

Why Indian Mango-Wood Furniture Cracks After Delivery



Yash Khatri

Founder, SourcingFrom

Updated 18 Oct 2026 10 min read

Indian mango-wood furniture usually cracks after delivery because the timber was finished at a higher moisture content than the buyer's home, so it keeps drying and shrinking, most across the width of wide panels. "Kiln-dried" names a process, not a result. Put a moisture range in the order, measure it properly at inspection, design wide tops to move and specify the finish.

The Short Version

- Wood shrinks about twice as much along the growth rings as across them and hardly at all along the grain, so wide tops crack and cup first.
- "Kiln dry" should mean an average moisture content with upper and lower limits, and every piece inside them. Ask for the range, not the word.
- Pinless meters read mostly the surface, so a dry-looking reading can hide a wet core. Use insulated pins or check both ways.
- A finish slows moisture exchange but does not stop it, so a good lacquer will not save wet wood.
- Mango varies from tree to tree. Practitioners put it to frames and small parts before wide panels.

Mango-wood furniture from India usually cracks because the wood was finished while it still held more moisture than the room it ended up in. Once it's indoors, especially in a heated home, it keeps drying, and as it dries it shrinks, mostly across the width of a wide top, until something gives. The voyage is rarely the cause, and the fix sits in the purchase order, at inspection and in the design, long before the container is booked.

A German buyer posted photos of a new mango dining table in October 2024. "The table top had slight cracks (hairline cracks) right from the start," they wrote, and the woodworkers who answered mostly agreed on why: "The moisture content of the slab was probably too high for it to be finished" ([r/woodworking, October 2024](#)). Two years earlier a reply from someone who "imports a lot of solid wood furniture internationally, mostly India" said of another table, "It does look like sections have shrunk" ([r/woodworking, December 2022](#)). This post is about stopping that on your next order. One caveat first. Nobody publishes the moisture content Indian furniture actually ships at. We've asked the question in our own research and haven't answered it yet, so what follows is the method, backed by the US Forest Products Laboratory's handbook, not a measured Indian figure.

SourcingFrom Intelligence

powered by [Kirnova](#) - the intelligence company

- 01 **Wood shrinks most along the growth rings, about half as much across them, and only slightly along the grain.** That's why wide tops split and cup while legs survive. (*USDA Forest Products Laboratory, Wood Handbook, chapter 4, 2021*)
- 02 **"Kiln dry" means dried to an average moisture content suited to a use, with upper and lower limits that every piece should fall inside.** The word on its own promises neither. (*Wood Handbook, chapter 13, 2021*)
- 03 **Buyers of imported mango tables blame cracks on wood finished before it was dry enough, and say mango varies from tree to tree.** (*Our forum signal log, woodworking forums, 2022 to 2024*)

What we don't know yet

- ☐ The moisture content Jodhpur and Saharanpur exporters actually ship at, compared with their kiln-dried claims. We plan to measure it with a meter on real orders.

1. Why Does a Table That Left India Fine Crack in a Customer's Home?

Because wood never stops trading moisture with the air around it. The Forest Products Laboratory puts it simply. Wood's moisture content is "a function of both relative humidity (RH) and temperature of the surrounding air", and the whole point of drying is "to bring the moisture content close to the expected value that a finished product will have in service" ([Wood Handbook, chapter 4](#)). A workshop in Rajasthan, a monsoon warehouse and a centrally heated flat in Hamburg in January are three very different airs. If the wood was made for the first one, it'll keep drying in the third.

Drying means shrinking, and wood doesn't shrink evenly. It moves most in the direction of the growth rings, about half as much across them, and hardly at all along the length of the board, and "this shrinking and swelling can result in warping, checking, and splitting" (same chapter). So a 90 cm mango top made of glued boards is trying to get narrower, while the frame, the battens and the screws underneath are holding it at the width it was made. Hairline cracks along the grain are where that argument ends. The figures for a heated home are on [wooden furniture from India](#), so I won't repeat them here.

What about the container? It's usually not the villain. The same handbook says dry lumber shipped in closed containers can generally be held to 0.2% moisture change or less per month, and about 1.5% in a ship's hold over a normal voyage ([Wood Handbook, chapter 13](#)). That's softwood lumber, not finished furniture, but it points at the real danger, which is the weeks before loading. Kiln-dried hardwood piled in a yard in warm, humid weather can pick up about 2% a month for the first 45 days (same chapter). A finished order waiting in an open shed through the monsoon is a plausible way to undo a good kiln.

2. Isn't "Kiln-Dried" Supposed to Prevent This?

It's supposed to, and it's the most over-trusted phrase on a furniture quote. "Kiln dry" means lumber dried "to an average moisture content specified or understood to be suitable for a certain use", and "the average moisture content should have upper and lower tolerance limits, and all values should fall within these limits" (Wood Handbook, chapter 13). Read that twice. The definition only works if someone has said which use and which limits. A supplier can kiln-dry timber honestly, to a level that suits Indian homes, and still send you a table that cracks in Toronto.

The handbook adds two details that belong in your conversation with the maker. Furniture wood is commonly dried a little below its service level, to allow for some regain during making and shipping. And drying stresses "can be relieved by conditioning inside the dry kiln". So the useful questions aren't "is it kiln-dried?" but these four.

- What average moisture content do you dry to, and what's the range?
- How long does the wood rest after the kiln before it's machined, and where?
- Is the kiln charge conditioned to relieve stress?
- Where is finished stock stored before loading, and is it covered and off the floor?

A maker who answers with numbers and a storage plan is a maker who's thought about it, and plenty have. US shoppers in our forum log credit Indian acacia, mango and sheesham with putting good solid wood into mid-market stores. The point is that "kiln-dried" on a quote tells you nothing about which kind you've got.

3. How Do I Check Moisture at Inspection Without Fooling Myself?

With a meter, used properly, on enough pieces. A cheap meter waved at three tabletops proves less than people think, and the handbook explains why.

There are two kinds of meter. Pin meters measure electrical resistance between needles driven into the wood. Pinless meters sit on the surface and read a field that "decreases rapidly with depth", so "the surface layers of the specimen influence the readings of dielectric (pinless) meters predominantly" (Wood Handbook, chapter 13). That matters because drying wood is normally wetter in the middle than on the outside. A freshly finished top can read dry on the surface and still hold a wet core, which is exactly the slab that cracks later.

So brief your inspector on four things from the handbook.

1. **Read the core as well as the surface.** With insulated pins, the reading comes from the tips, and if it rises as the pins go in then the core is wetter. Driving them to about a fifth to a quarter of the thickness gives roughly the average for the piece.
2. **Set the species.** Meters need a species correction, and mango may not be on the meter's list, so agree which setting you'll use and stick to it across orders.
3. **Correct for temperature.** For resistance meters, the handbook's rough correction is about 0.5% for every 5.6°C the wood differs from the meter's calibration temperature. In an Indian summer that's not a rounding error.
4. **Measure a sample of pieces, not one.** Readings above about 30% are only qualitative, and a properly used meter on a batch should land within about 1% of the true average. So the batch average and the spread matter more than any single number.

Do this on unfinished parts in the workshop where you can, and on finished pieces before packing. The sampling plan itself is on [AQL sampling](#), and how inspections fit an Indian order is on [quality control in India](#). If you'd like someone at the workshop to take the readings across the batch and send you the log, [SourcingSync](#) does that.

What target should the range be? For US furniture the handbook says hardwood "usually has a final moisture content of 6% to 8%". Your market may differ, and an Australian coastal home is not a Canadian one, so agree your range with your inspector for where the furniture will live. Then write it down.

4. Is Mango Wood the Problem?

Partly, and it's worth being fair to it. Mango is an attractive hardwood and one of the main woods in Jodhpur's export furniture, alongside acacia and sheesham. But practitioners describe it as variable. Answering an Australian buyer in 2022, one said "it also seems to be a bit inconsistent from tree to tree. Weight and hardness seems to vary quite a bit" and "It isn't super stable" ([r/woodworking, July 2022](#)). Another in the same thread said it wasn't much of an issue if you only used it for doors, drawer fronts and face frames.

That gives you a design rule. Put mango where wide movement doesn't matter (frames, legs, rails, small panels) and think hard before specifying a single wide slab or a glued-up top with nowhere to move. Where you do want a wide mango top, ask the maker how it's fixed to the frame. Standard joinery practice is to fix a solid top so it can slide across its width (slotted holes, buttons, clips), which gives the wood somewhere to go. Screws driven tight through a rigid frame don't. Breadboard ends and frame-and-panel construction are the other usual answers, and the [global wooden furniture page](#) has the spec lines for joinery.

5. Does the Finish Make Cracks Better or Worse?

Neither, really. A finish slows the problem down without fixing it. Moisture changes "can be retarded, but not prevented, by protective coatings such as varnish, lacquer, or paint" ([Wood Handbook, chapter 4](#)). A thick lacquer over wet wood just means the table cracks a bit later, usually after the return window.

Finish is still the second most common mango complaint, and it's a separate one. Owners report finishes that mark at a touch and finishes far too glossy for their taste (four forum threads, UK and US, 2023 to 2025, in our forum log), and one practitioner noted that a factory "2k lacquer or polyurethane" is more durable than anything a customer can apply at home ([r/woodworking, November 2025](#)). That matters for the cracked stock below. Some importers void the warranty if the buyer refinishes, so a customer who sands and re-oils a cracked top may lose their claim. Name the finish system and sheen in the order and keep a signed-off finish panel.

6. What Should the Next Purchase Order Say?

Here's the wood section I'd add to a mango order, alongside the species, finish and packing lines you already have.

1. Moisture content of all solid wood parts at packing within an agreed range, measured by our inspector with a named meter, species setting and method.
2. A batch log of readings, surface and core, by piece number.
3. Timber conditioned after kilning, rested before machining, and finished stock stored covered and off the floor until loading.
4. Wide tops fixed to allow movement across the width, with the fixing method shown on the drawing.
5. Finish system, sheen and coats as per the signed panel.

6. Wood packaging ISPM 15 marked, or plastic, as set out on [ISPM 15 wood packaging](#).

The packing line is there because a container can be held for its pallets even when the furniture is perfect. Indian exporters often floor-load or use unmarked pallets unless the buyer asks (UK and US logistics voices, 2026, in our forum log), so ask.

7. What About the Cracked Stock I Already Have?

Measure before you argue. Take meter readings on the cracked pieces now, in the room where they cracked, and on any uncracked stock from the same batch. Photograph the cracks against a ruler, note where they run (along the grain or across it, through the top or at the ends) and how the top is fixed to the frame. That's the evidence a supplier can engage with, and it's far stronger than "your tables cracked".

Be realistic about the fix, too. A woodworker in the same 2024 thread said "Light cracking isn't a huge issue as you can rub some wood filler into them" ([r/woodworking](#), October 2024). For a showroom that might be true. For a customer who paid for a solid wood table it's a return, and the conversation with your supplier is about the next order as much as this one. A maker who sees your readings and changes how it stores and dries is worth keeping. If the claim itself goes nowhere, [settling a payment dispute with a supplier](#) sets out the routes.

Questions Buyers Ask

Is a moisture certificate from the supplier enough? 

It's a starting point. A certificate reads one moment and often one piece. A batch

log by your own inspector, surface and core, is what tells you the order is dry.

Should I avoid mango wood?



Do cracks show up straight away?



Is acacia or sheesham safer?

