

WALNUT: A STUDY IN CULTURE AND MEDICINAL VALUE

Mohd Shafi Mir

Department of CCAS, University of Kashmir, Srinagar (190006), J&K.

The word “duun” is etymologically taken from Sanskrit term “druuna” means a fruit with a covering. In English it is known as walnut. In Persian it is called “gardidagun” in Arabic “Joza” and in Urdu “akhroat” the walnut tree belongs to the juglandacea family of the kingdom plantae, which is why it is botanically named as juglans regia. There are seventeen know species of walnuts.

The first historical reportage of walnut crop is a debatable issue. Is is often believed that walnuts were first grown in different North-west Mountains of china. Another view is that the crop was first grown in south east areas of Europe and northern peripheries of the Himalayas gradually reaching china where it was grown on a larger scale. Some believe that the crop was cultivated in England in 1562 which is possibly the first time it was cultivated. However, some believe that it has spread from Rome to England. Apart from China and England, walnuts were grown in America, Turkey, France, Romania and Iran some thousands of years ago generally walnuts grow in moderate climate. In India apart from Jammu and Kashmir ,Uttarpardesh too undertakes walnut cultivation and so does Arunachal Pradesh.

There are diverse types of walnuts that grow in different regions of the world black walnut is the most cultivated types of walnuts. This species of walnuts is actually famous for its wood. The wood of this type issued for wood carving. Such species is especially found in hilly areas and the trees of this type are very beautiful. The white walnut, also known as butternut, is neither too tall nor too short. The walnut of this species is very viable and hard.

Walnuts are the pride of Kashmir and the trees are found in almost all areas where Kashmiri is spoken like Doda, Kishtwar, Baderwah and Banihal etc. Walnut orchards are cultivated mostly in hilly areas of Kashmir rather than the plains, because walnut trees grown in hilly areas are more productive than those of the plains and don't require much manure and care etc.

Walnut is important in many respects. Pundits and Shias venerate it very much. Pundits use them almost on all their festivals like Hehrath, Jamus, Yagun. It has a unique significance of its own. On the occasion of herath, pundits keep walnuts in water tanks for two to three days and then after prayers distribute them to their relatives and neighbours as tabaruk a holy gift in autumn too

they boil walnuts in new rise. Shias too make use of walnuts to their children who play with them all day.

Walnut is a viable fruit. It is sold in markets and has many benefits. Walnuts are source of edible oil and are used also in confectionary, cakes and biscuit formation the walnut wood is suitable for wood carving which is a delicate and tedious task. Kashmir, being famous for many arts and wood carving has a prominent place in this field and its models of wood carving are exported to foreign countries. Walnut wood is very expensive. It has the least chance of decaying/rotting. Reading desks for holy Quran, Gita etc. Are made of walnut wood. Apart from this pen stands, writing slates, dressing tables and perfume containers are made of walnut wood.

The bark of walnut tree, the cover of the fruit and the roots of the tree are used to clean teeth and dye clothes etc. The leaves are dried and then burnt to make coals out of them. The twigs of walnuts are dried to be used as dishes both in winter as well as summer. Even the leaves of this tree, along with the fruit covering, are boiled in winters to cure frostbites. It is still a custom in some places to serve tea to special guests with bread made of maize, flour and walnuts.

Fresh walnuts are covered in a green covering on the plant. The covering dries gradually and the innerfruit that has a hard covering dries too. The covering detaches and we get what is known as greinkan which are dried. After that, these fruit stones are sent to fruit markets or are broken and the inner kernel is transported to various fruit markets. Walnut is a dry fruit and there are machines to excavate the kernel.

Kashmiri walnuts are classified into three types

- a) Burzul
- b) Normal]
- c) Waeynt-hard to crack

The covering of Burzul walnut is soft and can be broken by hand. It is also known as papery the normal ones covering is neither too tough nor too soft to crack. The Waeynt walnuts covering is too hard and is almost unbreakable. It is normally, walnuts have four kernels, however, there are some varieties with six and eight kernels sub kernels. Walnut plucking is an art in itself. Those adept at it all called as laanzeyr whosue long sticks (laanz) to tresh the crop. One kashmiri proverb notes about walnuts: Dapaan duun gatshi kava, waava ta taava neirun

After the crop has been felled and the owner completes picking them up, children begin a search (pot tsbaid) some of the walnuts may remain unfelled on the branches which the children tell by using short sticks or by climbing the tree. Such walnuts are known as Kaanavaal Doni, those picked by children soon after walking in the morning, even before taking tea, are called layi doni. Children call the flying crows for walnuts as:

Kava kava duun bana

Pagab dimay khand bana

If a crow lets loose a walnut off its beak or claws, children chase the crow and take away the walnut. Such walnuts are known as kava duun.

In Kashmiri walnuts are also gifted. Packets of them are sent to households on wedding in villages. Folklore admits the significance of this fruit and gives it a special mention in the literature. It is mentioned in folk songs how a mother-in-law gifts walnuts to daughter-in-law who gives it to her sister-in-law and, in return, asks her to do her handicraft piece, while visiting her parents' home.

Hasbi dyutum washil duun

Su dima zaem sou karem kaem

Ba gatsha malyunuyei

The first haircut of new born babies is known as 'zadi' in ancient times people used to wrap this hair around walnuts and then sow these walnuts in spring. Such walnut trees were commonly known as 'zadikul'

Tsbaeg lasbiniy manz burzuld dunn theymay

Wevimay babsinz waarei manz

In Kashmir, farmers would begin ploughing their land in early spring when snow was sparsely visible in the fields. This was called as gongul. On this day walnuts would be distributed among all and the walnuts were called as "gongul duun"; Since then the proverb "gongul duun hyuv"; is in use to refer to something or someone who is fit and healthy.

In spring, the sap ups into the branches of trees while as it descends down to the roots in autumn. People would put oil in bottles under them roots dipping them in the bottles. At the end of autumn, the bottles would be full of sap, which was used for many hair diseases / infections.

On wedding in Kashmir, sweets almonds, groundnuts etc, are distributed among children as are Walnuts before the wedding would take place, the bride's mother would distribute walnuts among all. This was to inform all about the wedding. Her friends and acquaintances would sing:

Vesa daasa chhay mas bay sheiraeni

Mumy jaan duun bagraeni chaey

It was borth on grooms going to his in laws or a birds arrival at her husband's home that walnuts were distributed,. This is why at these ceremonies; there is mention of walnuts in the songs

Duun kul saeyn tay phres ta waadi ganiye

Lala soan baji wati baniye drab

Lala soan dravuy duun kul taeliye

Joshua siit phaliye dunniiy poash

(On grooms departure to in laws home) sona sund duun Kul ropa sund moalo sheir gad tsaakho poshi nuulo sani jay paet kin duun kul bag chuy ath andar naag chuy shoal maraan (on groom's arrival at in-laws Home) Duun chiy chakaan hermey daarey haer sateyn aaye kaarey keth Tseer kyazi aayakh duun kul taliye sona posh phaliye yimberzoley (on bride's reaching her in-Laws' home)

Walnut has many medicinal benefits. It is full of energy, Vitamin B and E and Omega 3 fatty acids in abundance .This is used as an anti-Oxidant and is dry and hot. It is Anti-Constipations and cures indigestion. Eating walnut energizer the brain nerves, kidneys and the liver. Using Walnut with honey cures cough, Flu and pneumonia, Paralysis, paraplegia etc .Are cured by applying a paste of walnut ground in honey. A new research has found that walnuts are a special treatment for high cholesterol patients cholesterol is of two types (a) Good (b) Bad. Walnuts decrease the quality of bad cholesterol but increases the abundance of goof Cholesterol which is good for one's Health. This is why it helps reduce the weight even through the use of walnuts is very beneficial its excess usage can be dangerous for one's health. It has been aptly sad, "Excess of everything is bad". The range is 1-3 per day.

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