

Periyapuranam* : Mango and its medicinal properties depicted in *Karaikkalammaiyar puranam

Kumaran Ramayah¹

1.0 Introduction

The *Periyapuranam* is the great purana or an epic that depicts the legendary lives and works of the sixty-three nayanmars and nine sacred poets called '*Thokaiyadiyarka*', the canonical poets of Tamil Saivism. It also serves to show the reward bestowed by God and maintain the devotional element in the human heart. It is one part of the complete collection of twelve Holy Scriptures called *Panniru Thirumurai*. Sekkizhar compiled and wrote the *Periyapuranam* or the great purana. *Periyapuranam* poems are not only demonstrating the nayanmar experiences, but also useful as historical literature that shows the community's life. Poems that resulted from high worship widespread throughout this devotional collection. The purpose of this paper is to analyze and identify the information and use of mango fruit in these poems and explain its medicinal properties.

2.0 Punitavatiyar and mango

In the prosperous town, Karaikkal belonging to the Chola kingdom, there lived many honest, law-abiding, God fearing business people. Tanatattan was the leader of that business community. Punitavatiyar was born to him as sole heir-apparent. Her beauty was like that of goddess Lakshmi. Growing like a lovely plant, Punitavatiyar had great love for Lord *Shiva*. Even while playing with her little friends she was chanting the names of Lord *Shiva*. She used to pay respect and worship *Shiva* devotees (*Shivanadiyargal*) whenever she saw them.

When Punitavatiyar came of age, a prominent businessman by name Nitipati of Nagappatinam sought her as a bride for his son Paramatattan. The elders of both the families met and settled the marriage. The marriage was celebrated as per Vedic rites in the presence of relatives and friends. Punitavatiyar with constant love for Lord *Shiva* was also leading a domestic life. She took pleasure in feeding Saivite saints and giving them clothes. As the couple was living happily in this fashion, one day a business friend of Paramatattan gave him two mangoes. Paramatattan sent the fruits to his wife through his servant. Punitavatiyar received them and kept them. A little later a hungry Saivite saint came to her house. As she had not then prepared side-dishes, she served rice and one of the two mangoes. The saint old in age and very hungry, ate the rice with the tasty mango fruit and left her house blessing her. A little later, her husband Paramatattan came for lunch. Punitavatiyar served rice and vegetable curry with the remaining mango fruit. Paramatattan, much pleased with the taste of the mango fruit, asked her to bring the other fruit also. For a moment she was perplexed and went in as if to bring the other fruit. She thought of the sacred feet of Lord *Shiva* and for a while was weary in her spirit.

¹ Sultan Abdul Halim Institute of Teacher Education Sungai Petani, Kedah, Malaysia. kujamasha@gmail.com

By the grace of Lord *Shiva*, a very sweet mango-fruit was placed in her hands. Happily praising Lord *Shiva* for his grace towards her, she gave that fruit to her husband. He ate it and found it sweeter than the other fruit. 'This is not the mango fruit I sent you. It tastes very different. From where did you get this?', he asked her. She thought it best to speak the truth as it was her duty to do so; she told him what had happened actually, all the while thinking of the grace of Lord *Shiva*.

Paramatattan refusing to believe her, asked her to bring another fruit if the previous fruit was given by Lord *Shiva*. Punitavatiyar going inside again appealed to Lord *Shiva* thus: "If you do not bless me with another fruit, what I have told my husband just now becomes false." Again by the grace of Lord *Shiva* she got another fruit in her hands. She gave it to her husband. He received the mango fruit with much surprise, but the fruit disappeared from his hands immediately. On seeing this Paramatattan trembled with fear. He thought that Punitavatiyar who has received the grace of God was not a human-being but a heavenly being. He decided that it was no longer possible for him to live with her an ordinary domestic life.

3.0 Mangos' specialty

The mango fruit is one of the three auspicious fruits of Tamils, along with banana and jackfruit, known as *Mukkani*. In Tamil Nadu, the holy scriptures describe this particular fruit as the gods' food. Mango from Tamil Nadu has its own uniqueness and very famous all over the world. India is the biggest producer of mango. Most of it is locally consumed though some of the popular varieties like the '*Alphonso*' called '*Hapoos*' in India are widely exported. *Alphonso* is the highest rated mango in quality and the most expensive mango that is available in India. The word 'mango' arises from the Tamil word '*mangga*'. The ripe mango fruit is highly nutritious for the body. The scientific name for this tree is '*Mangifera*'. Mangoes are eaten by lots of people around the world especially in Asia during the dry season. It is extensively used in the form of a ripe and unripe mango, juice for various purposes.

This tree can grow up to 35 to 40 feet. The leaves give off a distinct sweet aroma, oval-shaped and slightly longer than the size of the other leaves. These trees are flowering earlier in a very short term and subsequently bear fruit within 3 months. Unripe fruits are usually green in color and after ripe will change color into yellow and slightly reddish. The ripe mango has a fragrant smell. We could find a big and hard seed within this fruit.

4.0 Mangos' usefulness

Mango is a very nutritious fruit that contain vitamin A, *beta-carotene*, *alpha-carotene* and *beta-cryptoxanthin*. Mango provides strength to the eyesight and strengthens the immune system. Just like other fruits, mango is also rich in nutrients like potassium and minerals. It is very important for the heart. Moreover, this fruit also contains nutrients such as vitamin B6 (*pyridoxine*), vitamin C and vitamin E. Vitamin B6 is necessary for the production of hormones in the nervous system. It also has the ability to prevent

paralysis. In addition to this, vitamin C immunized against germs which acts as the best antioxidant. All these benefits can be obtained from the mangos that are grown normally without involving any chemical process. The fruit resulting from chemical processes may lead to health problems. Nutrients mentioned above can only get from a natural fruit juice instead of fruit juice in cans manufactured through a chemical process.

Scientists say that chemical (*lupeol*) in mango has a protective effect against degenerative diseases, especially with regards to the heart; helps prevent certain types of cancer, as well as lowering blood cholesterol levels. These chemicals not only reduce cancer tumors but also treat some other types of health problems. Customized vitamins embodied in '*lupeol*' such as organic acids and carbohydrate works to hinders diseases that affect health.

5.0 Mango in Siddha medicinal

The Siddhas gives various names to the mango like *aamiram*, *maazhai* and *maanthi*. Apart from the fruit offering excellent health benefits, the other parts of the tree like the leaves, bark, trunk etc. In fact, each and every part is used in a variety of applications and medicinal benefits.

Tender mango alleviates the irritation caused in the body. It is also helps to maintain the right level of temperature in the body, improvise hunger. Unripe green mangoes are beneficial in the treatment of gastro-intestinal disorders. Eating one or two small tender mangoes in which the seed is not fully formed with salt and honey is found to be very effective medicine for summer diarrhea, dysentery, piles, morning sickness, chronic dyspepsia, indigestion and constipation.

Fully ripe mango is the perfect after exercise replenishes of lost salts, vitamins, minerals and energy. It simplifies the process of urination, increase cholesterol in the body, increase the sweat and strengthen the body. Moreover, mangos are able to heal constipation, stomach ulcers, increase digestive power, and reduce the impact of the *hemorrhoids*. It is also expressed by a Siddha as follows:

‘Vetha sathiya maaga vilambuvonth
thathu virththirukkunth thambana mangkani
pothum marththanam punkayin aalvadu
vaatha piththa kapanggalai mattrumey’

(*Agaththiyar kunavagadam*)

Mango seeds should be dried and grinded earlier; this mango seed powder must be mixed with water and drank during menstrual period to control excessive bleeding. This powder also could able to heal *leucorrhoea*, stomach ulcers dysentery, diarrhea and remove stomach worms. Parch the mango seeds and grind up into a fine powder. Take

a teaspoon of powdered mango seeds to be eaten mixed with honey in order to cleanse skin irritation. These tips are clearly explained in the following Siddhas' poem.

'Pesumey sithap perukkunjoo rikkaduppum
visumo muulamuru vengkothippu – maasudaiya
pungkottai yaithhallip pottuk kaniyilvantha
maangkottaiyaik kaanil vaathu

(*Agaththiyar kunavagadam*)

Fresh mango bark juice is useful in heavy menstrual bleeding, leucorrhoea, mucus and pus discharge from the uterus and uterine bleeding. Mango resin is rich with protein, carbohydrates and cholesterol. It is highly helpful for women on menstrual bleeding and pus discharge from the uterus and uterine bleeding.

6.0 Conclusion

Use of the mango in *Periyapuranam* is clearly shown in this paper. The mango is the king of the three auspicious fruits of Tamils, along with banana and jackfruit, known as *mukkani*. A component of mangoes is widely used as food, drink and medicines. Mangos that ripe naturally have the ability to provide various nutrients and prevent diseases. The use of mango in the medical field is also clearly evident in the *Akaththiyar Kun:ava:kat:am* poem. It proves here that the mango can provide nutrition and health care for humans.

References

- Arun Cinnayah. (2007). *Ciththa maruththuvam collum kai vaiththiyam*. Chennai : Kizhakup Pathippakam.
- Irattina Sanmuganar. (1999). *Nhoy thirkkum pazhangkal*. Chennai: Chennai Abset.
- Kothantaraman, Cu. (2001). *Karaikkal ammaiyar*. Chennai : Vasantha Piracuram.
- Kurucami. (2006). *Marunthakum unavu*. Mathurai : Kanthiya Ilakkiya Cangkam.
- Paramacivam. (2001). *Periyapuraana ayvu malai*. Varanaci : Kumaraccami Thirumatam.

Turmeric in South Indian Tradition

Prakashdas K. Ramadas

Lizamaria Paramasivam

Plants play a vital role in Indian culture and tradition. From the ancient times, plants have been used by humans for various reasons in various forms such as to make shelters, firewood, food, clothing and remedies. Furthermore, some places are named after the famous trees and flowers in respective regions; for example, Kurinci, Neytal, Mullai, Palai, Marutham and many more. This indeed shows the passion of the ancient Tamils who associated their lives with nature through the plants from various regions and the rich knowledge they had of them. (The treatment of nature in Kuruntokai) Through the years many researches have taken place on the usage of medicinal plants to cure diseases. Moreover, the savvy science and technology has innovated herbal solutions to tablets and capsules forms.

Ayurveda

The oldest art of healing in Hindus' religion is Ayurveda. It is believed that the knowledge of Ayurveda was passed on from heavenly deities to the saints and sages of India through deep meditation. It was between 1200 and 700 BC when all the four Vedas were composed. Ayurveda is a part in Atharva Veda which gives detailed information about the diseases, injuries, sanity and health. It highlights on three doshas – vitta, pitta, and kapha and how to cure using different types of herbs. Fortunately, all four vedas especially Rig veda contains the references of diseases, symptoms and their cure with herbs. On the other hand, the Artha Veda has detailed knowledge about herbs and several hymns are dedicated to herbs and disease elimination such as to cure jaundice, skin and hereditary diseases.

Turmeric

In today's world, turmeric is widely cultivated in the tropics and goes by different names in different cultures and continents. In Tamil, it is commonly called as 'Manjal', 'Pasupu' in Telegu, 'mannyal' in Malayalam, 'Arishina' in kannada, and 'Haldi' in Hindi. It has atleast 53 names in Sanskrit, for example, Hridayavilasini (gives delight to heart, charming), Jayanti (one that wins over diseases), Jawarantika (which cures fevers), Kanchani (exhibits golden color), Kaveri (harlot), Krimighni or Kashpa (killer of worms), Kshamata (capability), Laxmi (prosperity), Mangalprada (who bestows auspiciousness), Mangalya (auspicious) and many more. (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK92752/>) The herb has a pungent smell and has a bitter taste.

Fortunately, the golden virtue is one those truly amazing plants that seem to do anything. It is the core element which is used to celebrate the joy of a new born baby till the last respect for a human being. Commonly, pounded turmeric extract have been used to mark the door frame and door on auspicious Friday mornings by Hindus, to mark the mango leaves for ritual need, and diluted with water and sprinkled all over the house. Furthermore, Turmeric is used in kitchen as natural colouring to food, preservative, and as an antibacterial. To continue with, the

turmeric's rhizomes is used as remedy solely or combined with other herbs to cure diseases. Indeed, turmeric is a must have plant at compounds of all the Indians' houses. It is considered very auspicious and therefore, is the first item on the grocery list. During Indian weddings, a string immersed in turmeric and a fresh manjal is tied around the neck of bride by bridegroom as a sign of marriage.

Turmeric as cosmetic

Turmeric has been used as beauty product over the centuries, especially poosu manjal and kasturi Manjal widely used to maintain flawless skin. It is an excellent exfoliating agent and can help to defeat ageing. Usually dry poosu manjal's rhizome is used to make a thin paste by adding water and then applied on face and body after a refreshing bath on Friday mornings by married women. Devotionally, turmeric is the significant of goddess Lakshmi and the person using it will be blessed by her. Poosu manjal is a must while taking bath among traditional Indian women even today in rural villages in Malaysia. Moreover Turmeric'-honey paste can be applied on face and neck to enhance a wrinkle free skin and keep a check on pores. Not only does turmeric take care of the scars and inflammation but also reduce oil secretion by sebaceous glands. A basic mix of turmeric powder and water will do the magic on the acne and acne scars. (Box Office)

Apart from that, turmeric quickly reliefs burned skins because of its antiseptic properties. A good mix of aloe vera gel and turmeric will heal the wound in no time. For ages, poosu manjal and chickpea flour mix is used to inhibit facial hair growth. (Box Office) Poosu manjal paste is applied after the shower all over the face, and the yellowish tone is visible until the person washes it with soap or soap nut solution. For cracked heels, a touch of coconut oil and turmeric before bath will smoothen it. Kasturi manjal is good natural bleaching agent to lighten skin tone. Kasturi manjal is available in original dried form or powder form in Malaysian Indian grocery shops. Kasturi manjal usually mixed with poolan kilangu powder and mung bean flour and added with rose water or fruit juice then applied as facial mask or pack. This mask is cleansed with lukewarm water after 30 to 40 minutes. This traditional way of skin lighting is now popularised by Indian cosmetic companies which produce premix facial pack which contains kasturi manjal, poolan kilangu, mung bean and other ingredients. This new products is one of the fast moving product in Indian supermarkets in Malaysia among Indian ladies. Malaysian Indian cosmetic manufacturers have used turmeric as an active ingredient in their cosmetic products. Toiletry products with turmeric in their ingredients are soaps, facial packs, fairness creams, lotions, shower creams and bathing powder. Turmeric in these products attracts Indian consumers to use these marvellous products owing to turmeric's medicinal values.

Turmeric in food preparation

Turmeric is always preserved as a medicinal herb and used to heal all the diseases from skin diseases to blood poisoning to heart problems, is also a staple in most of the Indian kitchens. The dynamic uses to which it can be put, ranging from savoury meals to desserts, proves that it is one of the most versatile spices. Turmeric is well known for its significant pungent flavour and the less expensive alternative for saffron for the yellow colour, turmeric is an essential key for many different kinds of food. Virali Manjal is renowned for its role in curry, chutney and pickles. Being

primarily grown in India, the spice has been cultivated for centuries and today is used widely in all the continents. Turmeric comes from the root, or rhizome, of a plant called *Curcuma longa*, which is in the ginger family. Turmeric root has a tough brown outer skin, with bright orange flesh underneath. Sharp and earthy in flavour, with just a hint of ginger, turmeric complements any kind of poultry or seafood by giving it a warm colour and accenting the natural flavour of the meat. However, it also goes well with any number of rice, lentil, or vegetable dishes. It should, however, be used sparingly. While turmeric tastes pleasantly spicy, a little goes a long way and it gets stronger as it cooks. Adding it to soups and stews improves the flavour provides a bright splash of colour as well as irresistible taste. (http://www.turmericinfo.com/turmeric_spice.html) For example, Virali Manjal powder is used for cooking purpose. In those days, home makers prepare the turmeric powder at home, by drying virali manjal and raw rice under the sun before pound it using pestle and mortar and sieve it to get the finest powder. Nowadays most of the Malaysian Indian families get the readymade turmeric powder in shops to cook and marinate food items.

Turmeric in medicine

The uses of turmeric and the chemical it contains - curcumin, as per described in ancient Indian medical texts, are indeed numerous for their potential to prevent and treat a wide range of chronic diseases such as cancer, cystic fibrosis, Alzheimer's and arthritis. In the ancient medicine, turmeric has been used in therapeutic preparations. A teaspoon of turmeric powder mixed in a cup of warm milk used three times daily has long been considered an effective Ayurvedic treatment for colds and influenza. In Ayurvedic medicine, turmeric is thought to have many medicinal properties including strengthening the overall energy of the body, relieving gas, dispelling worms, improving digestion, regulating menstruation, dissolving gallstones, and relieving arthritis.

Many Indian women use it as an antiseptic for cuts, burns, bruises, and psoriasis and as an antibacterial agent because it was cheap and available at their kitchen cabins. Indians put the spice on their Band-Aids as a disinfectant. Bizarrely, even *Johnson & Johnson* makes turmeric Band-Aids for the Indian market. (http://www.bri.ucla.edu/bri_weekly/news_060206.asp) Those days, turmeric is used to cleanse wounds and fasten their recovery by wrapping a thin warm piece of cloth with turmeric paste around the wounded area. Furthermore, Malaysians, use turmeric as an anti-inflammatory agent, and as a remedy for gastrointestinal discomfort associated with irritable bowel syndrome and other digestive disorders. It stimulates bile production in the liver and encouraging excretion of bile via the gallbladder, which improves the body's ability to digest fats. It can be sprinkled in rice and bean dishes, to improve digestion and reduce gas and bloating.

Indians use turmeric, to purify blood and remedy skin conditions. Turmeric paste is applied all over the skin if infected with 'chicken pox' where it is believed to cool down the body's temperature and keep harmful bacteria away from the body. According to Arul Nithi the visitors who visit the chicken pox victim's house must wash their feet with turmeric water to purify themselves from any foreign particles and to not harm the victim.¹ Turmeric has been tested for its anti-cancer properties.

¹ Mr Arul Nithi is a herbalist practicing siddha medicine in Chennai.

In other tumors, it has been demonstrated to inhibit tumor growth and stimulate apoptosis, an intracellular mechanism for cells of all types to "kill" themselves. Turmeric is considered to be anti-cancer because it has a triple action: It neutralizes those substances and conditions which can cause cancer; it directly helps a cell retain its integrity if threatened by carcinogens; if a tumor does grow the curcumins can often destroy it. Ayurveda especially prescribes turmeric for cancers of the female reproductive system, namely breast and uterine cancer, and to treat benign tumors too. Turmeric is also useful in cancers of bowel and colon. Moreover, curcuma can prevent prostate cancer. (http://ayurveda-foryou.com/ayurveda_herb/turmeric-health-benefits.html)

For ages, turmeric has been utilised well for various respiratory conditions such as asthma, bronchial hyperactivity and allergy. A good mix of honey with turmeric keeps the asthma away. This can be applied as well for liver disorders, anorexia, rheumatism, diabetic wounds, runny nose, cough, and sinusitis. Indian women also use turmeric as an instant remedy to expel phlegm or kapha, as well as to open blood vessels in order to improve blood circulation. Turmeric mixed with milk or water has been a remedy for more than 4000 years, is taken to treat intestinal disorders as well as colds and sore throats.

Conclusion

Time pass through generations , but tradition remain unchanged in certain issues. Turmeric have been used as cultural icon. turmeric has played a fundamental role right up to the most complex role in indian culture, so turmeric viewed as goddess Lakshmi and has a high position in Hindu society. The Indians who migrated to Malaya also brought the knowledge about traditional use of turmeric from their mother land. Turmeric churanas changed to capsules, turmeric paste changed to facial foams and turmeric water became sanitizers ; the purpose of the turmeric keep unchanged.

Bibliography

- Athikumanan, A. K. (2013, April). Turmeric for Flawless Skin. *Box Office*, Vol 6 Issue 9, 1-113
- Bharadwaj, M. (1996). *The Indian spice kitchen: essential ingredients and over 200 authentic recipes*. New York: Dutton.
- Krishnamurthy, K. H. (1992). *Ginger and turmeric*. Delhi: Books for All.
- Majeed, M., & Badmaev, V. (1996). *Turmeric and the healing curcuminoids: their amazing antioxidant properties and protective powers*. New Canaan, CT: Keats Pub..
- Peter, K. V. (2001). *Handbook of herbs and spices*. Boca Raton, Fla.: CRC Press ;.
- Ravindran, P. N., Babu, K., & Sivaraman, K. (2007). *Turmeric: the genus Curcuma*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.
- Ravindran, P. N., Babu, K., & Sivaraman, K. (2007). *Turmeric: the genus Curcuma*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.

Turmeric (Updated April 2012. ed.). (2012). Bethesda, Md.: U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine.

<http://www.umm.edu/altmed/articles/turmeric-000277.htm>

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK92752/>

<http://suite101.com/article/turmeric-a11638#.UWy2yaI9HIZ>

http://ayurveda-foryou.com/ayurveda_herb/turmeric-health-benefits.html

http://www.bri.ucla.edu/bri_weekly/news_060206.asp