Chaami, Buddu go wild with Wild fruits

As every year during vacation Buddu visits his grandma and grandpa. Buddu was just waiting for his holidays to pack all his stuff and visit his maternal uncle, as he stayed in a village away from the crowded city of Bangalore. It was a summer time, and adjacent to the village was a dense forest area. Accompanying him this time was his best friend Chaami, her partner in most of their mischief’s and fun moments.

Buddu’s uncle had come to receive the children at the railway station along with his eight year old naughty son Bantu who was famous everywhere for his pranks. “Hello Buddu Bhaiya and Chaami”, cried Bantu spotting them and ran towards them frantically waving his hands. His face was flushed with excitement, and he knew now that he had company. “Now, amma will not be after me all the time and so no scolding, and I am going to have a lot of fun”, Bantu was thinking, and he ran and hugged his cousin brother.

Buddu squeezed Bantu’s hand gently and they set forth for their village retreat. Buddu’s grandmother welcomed the children and handed them a glass of cool buttermilk each. It was refreshing. Grandmother after enquired about their parent’s well-being came and sat down next to Chaami. Chaami looked up and saw Bantu standing on the doorway obviously losing his patience and she smiled and carefully stifled a giggle. Slowly with her hand she managed to signal Buddu who was happily engrossed in eating a sweet mango.

“Buddu bhaiya, leave this mango, come I will show you another type of mango, the wild mango, and then you will forget this one”, insisted Bantu, “No, I am not joking”, Buddu continued seeing a bewildered expression on his face. Buddu hurriedly got up and Chaami too joined him and the trio ran outside quickly shrieking and shouting wildly. After running for a while, Bantu stopped in front of a small tree where a bunch of monkeys (children) were already perched up. Seeing their dear friend, they started throwing small green fruits that resembled raw mangoes, towards Bantu and Chaami, Buddu. When offered, Buddu started inspecting the fruit rather skeptically with a confused expression.

“Is this edible”, enquired Buddu, “it looks wild”, “Yes, indeed, this is a wild mango, but you can eat this, it is very sour though”, replied Bantu as a matter of fact. Chaami then remembered something and said, “Isn’t it Ambata or Avatekayi”, to which Bantu nodded and replied “yes”, “I remember my grandma making pickle from this, this is very very tasty”, said Chaami. Slowly Buddu gathered some courage and dug his teeth into the inviting fruit. It was sour, but interesting, and he continued gorging on the wild mangoes one after another. What fun it was. Bantu’s friends were continuously plucking and throwing the fruits down.

Soon, the children had collected a huge pile of wild mangoes. Chaami bent down and stuffed the fruits into her frock pocket and started back towards home, Bantu and Buddu followed. They too were tired. Next day, in the morning Buddu woke up with a bad toothache, and started crying. Again Bantu came to his rescue and gave him a small twig and asked Buddu to use it as a toothbrush. Buddu mistook it as a neem twig and refused to take it as neem twig was too bitter. “No, this is not neem, this is goni maru, commonly used as Meswak, and you can eat the fruits as well of this plant”, said Bantu.

Reluctantly, Buddu took the twig and started chewing it. Surprisingly, after a few minutes, his toothache had vanished. Buddu was impressed and he wanted to see this amazing plant. And Bantu was feeling proud of his wild heritage. After their breakfast, the children ran again to the wilderness to discover their Meswak tree. Chaami found the small purple coloured berries and popped them in her mouth.

“Ideally, Meswak should be used before meals to remove the bacteria that convert sugar into acid, or immediately after meals. Chaami this is freely available in this forest and is cost effective too”, said Buddu’s uncle from behind who had followed the kids in anticipation. Our forest area is full of such wild plants that are of great medicinal use. Chaami looked at Buddu and winked. Buddu was already imagining the wild fun they were going to have these holidays. Turn overleaf to find out more about these wild fruits……
**WILD MANGO**

*Spondias mangifera*

**Synonym:** *Spondias pinnata*

**Botanical Family:** ANACARDIACEAE

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**My Common Names:**
- English: Indian Hog Plum
- Hindi: Ambada, Amra, Pashu-haritaki
- Kannada: Amate mara, Ambatte
- Malayalam: Ampazham
- Telugu: Adavimamidi
- Assamese: Aamrata
- Tamil: Kincam
- Marathi: Amada
- Sanskrit: Aamranta

**Where am I found?**
I am an Indo-Malaysian species. I am found throughout India in moist deciduous and semi-evergreen forests; often planted.

**How do I look?**
I am a small, aromatic deciduous tree. My bark is thick, aromatic, smooth and grey in colour. My leaflets are ovate-oblong, elliptic or elliptic-oblong, more or less oblique in shape. My flowers are whitish or greenish white, polygamous, present in large, terminal panicles. My fruit is a drupe resembling a mango, yellow-green or rich olive-green in colour. Seeds are 1-3, one being perfect, oblong-elliptic.

**What are my Uses?**
- My fruits are eaten as a vegetable when green and as a fruit when ripe.
- It is also used as a seasoning/flavouring agent.
- My fruits can be made into chutneys, stews, pickles, curry and jams.

**What are my Medicinal Uses?**
- Fruits are astringent and antiscorbutic (curing or preventing scurvy)
- My fruits are also used in bilious dyspepsia
- My bark is an astringent and refrigerant
- My bark used in diarrhoea and dysentery
- My bark paste is applied in rheumatism.
- My Roots are employed for regulating menstruation

**Kids, surprise your mother with this Wild Mango Pickle Recipe**

For this, you will need: 20 wild mangoes, 3 tablespoons of turmeric powder, 2 tablespoons red chilli powder, Salt to taste, 1 tablespoon fenugreek (methi) powder, 2 tablespoon mustard seed powder, 2 cups gingelly oil, 1 tablespoon fenugreek seeds

1. Wash the wild mangoes well, cut into 4 pieces, and remove the seed.
2. Wipe each piece with a cotton cloth, they should be dried completely.
3. In a dry bowl mix all the ingredients along with half the oil.
4. Store them in an air tight jar and pour remaining oil; close with a tight lid and keep it in sun for 2 weeks.
5. Mix thoroughly on the third day and pour more oil if needed.
**Fruits**

**TOOTHBRUSH TREE**

*Salvadora persica*

Synonym: *Salvadora persica* L. var. *wightiana*

**Family:** SALVADORACEAE

**My Common Names:**

- English: Mustard tree, Salt bush, Toothbrush tree
- Bengali: Jhal
- Hindi: Jhak, Kharjal, Mithajal, Meswak
- Kannada: Goni, Goni-mara
- Marathi: Pelu, Miraj
- Sanskrit: Brihatpilu, Gauli, Gudaphala
- Tamil: Kalawa, Karkol, Perungoli, Ughaiputtai, Vivay
- Telugu: chinna-varagogu, ghunia, gone

**Where can you find me?**

I am a paleotropical species. In India, I am chiefly found in drier parts and in coastal regions.

**How do I look?**

I am an upright evergreen small tree or shrub, seldom more than one foot in diameter reaching maximum height of three meters. My leaves are small, oval, thick and succulent with a strong smell of cress or mustard. The flowers are small and fragrant and are used as a stimulant and are mildly purgative. The berries are small and barely noticeable; they are eaten both fresh and dried.

**Herbal Tooth Brush (MESWAK)**

My root-twigs are used as herbal tooth brushes. It has very good styptic and antioxidant properties.

**What are my Medicinal Uses?**

- My leaves are useful in asthma, bronchitis, cough, rheumatism, bleeding piles, worms, amenorrhea toothache, pyorrhoea, and fever; vitiated conditions of vata, scurvy, constipation, verminosis etc.
- My fresh leaves are eaten as salad and are used in traditional medicine for cough, asthma, scurvy, rheumatism, piles and other diseases.
- My shoots and leaves are useful in all types of poisons, coughs, bronchitis etc.
- My Fruits are useful in gastropathy, spleen disorders, constipation, seminal weakness and vitiated conditions of kapha and vata, amenorrhoea, piles etc.
- Seed oil is applied on skin diseases and rheumatism.