

Systematic Studies in Polygonaceae of Kashmir Himalaya by A. H. Munshi and G. N. Javied, (Published by Scientific Publishers, Jodhpur, India), 1986, pp. 215, (ISBN 8-85046-32-8), Price Rs. 275.

The Polygonaceae are predominantly herbaceous plants of the north temperate regions and of high mountains but of limited distribution elsewhere in the tropics. The monogeneric, *Oxyria digyna* is unique in occurring in the arctic zone, on mountain ranges of Europe and Asia and even on the high mountains along the equator in East Africa. The family is well represented on the Himalayan mountain system. Some of its members, like *Bistorta affines* (D. Don) Greene (syn. *Polygonum affine* D. Don), form attractive creeping patches on rocks at high altitudes adding colour to the landscape with their pink, red or purple flowers. A few are of food value (buckwheat, *Rheum*) and medicinally useful (*Rheum-rhubarb*).

The book under review gives an exhaustive account of the morphology (including anatomy and cytology with chromosome numbers), taxonomy, palynology, epidermal features and relevant phytogeographical aspects of as many as 50 species belonging to 10 genera of the family collected by the

authors in different sectors of Kashmir Himalaya at altitudes ranging between 1000 and 4800 m. above msl. The supporting illustrations, however, are unsatisfactory, particularly those of Herbarium sheets in the taxonomy section. Line diagrams are always preferable for depicting the diagnostic features of a species. The photographs in other sections are also poor (e.g. what can one make of the illustration no.1. in Plate LV? – nothing is seen here, at least in the reviewer's copy). The book concludes with a general discussion, bibliography and index.

While, no doubt, there is useful information in the book, it can be of interest only to the select few interested in the particular family. For a first look, the book appears well produced and printed but there are several printing errors and the binding is weak (it had split even when it came to the hands of the reviewer). The price is also prohibitive, perhaps, even for the libraries.

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ANNOUNCEMENT

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