



## Nakshatra Vanam

### Poorva Bhadrapada (Pooratathi) Mango



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**Botanical Name:** *Mangifera indica* L.

**Tamil Name:** Ma

**Sanskrit Name:** Amra

**English Name:** Mango

### Habitat

Evergreen trees, to 30 m high, bark 2-2.5 cm, dark grey, rough with vertical fissures; blaze yellow; exudation yellowish, gummy. Leaves simple, alternate, clustered at the tips of branchlets, estipulate; petiole 10-75 mm long, stout, glabrous, pulvinate; lamina 9.2-40 x 2.5-8 cm, elliptic, elliptic-lanceolate, linear-oblong, base attenuate or acute, apex acuminate, acute or obtusely acute, margin entire, glabrous, shiny, coriaceous; lateral nerves 14-28 pairs, pinnate, prominent; intercostae reticulate, prominent. Flowers polygamous, yellowish-green, in terminal panicles; pedicels jointed; bract deciduous; calyx 4-5 partite, ovate, imbricate, hairy without, cauducous; petals 4-5, oblong-obovate, subequal, nerves at base gland crested, free or adnate to the disc; disc fleshy, cupular, 4-5 lobed; stamens 4-5, inserted inside or on the disc, fertile stamens 1 or 2; filaments free, glabrous; staminodes gland-tipped; ovary sessile, superior, oblique, 1-celled, ovule pendulous; style lateral; stigma simple. Fruit a drupe, 5-15 cm long, oblong-reniform, compressed, yellowish-red, mesocarp fleshy, endocarp fibrous; seed subreniform (India Biodiversity Portal).



## Religious Association

The mango tree is sacred to Hindus, Buddhists and Jains. In the Hindu religion, it is considered to be the incarnation or manifestation of Prajapati, the Lord of creatures (Gupta, 1971). It has also been associated with the goddesses Ambika and Lakshmi (Huyler, 1994). It is a symbol of fertility and a happy conjugal life (Jha and Basak, 1994). It is sacred to Buddhists because Buddha was born in the Lumbini garden surrounded by sal and mango trees. It is believed that the Lord



Buddha was presented with a grove of mango trees in which He used to rest. The Buddhists therefore consider it a holy tree (Randhawa, 1962). The Buddhist texts refer to the mango tree frequently. The Jivaka-amba-vana was well known in the Buddhist period (Law, B.C. Ancient Indian flora. Part II, 367, Indological Studies).

Neminatha, a Jaina Tirthankara, attained enlightenment under this tree, and thus it became sacred to the Jaina religion. A Jaina *yakshini* called Tara, Amra or Kushmandini is also associated with this tree. The mango tree appears in the reliefs of the Sanchi *stupa* more than once. Various patterns with the mango tree and its fruit, are carved on the *stupa* at Sanchi which dates back to 150 B.C., This pattern is quite common in the sculptures of Bharhut and Sanchi. Similar evidence of its use as a religious symbol can be seen in the Ekambareswarar temple at Kanchipuram (Sinha, 1995). The tree has also been associated with the subject of astrology under the constellation *Pooratathi*

### Temples associated with the mango tree:

District	Village/Town	Temple	Deity
Coimbatore	Avinasi	Avinasilingesar	Shiva
Cuddalore	Nallur perumanam	Shivaloga-Thiyakesar	Shiva
Kanchipuram	Kanchipuram	Ekambareswarar	Shiva
Nagappattinam	Mailadudurai	Maayurunadhar	Shiva
Nagappattinam	Nagai Karonam	Kayaroganeswarar	Shiva
Nagappattinam	Tirukuruhavur	Velvidainadhar	Shiva
Nagappattinam	Tiruvusathanam	Mandhirapureswarar	Shiva
Nagappattinam	Padaleecharam	Naganadhar	Shiva
Tiruchirapalli	Tirumandhurai	Amravaneswarar	Shiva
Tirunelveli	Nanguneri	Vaanamamalai Perumal	Vishnu

(Source – Sacred Trees of Tamil Nadu – 2005 by M. Amirthalingam)

## Medicinal uses and other benefits



The mango contains large amounts of fiber, pectin and vitamin A and C. This can help in lowering serum cholesterol levels, especially low-density lipoprotein. The mango is also useful in clearing the skin of pores and pimples. It is also very useful for improving the eye sight and helps prevent night blindness and dry eyes.

The mango also contains tartaric acid, malic acid and citric acid which help to maintain the alkali reserve of the body. The crushed mango leaves also help to maintain the insulin

levels of the blood. Consumption of mango also does not increase the sugar level in your body since it contains a low glycemic index.

The mango contains certain enzymes that help to break down protein. The fiber in the fruit also aids digestion and elimination. The juice of the green mango mixed with water and sugar helps to cool the body. Hence it is very effective in hot and tropical climates.

## Mythology /Folklore

The origin of the mango tree goes back to ancient mythology. It is said that once the daughter of Surya, the sun god, was being chased by an enchantress. In order to evade her, the girl entered a pond and turned into a lotus. A king saw the flower and wanted to possess it. However, before he could do so, the enchantress burnt it. Hence the present *vriksham* of the Nagai Karonam is having two branches. There is a legend that each branch of the tree bears fruit with a different taste. This is the Sthala Purana of the Kayaroganewarar temple at Nagappattinam.

Another legend that can be ascribed to the *Dikshidar Purana* says that during the separation of Shiva and Parvathi, Shiva meditated under an *amra* tree and was united with Parvathi. This was due to the grace of Lalitha. (Dikshidar purana Index, Vol. I, p. 66).

The mango tree has thus played an important role in the religious life of the people. It is extensively used in religious ceremonies and rituals, especially by ladies. It is said that the leaves, when used in rituals, can get rid of bad omens and taboos. Further, according to a tribal belief, it is considered auspicious for men to walk around and embrace the mango tree a day before their marriage (Agarwal and Shashi, 1981).

## Conclusion

Our forefathers knew the useful and important properties of the mango tree. They used to grow the mango trees in the compound and prepare homemade items from the fruit. Hence they led healthy lives. Nowadays, we consume factory made items of the fruit which contain many harmful chemicals. Recent research has proved that the mango fruit prevents the development of cancer in the human body. Hence it is essential to grow mango trees in our houses, agricultural lands and gardens and make full use of the manifold properties of this tree.

