ISSN 0971-6548

HYDROBIOLOGY

VOLUME

NUMBER

22 | 2 | 23



INDIAN HYDROBIOLOGY

Volume 22 Number 2 December 2023

Krishnamurthy Institute of Algology

9/2 Lady Madhavan I Cross Street, Mahalingapuram, Chennai-600 034

INDIAN HYDROBIOLOGY

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New distributional record of *Cosmarium* Corda *ex* Ralfs and *Euastrum* Ehrenberg *ex* Ralfs (Desmidiales, Zygnematophyceae) from the Peninsular Indian river Kallada, Kerala

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Abstract

Desmids are indicators of the water's quality. They show rich species diversity. The Genus Cosmarium Corda ex Ralfs is a very common desmid in riverine ecosystems. They are a principal component of the food of many ichthyofauna. Unfortunately, they are inadequately documented and studied in the field biology of Kerala Rivers. The present study is aimed at understanding the Desmid flora of the river Kallada in Kollam District. Six algal samples were collected from three different locations along the river, extending from the upstream to the downstream. A total of 16 taxa of Cosmarium, viz., C. amoenum, C. crenatum, C. dickii, C. hammeri, C. humile, C. impressulum, C. norimbergense, C. pseudoornatum, C. quadrum, C. reniforme, C. retusum, C. sexnotatum, Cosmariumsp., C. subprotumidum, C. subtumidum, and 3 taxa of Euastrum, viz., Euastrum binale, E. denticulatum, E. pulchellum were reported for the first time from the River.

Key words: Peninsular Kallada River; Phytoplankton Flora; Desmids-Zygnematophyceae; *Cosmarium*; *Euastrum*.

Introduction

Desmids are a unique group of unicellular green algae; they are indicators of the quality of fresh water (Sanilkumar and Thomas, 2002). Most of the Indian freshwater bodies are enriched with a large number of the algae of the Zygnemataceae family. They are significantly contributing to the food web of the rivers. Many fishes are selective feeders of the Zygnemataceae group of algae due to their rich potential for protein and lipids (Coesel, 1997). Around 12,000 species of desmids have been identified so far (Coesel and Krienitz, 2008).

Studies on the Indian Desmidaceae began in the late 18th century (Turner, 1892). Meager literature is available on the detailed distribution and diversity of Desmids in India. South Indian Desmid flora was studied by a few scientists (Iyengar and Vimala Bai, 1941;

Iyengar and Ramanathan, 1942; Ramanathan, 1962; Anand, 1998; Arulmurugan *et al.*, 2010; Maheswari and Baluswami, 2018). In Kerala, research on Desmid flora was carried out by Sindhu and Panikkar (1995); Paul and Sreekumar (2007, 2011, 2013); Krishnan (2010); Krishnan *et al.* (2023).

Among the Desmids of South Indian rivers, the genus *Cosmarium* is the most frequently occurring one. This genus has 1024 species (Guiry and Guiry, 2023). *Cosmarium* and *Euastrum* are characterized by individual cells with two bi-cells formed by deep constriction. Many of the species show ornamentation on the cell wall, which makes their identification unique. The semi-cells of all the species are unique in size and shape, making it easy to identify and distinguish them from each other. The semi-cells are rich in chloroplasts and pyrenoids.

Very little literature is available on the diversity of Cosmarium and Euastrum in India. A few reports available on the diversity are Hegde (1986); Asokakumar and Patel (1990); Habib and Pandey (1990); Jena et al. (2006); Shukla et al. (2008); Raja and Baluswami (2009); Suseela and Toppo (2007); Toppo and Suseela (2009); Das and Keshri (2013); Mhaske and Talwankar (2018); Nandi et al. (2019); Babu and Vasanthakumar (2020) etc. However, Sindhu and Panikkar (1994); Krishnan (2009); Ray et al. (2012); Paul and Sreekumar (2013); Krishnan et al. (2023) are some of the significant reports that document the diversity of Cosmarium in different lotic and lentic water bodies of Kerala. A detailed documentation of Euastrum in Kole lands of Thrissur, Kerala was carried out (Paul and Sreekumar, 2015). Maheswari and Baluswami (2017) documented the Euastrum of Tamil Nadu.

River Kallada is one of the major rivers in Kerala, which significantly contributes to the hydroelectricity generation and irrigation requirements of the State. The Phytoplankton flora of this river is not yet documented in detail. Since the river joins with the Ashtamudi backwaters of Kollam, a horizontal migration of unique flora and fauna exists in the River. This river needs to be documented to understand phytoplankton community and related food web architecture. Since Desmids play a significant role in the food chain of freshwater bodies, they should be well documented. No specific literature is available on the Zygnematophyceae of the Kallada River in Kerala. Therefore, the present study was undertaken to documenttwo important genera Cosmarium and Euastrum of Zygnematophyceae from the Kallada River.

Materials and methods

Samples were collected on April 3rd and 4th, 2023, from three river locations (Punalur (K1), Enathu (K2), and Kunnathur (K3)) (Fig. 1). The first two stations are at a distance of 25 km, and the second and third stations are at a distance of 13 km each. The sample number, localities, habits and geographical coordinates are expressed in Table 1. The samples were preserved in lugol's iodine as per standard

procedures (Santhanam *et al.*, 1989) and stored in labeled bottles for further studies. Each sample was observed, and photomicrographs were taken using a MAGCAM DC-5 camera attached to a 100x trinocular microscope. Identification of *the* taxa was performed using Coesel (1996); Suseela and Toppo (2007); Das and Adhikary (2014); Das and Keshri (2016); Brook and Williamson (2010); Paul and Sreekumar (2015); Lee (2015); Guiry and Guiry (2023). The Samples were deposited in the Research Laboratory, NSS College, Pandalam, Kerala.

Result and discussion

The bi-cells of *Cosmarium* are rounded and solitary; in outline, they appear rectangular or ellipsoid. A constriction separates the bi-cells. Some species have elliptic cells while others have pyramidal, reniform, semicircular, sub ovate, and sub-rectangular cells. Some species have cells with smooth margins while some others have granulated margins.

The bi-cells of *Euastrum* are solitary, with varied shapes. Some species have rectangular or ellipsoid cells while others with reniform, sub ovate, or pyramidal semi-cells. Strict constriction separates the semi-cells. Most species have cells with smooth margins while some others have pointed appendages.

A total number of 16 taxa of *Cosmarium* were documented during the present study. All of them were reported for the first time from the River, and 3 taxa of *Euastrum*, that were also recorded for the first time. Description of identified taxa of *Cosmarium* and *Euastrum* are given below (Plate 1).

Cosmarium amoenum Brébisson ex Ralfs 1848 (fig. 1)

Cell dimensions

Cells longer than broad, cylindroid, cell body 42–67 μm long and 22–30 μm broad, isthmus 13–21 μm broad; cell wall covered with large granules, longitudinally arranging in 7–8 rows forming a cross pattern on the cell wall; 2 pyrenoids in each semi cell.

Hahitat

Free floating form collected from the River at Punalur near KSRTC Bus Station.

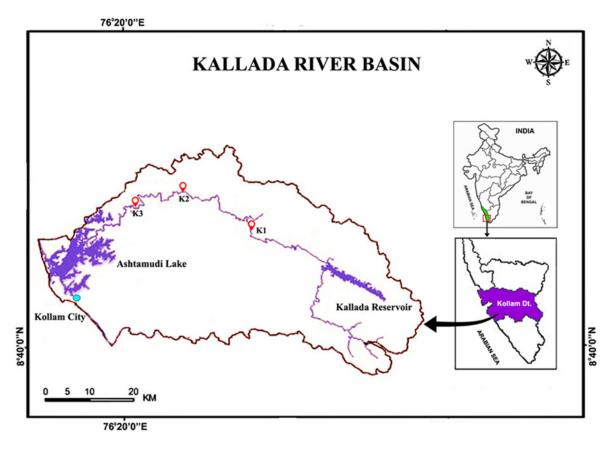


Fig. 1: The course of river showing sampling locations.

Table 1: List of sample, location, habit, and geographic coordinates.

S. No.	Sample No.	Site Name	Habit	Latitude	Longitude
1	K101042023	Punalur (Near Suspension Bridge)	Epiphyte	9.0217 ⁰ N	76.9327 ⁰ E
2	K102042023	Punalur (Near KSRTC Bus Station)	Plankton		
3	K201042023	Enadimangalam (Near Footbridge)	Epiphyte	9.1342 ⁰ N	76.81125 ⁰ E
4	K202042023	Enadimangalam (Near the Market)	Plankton		
5	K301042023	Kunnathur (Near the Bridge)	Epiphyte	9.22392 ⁰ N	76.55721°E
6	K302042023	Kunnathur (Near Karimbinpuzha Temple)	Plankton		

Cosmarium crenatum Ralfs ex Ralfs 1848 (fig. 2)

Cell dimensions

Variable cell shape, flattened, each semi-cell hemispherical, cell body 30 μ m long, 20 μ m broad, isthmus 10 μ m broad, semi-cells linearly arranged or zigzag; cell body is elliptical or spindle or crescent in shape; marginal cells with ornamentation.

Habitat

Free floating form collected from the River at Punalur near KSRTC Bus Station.

Cosmarium dickii Coesel 1989 (fig. 3)

Cell dimensions

Bi-cells attached side by side, linearly arranged, cell body with round apex, margins fringed, with projections. Cell body 24–26 μ m long and 20–22 μ m broad. Distinct two supra isthmal granules present.

Habitat

Epiphytic form collected from the River at Punalur near Suspension Bridge.

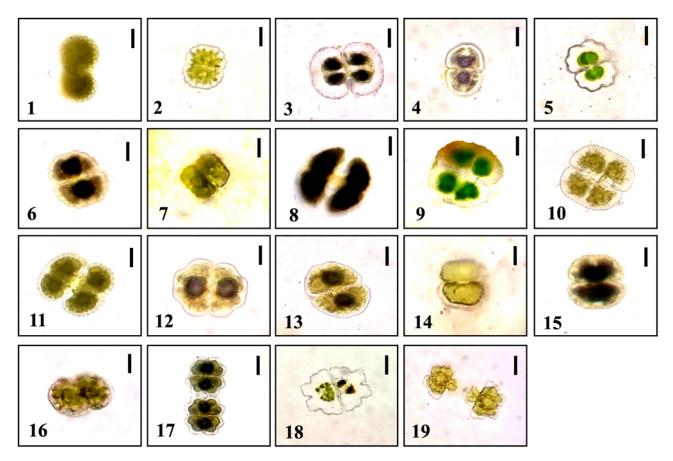


Plate 1: (1) Cosmarium amoenum; (2) Cosmarium crenatum; (3) Cosmarium dickii; (4) Cosmarium hammeri; (5) Cosmarium humile; (6) Cosmarium impressulum; (7) Cosmarium norimbergense; (8) Cosmarium obsoletum; (9) Cosmarium pseudoornatum; (10) Cosmarium quadrum; (11) Cosmarium reniforme; (12) Cosmarium retusum; (13) Cosmarium sexnotatum; (14) Cosmarium sp.; (15) Cosmarium subprotumidum; (16) Cosmarium subtumidum; (17) Euastrum binale; (18) Euastrum denticulatum; (19) Euastrum pulchellum (Scale bars: Figs. 1–19=10 µm).

Cosmarium hammeri Reinsch 1866 (fig. 4)

Cell dimensions

Cells 27 μ m long, 23 μ m broad, isthmus 12 μ m broad. Cells variable in shape; a constriction at the center of the cell body: mostly longer than broad; flattened; each semi-cell hemispherical, spherical, ellipsoidal, rectangular, pyramidal, or kidney-shaped; no apical indentation.

Habitat

Epiphytic form collected from the River at Punalur near Suspension Bridge.

Cosmarium humile Nordstedt ex DeToni 1889 (fig. 5)

Cell dimensions

Small-sized *Cosmarium*, the cell wall of which is sculptured by both in curvations and granules.

The lateral sides of the semi-cells show a deep sub-apical in curvation dividing the semi-cell in a broad basal part and a smaller rectangular apical part. Apical granules are present on the cell margin. Cell body 15–20 µm long, 20–30 µm broad.

Habitat

Free floating form collected from the River at Punalur near Suspension Bridge.

Cosmarium impressulum Elfving 1881 (fig. 6)

Cell dimensions

Cells small, 21–30 µm long. 15–20 µm broad, isthmus 5–7 µm broad, both sides of semi cells with four wavy margins with 8 undulations, 2 at the apex, all waves equal in size, side view elongated ellipsoid; smooth cell wall.

Habitat

Epiphytic form collected from the River at Punalur near Suspension Bridge.

Cosmarium norimbergense Reinsch 1867 (fig. 7)

Cell dimensions

Cells rectangular in shape, longer than broad, dorso-ventrally compressed, 17 μ m long, 14 μ m broad, constriction 5.5 μ m broad, unicellular, variable in shape, a constriction at the center of the cell, flattened apex. Semi cells oblong transversely, basal angles broadly rounded, lateral margins ret use and parallel, with truncated apex, circular in lateral view and elliptical in vertical view.

Habitat

Epiphytic floating form collected from the River at Punalur near Suspension Bridge.

Cosmarium obsoletum (Hantzsch) Reinsch 1867 (fig. 8)

Cell dimensions

Cells medium in size, broadly elliptical, 34– $50~\mu m$ long, 42– $54~\mu m$ broad, and isthmus 15– $25~\mu m$ broad; deeply constricted at the center, semicells semi-elliptical or depressed semicircular, cell wall at basal corner thickened like a papillae, cell wall punctuate and dotted. Semi cells circular in lateral view and elliptical in vertical view; protruding apex end and cell wall sparsely punctate.

Habitat

Epiphytic form collected from the River near Enathu Footbridge.

Cosmarium pseudoornatum B. Eichler & Gutwinski 1894 (fig. 9)

Cell dimensions

Medium-sized cells, as long as broad or slightly broader than long. Cells 30–35 μ m long and 35–39 μ m in broad. Cells deeply constricted at the center, sinus linearly closed, and isthmus 8–10 μ m. Semi-cells nearly spherical or inverted, broadly ovoid, both ends broader than the center, two concentric series of granules present on the cell wall.

Habitat

Free floating form collected from the River near Enathu Footbridge.

Cosmarium quadrum P. Lundell 1871 (fig. 10)

Cell dimensions

Cells rectangular, 52–70 µm long, 47–80 µm broad; isthmus 20–30 µm broad, cells deeply constricted, sinus narrowly linear, with a slightly dilated proximal end. Semi cells subrectangular, with rounded comers, side view nearly circular, apical view elongated and ellipsoidal, and marginal granules up to 40 in number.

Habitat

Free floating form collected from the River near Enathu Footbridge.

Cosmarium reniforme (Ralfs) W. Archer 1874 (fig. 11)

Cell dimensions

Cell body medium in size, slightly longer than broad, 47–57 μ m long, 38–40 μ m broad, isthmus 15–20 μ m broad: semi-cells reniform, side view circular, apical view elliptical and the cell wall is covered with granules.

Habitat

Epiphytic form collected from the River near Enathu Footbridge.

Cosmarium retusum (Perty) Rabenhorst 1868 (fig. 12)

Cell dimensions

Cells 160 μ m long and 108 μ m broad. Slightly constricted at the center. Look similar to *Euastrum* cells. Semi-cells broader at the center and narrow and tapering towards the apex, wavy and smooth margin.

Habitat

Epiphytic form collected from the River near Enathu Market.

Cosmarium sexnotatum Gutwinski 1892 (fig. 13)

Cell dimensions

Bi-cells attached side by side, linearly arranged. Cells $90-100~\mu m$ long and $100~\mu m$ broad.

Broader than long, broad central region and convex margin and blunt apex with a small constriction at the tip.

Habitat

Epiphytic form collected from the River near Kunnathur Bridge.

Cosmarium sp. (fig. 14)

Cell dimensions

Cells 15–19 µm long, 19–25 µm broad; variable in shape. A constriction at the center of the cell body, broader than length; each semi cell hemispherical, spherical, ellipsoidal, rectangular, pyramidal or kidney-shaped; flattened at the apex.

Habitat

Epiphytic form collected from the River near Karimbinpuzha Temple.

Cosmarium subprotumidum Nordstedt 1900 (fig. 15)

Cell dimensions

Cells 28–40 μm long, 21–33 μm broad, and isthmus 5–7 μm broad. Granulate cell wall and a crenate cell outline. The apex is more flattened.

Habitat

Epiphytic form collected from the River near Kunnathur Bridge.

Cosmarium subtumidum Nordstedt 1878 (fig. 16)

Cell dimensions

Cells 30–43 μm long, 21–32 μm broad and isthmus is 7–14 μm broad. Apex flat and broad.

Habitat

Free floating form collected from the River near Karimbinpuzha Temple.

Euastrum binale Ehrenberg ex Ralfs 1848 (fig. 17)

Cell dimensions

Cells small, 15–30 μ m long and 12–20 μ m broad, constriction 3–8 μ m broad, semi-cells pyramidal, basal lobes rounded, anterior margin

broad, both corners depressed at the center, both corners slightly pointed, lateral view of semi-cells ovoid, apical view ellipsoid. Both sides convex.

Habitat

Epiphytic form collected from the River near Punalur Suspension Bridge.

Euastrum denticulatum F. Gay 1884 (fig. 18)

Cell dimensions

Cells 24 µm long and 17 µm broad. Semicells appear to be sub-trapezi form and semiquadrangular in shape, 3-lobed with tiny spine at each angle as the ornamental features of the cell walls.

Habitat

Epiphytic form collected from the River near Enathu Footbridge.

Euastrum pulchellum Brébisson 1856 (fig. 19)

Cell dimensions

Cells 31–40 µm long and 28–33 µm broad, semicells with longer apical lobes. Isthmus 7–8 µm broad. The semi-cells are quadrangular in shape with tiny spines at each angle as well. The apical lobes appear broad with a deep narrow median incision straight towards the pyrenoid.

Habitat

Epiphytic form collected from the River near Karimbinpuzha Temple.

Conclusion

A total of 16 taxa of Cosmarium and 3 taxa of Euastrum were recorded in the present study. All the taxa are reported for the first time from the River. As per the present study, it was understood that the freshwater algal biodiversity of river Kallada is rich in Desmids. A good number of the varied species of Cosmarium exist in the river. This study serves as baseline data for the diversity of Desmids in peninsular Indian rivers, particularly the rivers in Kerala. This study also pinpoints the importance of a detailed investigation on the beneficial algal flora in

the aquatic food chain as well as their role in the ecosystem. These microalgae play a crucial role in maintaining the balance of the aquatic ecosystem. This may help in the conservation and to explore the ways and means of proper utilization of such bio-resources for human welfare.

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