Shikha Hajela

Buddu’s Dusshera vacations were over now and he was back in Bangalore after his ten day long break in Haridwar, the holy city in Uttarakhand. Buddu’s paternal uncle, who was staying there, had invited him over for Durga Puja. According to Hindu scriptures, Haridwar is one among the four sites where drops of the elixir of immortality, ‘Amruth’, accidentally spilled over from the pitcher, in which it was being carried away by the celestial bird Garuda, after the ‘Samudra manthan’. This fact of religious significance made Buddu’s holiday even more special, and he had so much of fun and good times that he did not want to go back.

The spot in Haridwar where the Amruth fell is considered to be the Brahma Kund at ‘Har ki Pauri’ (literally, “footsteps of the Lord,”), the most sacred ghat of Haridwar; where thousands of devotees and pilgrims flock during festivals from all over India to take a holy dip. This act is considered to be the equivalent of washing away one’s sins to attain Moksha. So, on the first day itself of his trip, Buddu went there to take a holy dip to absolve him from all the naughty pranks he had been doing.

Later, he went to see the mela (fair), and Durga puja celebrations with his cousins and friends. He loved playing with the bow and arrow set he got from there. On Dussherra day, Buddu and his friends had made a Ravana puppet using lots of straw and paper. In the evening with the help of their uncle, they burnt the Ravana effigy. Buddu was not going to forget this for long as all these things were so new to him, and being in the south of India, Dusshera celebrations were so much of a different affair. He could not help but revel in the diversity of his country and was looking forward to narrating all the experiences to his best pal, Chaami who was not there with him in this trip.

Now Diwali was almost here. He had grand plans for this diwali and he was eagerly waiting for Chaami who too had gone to meet her aunt in Delhi. He could hardly wait.Finally, when Chammi arrived, both of them were so excited on seeing each other, as if they were meeting after ages. Both of them were laughing, telling stories and talking at the same time.

“So what did you get for me” Buddu asked Chammi. Buddu’s mother was glaring at him for being so impolite. Chammi laughed and said “Oh! I almost forgot. Amma has sent this pickle for you. Aunty, amma has also sent this medicine for you”. Buddu jumped and grabbed the pickle bottle from Chammi. After inspecting the bottle he said to Chammi “now I know where all my marbles went. Whenever we played with them, remember how I kept losing and you were always winning. So you were collecting them to make MARBLE PICKLE. Don’t you know eating marbles is dangerous”?

Chammi was doubling with laughter by now. “Stop it Buddu. Once a Buddu, will always remain ‘Buddhu’. Don’t you know what this is” Buddu’s mother who had been watching this little drama so far without a word intervened and said, “Buddu this is the challe pickle or lasora pickle. It is also called dodda here in Kannada. And thank you Chammi for getting my medicine. “Ma, I was just joking” said Buddu making a funny face at Chammi. “I remember last July mami got also brought this fruit from Haridwar. You made vegetable for us to eat. Baba loved it. Ma, can you make that vegetable for us today”?

“Buddu, you can have the pickle now but for the vegetable, you will have to wait. You see Buddu, this pickle is made from chikkachalle or challe or lasora raw fruits. The fruits are available from the beginning of July to the end of August. So vegetable of the raw fruit which is very useful for digestion and a seasonal delicacy can only be made in summer. The pickle can be kept for long time so you can have them any time of the year. The tender leaves of new spring growth are made into a roll which is used as a snack or vegetable”. “Mmm”, Buddu rolled his tongue and eyes simultaneously.

His mother continued, “These lasor fruits are useful in treating coughs, the diseases of the chest, and chronic fever. The fruits can be used as an expectorant and are effective in treating the diseases of the lungs. The medicine Chammi got for me is actually made from fruits of challe. You know how change of weather here in Bangalore makes me sick. This medicine helps soothe my coughing”. Chammi and Buddu continued listening intently.

To know more about this wild edible fruit, turn overleaf....

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My Common Names:

English: Large Sebesten
Hindi: Lassora
Telugu: Chinna-nakeru
Bengali: Bahubara
Gujarati: Sepisten
Himachali: Lassura
Kannada: Chikkachalle
Malayalam: Cheruviri
Marathi: Shelwant
Sanskrit: Gandhapushpa
Tamil: Naruvilli

Where am I found?

I am a widely distributed species from Africa to Australia. I am found throughout India, especially in the warmer regions; occasionally planted.

How do I look?

A medium-sized deciduous tree, 10.5 metres high; the girth of the trunk of a full-bearing tree being 75.5 cm; wood is light brown. Leaves, alternate, entire to slightly dentate, young leaves, tomentose from beneath; mature leaves, almost glabrous and ovate.

Flowers, very short-stalked, glabrous, white, the average diameter of a fully open flower, 6 mm; inflorescence, terminal or an axillary cyme. Fruit, a drupe, 1.75 cm in diameter, colour, light yellow to slightly greenish, with a light-red tinge at the time of full maturity; epicarp, thick; mesocarp, mucilaginous; endocarp, hard and stony. Seeds are mildly sweet. The flowering starts during the last week of April and continues till the end of May. The fruiting season lasts from the beginning of July to the end of August.