

Kalanamak rice has been cultivated since the Buddhist period (600 BC). The kalanamak grains were found from excavation of Aligarhwa (Siddharthnagar district, Uttar Pradesh, India), located at Nepal border. Aligarhwa has been identified as the real Kapilvastu, the Kingdom of King Śuddhodana, father of Gautama Buddha. Faxian, the famous Chinese monk wrote that when Gautama Buddha (Buddha) visited Kapilvastu for the first time after attaining 'enlightenment', while passing through Bajha jungle, he was stopped at Mathla village by the people. The villagers asked Siddhartha to give them 'prasad'. Siddhartha took the rice he had taken in alms and gave it to the people, asking them to sow it in a marshy place. The rice thus produced "will have typical aroma which will always remind people of me," he said. Since then, Bajha jungle has vanished, and its place has been taken by Bajha village near Kapilvastu.

The first effort for the conservation of Kalanamak was made by the Englishmen William Pepe, J H Hemprey, and Edcan Walker (Jamindars of Alidapur, Birdpur, and Mohana) during the British Raj. They built four reservoirs at Bajha, Marthi, Moti, and Majhauri to produce Kalanamak in a large quantity. They not only produced this variety for their own consumption but transported it to England from Uska-bazar mandi, passing through Dhaka (now in Bangladesh) via sea route. Due to its increasing demand, the British captured the land around Kapilvastu, and established Birdpur and Alidapur states. They produced Kalanamak through bonded labor and exported to Britain. When the shrewd Gujarati businessmen came to know about its business potential, they formed a mandi at Uska-bazar to export Kalanamak. To counter them the British "shopkeepers" built a rail route to carry rice on the goods train. But after independence, Uska-bazar mandi became nonfunctional due to

Quality

- Kalanamak rice is said to outshine even the most exclusive Basmati rice in all quality traits except grain length. Kalanamak rice is a non-basmati rice with short to medium grain length. Aroma of Kalanamak rice, which is said to be the gift of Gautam Buddha, is stronger than all Basmati varieties. Elongation after cooking, which is one of the most important quality traits in the international rice market, is 40% greater than Basmati rice (2.2 times of grain length).
- Cooked Kalanamak Rice is softer and fluffier than other rice varieties. Amylose content is close to 20% as compared to 24% and higher in Basmati.
- High amylose levels tend to make the rice cook firm and dry. Rice with a medium amylose content of between 16% and 22% usually cooks softer and the grains stick together more readily.

