

VANISHING INDIGENOUS FRUITS OF WEST BENGAL

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Since long many wild indigenous edible fruits are traditionally grown and consumed by the rural communities of west Bengal. These fruits play an important in the livelihood development and also provide nutritional security to the rural village people. But unfortunately, they are vanishing rapidly due to destruction of their habitat, climatic change, destruction of plants for urbanisation and bringing land under agriculture, lack of traditional knowledge about their nutritional values, their proper identification, harvesting and conservation procedure. Occurrence of this event impacting enormously on food and nutritional security and maintainance of livelihood of poor rural communities of West Bengal.

Kendu (*Diospyros melanoxylon*):



Kendu is found to grow in the hot and dry lateritic regions of West Bengal. It is a tall tree that grows up to 15-25m. It is deeply associated with the lives of tribal people. It ripens during summer season. Orange coloured and round shaped ripe fruits are eaten fresh and aslo made juice from its

flesh. The fruits are rich in protean, fiber, vitamin-C, betacarotene, tannin and flavonoids. The leaves are used locally for making bidi.

Jangal Jalebi (*Inga dulcis*):



This is a fast growing thorny tree which thrives well in hot and dry climate. It is highly drought resistant. The fruit is a pod which is typically twisted giving the shape of a sweet 'Jalebi'. The pink coloured firm, sweet and edible pulp is called aril. It is a nutritious fruits that contains Vitamin-C, vitamin-B-1, vitamin-B₂ calcium, iron, potassium along with protein and fiber.

Falsa (*Grewia asiatica*):



This is a tropical fruit plant which is found to grow throughout the state of West Bengal. It is drought tolerant. Falsa is a summer season small and round shaped fruit. Fruits turn pinkish in colour when ripe and sweet sour in taste. It is rich in nutrients like carbohydrate, protein, fat, calcium, phosphorus, iron, vitamin-c and vitamin -A. The ripe fruits are eaten fresh and juice, syrup and squash are also prepared from its pulp. The drinks are used as an astringent, stomachic and colling agent. Ripe fruits are excellent for meeting up thirst during hot summer.

Dheua (*Artocarpus lacucha*):



This fruits plant is a big tree with elliptical broad leaves. The fruits are irregular in shape and velvety in texture. The unripe fruits are green in colour but turn yellow when ripe. It has yellow coloured edible pulp which is sweet-sour in taste. Ripe fruits are eaten and also made into curries and chutneys. The ripe fruits are rich in vitamin-c, betacarotene, iron, phosphorus and magnesium, and antioxidants, phenolic acid and flavonoid.

Piyal (*Buchanania lazam*):



Piyal fruits plant is a tree which grows upto about 20m. This tree thrives well in the dry lateritic regions of West Bengal. It is a very popular fruit among the tribal people. White scented flowers are appeared at the terminal end of the branches. Small round shaped (drupe) fruits turn reddish-purple colour when ripe. Fruits are available during summer season. Sweet and sour tasted ripe fruits are eaten fresh. The fruits are nutritious which contain vitamin-c, protein, vitamin-B-2 and minerals like iron, calcium and phosphorus.

Bainchi (*Flacourtia indica*):



This fruit is also known as Indian plum or kantayi. The plant is a bushy shrub with spiny trunk and branches. It grows upto the height of about 7.5m. Roundish fruit are dark red in colour and edible when ripe. The branches are drooping in nature which bear oval shaped leaves. The fruit pulp is yellow or white and have sweet acidic taste. It is a wild but nutritious fruit which is rich in vitamin-C, minerals and dietary fiber with a notable presence of antioxidants. The fruit is eaten raw or made into jam and jelly.

Longan (*Dymocarpus longan*):



Longun is a lychee like minor indigenous fruit of subtropical regions of West Bengal. It is locally known as 'Ashfol'. This plant is a tree which grows up to the height of 10-12m. It looks almost like lychee plant. Flowers appear during February and fruits matured in summer. The edible portion is white fleshy aril. It is rich in nutrients like carbohydrate, protein, dietary fibre, vitamin-C, malic and tartaric acid and minerals like iron, potassium and phosphorus. Due to high water content, the fruits help to meet thirst during hot summer months.

Wood apple (*Limonia acidissima*):



This fruit is locally called 'Koyet Bael'. It is a native Indian fruit with a hard, woody shell and a distinctive brownish fibrous pulp. The fruits are typically round or oval in shape. The plant is a medium sized tree that grows up to 10-15m with spiny branches. Fruits mature in the month of August-November. The fruits are rich in nutrients like carbohydrate, protein, dietary fibre, pectin and minerals like phosphorus, iron calcium and vitamin-C and vitamin - B-2. The pulp of this ripe fruit is edible and also used to prepare various products like pickle, chutney, jam, jelly and sharbat.