



Saraca asoca– The State Flower of Odisha

Botanical Name : *Saraca asoca*
(Roxb.) De Wilde

Family : Caesalpiniaceae

Synonyms : *Saraca indica* L.,
Jonesia asoca Roxb.

Local Name

Odia : Ashoka

English: Ashok

Hindi : Ashok

Telugu : Kankeli, Asokamu, Vanjulamu

Tamil : Asogam

Kannada : Husangid-ba, Usangid-ba

Habitat

It is grown all over India. It occurs up to the altitude 600 meters. It is also cultivated in many gardens because of its decorative orange red flowers.

Distribution

India, Central and E. Himalayan, W. Peninsula, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Malaysia.

Flowering time : March-April

Fruiting time : September

Conservation Status

Critically endangered



Ashoka is one of the most legendary and sacred trees of India

Description

Habit : Trees or large shrub.

Leaf : Leaves abruptly pinnate, with few pairs of leaflets.

Inflorescence : Corymbose panicles axillary or terminal.

Flowers : yellowish to deep red, with short pedicels. Calyx tubular, lobes 4. Petals absent.

Stamens usually 7, filaments long, filiform, anthers versatile, dehiscing longitudinally.

Ovary compressed, oblong, ovules few to more than 10; style filiform; stigma terminal, capitate.

Fruit : Legume compressed, oblong, slightly curved and oblique, leathery to rather woody.

Seed : Seeds 1-8, compressed, obovate-orbicular, ex-albuminous.

Uses

Saraca asoca has been traditionally used in Indian system medicine for treatment of uterine, genital ailments and other reproductive disorders in women, fever, pain and inflammation.

Its medicinal importance has been inscribed in various Ayurvedic scriptures.

All parts of the tree used in medicine.

Bark : The bark from *Saraca asoca* reported to have a stimulating effect on the endometrial and ovarian tissues. It is also used in cases of uterine bleeding, irregular menstrual cycles and infertility. Decoction of bark used in dysentery treatment. The bark contains tannins and some chemicals of medicinal importance is prescribed as a tonic.

Leaf : Leaves possess blood-purifying properties and also used for stomach-ache relief. The paste of leaves are applied on the skin to get relief from skin diseases.

Flower : The dried flowers are used in diabetes and haemorrhagic dysentery and seeds are used for curing bone fractures, strangury and vesical calculi. The flowers are considered to be a uterine tonic and are used in cases like burning sensation, dysentery, hyperdyspsia, scabies in children and inflammation. It is also used in fever, dipsia, colic, ulcers and pimples.

Seed : The seeds help in bone strengthening and the ash of plant is good for external application in rheumatoid arthritis. It is considered as best female tonic.

Mythological importance

The Ashoka (*Saraca asoca*) plant is one of the sacred and legendary trees of India. Buddhists, Hindus and Jains revere the tree. It is usually associated with Kamadeva, the Hindu God of love. In the Indian epic "Ramayana" there is mention of Ashoka Vatika where Hanuman had met Mata Sita and the Ashoka Vatika is nothing but the garden of Ashoka trees.

In our state, on a festival of Lord Lingaraj in the month of Chaitra, the day called as Ashokastami on which the Ashok flowers are used in the worship of Lord Lingaraj.

Source

- Saxena, H.O. & Brahmam, M. (1994). The Flora of Orissa, Vol. I, pp: 401 - 402.
- Swain B.K. & Dash, S.K. (2007) Visual guide to Wild Medicinal Plants of Orissa, pp: 42-43.
- www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saraca_asoca
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