

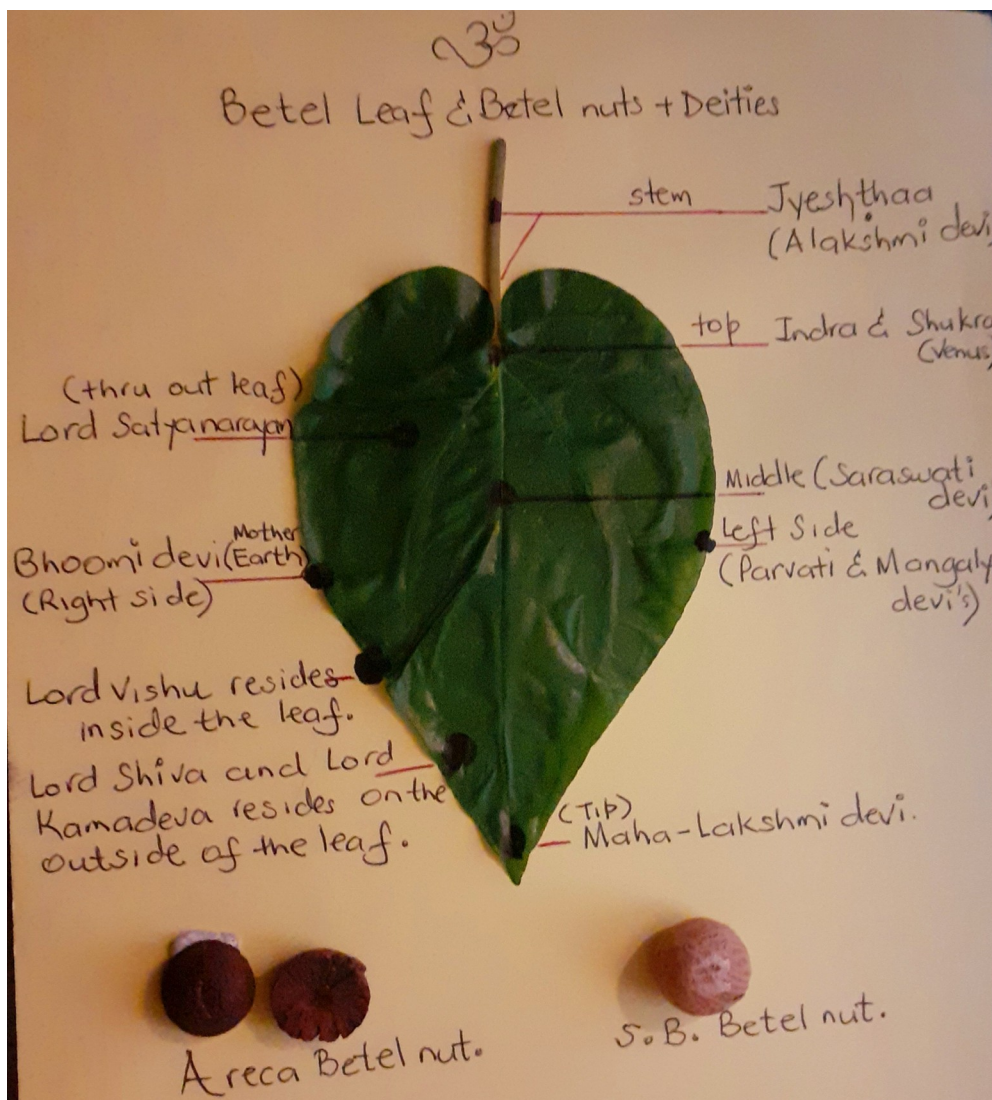
Betel leaf (paan) and the two types of betel nuts its significance with regard to Sanatan pujas.

Dipika (www.dipika.org.za) is providing you with sacred and essential information that may change the way you perform your Sanatan prayers in the future with regards to the significance of using Betel leaves, and the two types of betel nuts.

According to the Skanda Purana, the betel leaf was obtained by the Celestials during the churning of the ocean for the nectar of immortality, the amrita, from the depths of the cosmic ocean. The main reason that it is used in pujas, however, is that various deities reside in the betel leaf.

Thus:

- Lord Indra (the king of the heavens) and Shukra deva (The planet Deity Venus) are present in the top portion of the betel leaf.
- Mother Saraswati devi resides in the middle part of the betel leaf.
- Mother Mahalakshmi devi resides in the lower tip of the betel leaf.
- Mother Jyeshthaa-Lakshmi (Alakshmi Devi - the elder sister of Lakshmi devi) resides in the part that connects the betel leaf to the stem.
- Lord Vishnu resides inside of the betel leaf.
- Lord Shiva and Lord Kama-deva (the Deity of love) reside on the (epidermis) outside of the betel leaf.
- Mother Parvati and Mother Mangalya Devi live on the left side of the betel leaf.
- Mother Earth (Bhoomi-devi) lives on the right side of the betel leaf.
- Lord Surya-Narayana is there throughout the betel leaf.



Kindly note that if you don't have a betel leaf, then these leaves namely perilla leaves, shiso leaves, grape leaves, spinach or other large leafy greens are used BUT the results are not the same as using the sacred Betel leaf as the Deities mentioned above are not on these leaves.

My take on this is that if you know you are performing prayers then outsource the betel leaves. I find it unacceptable that Hindus look for prayers items last minute and then conveniently say I don't have this and that item and can I substitute this or that item.

The betel leaf is perfectly Heart shaped. Anything we offer the divine mother should be with love and devotion. Need I say more?

The betel leaves for your prayers should not be torn, weathered, diseased or have holes in it. There are two types of Betel nuts that are used in Sanatan prayers namely the whole round SB (no idea what the SB stands for) nut and the flat brown Areca nut. Both the nuts should not be broken.

Srimad Devi Bhagavatam, The 11th Book chapter 18 called "The greatness of Devi Puja". Verse 33. Narada Muni spoke: O Bhagavan! I'm now very eager to hear the special puja of Shree Devi." Lord Narayana said: O Devars! I shall now speak to you how Mother Bhagavati (Durga) is worshipped. The devotee should offer heaps of food consisting of the 6 Rasas (tastes namely pungent, bitter, spicy, sweet, salty and astringent) mountain-like high. Lord Narayana states that one should offer Devi "Betels (leaf and nut) with camphor, cardamom (elachie), cloves, and various delicious scents".

How does one go about preparing this? On a tray place a banana leaf, then on top of the banana leaf place 9 sets of hot puri's (one puri on top of another), on top of the puri's place a betel leaf (the point of the betel leaf must face the worshipper), add 1/4 tsp Halwa, 1/4 tsp Sweet rice, 3 kinds of fruits, 3 kinds of Mitthai (sweetmeats), 3 channa dal, 1 elachie, 1 clove, 1 Areca betel nut, a dot of red sindhoor, 1 tikli, 2 red bangles.

Lord Narayana continued: Devi Bhagavati is pleased with anybody who remembers Her even once! What wonder then that She will be pleased with all these offerings! The Mother is naturally merciful to her child. When She is loved with devotion, She becomes very merciful. There is nothing strange here!"

The six rasas (tastes) mentioned are

- 1) LAVANA (Salty) - Betel nut, puri,
- 2) MADHURA (Sweet) - Halwa, sweet rice, betel nut, cardamom, mithai, puri, fruits,
- 3) AMLA (Sour) - Fruits, betel nut,
- 4) KATU (Bitter) - ARECA betel nut,
- 5) TIKTA (Pungent) - Betel leaf, betel nut, cloves, elachie,
- 6) KASHYA (Astringent) - Channa dal, betel nut, cloves, puri, fruits.

The flat brown betel nut (ARECA) possesses as many as 13 qualities found in the regions of the heavens. It has all six rasa's (tastes namely pungent, bitter, spicy, sweet, salty, and astringent). Chewing this nut stimulates the flow of saliva to aid one's digestion. The Areca nut also has been used to stimulate the appetite, expel wind, remove worms from one's stomach, remove phlegm, subdue bad odours, induce purification, and kindle passion.

Do note that the betel leaves points/tips (DO NOT BREAK OFF THE TIPS) must be facing the worshipper as the worshipper is setting the Puri's with its offerings on the rectangular tray. The stem of the betel leaf is broken off as this part represents Alakshmi (Jyeshthaa) Devi). Alakshmi devi represents the negative, inauspicious side of things.

Question: Why is the sacred betel leaf, SB betel nut and Areca betel nut used in Devi Puja?

Answer: The Betel leaf and the SB nut (together with uncooked white rice, a coin and flower petals) is initially used to invoke Devi in the puja. The Areca betel nut with a betel leaf is offered at the end after the Naivedhyam (sweet offering) is offered to the Mother. This is for the Mother to consume to induce digestion after eating the Betel leaf and Areca nut (paan aur supari).

On a Halwa puri offering the Areca betel nut as explained by Lord Narayan is a compulsory offering in Devi puja. The betel leaf and Areca nut are a powerful medium of transmitting the frequencies of a particular Deity and in this case Mother Durga. On a platter of puja materials the betel leaf and Areca nut are kept on the Puri. The tip of the leaf should be pointing towards the worshipper. The particles present in the leaf and the water particles present in the Areca betel nut attract the subtle frequencies of Mother Durga towards the worshipper. The reason why the tip faces the worshipper is that as the puja is being performed Mother Durga targets Her worshipper with a single point (like a laser with her right hand) of blessings and sends that blessings towards Her worshipper. Hence the tip of the Betel leaf is NEVER removed. Removing the tip removes Mother Mahalakshmi's presence.

Question: Is having a betel leaf tree allowed to be grown in ones yard?

Answer: YES, most certainly. From the information provided above it is most auspicious to grow Betel leaf in ones yard as there are so many deities that presides in the betel leaf. Do plant a natural snake repellent plant like the SNAKE PLANT around the betel leaf tree to keep snakes away.



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Compiled for the upliftment of Sanatan Dharma
Narottam Das & Arjun Nandlal

ॐ TN 卐

E-mail info@dipika.org.za