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The mango effect

The Sweet And Sour Story Of Mango Man



Dasheri, chausa, langra, totapuri, kesar... oh the sweet variants of mango! Each offering a unique flavour, texture and soothing the soul in its own unique way. Imagine having all this delicious summery goodness from a single tree. Don't go looking for unicorns to make this thought a reality, for Padma Shree awardee, the Mango Man of India, Haji Kaleem Ullah Khan, with an honorary mention in the Limca Book of World Records, has done this already, by growing over 300 varieties of mangoes on a single tree.

Humble beginnings

"My whole childhood was spent growing mangoes and I am emotionally connected to them. Mangoes are a gift of nature and can be used in multiple ways by humans. It is grown to be eaten by families and shared amongst others, and there are many medicinal uses of its extract as well," says Mr Khan taking us through the beginnings of his mangolicious journey. Growing up, Mr Khan may not have had a proper roof on his head, but what he did have was a supportive family, who enabled him to take up his passion to another level. "At the age of 17, I started to learn using asexual propagation technique of grafting as well as hybridisation of mangoes from my father and grandfather. The first tree I ever grafted was



Haji Kaleem Ullah Khan with his miracle tree



Mangoes from the orchard

one with seven varieties of mango on it. And since then, I have been constantly trying to add more and more mangoes," he says.

Ek aam, anek aam

For many, mango maybe just another fruit, but for Mr Khan, they have a human like quality. He says, "Just like humans, each mango on a tree is different. Each one of them has a different texture, flavour, and smell." He has tried to bring this very uniqueness together on what he calls the "miracle tree" that houses over 300 varieties of mangoes. "This tree is like my baby, I tend to its needs just like a mother cares for her young one. Even the balcony from my bedroom overlooks the tree. It's not just a tree, it's a universe in itself," he explains.

A scientific marvel

Sharing the science of this century old miracle tree, he says, "While grafting a new variant, I slice a branch and then insert a piece cut from the branch of another type of mango tree and tie them together, so they generate new tissue. The result is that the same tree bears various kinds of mangoes, each with a distinct flavour and texture. Many scientists have conducted studies into the genetic composition of the tree to identify the reason behind such flavours, textures etc., but they've been inconclusive." The miracle tree, however, is not the only marvel by Mr Khan. Walk into his orchard, you will be surprised with mango varieties, you have never seen before. "A few years ago, I grafted this mango and named it Anarkali. It

has two skins, one thin and slightly black and then another showing a beautiful red and yellow hue. But the surprising part is actually the middle which has two kinds of pulps inside, each of a different flavour, colour, texture, and sweetness," he explains.

Mangoes for life

For Haji Kaleem Ullah Khan, mangoes are not just his source of income, but his lifeline. Having spent over six decades, grafting mangoes and tending to his miracle tree, he has earned himself the title of 'Mango Man' of India. His creations vary from tender to firm, juicy to supple; some named after personalities like PM Modi, Aishwarya Rai, and Amitabh Bachchan. He wishes to continue this legacy by imparting the knowledge he has accumulated all these years. "Over the years, I have had many visitors from various countries who visited the nursery to understand the techniques I use in grafting trees. I wish to give more to the society by sharing this knowledge to others, for the biggest thing in the world is knowledge. It is a power that stays with you wherever you go. The more you spread it, the more it'll grow. I wish to see coming generations bringing laurels to India and making us feel proud," he says, signing off. [GFI](#)

Pics: Siddharth Tripathy, AIS VKC Lucknow, XII B



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