

Meconopsis gakyidiana: Bhutan's National Flower and a Symbol of Happiness



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Figure 1. Flowers of *Meconopsis gakyidiana* showing variation in corolla colour with flower age: newly opened flowers display a deep purple corolla, while older fully opened flowers appear paler, with one flower exhibiting a pinkish tinge. Photo by Phuentsho.

The national flower, formerly regarded as a subspecies of *Meconopsis grandis*, has been taxonomically revised and recognized as a distinct species, *Meconopsis gakyidiana* in 2016 (Figure 1) [1]. It is a polycarpic herb with height ranging from 45 – 120

cm with rhizomes, fibrous roots, and bristly stems. Leaves are oblong to ovate, flowers nodding, 6 – 15 cm wide, petals blue to purple. It grows in shrubberies and forest edges at 3,700 – 4,300 m in Bhutan, Arunachal Pradesh, and Xizang (Tibet) [1].

As the plant represents Bhutan's national flower, the species epithet *gakyidiana* was derived from the Dzongkha term *gakyid* (happiness), to symbolize Bhutan's guiding developmental philosophy of Gross National Happiness [1]. In Dzongkha, the species is known as *Tsernyoen Meto*, while the Brokpa community of Merak refers to it as *Kuengyen Mendo*, which literally translates to “the ornament flower of all the people.”

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Although a few other species of the genus *Meconopsis*, such as *Meconopsis horridula*, *Meconopsis paniculata*, *Meconopsis bhutanica* (previously identified as *Meconopsis discigera*), *Meconopsis simplicifolia*, and *Meconopsis wallichii* (now identified as *Meconopsis napaulensis* [2]) have been reported to be used in the formulation of traditional medicines in Bhutan [2,3], *Meconopsis gakyidiana* is currently not known to be used in traditional medicine in the country.

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