**ORIGIN OF (SOLANUM MELONGENA) THE BRINJAL**

*S. melongena* the commonly known brinjal in India and the eggplant abroad is not found in the wild state anywhere. This species has been under cultivation in tropical and sub-tropical Asia as a common vegetable since a very ancient times. In India its cultivation dates back to the Vedas and is mentioned in the Ayurveda. It is also mentioned in the Chinese work of Agriculture of 5th Century A.D. and also in later writing of 6th Century. It was probably introduced in Spain by Moors and from there taken to the new world along with other crops. To-day, it is cultivated in all the warmer parts of the Globe.

This species shows tremendous variation in the shape and size and colour of the fruits and numerous varieties have been named on these basis. India is the only place where such diversity of varieties of the brinjal are found. It is only from India that varieties like *S. melongena* var. insanum and *S. melongena* var. potamugi have been reported. These varieties are very small fruited and the fruits are green in colour and are bitter in taste. *S. melongena* var. lankavi (with bunches of fruits) is another example of the small fruited varieties. All these primitive forms of the species have been collected from South India only and are eaten by the natives as curries or pickled.
Plate No. XV:  

Fig. 21: *S. indicum* Linn female parent. 

Fig. 22: *S. melongena* Linn male parent.
PLATE No. XV.

SOLANUM INDICUM

SOLANUM MELONGENA
Plate No. XVI: Fig. 23: Hybrid S. indicum X S. melongena.
PLATE No. XVI

HYBRID
S. INDICUM X S. MELONGENA

Fig 23
According to Watts (1893) the species which seem to be very close to *S. melongena* Linn. are *S. coagulans* and *S. incanum* Linn. Decondolle considered *S. insanum* Roxb. almost allied to *S. melongena*. C. B. Clarke in Hooker's Flora of British India 1885 considers *S. incanum* Linn. growing in India as wild variety of the cultivated brinjal and *S. coagulans* is treated as separate species growing in Punjab and Sind only.

To trace the relationship between the wild species of *Solanum* and *S. melongena* a number of crosses were made and results are shown in the diagram. It was found that *S. incanum* hybridize freely with *S. melongena* and it was also found that *S. melongena* produces fertile hybrids with *S. indicum* fruits of which resembles *S. indicum*.

*S. indicum* Linn., a species which is found growing wild in Southern and Central India extending up to Malaya, Philippines and Java where it is used medicinally. This species resemble *S. incanum* in general morphology except it bears smaller leaves, smaller fruits and purple colour, 5-7 flowers at peduncle in a racemose order. *S. incanum* shows wide distribution extending west word from India, Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, North Africa and Balkan countries (Watt 1893). The distribution of these two species overlap in Southern India and since they cross with each other, it is highly probable that both have contributed to the formation of cultivated brinjal. Fruits of *S. indicum* are purple in colour and has probably
Plate No. XLIV: Fig. 20: Map of the world showing distribution of *S. incanum* Linn, *S. melongena* Linn and *S. indicum* Linn.
contributed to purple pigment in *S. melongena*. In some varieties of brinjal, the fruits occur in bunches as in *S. indicum*.

Thus, it can be said that the primary centre of origin of the cultivated brinjal may be South India where number of wild as well as cultivated varieties could be distinguished while North India could be considered as the secondary centre of origin. PL. [Image]

The number of varieties we see now were not reported by early workers and whichever variety they mentioned, the range of size displayed was not very great. Thus, the number of cultigen now found with different taste and flavour are the result of intensive selection during hundred of years cultivation. These were now brought together by hybridization and large fruited and delicate flavoured varieties have been evolved.