

## Jamunawala Pind: How a farmer inspired his village to adopt fruit economy

Courtesy: Anju Agnihotri Chhaba



In the quiet village of Samme Wali, tucked away in Muktsar Sahib district, a sweet revolution is blooming — literally. In about 100s of fields, traditionally dominated by wheat and paddy, purple jamuns have become the new gold. And behind this transformation stands a man, his family and their combined earning of Rs 4 lakh per acre without any current investment. Not only is the family profiting from this, but others are also earning similar amounts through a system the man has created. Meet Balraj Singh Sidhu (31), a kickboxing coach with the Punjab government's Sport Department. He owns 12 acres and has planted 75 jamun (Black Java) trees along the boundaries of his entire farmland. He has also dedicated 3 acres exclusively to Jamun cultivation where he planted 60 jamun tree. He began the venture when he was in his teens while studying, alongside his father, Gursahib Singh, who is also a farmer. Today, he owns 135 fully grown Jamun trees — the result of several years of consistent effort. "Our Jamun trees require a one-time investment, which is not more than Rs 30,000 to 40,000, including everything per acre, and just a couple of years of care. After that, they take care of themselves," he says, adding that the plants are drought-resistant and need minimal water once established. "I have a government job, and whatever spare time I get, I monitor the trees." To manage the extensive harvesting work, Balraj rents his Jamun trees to contractors at Rs 10,000 to Rs 15,000 per tree. These contractors take full responsibility — from pruning and harvesting to transportation and selling the produce. Each tree yields about 400–500 kg

of fruit, with high-quality produce fetching Rs 250 per kg in Delhi's wholesale markets. It's a win-win," says Balraj. "The contractor earns about the same as I do after paying labourers and transportation costs. During the harvesting season — which lasts just 35 to 40 days — around 150 people get employment." Traders from Delhi pay Balraj's contractors and other contractors in village in advance every year to secure the entire harvest of Samme Wali. The wholesale rate for good quality Jamun in Delhi markets averages Rs 250 per kg, whereas in Punjab, the price is nearly half. This translates to an average revenue of Rs 75,000 to Rs 1 lakh per tree. "If I were to manage everything myself, I could earn almost double from one acre, but that requires full-time involvement. I can't spare that much time because of my job. However, I am happy that by renting out the trees, I am creating job opportunities for others," he adds. Balraj's Jamun journey isn't new — it's deeply rooted in his family history. His ancestors, who used to work in the forests like Changan Manga, a famous forest in Pakistan, migrated during Partition carrying with them seeds from the orchards they left behind. These seeds became trees, which are still present in our orchard. The father-son duo also established Guava and Peach orchards in three and two acres respectively — both leased out at Rs 20 lakh (4-lakh per acre) per year. Another four acres are under Kashmiri Naakh (wild pear), a newer crop still waiting to bear fruit. So from 8-acre, he is earning Rs 33-34 lakh annually without investing anything now. At a time when many Punjabi youths are abandoning family farms in search of opportunities abroad, Balraj is an outlier. "I haven't even made a passport," he laughs. "Why leave, when you can create something amazing here on your own land?" His approach has inspired an entire village. A decade ago, Samme Wali had just Jamun trees Balraj's fields but today every farmer in the village has 10 to 50 or more trees. The village has now earned a new nickname — "Jamunawala Pind." During the peak June–July season, 7 to 8 trucks (cantors), each carrying 7.5 tonne, leave the village daily, shipping over 50 to 60 tonne of jamun to Delhi markets. Balraj also mentioned that a special community of Sikh Rajputs called "Boriye Sikh" from Punjab and Rajasthan is involved in plucking and maintaining Jamun orchards in the village. As the speciality of our jamun is that it is plucked from the trees and is not a naturally fallen, thus retaining the quality. Balraj supplies 5,000 to 6,000 jamun saplings to farmers, helping them develop small orchards. Many NRIs are now investing through him as well. He offers complete support — from saplings to supervision — until the orchards are fully established. He also points out that while waiting for jamun tree to grow, farmers can invest some land in fruits like guava and peach for earning which begin to

bear fruit in just 2–3 years. “Even the fruit that falls naturally is valuable. Labourers from Amritsar collect these jamuns for their seeds, which are used widely in Ayurvedic medicines, and sell them at Rs 300 to 400 per kg,” he says, adding that in Samme Wali, the fruit of labour now looks purple and states sweet.

\*\*\*\*\*