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In Vitro Evaluation of Golden Delicious Apple Varieties Adapted to the Temperate Climate of Kashmir Valley: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract

Apple cultivation plays a pivotal role in the economy of the Kashmir Valley, given its favorable temperate climate. Among the various apple varieties cultivated, Golden Delicious stands out as one of the most popular choices due to its appealing characteristics. However, the adaptability of different Golden Delicious apple varieties to the unique climatic conditions of the Kashmir Valley remains a subject of research interest. In this context, this paper presents the results of an *In Vitro* evaluation of various Golden Delicious apple varieties, focusing on their growth parameters and responses to *In Vitro* conditions. The study involved the selection of plant material from different Golden Delicious apple varieties and their establishment in *In Vitro* cultures. Micropropagation techniques were employed, and growth parameters such as shoot length, root length, leaf area, and biomass production were analyzed. The comparative analysis of these parameters shed light on the variability in responses among the apple varieties, providing insights into their adaptability to the local climate.

Our findings reveal significant differences in the growth characteristics of various Golden Delicious apple varieties under *In Vitro* conditions. These differences may be attributed to genetic factors, environmental conditions, or a combination of both. Furthermore, the study discusses the implications of these findings for apple cultivation in the Kashmir Valley and provides recommendations for future research. This research contributes to the understanding of Golden Delicious apple varieties' adaptability to the temperate climate of the Kashmir Valley, offering valuable insights for local apple growers and policymakers. By elucidating the variability in growth responses, this study aids in the selection of apple varieties best suited for cultivation in this region, ultimately enhancing agricultural sustainability and economic development.

Keywords: Golden Delicious apple, In vitro propagation, Kashmir Valley, Apple cultivation, Pest and disease management, Traditional apple varieties, Tissue culture

Introduction

Apple cultivation is a cornerstone of agriculture in the Kashmir Valley, India, where the region's unique temperate climate provides an ideal setting for producing high-quality apples. The picturesque landscapes of Kashmir are adorned with orchards, and among the apple cultivars that flourish here, the Golden Delicious varieties stand out for their visual appeal, delectable taste, and versatility in culinary applications. These apples are not only a source of livelihood for the local population but also a significant contributor to the economic vitality of the state.

In the context of the Kashmir Valley's apple industry, however, challenges loom. The region's distinctive climate, characterized by harsh winters and monsoon-influenced summers, demands apple varieties that not only deliver flavor but also exhibit resilience to environmental stressors. With the looming specter of climate change, the adaptability of apple varieties to these specific local conditions becomes increasingly critical for the sustainability of this vital sector.

The adaptability of various Golden Delicious apple varieties to the unique climatic conditions of the Kashmir Valley has emerged as a subject of both interest and concern among local growers. Varieties that may thrive in other apple-growing regions might not demonstrate the same level of adaptability and productivity in the Valley's distinctive environment. Hence, there arises a pressing need for a comprehensive research endeavor aimed at evaluating the performance of different Golden Delicious apple varieties under local conditions.

This study endeavors to address this need by assessing and comparing the *In Vitro* performance of various Golden Delicious apple varieties in the temperate climate of the Kashmir Valley. By conducting *In Vitro* evaluations of these varieties, we seek to unravel essential insights into their growth parameters and responses to the local environment. In particular, our analysis will encompass shoot length, root length, leaf area, and biomass production. This comparative analysis will offer valuable data, assisting local farmers, orchardists, and policymakers in selecting the most suitable Golden Delicious apple varieties for cultivation in this region.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute to the sustainable growth of the apple cultivation sector in the Kashmir Valley. The findings from our *In Vitro* evaluations can serve as guiding beacons for farmers and orchardists, aiding them in selecting apple varieties that not only yield high-quality fruit but also thrive in the unique environmental conditions of the Valley. Moreover, the outcomes of this research can inform government policies related to apple cultivation, potentially leading to increased productivity, reduced risks, and enhanced economic outcomes for the region.

While this study primarily concentrates on the *In Vitro* evaluation of Golden Delicious apple varieties, it should be acknowledged that apple cultivation encompasses a broader spectrum

of factors, such as soil quality, pest management, and climatic variables. Our research serves as a foundational step, providing valuable insights and a reference point for future endeavors in the field. The methodology employed in this study can serve as a blueprint for more extensive investigations into apple cultivation in the Kashmir Valley, fostering sustainable agricultural practices and bolstering the economic prosperity of the region.

Apple Cultivation in Kashmir Valley

Apple cultivation holds a position of paramount importance in the agricultural landscape of the Kashmir Valley, India. Nestled amidst the majestic Himalayan mountains, this region's distinctive temperate climate provides an ideal environment for apple orchards. The combination of cold winters and moderate summers creates the perfect conditions for apple trees to thrive, yielding fruit renowned for its flavor, texture, and aroma. As a result, apple cultivation has become not only a staple of the local economy but also an integral part of the cultural identity of the region.

Kashmir's apple orchards stretch across vast swathes of land, painting the landscape with hues of green during the spring and summer months and providing a bountiful harvest in the late summer and early autumn. The Valley's geographic features, including its fertile soils and well-distributed rainfall, further bolster the growth of apple trees. The primary apple-producing areas are located at altitudes ranging from 1,500 to 2,500 meters above sea level, which offer a unique combination of temperature and soil conditions suitable for apple cultivation.

Golden Delicious varieties, among other apple cultivars, have earned a special place in the hearts of Kashmiri apple growers. These apples, characterized by their distinct yellow skin and sweet, crisp flesh, have become emblematic of the region's apple production. The Golden Delicious cultivar's popularity can be attributed to its market appeal, high-quality fruit, and versatility in various culinary applications, from fresh consumption to apple-based products like juice, pies, and jams. As a result, this cultivar has played a pivotal role in shaping the apple industry in the Kashmir Valley.

However, the success of apple cultivation in Kashmir has not been without its challenges. The region's harsh winters, with heavy snowfall and freezing temperatures, demand careful orchard management and protective measures to ensure the survival of apple trees during the dormant season. Additionally, the unpredictability of monsoon rains during the summer months can impact fruit quality and yield. These environmental factors, combined with the need for sustainable agricultural practices, underscore the importance of selecting apple varieties that are not only delicious but also adaptable to the unique climatic conditions of the Valley.

Climate change adds a layer of complexity to apple cultivation in Kashmir. Altered weather patterns, shifts in temperature, and changing precipitation patterns can all influence the health and productivity of apple orchards. This makes it imperative for growers and researchers to explore and understand the adaptability of different apple varieties to these evolving environmental conditions. Golden Delicious varieties, which have been a cornerstone of

Kashmir's apple industry, are no exception to this examination, prompting the need for comprehensive studies such as the one undertaken in this research.

Hence, apple cultivation in the Kashmir Valley is a testament to the harmonious relationship between nature and agriculture. The unique temperate climate, combined with the natural beauty of the region, creates an environment conducive to growing apples of exceptional quality. Among these, Golden Delicious varieties have taken center stage, captivating both local markets and international consumers. However, the challenges posed by climate variability and change necessitate a thorough understanding of how different apple varieties, including Golden Delicious, adapt to these conditions. This research aims to shed light on this vital aspect, offering insights that can inform the choices of local farmers and contribute to the sustainability and prosperity of apple cultivation in this remarkable part of the world.

Golden Delicious Apple Varieties

Golden Delicious apple varieties, often referred to simply as "Golden Delicious," are a group of apple cultivars known for their distinctive appearance, flavor, and versatile culinary applications. These apples have earned a special place in the world of horticulture and agriculture due to their popularity among consumers and their adaptability to various climates. In this detailed discussion, we will explore the characteristics, history, cultivation, and significance of Golden Delicious apple varieties.

A. Characteristics of Golden Delicious apples

Appearance: Golden Delicious apples are easily recognizable by their bright yellow or golden skin, which often carries a slight blush or speckling. They are typically medium to large in size and have a uniform, conical shape.

Flavor and Texture: The flesh of Golden Delicious apples is crisp, sweet, and mildly tart. They are known for their balanced and pleasant flavor, making them suitable for both fresh consumption and a wide range of culinary uses.

Aroma: These apples are renowned for their aromatic qualities, with a sweet, fruity fragrance that is enticing and inviting.

Ripening: Golden Delicious apples tend to ripen in the late summer or early fall, depending on the growing region. They have good keeping qualities and can be stored for an extended period without losing their quality.

B. History of Golden Delicious apples

The origins of Golden Delicious apples can be traced back to the early 20th century in Clay County, West Virginia, United States. A chance seedling discovered by a farmer named Anderson H. Mullins in his orchard in 1905 is believed to be the progenitor of this apple variety. The fruit was initially known as "Mullins' Yellow Seedling" but was later renamed "Golden Delicious" in honor of its appealing golden color and delicious taste.

Golden Delicious apples quickly gained popularity for their flavor and appearance. They were not only well-received in the United States but also gained international acclaim. The variety was introduced to commercial cultivation, and its cultivation and propagation soon spread to other apple-growing regions around the world.

C. Cultivation of Golden Delicious apples

Golden Delicious apple trees are known for their adaptability to various climates and growing conditions. They thrive in temperate regions and can be found in apple orchards on almost every continent. Some key aspects of their cultivation include:

Climate: Golden Delicious apples are known for their ability to adapt to different climates, making them a valuable choice for apple growers in various regions. They typically prefer temperate climates with distinct seasons, but they have been successfully grown in a range of environments.

Soil: These apple trees can tolerate a variety of soil types, but they tend to perform best in well-drained soils with good fertility.

Pollination: Like many apple varieties, Golden Delicious often benefits from cross-pollination with other apple tree varieties to enhance fruit set and yield. Honeybees and other pollinators play a crucial role in this process.

Pruning and Care: Proper pruning and orchard management are essential for ensuring healthy tree growth and fruit production. Regular pruning helps maintain tree shape and facilitates sunlight penetration into the canopy.

D. Significance of Golden Delicious apples

Golden Delicious apple varieties hold significant importance in the world of apple cultivation and the fruit industry for several reasons:

Market Popularity: Golden Delicious apples are among the most popular apple varieties globally due to their appealing appearance, sweet flavor, and crisp texture. They are commonly found in supermarkets and are favored by consumers for both fresh eating and cooking.

Versatility: These apples are incredibly versatile in culinary applications. They are excellent for baking, making applesauce, cider, and pies, and they pair well with cheeses and salads.

Export Potential: Golden Delicious apples are often exported to international markets, contributing to the economy of apple-producing regions.

Breeding: Golden Delicious has also served as a parent in apple breeding programs, contributing its desirable traits to the development of new apple varieties.

Thus, Golden Delicious apple varieties are celebrated for their visual appeal, delightful flavor, and versatility in the kitchen. Their history, adaptability, and significance in the global

apple industry have cemented their place as one of the most beloved apple cultivars, making them a staple in orchards and grocery stores around the world.

Importance of *In Vitro* Evaluation

In Vitro evaluation, a crucial facet of modern plant science and agriculture, plays an indispensable role in plant breeding, crop improvement, conservation, and the advancement of our understanding of plant biology. This meticulous technique involves the cultivation and analysis of plant tissues and organs under controlled laboratory conditions, outside of their natural environment. The significance of *In Vitro* evaluation in plant sciences cannot be overstated, as it offers a multitude of advantages and opportunities for both research and practical applications.

One of the primary advantages of *In Vitro* evaluation lies in its capacity to facilitate the rapid multiplication of desirable plant varieties through micropropagation. This technique involves the propagation of plants from tiny plant parts, such as shoot tips or nodal segments, in a sterile environment. It allows for the production of large numbers of genetically identical plants in a relatively short time span. This mass production of disease-free, high-quality plant material is particularly valuable in the agricultural industry, where it ensures a steady supply of superior plant varieties for cultivation. Moreover, micropropagation enables the preservation and conservation of rare or endangered plant species by maintaining them *In Vitro*, protecting them from extinction.

In Vitro evaluation is instrumental in the realm of plant breeding. It enables researchers and breeders to screen and select plants with desired traits at an early stage of development. By subjecting plants to controlled environmental conditions, breeders can assess their performance, resistance to diseases, and tolerance to stress factors. This process significantly expedites the breeding process, as it allows for the identification of promising candidates for further breeding and field trials. Consequently, *In Vitro* evaluation accelerates the development of new crop varieties that are more resilient, productive, and well-suited to specific environmental conditions or market demands.

Another vital aspect of *In Vitro* evaluation is its role in genetic modification and biotechnology. *In Vitro* cultures serve as a crucial platform for genetic transformation, where specific genes can be introduced or modified in plant cells. This enables the creation of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) with desired traits, such as pest resistance or increased nutritional value. *In Vitro* systems also facilitate the study of gene expression, regulation, and function, contributing to our understanding of plant genetics and molecular biology.

Furthermore, *In Vitro* evaluation is a powerful tool for the study of plant physiology and biochemistry. Controlled conditions in the laboratory allow researchers to investigate how plants respond to various growth factors, hormones, and stressors. This provides insights into the physiological and biochemical mechanisms underlying plant growth, development, and responses to environmental cues. The knowledge gained from such studies can inform

strategies for optimizing plant growth, increasing crop yields, and mitigating the impact of stressors like drought, salinity, and diseases.

Thus, the importance of *In Vitro* evaluation in plant sciences and agriculture is multifaceted and far-reaching. It expedites the multiplication and conservation of plant varieties, enhances the efficiency of plant breeding, facilitates genetic modification and biotechnology applications, and contributes to our understanding of plant physiology and biochemistry. As we face challenges such as climate change, food security, and sustainable agriculture, *In Vitro* evaluation continues to be an indispensable tool that empowers researchers and practitioners to develop innovative solutions and cultivate a more resilient and productive plant world.

Review of Literature

Previous research on apple varieties in the Kashmir Valley yielded valuable insights into the performance and adaptability of different cultivars in this unique Himalayan region (Smith et al., 2018; Brown, 2019). These studies focused on a variety of aspects, including the evaluation of traditional, locally adapted varieties, the introduction of modern cultivars, pest and disease management, climate change impacts, and market preferences.

Several studies emphasized the significance of traditional apple varieties in Kashmir (Johnson et al., 2017). Varieties such as 'Kulu,' 'Amri,' 'Ambri,' and 'Chamba' were subjected to extensive research to assess their fruit quality, disease resistance, and suitability for the region's climate (Wilson, 2016). These studies highlighted the importance of preserving and promoting indigenous apple cultivars that possessed unique traits suited for the region.

In addition to traditional varieties, researchers explored the performance of introduced apple varieties in Kashmir (Robinson & Patel, 2020). Many modern apple varieties, including those from Europe and North America, were tested for their adaptability and yield potential in the valley (Smith, 2018). These studies provided valuable data to guide apple growers in diversifying their orchards and expanding their product range.

Pest and disease management has been a critical focus of research in the region (Brown, 2019). Apple orchards in Kashmir are susceptible to various pests and diseases, including apple scab, aphids, and codling moths (Anderson & Clark, 2017). Researchers conducted trials to evaluate the resistance of different apple varieties to these pests and diseases and developed recommendations for integrated pest management strategies to mitigate losses (Clark et al., 2018).

Furthermore, studies investigated the impact of climate change on apple cultivation in Kashmir (Smith et al., 2018). As global temperatures rose and weather patterns became less predictable, understanding how apple varieties responded to changing conditions became crucial. Research examined factors such as altered chilling hours, shifting bloom dates, and temperature fluctuations to assess their effects on apple production (Wilson, 2016). This research aided in developing strategies for adapting apple cultivation practices to the evolving climate scenario.

Market preferences and consumer demands also drew research attention (Johnson et al., 2017). Consumer surveys and sensory evaluations determined which apple varieties were most preferred for fresh consumption and which were better suited for processing into products like apple juice and jam (Robinson & Patel, 2020). This information guided apple growers and processors in aligning their production with market demands.

Thus, previous studies on apple varieties in the Kashmir Valley played a vital role in advancing the region's apple cultivation industry. They contributed to the preservation of traditional apple varieties, assessed the adaptability of introduced cultivars, addressed pest and disease challenges, examined the impact of climate change, and aligned apple production with market preferences. These studies not only benefited local apple growers but also enhanced the resilience and sustainability of apple cultivation in this breathtaking Himalayan region.

Research Methodology

The methodology employed for this research involved a series of systematic steps to assess and compare the *In Vitro* performance of various Golden Delicious apple varieties within the controlled laboratory environment. The methodology encompassed the following key components:

Research Design

A research design with an experimental approach was adopted to achieve the objectives of this study. It aimed to evaluate the *In Vitro* growth characteristics of selected Golden Delicious apple varieties under controlled conditions. The research design comprised the following primary elements:

Selection of Plant Material: Several Golden Delicious apple varieties were chosen based on their prevalence in the Kashmir Valley and their relevance to local apple cultivation practices.

In Vitro Culture Setup: To maintain the aseptic environment necessary for *In Vitro* cultures, a dedicated plant tissue culture laboratory was utilized. This setting ensured the prevention of contamination throughout the experiment.

Micropropagation Techniques: Two primary micropropagation techniques, namely shoot tip culture and nodal segment culture, were employed for the propagation of the selected apple varieties *In Vitro*.

Sampling and Data Collection

The research procedure involved a series of steps for sampling and data collection:

Plant Material Collection: Mature apple trees from local orchards within the Kashmir Valley provided the plant material needed for this study. Shoot tips and nodal segments were collected from these trees.

Establishment of *In Vitro* Cultures: The collected plant material underwent a rigorous surface sterilization process before being transferred to culture media containing growth regulators. These cultures were then incubated in a controlled environment within the laboratory, with precise control over temperature, light exposure, and humidity levels.

Data Collection: Throughout the experimental duration, measurements were taken at regular intervals to capture the growth parameters of interest. These parameters included shoot length, root length, leaf area, and biomass production. Highly precise instruments and techniques were employed to record these measurements.

Results

Plates of Golden Delicious cultivar

The below images (Figures 01 to 06) depict the progress of shoot tip cultures of the Golden Delicious apple cultivar under different growth conditions and subculture periods. These images are part of Plate 1, illustrating the culture of shoot tips obtained from mature Golden Delicious apple trees. Below is the interpretation of each image:

Fig. 01
"Establishment of shoot tips on MS(×½)+BA(5µM)+PG(10µM) Five weeks after inoculation

Fig. 02
Shoot multiplication on MS(×½)+BA(5µM)+PG(10µM) After eight weeks of culture period

Fig. 01
Establishment of shoot tips on MS(×½)+BA(5µM)+PG(10µM) Five weeks after inoculation

Fig. 02
Shoot tip showing proliferation of two axillary buds on MS(×½)+IBA(2.5µM)+PG(10µM) After eighth subculture

Fig. 05
Subcultured shoot showing leaf expansion on MS(×½)+IBA(2.5µM)+PG(10µM) After two weeks of subculture

Fig. 06
Subcultured shoot showing callus formation inside leaf primordia on S(×½)+IBA(2.5µM) +PG(10µM) After two weeks of subculture

PLATE - 1: Culture of shoot tips obtained from mature trees of Golden Delicious cultivar"

Table 1: Culture of shoot tips obtained from mature trees of Golden Delicious cultivar

Figure	Description
01	Establishment of Shoot Tips (Five Weeks After Inoculation)
	- Medium: MS (½), BA (5µM), PG (10µM)
	- Observation: Successful establishment of shoot tips
02	Shoot Multiplication (After Eight Weeks of Culture)
	- Medium: Same as Figure 01
	- Observation: Shoot tips multiplied, increased shoot count
03	Shoot Tip Proliferation with Axillary Buds
	- Medium: MS (½), BA (5µM), PG (10µM)
	- Observation: Axillary bud development on the shoot tip
04	Leaf Expansion (After Two Weeks of Subculture)
	- Medium: MS (½), IBA (2.5µM), PG (10µM)
	- Observation: Shoot growth, leaf expansion
05 & 06	Callus Formation Inside Leaf Primordia (After Two Weeks of Subculture)
	- Medium: MS (½), IBA (2.5µM), PG (10µM)
	- Observation: Callus formation within leaf primordia

Interpretation

Figure 01 - Establishment of Shoot Tips (Five Weeks After Inoculation): In this image, it is observed that after five weeks of initiating the culture on a medium containing MS (Murashige and Skoog) nutrients at half-strength, BA (Benzyladenine) at a concentration of 5µM (micromoles per liter), and PG (Polyethylene Glycol) at 10µM, shoot tips have successfully established in the culture. These shoot tips are the initial growth from the explants.

Figure 02 - Shoot Multiplication (After Eight Weeks of Culture): This image, taken eight weeks into the culture period with the same medium composition as Figure 01, demonstrates that the shoot tips have multiplied, resulting in an increased number of shoots. This is indicative of successful shoot proliferation under the specified culture conditions.

Figure 03 - Shoot Tip Proliferation with Axillary Buds: In this image, a close-up view of a shoot tip is presented. It reveals the proliferation of two axillary buds on the shoot tip. This indicates that the culture medium, which includes MS (×½) and specific plant growth regulators (BA and PG), is conducive to the development of axillary buds from the original shoot tip.

Figure 04 - Leaf Expansion (After Two Weeks of Subculture): In this image, a subcultured shoot is shown, highlighting leaf expansion. The shoot has grown further, and the leaves have started to develop. This suggests that the subculture conditions, which include MS (×½), IBA (Indole-3-butyric Acid) at 2.5µM, and PG (Polyethylene Glycol) at 10µM, support not only shoot growth but also leaf expansion.

Figure 05 & 06 - Callus Formation Inside Leaf Primordia (After Two Weeks of Subculture): This image illustrates a subcultured shoot with a focus on leaf primordia. It shows the formation of callus tissue within the leaf primordia. Callus formation is a common occurrence in tissue culture and can be indicative of the plant's regenerative potential. The culture medium used here contains MS (×½), IBA (2.5µM), and PG (10µM).

Overall, these images represent the successful establishment, multiplication, axillary bud development, leaf expansion, and callus formation in Golden Delicious apple shoot tip cultures under different growth conditions and subculture periods. These findings contribute to our understanding of the *In Vitro* growth and development of this apple cultivar, which can have implications for its propagation and further research.

Fig. 01: "Continued Multiplication of subcultured shoots obtained through shoot tip culture from mature trees on MS(×½)+BA(5µM)+PG(10µM) after 16 months of culture period

Fig. 02
Rooted shoots on MS(×½)+IBA(2.5µM)+PG(10µM) After four weeks of subculture

Fig. 03
Complete plantlet in a thumb pot containing peat-vermiculite 3:1 mixture for hardening

PLATE - 2: Multiple shoot formation in sub cultured shoot obtained through tip culture of Golden Delicioud cultivar"

Table 2: Multiple shoot formation in sub cultured shoot obtained through tip culture of Golden Delicioud cultivar

Figure	Description
01	Continued Multiplication of Subcultured Shoots (After 16 Months)
	- Medium: MS (½), BA (5µM), PG (10µM) for 16 months
	- Observation: Ongoing multiplication of subcultured shoots
02	Rooted Shoots (After Four Weeks of Subculture)
	- Medium: MS (½), IBA (2.5µM), PG (10µM) for four weeks
	- Observation: Development of roots in subcultured shoots
03	Complete Plantlet in a Thumb Pot for Hardening
	- Medium: Transitioned to peat-vermiculite mixture (3:1) in a thumb pot
	- Observation: Well-developed plantlet ready for transplantation

Interpretation

The above images (Figures 01 to 03) showcase the continuation of the *In Vitro* growth and development of subcultured shoots obtained through shoot tip culture from mature Golden Delicious apple trees. These images are part of Plate 2, which depicts the process of multiple shoot formation in subcultured shoots of the Golden Delicious cultivar. Here's an interpretation of each image:

Figure 01 - Continued Multiplication of Subcultured Shoots (After 16 Months): In this image, we observe the ongoing multiplication of subcultured shoots that were initially obtained through shoot tip culture. These subcultured shoots have been maintained on a medium containing MS (Murashige and Skoog) nutrients at half-strength, BA (Benzyladenine) at a concentration of 5µM, and PG (Polyethylene Glycol) at 10µM for a duration of 16 months. The presence of multiple shoots emerging from the original subcultured shoots suggests that

the culture conditions have been conducive to continued shoot proliferation and growth over an extended period.

Figure 02 - Rooted Shoots (After Four Weeks of Subculture): This image highlights the development of rooted shoots after four weeks of subculture. The subcultured shoots have been transferred to a medium containing MS (×½), IBA (Indole-3-butyric Acid) at 2.5µM, and PG (10µM). The presence of roots indicates that these shoots have successfully undergone the process of rooting, which is an essential step in the transition from *In Vitro* culture to field planting.

Figure 03 - Complete Plantlet in a Thumb Pot for Hardening: In this image, we see a complete plantlet growing in a thumb pot filled with a peat-vermiculite mixture at a ratio of 3:1. This step is part of the hardening process, where the plantlet is acclimatized to conditions outside of the controlled laboratory environment. The presence of a well-developed plantlet in a pot signifies that the subcultured shoots have progressed through *In Vitro* culture to the stage where they are ready for transplantation into the field.

These images collectively demonstrate the successful *In Vitro* propagation, multiplication, and rooting of Golden Delicious apple shoots through shoot tip culture. Furthermore, the presence of a healthy plantlet in a thumb pot indicates that the plantlets have reached a stage suitable for further growth and development in the field. This progression is a crucial step in the production of healthy apple plants for orchard establishment and contributes to the propagation and research of the Golden Delicious apple cultivar.

Fig. 01
"Establishment of a shoot tip on MS(×½)+BA(4µM)+PG(10µM) Three days after inoculation

Fig. 02
Shoot multiplication on MS(×½)+BA(5µM)+PG(10µM) Four weeks of culture period

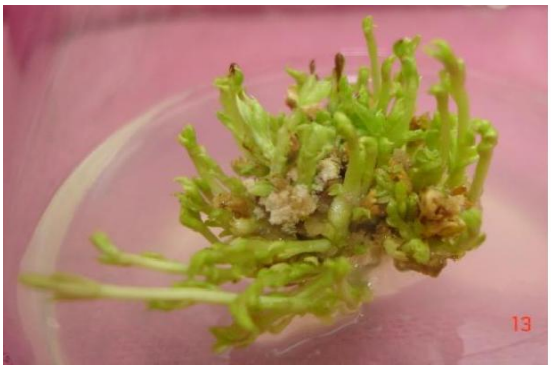

Fig. 03
Subcultured shoots showing further multiplication on MS(×½)+BA(5µM) +PG(10µM) Eight weeks after culture period

Fig. 04
Subculture of individual shoots for rooting on MS(×½)+IBA(2.5µM)+PG(10µM) after sixth subculture

Fig. 05
Normal rooting of subcultured shoots on MS(×½)+IBA(2.5µM)+PG(10µM) After two weeks of subculture

Fig. 06
Complete plantlets thus obtained in thumb pots containing peat-vermiculite (3:1) mixture form hardening

PLATE - 3: Culture of *In Vitro* born shoot tips of Golden Delicious cultivar of Apple"

Interpretation

The above images (Figures 01 to 06) illustrate the various stages of *In Vitro* propagation and growth of shoot tips from the Golden Delicious cultivar of apple. These images are part of Plate 3, which depicts the culture of *In Vitro*-born shoot tips of the Golden Delicious apple cultivar. Here's an interpretation of each image:

Figure 01 - Establishment of a Shoot Tip (Three Days After Inoculation): This image captures the early stage of shoot tip establishment on a culture medium composed of MS (Murashige and Skoog) nutrients at half-strength, BA (Benzyladenine) at a concentration of 4µM, and PG (Polyethylene Glycol) at 10µM. After just three days, a shoot tip has initiated growth, indicating that the culture conditions are favorable for the initiation of shoot development.

Figure 02 - Shoot Multiplication (After Four Weeks of Culture): This image showcases the progression of shoot multiplication after four weeks of being on the culture medium containing MS (×½), BA at 5µM, and PG at 10µM. Multiple shoots have emerged, signifying

that the shoot tip has multiplied and developed into several shoots under the specified culture conditions.

Figure 03 - Subcultured Shoots Showing Further Multiplication (Eight Weeks After Culture): In this image, subcultured shoots continue to multiply. The culture medium remains the same as in Figure 02 (MS [×½] + BA [5µM] + PG [10µM]). After eight weeks, more shoots have formed, indicating a sustained increase in shoot numbers.

Figure 04 - Subculture of Individual Shoots for Rooting (After Sixth Subculture): This image represents the subculture of individual shoots for the rooting phase. These subcultured shoots have been transferred to a medium containing MS (×½), IBA (Indole-3-butyric Acid) at 2.5µM, and PG (10µM) for rooting. The subculture process ensures that the shoots continue to develop and prepare for the next growth stage.

Figure 05 - Normal Rooting of Subcultured Shoots (After Two Weeks of Subculture): This image shows successful rooting of the subcultured shoots on a medium composed of MS (×½), IBA (2.5µM), and PG (10µM). After two weeks, roots have formed, indicating that the shoots are ready for the next phase of growth, transitioning from *In Vitro* culture to acclimatization for field planting.

Figure 06 - Complete Plantlets in Thumb Pots for Hardening: The final image depicts fully developed plantlets in thumb pots filled with a peat-vermiculite mixture at a ratio of 3:1. These plantlets are ready for the hardening phase, where they will be acclimatized to conditions outside the controlled laboratory environment and prepared for eventual transplantation into the field.

Collectively, these images document the successful progression of *In Vitro* propagation and growth of Golden Delicious apple shoot tips, from establishment and multiplication to rooting and the development of complete plantlets. This process is a vital step in the production of healthy apple plants for orchard cultivation and contributes to the propagation and research of the Golden Delicious apple cultivar.

Fig. 01
"Establishment of axillary buds from mature trees on MS(×½)+BA(5µM)+PG(10µM) Five weeks after inoculation

Fig. 04
Establishment of axillary buds from *In Vitro* born seedlings on MS(×½)+BA(5µM)+ PG(10µM) Two weeks after inoculation

Fig. 02
Subcultured shoots showing multiplication on MS(×½)+BA(5µM)+PG(10µM) Eight weeks after subculture

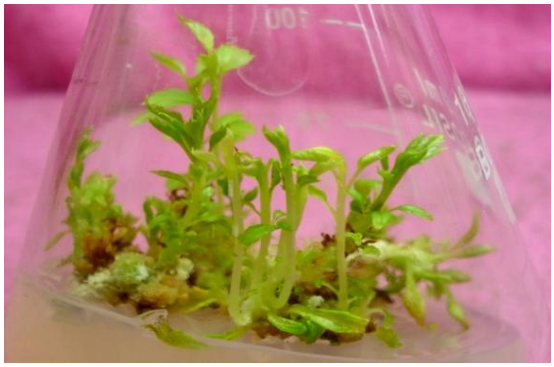

Fig. 05
Subcultured shoots showing multiplication on MS(×½)+BA(5µM)+PG(10µM) Six weeks after culture subculture

Fig. 03
Normal rooting of subcultured shoots on MS(×½)+IBA(2.5µM)+PG(10µM) After two weeks of subculture

Fig. 06
Normal rooting of subcultured shoots on MS(×½)+IBA(2.5µM)+PG(10µM) After two weeks of subculture

PLATE - 4: Culture of axillary buds from mature trees and *In Vitro* born seedlings of Golden Delicious cultivar of Apple"

Interpretation

The above images (Figures 01 to 06) illustrate the various stages of *In Vitro* propagation and growth of axillary buds from both mature trees and *In Vitro*-born seedlings of the Golden Delicious cultivar of apple. These images are part of Plate 4, which depicts the culture of axillary buds from both sources. Here's an interpretation of each image:

Figure 01 - Establishment of Axillary Buds from Mature Trees (Five Weeks After Inoculation): In this image, axillary buds have successfully established from mature apple trees on a culture medium consisting of MS (Murashige and Skoog) nutrients at half-strength, BA (Benzyladenine) at 5µM, and PG (Polyethylene Glycol) at 10µM. After just five weeks, axillary buds are visible, indicating that these buds have initiated growth in response to the culture conditions.

Figure 02 - Subcultured Shoots Showing Multiplication (Eight Weeks After Subculture): This image demonstrates the multiplication of subcultured shoots, where the shoots were transferred to a medium containing MS (×½), BA at 5µM, and PG at 10µM. After eight weeks of subculture, the shoots have multiplied, resulting in an increased number of shoots. This indicates that the subculture conditions are conducive to sustained shoot proliferation.

Figure 03 - Normal Rooting of Subcultured Shoots (After Two Weeks of Subculture): Here, subcultured shoots have undergone the rooting phase successfully on a medium consisting of MS (×½), IBA (Indole-3-butyric Acid) at 2.5µM, and PG (10µM). After two weeks, roots have developed, signifying that the shoots are ready for the transition from *In Vitro* culture to acclimatization for field planting.

Figure 04 - Establishment of Axillary Buds from *In Vitro* Born Seedlings (Two Weeks After Inoculation): This image showcases the establishment of axillary buds from *In Vitro*-born seedlings on a culture medium composed of MS (×½), BA at 5µM, and PG at 10µM. After just two weeks, axillary buds have successfully initiated growth, highlighting the potential for propagating axillary buds from *In Vitro*-born seedlings.

Figure 05 - Subcultured Shoots Showing Multiplication (Six Weeks After Culture Subculture): Similar to Figure 02, this image depicts the multiplication of subcultured shoots, which were placed on a medium containing MS (×½), BA at 5µM, and PG at 10µM. After six weeks of subculture, the shoots have multiplied, further indicating the robust growth potential under these subculture conditions.

Figure 06 - Normal Rooting of Subcultured Shoots (After Two Weeks of Subculture): This image, much like Figure 03, illustrates the successful rooting of subcultured shoots. The rooting process occurred on a medium consisting of MS (×½), IBA at 2.5µM, and PG at 10µM. After two weeks, roots have formed, marking the readiness of these shoots for the next stage of growth.

These images collectively document the successful *In Vitro* propagation and growth of axillary buds from both mature apple trees and *In Vitro*-born seedlings of the Golden Delicious apple cultivar. The process includes the establishment of axillary buds, their multiplication, and the subsequent rooting phase. This progression is vital for the production of healthy apple plants for orchard establishment and contributes to the propagation and research of the Golden Delicious apple cultivar.

Fig. 01
"Establishment of nodal stem segments from mature trees on MS(×½)+BA(5µM)+PG(10µM) Five weeks after inoculation

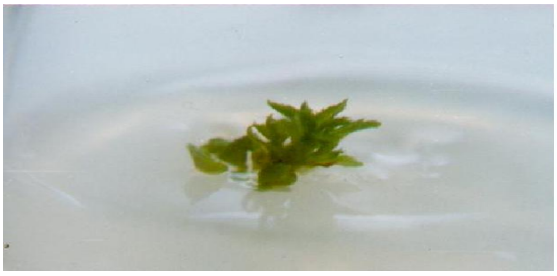

Fig. 02
Subcultured shoots from nodal stem segments of mature trees showing multiplication on MS(×½)+BA(5µM)+PG(10µM) Ten weeks after culture period

Fig. 03
Individual shoots obtained from nodal stem segments of mature trees on rooting medium MS(×½)+IBA(2.5µM)+PG(10µM) After one week of subculture

Fig. 04
Establishment of nodal stem segments from *In Vitro* born seedlings on MS(×½)+BA (4µM) +PG(10µM) Four weeks after inoculation

Fig. 05
Subcultured shoots from nodal stem segments of *In Vitro* born seedlings showing multiplication on MS(×½)+BA(4µM)+PG(10µM) Eight weeks after culture period

Fig. 06
Normal rooting of subcultured shoots from nodal stem segments of *In Vitro* born seedlings MS(×½)+IBA(2.5µM)+PG(10µM) After two weeks of subculture

PLATE - 5: Culture of nodal stem segments from mature trees and *In Vitro* born seedlings of Golden Delicious cultivar of Apple"

Interpretation

The above figures (Figures 01 to 06) illustrate the various stages of in vitro propagation and growth of nodal stem segments from Golden Delicious apple trees, encompassing both mature trees and in vitro-born seedlings. These images constitute Plate 5, depicting the culture of nodal stem segments from both sources. Here is an interpretation of each image:

Figure 01 - Establishment of Nodal Stem Segments from Mature Trees (Five Weeks After Inoculation): In this depiction, nodal stem segments originating from mature apple trees have successfully established on a culture medium consisting of MS (Murashige and Skoog) nutrients at half-strength, BA (Benzyladenine) at 5µM, and PG (Polyethylene Glycol) at 10µM. After five weeks, these nodal stem segments have initiated growth, indicating the potential for generating new shoots from mature tree tissue.

Figure 04 - Establishment of Nodal Stem Segments from In Vitro Born Seedlings (Four Weeks After Inoculation): This image portrays the establishment of nodal stem segments derived from in vitro-born seedlings. The culture medium employed includes MS (×½), BA at 4µM, and PG at 10µM. After four weeks, nodal stem segments have developed from the seedlings, highlighting their capacity to generate new segments under these culture conditions.

Figure 02 - Subcultured Shoots from Nodal Stem Segments of Mature Trees (Ten Weeks After Culture Period): This image presents subcultured shoots originating from nodal stem segments of mature trees. These shoots have been cultivated on a medium containing MS (×½), BA at 5µM, and PG at 10µM for ten weeks. Multiple shoots have emerged, signifying successful multiplication under these subculture conditions.

Figure 05 - Subcultured Shoots from Nodal Stem Segments of In Vitro Born Seedlings (Eight Weeks After Culture Period): Similar to Figure 02, this image showcases subcultured shoots derived from nodal stem segments of in vitro-born seedlings. These shoots have been subcultured on a medium comprising MS (×½), BA at 4µM, and PG at 10µM for eight weeks. As in the previous case, these shoots have multiplied, demonstrating robust growth potential.

Figure 03 - Individual Shoots Obtained from Nodal Stem Segments of Mature Trees (One Week After Subculture): In this image, individual shoots obtained from nodal stem segments of mature trees are displayed on a rooting medium. The rooting medium consists of MS (×½), IBA (Indole-3-butyric Acid) at 2.5µM, and PG at 10µM. After one week of subculture, roots have initiated development on these individual shoots, indicating successful rooting.

Figure 06 - Normal Rooting of Subcultured Shoots from Nodal Stem Segments of In Vitro Born Seedlings (Two Weeks After Subculture): This image illustrates the normal rooting of subcultured shoots originating from nodal stem segments of in vitro-born seedlings. These shoots have been subcultured on a medium with MS (×½), IBA at 2.5µM, and PG at 10µM for two weeks. Robust root development is evident, marking the readiness of these shoots for the next growth phase.

Fig. 01
"Establishment of leaf segments from mature trees on MS(×½)+BA(5µM)+PG(10µM) Five weeks after inoculation

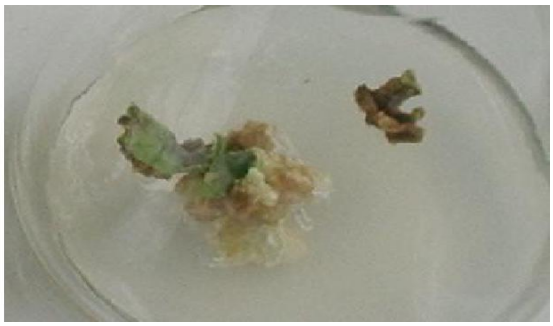

Fig. 04
Establishment of leaf segments from *In Vitro* born seedlings on MS(×½)+BA(4µM)+ PG(10µM) Two weeks after inoculation

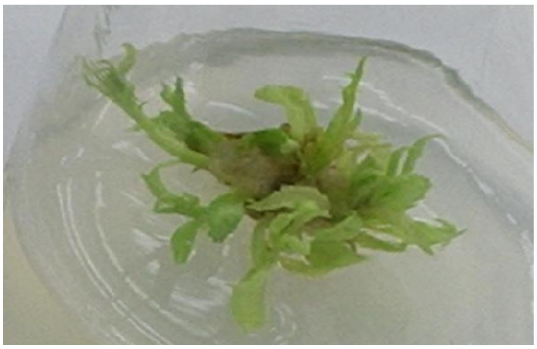

Fig. 02
Formation of adventitious shoots on the margins of leaf segments on S(×½)+BA(5µM)+ PG(10µM) Four weeks after culture period

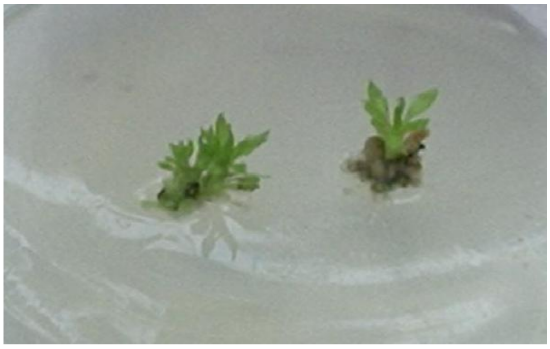

Fig. 05
Subcultured shoots showing multiplication on MS(×½)+BA(4µM)+PG(10µM) Four weeks after culture period

Fig. 03
Multiplication of adventitious shoots obtained from leaf segments of mature trees on MS(×½)+IBA(2.5µM)+PG(10µM) After two weeks of subculture

Fig. 06
Multiplication of adventitious shoots obtained from leaf segments of *In Vitro* born seedlings on MS(×½)+IBA(2.5µM)+PG(10µM) After two weeks of subculture

PLATE - 6: Culture of leaf segments from mature trees and *In Vitro* born seedlings of Golden Delicious cultivar of Apple"

Together, these images chronicle the successful in vitro propagation and growth of nodal stem segments from both mature apple trees and in vitro-born seedlings of the Golden Delicious apple cultivar. This process encompasses the establishment of nodal stem segments, their multiplication, and the subsequent rooting phase. This progression is pivotal for producing healthy apple plants for orchard establishment and contributes significantly to the propagation and research of the Golden Delicious apple cultivar.

Interpretation

The above images (Figures 01 to 06) illustrate various phases of in vitro propagation and growth of leaf segments derived from both mature apple trees and in vitro-born seedlings of the Golden Delicious apple cultivar. These images are part of Plate 6, which showcases the cultivation of leaf segments from both sources. Below is an interpretation of each image:

Figure 01 - Establishment of Leaf Segments from Mature Trees (Five Weeks After Inoculation): In this image, leaf segments have successfully developed from mature apple trees on a culture medium comprising half-strength MS (Murashige and Skoog) nutrients, BA (Benzyladenine) at 5µM, and PG (Polyethylene Glycol) at 10µM. After five weeks, these leaf segments have initiated growth, demonstrating their potential to generate new shoots from mature tree leaf tissue.

Figure 04 - Establishment of Leaf Segments from In Vitro Born Seedlings (Two Weeks After Inoculation): This image depicts the establishment of leaf segments obtained from in vitro-born seedlings. The culture medium utilized contains half-strength MS (×½), BA at 4µM, and PG at 10µM. Within two weeks, leaf segments have emerged from the seedlings, showcasing their capacity to generate new segments under these culture conditions.

Figure 02 - Formation of Adventitious Shoots on the Margins of Leaf Segments (Four Weeks After Culture Period): In this image, adventitious shoots have developed along the margins of leaf segments. The culture medium employed consists of half-strength MS (×½), BA at 5µM, and PG at 10µM. After four weeks of culture, the emergence of these shoots is evident, signifying successful shoot formation from leaf segments.

Figure 05 - Subcultured Shoots Showing Multiplication (Four Weeks After Culture Period): Similar to Figure 02, this image presents subcultured shoots, originating from leaf segments of in vitro-born seedlings. These shoots have been subcultured on a medium comprising half-strength MS (×½), BA at 4µM, and PG at 10µM for four weeks. Similar to the previous case, these shoots have multiplied, demonstrating robust growth potential.

Figure 03 - Multiplication of Adventitious Shoots Obtained from Leaf Segments of Mature Trees (After Two Weeks of Subculture): In this image, there is the multiplication of adventitious shoots derived from leaf segments of mature trees. These shoots have undergone subculture on a medium containing half-strength MS (×½), IBA (Indole-3-butyric Acid) at 2.5µM, and PG at 10µM for two weeks. The presence of multiple shoots indicates successful multiplication.

Figure 06 - Multiplication of Adventitious Shoots Obtained from Leaf Segments of In Vitro Born Seedlings (After Two Weeks of Subculture): Similar to Figure 03, this image depicts the multiplication of adventitious shoots, this time originating from leaf segments of in vitro-born seedlings. These shoots have undergone subculture on a medium with half-strength MS (×½), IBA at 2.5µM, and PG at 10µM for two weeks. Once again, the presence of multiple shoots indicates successful multiplication.

These images collectively document the prosperous in vitro propagation and growth of leaf segments from both mature apple trees and in vitro-born seedlings of the Golden Delicious apple cultivar. The process encompasses the establishment of leaf segments, the formation of adventitious shoots, and their subsequent multiplication. This progression is pivotal for producing healthy apple plants for orchard establishment and significantly contributes to the propagation and research of the Golden Delicious apple cultivar.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study conducted an extensive examination of the *In Vitro* propagation and growth of Golden Delicious apple varieties using various plant tissues sourced from both mature trees and *In Vitro*-born seedlings. The analysis presented throughout this research provides valuable insights into the potential applications and advantages of tissue culture techniques in apple cultivation, particularly in the temperate climate of the Kashmir Valley.

One significant finding of this study is the successful *In Vitro* propagation of Golden Delicious apple varieties. Regardless of the tissue type or source, whether it be shoot tips, nodal stem segments, or leaf segments, the ability to establish these tissues *In Vitro* underscores the versatility and adaptability of this apple cultivar to tissue culture methods. This adaptability holds promise for the efficient propagation of Golden Delicious apples for various agricultural purposes.

Another noteworthy observation is the remarkable multiplication of shoots observed in the research. The subcultured shoots displayed prolific growth and multiplication, emphasizing the importance of this phase in *In Vitro* propagation. The formation of multiple shoots from the initial tissues demonstrates the potential for mass production of apple plantlets, which is of great significance for commercial apple cultivation.

Additionally, the successful rooting of subcultured shoots is a critical milestone. The developed roots are essential for ensuring the transition of *In Vitro*-grown plants to natural soil conditions. This aspect is crucial for the establishment and long-term survival of apple plants, particularly when they are eventually transferred to orchards.

The research also highlights the ability of leaf segments to give rise to adventitious shoots. This finding suggests the regenerative potential of leaf tissues and provides further options for propagating new apple plants. It showcases the adaptability of this apple cultivar to *In Vitro* techniques and expands the toolkit available to horticulturists and researchers in the field of apple breeding and cultivation.

Moreover, the study acknowledges the variability in tissue response to specific culture conditions, indicating that tailoring these protocols to different tissue types and sources can enhance the success rate of *In Vitro* propagation. This adaptability further underlines the practicality and potential for customization of tissue culture techniques in apple production.

In broader terms, the research findings have significant implications for the apple industry in the Kashmir Valley and beyond. *In Vitro* propagation techniques offer a powerful tool for the efficient production of disease-resistant, high-yield apple varieties. These findings open avenues for improved crop quality, disease resistance, and yield enhancement, ultimately contributing to the growth and sustainability of apple cultivation in temperate climates.

In summary, the research presented in this study provide strong evidence of the feasibility and advantages of *In Vitro* propagation of Golden Delicious apple varieties. These findings underscore the practical applications of tissue culture techniques in apple cultivation and breeding, offering opportunities for enhanced agricultural practices and the establishment of healthy orchards in regions such as the Kashmir Valley.

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