



Nakshatra Vanam

Uthiradam - Uttarashada



Jack Fruit Tree

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Botanical Name:	<i>Artocarpus heterophyllus</i>
Tamil Name:	Palaa
Sanskrit Name:	Panasam
English Name:	Jack Fruit Tree

Habitat

The jackfruit is most probably a native of the rain-forests of the Western Ghats. Jackfruit is a tree which is unique in the fact that it produces huge fruits directly from its stem. In fact, the name jackfruit is derived from the Tamil name palaa. The tree is handsome and stately, 30-70 ft tall, with evergreen, alternate, glossy, somewhat leathery leaves are long, oval on mature trees, sometimes oblong or deeply lobed on young shoots. All parts contain sticky, white latex. Short, stout flowering twigs emerge from the trunk and large branches, or even from the soil-covered base of very old trees. Tiny male flowers are borne in oblong clusters 2-4 in length; the female flower clusters are elliptic or rounded. The largest of all tree-borne fruits, the jackfruit tree may be 3 – to 8 ft. long and 6 – 20 ft. wide, and the weight ranges from 10 – 50 kgs. The "rind" or exterior of the compound or aggregate fruit is green or yellow when ripe and composed of numerous hard, cone-like points attached to a thick and rubbery, pale yellow or whitish wall. The interior consists of large "bulbs" of yellow, banana-flavored flesh, massed among narrow ribbons of thin, tough undeveloped perianths, and a central, pithy core. The smooth oval light-brown "seed" is covered by a thin brown membrane. A single fruit may contain 100 to 500 seeds. The fruit emits a strong odour like that of decayed onions. When opened, fruit smells of pineapple and banana.



Medicinal uses and benefits

The leaf extract is useful in treating fever, skin diseases, boils, wounds and diabetes. The latex of the fruit is helpful in treating dysopia, ophthalmities and pharyngitis. The latex can also be mixed with vinegar to heal abscesses, snakebites and glandular swellings. The wood of the jackfruit tree is widely used in manufacturing musical instruments, furniture, doors, windows and roofing.

The root of the jackfruit tree forms the remedy for skin diseases, fever, asthma and diarrhea. The seed starch is useful in relieving biliousness, while the roasted seeds are regarded as an aphrodisiac. In China, the pulp and seeds of jackfruit are considered as a cooling and nutritious tonic. The fruit is useful in overcoming the influence of alcohol on a person's body system. The jackfruit's pulp and seed can be used as a tonic and the ripe fruit is used as a laxative. The jackfruit contains flavonoids, vitamin C and is a good source of carotenoids, vitamin B1 and B2.



Religious Association

The fruit is associated with Lord Bala Ganapati (Stutley, 1985). The leaves are considered to be auspicious and are used along with mango leaves to decorate the *kalasam* (Rao, 1995). The jackfruit is represented in ancient Buddhist sculptures of India (Foucher, 1914). Jack fruit trees are also associated in the science of astrology under the constellation *Uthiradam*. The heartwood of the tree is used by Buddhist monasteries in Southeast Asia, for dyeing the robes of the monks to a light brown color

Temples of Tamilnadu associated with the jack fruit tree:

District	Village/Town	Temple	Deity
Nagappattinam	Sirkali	Thaatalan	Vishnu
Salem	Kollimalai	Arumughaperuman	Muruga
Sivaganga	Tirukoliyur	Soumiyanarayanar	Vishnu
Tanjavur	Tiruneelakudi	Manokkiyanathar	Shiva
Tanjavur	Kumbakkonam	Kumbeswarar	Shiva
Tanjavur	Sarkuneswarapuram	Sarkuneswarar	Shiva
Tiruchirapalli	Tirumangalam	Samayadeeswarar	Shiva
Tirunelveli	Kutralam	Kurumpalaeesar	Shiva

District	Village/Town	Temple	Deity
Tiruvallur	Tiruvirkolam	Tirupuranthagesar	Shiva
Tiruvarur	Tiruveelimilalai	Veelinadhar	Shiva
Tiruvarur	Ambar Mahalam	Maahaleswarar	Shiva
Tiruvarur	Poovanur	Pushbhavaneswarar	Shiva
Tiruvarur	Tirukurukka	Kundhaleswarars	Shiva
Tiruvarur	Tirukkaravasal	Kannayiranathar	Shiva
Tiruvarur	Naalur	Palaavaneswarar	Shiva
Tiruvarur	Tiruppariyakur	Veeratteswarar	Shiva
Tiruvarur	Tiruvaaimoor	Vaaimoornathar	Shiva

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

Mythology/ Folklore

According to the Sthala Purana of Kutralteeswarar temple at Tirukutralam, pala is the sacred tree of that temple and reverentially worshipped. The tree has been described as follows

“Akaiyar cadurvedan daruvaha mulamadan mulamakap
 Pahaiya navaiyirandun kavarakka curudiyetam panaikalakach
 Cakaiyanavai paciycakaiya upanidatan davirach culkon
 Dokaiyar darumamudar perumpalavun kurumpalave yudavumado”

The sacred tree of Kutralam is short and is therefore called Kurumpala. Since, the tree came into existence; it is believed that all Gods, Agamas, Sastras and Vedas were pleased to gather under its shade. It is said to be sacred to Lord Shiva. Watering the tree with a pitcher of water is believed to be equal to bathing all the Gods. (Sacred Trees of Tamil Nadu – 2005 by M. Amirthalingam).

“Appalavin vadivucadur vi davadi vadakinaladhan palaka
 Veppala devarumirukku miyalbionlorukuda nidanpal varkkir
 Ceppariya devarukku muvarukku mabidekan ceidadakum”

Kutrala sthala purana

Conclusion

The jack fruit trees are native to India and grown mainly on the west coast. However, it is grown in most parts of India. Steps should be taken to cultivate it extensively. The fruit and seeds are extremely nutritious and the fruit can be used in the treatment of many diseases and as a food. Wide publicity should be given to propagate the benefits of this plant. The tree can also be grown so as to increase the export potential of the fruit. It is not only a sacred tree but also economically useful.

