

History of Mango – ‘King of Fruits’

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Abstract: From ancient times, Mangoes have been granted a special position in India. The fruit is heavenly in taste and is termed as “Food of the Gods”. Indian Mango or *Mangifera Indica* is native to southern Asia, particularly India Bangladesh and Myanmar. Buddhist monks are believed to have introduced the fruit to South-East Asian countries like Malaysia and China around 4th century B.C. Persian traders took the Mango into the middle east and Africa, from there the Portuguese brought it to Brazil and West Indies. Mango cultivars arrived in Florida in the 1830’s and in California in the 1880’s. Over the years Mango groves have spread to many parts of the tropical and sub-tropical world, where the climate allows the Mango to grow best. There are over 1000 different Mango varieties grown throughout the world. Down the ages, several qualities have got attached to the Mango. The knowledge of Vegetative propagation gained in the 16th century made it possible to produce a large number of cultivars which were far superior to the wild forms. Today India has the richest collection of Mango cultivars. India ranks first among world’s Mango producing countries accounting for about 50% of the world’s Mango production other major Mango producing countries include china, Thailand, Mexico, Pakistan, Philippines, Indonesia, Brazil, Nigeria and Egypt. Though the Mango has become a household fruit, its wild cousins can still be found in the north-eastern part of India and Myanmar.

Key Words: Mango, distribution, varieties, origin.

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I. Introduction

Mango (*Mangifera Indica* L.) is a member of the plant family, Anacardiaceae (cashews family or poison ivy family), order Sapindales, class Magnoliopsida and division Tracheophyta (vascular plants). The species name of the Mango is *Mangifera Indica* which means “an Indian plant bearing mangoes”. The cultivated Mango is probably a natural hybrid between *Mangifera Indica* and *Mangifera sylvatica*. There are two classes of cultivars – Indo China and west Indian. The over 1000 known Mango cultivars are derived from two strains of mango seed – monoembryonic (single embryo) and polyembryonic (multiple embryo). Monoembryonic hails from the Indian (original) strain of mango, polyembryonic from the Indochinese).

The Origin, History And Spread Of Mangoes Around The World

The history of Mango began thousands of years ago on the Indian sub-continent. The Mango is the national fruit of India, Pakistan and the Philippines. It is also the national tree of Bangladesh. Not only is it one of the most highly prized fruits of South Asia, it is also intimately connected with folklore and legends across many religions. There is consensus among the historians and horticulturists that the cultivated mango has originated in India. Vavilov (1926) has suggested India – Burma region as the centre of origin of Mango based on the observed level of genetic diversity. Mukherjee (1951) considered origin of genus *Mangifera* probably in the South – East Asia but the origin of cultivated Mango in the Assam – Burma region. Scientists of the Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeobotany, Lucknow, have traced the origin of genus *Mangifera* from 60 million years old fossil compressions of carbonized mango leaves in the Palaeocene sediments near Damalgiri, west Garo Hills, Meghalaya and named it *Eomangiferop-hyllum damalgiensis* (Mehrotra et al., 1998). Extensive comparison of the anatomy and morphology of several modern day species of the genus *Mangifera* with the fossil samples reinforced the view that North-East India is the Centre of origin of mango genus, from where it has spread into neighboring areas of South – East Asia and then slowly to the whole world.

Mangoes have been cultivated in South Asia for thousands of years and reached Southeast Asia between the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. The earliest mention of mango, *Mangifera indica*, that means “the great fruit bearer,” is in the Hindu scripture dating back to 4000 B.C. The wild mango originated in the foot hills of the Himalayas of India and Burma and about 40 to 60 of these tree still grow in India and South East Asia. Over the years mango groves have spread to many parts of the tropical and sub-tropical world. As the mango became cultivated, as early as 2000 B.C. its flavor, size and texture developed. The explorers who tasted

the mango were enchanted with its aromatic qualities and ambrosial flavor and introduced the fruit to other tropical countries. As the mango adapted to new locales, new varieties evolved and many names were bestowed upon it such as “apple of the tropics,” “King of fruit” and “Fruit of the Gods”.

After its domestication in India more than 4000 years ago, traders, travelers and rulers have taken mango for plantation in different subtropical regions of the world over the last 25,000 years. During 4-5th centuries B.C. the Buddhist monks took mango to Malaya Peninsula and East Asia. Mango was first introduced in China from India during middle of the 7th Century A.D. when Chinese traveler Hwen T’sang returned from India to China with the mango. Further in the 10th Century A.D. the Persians carried it to East Africa (Purseglove, 1969). The 14th century Moroccan traveler Ibn Battuta reported it at Mogadishu. The cultivation of mango began slowly moving westward with the spice trade. The Portuguese, who landed in Calcutta in 1498, were the first to establish a mango trade. English word mango originated from Malayalam “manga” and Tamil “mangai”. The Portuguese were fascinated by the fruit on their arrival in Kerala and introduced it to the world as “Mango”. The Portuguese introduced grafting on mango trees to produce extraordinary varieties like Alphonso. Alphonso is named after de Albuquerque, a nobleman and military expert who helped to establish the Portuguese colony in India. Mangoes continued to curry favor everywhere they were cultivated on their journey westward. The seventh century caliphs of Baghdad enjoyed their mangoes in the form of a complex brew. The traveling mango then hitched a camel ride from Persia and caravaned to the African continent about the year 1000. Mangoes were first recorded in Europe by Friar Jordanus in 1328 but Europeans didn’t fall in love with them as did countries with tropical climates. Although mangoes are the world’s third largest food crop today, they still remain obscure in Europe.

Spanish explorers brought mango to South America and Mexico in the 1600’s. The first attempt to introduce the mango into the US came in 1833 to Florida. The mango had tumultuous history in Florida due primarily to weather, minimizing the commercial production of the fruit in the early 1990’s. A very small percentage of fresh mangoes available commercially in the US are grown in South Florida and Southern California. During 16th century AD the Portuguese have taken it to West Africa and Brazil. After becoming established in Brazil, the mango was carried to the West Indies being first planted in Barbados about 1742 and later in the Dominican Republic. It reached Jamaica about 1782 and early in the 19th century it reached Mexico from Philippines and the West Indies (Morton, 1987). Mango reached Miami in 1862 or 1863 from the West Indies and it is believed seedling was polyembryonic and from “No. 11” parent (Litz, 2009). In same decade, about 40 varieties of Mangoes from India were initially planted in 1875 in North Queensland Australia after post – European colonization (Morton, 1987).

II. History Of Mangoes In India

The Mango has been known to Indians since very early times. Scientific fossil evidence indicates that the Mango made its first appearance even earlier 25 to 30 million years ago in North – east India, Myanmar and Bangladesh from where it travelled down to Southern India. History yields some very interesting facts about this celebrated fruit. Although Mango has been planted in India since time immemorial, earliest written records are present in ancient Sanskrit literature of pre – Buddhist era. Valmiki, Ramayan, regarded as the earliest epic poetry after the Vedas, which after a long oral tradition was written down around 500 B.C. has several references to Mango plantations, example – [^]o/kw ukVd Lu/kS% p la;qäke loZr% iqjheA m|ku vkez o.kksisrke egrhe lky es[kykeA** [Balkand, 1-5-12].

Similarly Varah Puran (172.39) says that – “One who plants one peepal, one neem, one Banyan, Two pomegranates, two orange, five mango trees and ten flowering plants or creeper shall never go the hell.”

The earliest name given to the Mango was Amra-Phal. It is also referred to in early Vedic literature as Rasala and Sahakara and is written about in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad and the Puranas which condemn the felling of Mango. The classical Sanskrit poet Kalidasa sang the praises of Mangoes. On reaching South India, the name translated to Aam – Kaay in Tamil, which gradually became Maamkaay due to differences in pronunciation. The Malayali people further changed this to Maanga. The Portuguese were fascinated by the first on their arrival in Kerala and introduced it to the world as ‘Mango’ [The words first recorded attestation in a European language was a text by Ludovico di Varthema in Italian in 1510, as ‘Mango’. Mango is also mentioned by Hendrik Van Rheede, the Dutch commander of Malabar (Northern Kerala) in his book Hortus Malabaricus, a compendium of the plants of economic and medical value in the Malabar, published in 1678].

In ancient India, the ruling class used names of Mango varieties to bestow titles on eminent people, like the honour given to the famous courtesan of Vaishali, Amrapali. The Mango tree was also associated with the god of love “Manmatha” and its blossoms were considered to be the god’s arrows by the Hindu Nanda kings. It was during the Nanda rule that Alexander arrived in India and fought the famous battle with King Porus. When it was time for him to return to Greece, he took with him several varieties of the delicious fruit.

With the rise of Buddhism, Mangoes came to represent faith and prosperity among the religious followers, as there were several legends about the Buddha and Mango trees. Buddhist monks cultivated the fruit

and in fact, the Mango is considered to be a sacred fruit in the region because it is said that Buddha himself meditated under a Mango tree. And it is also said that the Buddha created a white Mango tree which was later worshipped by his followers. Among Buddhist rulers, Mangoes were exchanged as gifts and became an important tool of diplomacy. During this period, Buddhist monks took Mangoes with them where ever they went, popularising the fruit. Mango tree has religious importance among Jainism because the Jain goddess Ambika is traditionally represented as sitting under a Mango tree.

Hsiun – Tsang, one of the early traveller to India (632-645) was the first person to bring Mango to the notice of people outside India. Megasthenes and Hsiun – Tsang the earliest writer – travellers of Ancient India wrote about how the Ancient Indian Kings, notably the Mauryas, planted Mango trees along roadsides and highways as a symbol of prosperity.

In fact, for a good part of the Mauryan rule and later, when Buddhism thrived, mango trees were considered as the beacon of knowledge and peace, and planting them a necessary act of faith. In fact, apart from the monks, who found mangoes to be naturally ready food, the Munda tribe and the Dattaray sect by Swami Chakradhar were instrumental in taking this rich fruit to the masses. This perhaps explains the far reach of mango trees in India, because where ever Buddhism went, Mangoes went along. It is said that among the few things that Alexander took away from King Porus court was Mangoes. In the medieval period, Alauddin Khilji was the first patron of the Mango and his feast in Sivama Fort was a real Mango extravaganza with nothing but Mangoes in different forms on the lavish menu. Next came the Mughal emperors, whose fondness for the mango is legendary. The obsessive love for mango was, in fact, the only legacy that flowed untouched from one generation to another in the Mughal dynasty. We all know about how Babur, after the victory of Battle of Panipat became disillusioned with Indian food and established a courier system that could connect him to Samarkand. And in doing so, gave India its Vibrant fruit basket.

The first Mughal, Babur was reluctant to face the feared warrior Rana Sanga of Mewar, despite Daulat Khan Lodis promises of a good part of his empire and war booty. It is said that Lodi then introduced Babur to Mango, a fruit he became so fond of that it convinced him not only to face Rana Sanga but to also lay the foundation of his empire in India.

It is said that Babur became so fond of this fruit that the melon neophile actually decided not only to be a part of the war but also lay the foundation of the Mughal empire here. What of course no one told Babur then was Mangoes was a summer fruit and seasonal. Not given to whims (as his successors turned to be), Babur decided to nevertheless stay, cleverly dividing his time among his territory, till newer ways of getting his other favourite fruits could be devised. Folklore is that Humayun which on the run from India to Kabul and ahead ensured that Mangoes was in good supply, which thank to Babar’s courier system worked, albeit with a few lapses. Incidentally, it wasn’t the first time that Mango – which Persian poet Amir Khusru called it Naghza Tarin Mewa Hindustan (the fairest fruit of Hindustan), would be at the centre of a new kingdom or an alliance. A few decades later, his great grandson Aurangzeb had offered Mangoes to Shah Abbas of Persia to support him to his light for the throne. Later on, the king of Balkan too had offered Aurangzeb 200 camel loads of dry fruits and Mangoes as a peace treaty.

Akbar the Great [1556-1605] built the vast Lakhi Bagh near Darbhanga growing over a hundred thousand (100,000) Mango trees. This was one of the earliest example trees. This was one of the earliest example of grafting of Mangoes including the Totapuri, the Rataul and the expensive Kesar. Shah, Jahan fondness for Mangoes was so deep that he had his own son Aurangzeb, the then Wazir of Decean, punished and house arrested because he had dared to have all the Mangoes himself. It was also Mangoes that Aurangzeb sent to Shah Abbas of Persia to support him to his fight for the throne.

In fact, many believe that one of the reason that Shah Jahan liked Dara Sikoh and chose him as his heir apparent was because Dara was a seasoned horticulturist, and had curated the “Nuskha Dar Fanni Falahat”, which not only detailed the manner in which all the varieties of Mangoes in the orchard and other places were grafted but also ensured that the gift of Mangoes continued for his generation. The book is today one of the finest piece of work on the traditional art of grafting. Abul Fazal’s Ain-i-Akbari and Tujuk – e – Jehangiri are the only other two books that not only have detailed accounts of the varieties of Mangoes, each segregated but quality, smell, shape aromas but also how each of the emperors loved them. After all, each emperor built his own orchard just to ensure he had enough of the fruit and in varieties. Second orchard of grafted Mangoes was grown by emperor Jahangir in Lahore (Pakistan) and the third at the “Jharna Qutub” village (now known as Shamsi Talab Mehrauli) was commissioned by Shah Jahan, who considered Mango the vitality fruit.

Mughal patronage to horticulture led to thousands of Mangoes varieties that were grafted, including the famous Totapuri, which was the first variety to be exported to Persia and other Kingdoms. This list should also include the Rataul, grafted by Kareemuddin in 1874 and the most expensive of all, Kesar, which was first cultivated by Nawab of Junagarh in 1931. Other came as odes to victories like chausa that Sher Shah Suri introduced on the eve of his victory in chausa (now Bihar) against Humayun. In fact, the juiciest Dussehri owes its birth to the Rohilla Chieftains.

The Mughals relished their favourite addiction, with Jahangir and Shah Jahan awarding their Khansamahs for their unique creations like Aam Panna, Aam Ka Lauz and Aam ka Meetha Pulao, a delicate Mango dessert sold all through the summer in the Shahjahanabad. Even Nur Jahan, the empress was rather fond of the Mango drink and used to a mix of Mangoes and roses to create her legendary wines.

Jahanara was so fond of the latter seasonal dessert that it was in the must list not only in the palace but also the numerous get togethers that were hosted by the Princess at Chandani Chowk. Mangoes were also the peacemakers between Jahanara and Aurangzeb. It is said that the otherwise astute Aurangzeb was only malleable which he was having a mango and in the years to come Jahanara often used the sweet summer fruit to convince him for various alliances and to be lenient to his sons. In fact, Aurangzeb who had given up most of the Mughal lavishness his father and grandfather were known for, would spend Rs. 1000 (One Thousand) on food, if Mangoes were in season. In fact, it was his aphrodisiac when he couldn't find the comfort of Udaipuri Mahal. The Peshwa of the Marathas Raghunath Peshwa, planted 10 million mango trees as a sign of Maratha supremacy. Folklore has it that it was a fruit from these trees that eventually turned into the famous Alphonso, "The King of Mangoes".

Mango retained much of its superiority even during Bahadur Shah Zafar's time. He was said to be fond of the fruit that featured prominently in paintings, crockeries, festivals and even in iftar parties. Bereft of much of grandeur of his ancestors, the last Mughal is said to have found solace among poets and his favourite mangoes. A famous story reiterated by Ghalib's memoirist Altaf Hussain Hali goes thus – One day Bahadur Shah accompanied by Ghalib and a number of other courtiers, were walking in the Hayat Bakhsh or the Mahtab Garden, a garden that was reserved exclusively for the king and his queens and members of the royal family. Ghalib looked at the mangoes repeatedly and with great concentration. When asked, the mango neophile wittily replied, 'My Lord and Guide, some ancient poet has written : upon the top of every fruit is written clear and legibly;' 'This is the property of A, the son of B, the son of C.' I am looking to see whether any of these bear my name and those of my father and grandfather.' Zafar smiled and the same day had a big basket of the finest mangoes sent to him thus starting a friendship that lasted well into his last days in the palace.

The advent of Europeans eventually affected the Mango, which fell from its position of empire builder to simply a fruit – the British had no use for it in matters of diplomacy. Though it retained its superiority of taste, many varieties disappeared from the scene while several new ones emerged.

Over the ages, the Mango become a household fruit and odes were sung in its praise. Rabindranath Tagore was extremely fond of mangoes and has written several poems about the fragrant flowers of Mangoes, including the very famous 'aamer manjori'. Legendary Urdu poet Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib was a Mango aficionado too; he despised people who didn't share his addiction for the fruit. Today, the curvaceous shape of Mangoes, which has long held the fascination of weavers and designers, has become an iconic Indian motif. The Mango is seen as a symbol of good luck and prosperity and in many parts of India. Mango leaves are strong up over the front doors of homes as Toran. It is a belief that the Mango tree has the power to make wishes come true. In Hinduism the perfectly ripe Mango is often held by Lord Ganesha as a symbol of attainment, regarding the devotees potential perfection. Mango blossoms are also used to worship of the goddess Saraswati. No Telugu / Kannada New Year's Day called Ugadi passes without eating Ugadi pachadi made with Mango pieces as one of the ingredients. With Mango festivals, being celebrated in Ahmedabad, Lucknow, Allahabad, Delhi and Goa, Mangoes in India have become a symbol of summer and are no less than a cultural legacy. Noted Mango cultivator Haji Kalimullah has even named a new variety a cross – breed of Kolkata's Husn – e – Aara and Lucknow's Dussehri, as the "Modi Mango". It's no wonder then that the Mango is rightfully called the "King of Fruits".

Analysis and Future Strategy

Mango is well adapted to tropical and sub-tropical climates. It thrives well in almost all the regions of the country but cannot be grown commercially in areas above 600 m. Mango is cultivated in almost all the states of India. In India, about 1,500 varieties of Mango are grown including 1000 commercial varieties. Each of the main varieties of mango has an unique taste and flavour.

Mango has an established export market and poses bright opportunities for export in the international market whether in fresh or processed forms. Similarly the mango industry has provided livelihood opportunities to its growers and those involved in its marketing channel. Creation of essential infra – structure for preservation, cold storage, refrigerated transportation, rapid transit, grading, processing, packaging and quality control are the important aspects which needs more attention. There is need for developing processing industries in the southern region of the country where post harvest losses in handling and marketing are higher. There is scope to establish mango preservation factories in cooperative sector. Considerable amount of waste material, example – mango stones, peels remain unutilized which can be used properly by the processors to earn more profit. This will add to their income through processing and create additional employment opportunities for the rural people.

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IV. Conclusion

Mango occupies 22% of the total under fruits comprising of 1.2 million hectares, with a total production of 11 million tonnes. Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh, Telangana are having the largest area under mango each with around 25% of the total area followed by Bihar, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Fresh mangoes and mango pulp are the important items of agri exports from India. India's main export destinations for mango are USA and other Middle East countries with a limited quantity being shipped to European market. Although India is the largest mango producing country, accounting about 50-60% of world production, the export of fresh fruit is limited to Alphonso and Dashehari varieties. India's share in the world mango market is about 15 percent. Mango accounts for 40 percent of the total fruit exports from the country. There is good scope for increasing the area and productivity of mango in the country.

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