

Heart protective fruit Mathulunga- for Chandika Yaga

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During Dasara occasion, to please the Goddess Shakthi, a concluding ritual take place in many sanctum sanctorum. As a part of this ritual, at the end a fruit is sacrificed in the fire. It is Madala fruit, also called Citron in many parts across the globe. Ganapathy Naranga is the Malayalam name to this fruit, which is used in the Ganapathy Havana. Citron, was called as Mathulunga, in Sanskrit and Charaka Samhitha, oldest medical literature of the world, included it as Cardio protective fruit among the prime 10 drugs. It is note worthy, that the cultivation practices of citron were common in our country. We have such ample evidences.

The great philosopher and thinker of India, Basavanna, who hailed from black cotton soil of our state has citron connections in his family. Madalaambike is his mother's name which refers to this fruit. Incidentally, my maternal great grand parents hail from a tiny hamlet near Puttur, DK district. It is called Maapala, which relates to the Tulu name of Citron. Unfortunately, such divine and heart savior fruit has almost disappeared from our grove as well as minds. Nowhere in the market, we find the fruit.

Theophrastus, Greek Philosopher of third century B.C. says about citron like this. "the fruit is not eaten, but is very fragrant, as is also the leaf of the tree; and the fruit is put among *clothes*, it keeps them from being *moth*-eaten. It is also useful when one has drunk deadly poison, for when it is administered in *wine*; it upsets the stomach and brings up the poison. It is also useful to improve the breath, for if one boils the inner part of the fruit in a dish or squeezes it into the mouth in some other medium, it makes the breath more pleasant."

"The seed is removed from the fruit and sown in the spring in carefully tilled beds, and it is watered every fourth or fifth day. As soon the plant is strong it is transplanted, also in the spring, to a soft, well watered site, where the soil is not very fine, for it prefers such places." This was the cultivation details found in the writings of Theophrastus."

From ancient through medieval times, the citron was used mainly for medical purposes: to combat seasickness, pulmonary troubles, intestinal ailments, and other disorders. The essential oil of the the outermost, pigmented layer of rind was also regarded as an antibiotic. In Ayurvedic system of medicine, the fruit juice is still used for treating conditions like nausea, vomiting, hyper acidity, excessive thirst and morning sickness. Pandith Gopalacharlu, is a big name of the proprietor of the past century, who was making the sherbath of Citron. Even today this product is sold over the counter as a popular remedy to cure morning sickness during pregnancy. It is Mathulunga Rasayana. The fruit juice has a high content of Vitamin C and used medicinally as an anthelmintic, appetizer, tonic, in cough, rheumatism, vomiting, flatulence, hemorrhoids, skin diseases and weak eye sight.

There is a rising market for the citron in the United States for the use of its soluble fiber found in its thick peel. India can certainly explore such market. Sustainable cultivation and value addition is the need of the hour. Will we keep the citron to posterity?