

PALMYRA PALM FRUIT MARKETING IN SOUTHERN WEST BENGAL

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Palmyra palm, *Borassus flabellifer* L., (Arecaceae: Arcales: Monocot), is a dioecious plant rich in minerals and vitamins B and C, iron, zinc, potassium, calcium, phosphorus, thiamine and riboflavin (<https://www.medindia.net/patients/lifestyleandwellness/top-4-health-benefits-of-palmyra-fruit.htm>). Palmyra palm fruits are borne in clusters and usually with three seed sockets. These fruits are sold both in unripe and ripe conditions. Herein, the marketing mode of Palmyra palm fruit as observed in West Bengal, especially in Kolkata suburbs is communicated.

Palmyra palm plant is native to the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Borassus_flabellifer). In West Bengal, it is called *Taal* in Bengali, which is commonly grown in Southern West Bengal. Its fruits, ripe and unripe, are widely consumed in rural areas but not usually harvested for sale at the weekly village market (*hat*) in West Bengal. This palm fruits when unripe are sold as *Taal sas* in summer and also when ripe as intact fruit available during rainy season in towns of this State (Figs. 1-2). During lockdown this year (2020), the unripe fruit locally called *Taal-sas* is sold at Rs. 2-3/- per piece in small towns far away (100 kms or more) from Kolkata, while in Kolkata city suburbs, viz., Thakurpukur Maheshtala areas, the price ranges between Rs. 4/- and Rs. 6/- per piece, usually in four at Rs. 20/-. On the contrary, the ripe *taal* price varied very highly from Rs. 15 to Rs. 60/- per piece, depending on season, size, quality, scent and occasions in the same suburb areas. A cycle vendor reported that he bought ripe *taal* during pandemic period from Asuti village about 11 km away under Thakurpukur Maheshtala Block at Rs. 10 to Rs. 40/- per piece and sold at almost twice the purchase price to the consumers from door to door in July – August, 2020. A local women seller in late season of September 2020 carrying a few ripe *taals* in a gunny bag was found to sell medium sized ripe *taal* fruit at Rs. 15-20/- per piece, indicating late season downward demand.

Economically, every part of Palmyra palm tree is usefully used in India, including tree trunk and leaves (Aman *et al.*, 2018). In West Bengal, in occasion like *Ranna puja* or *Arandhan*, some items like *Taal-er bora* (mixed with rice or wheat powder) and *Taal-kheer* (mixed with thickened milk) are often prepared in almost all rural households. It may be mentioned that *Taal-michhri* (especially Dulal's palm candy) has always been highly valued product in West Bengal and also in India for aged people and growing babies. But *Taal-patali* has scarcely gained much recognition. Thus, it is felt that an appropriate marketing channel for palm fruits and palm products is needed towards planting and conservation of *Taal* tree at fallow land holdings and pond banks, and also for preservation of cultural heritage.

REFERENCES

Aman, A., Rajan, R. and Sinha, S. 2018. The Palmyra palm (*Borassus flabellifer* L.): Overview of biology, uses and cultivation. *Biomolecule Reports- An Int. eNewsletter*, BR/04/18/21, pp.1-5.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Borassus_flabellifer

<https://www.medindia.net/patients/lifestyleandwellness/top-4-health-benefits-of-palmyra-fruit.htm>



1)



2)

Figs. 1-2 Palmyra palm fruit showing *Taal sas* (Fig, 1) and ripe fruit (Fig. 2)