, production and binding of the book are good. But, the photographs do not provide much information, except perhaps for some idea of the size and general facies of the plants. Little on their labels is legible. They would have been more helpful in double or even larger size, with detailed legends on what all is written on their labels.

On the whole, the book is a good example of critical revisionary work and would be very useful to teachers and research scholars in taxonomy and to phytogeographers, but the price of the book @ Rs. 595.00 (or $ 79.00) is bound to restrict its presence in libraries of wellfunded institutions.

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