

MADHYA PRADESH

State Flower: Chhiula, Dhak, Palas.

Botanical Name: *Butea monosperma* (Lam.) Taub.

Common Names: Bastard Teak, Flame of the Forest (English); Bijasneha, Brahmavriksham, Chichra, Dhak, Kakracha, Khakara, Khakharo, Kimshukam, Mooduga, Mutthuga, Palash, Palasamu, Parasa, Palas (Hindi).

Family: Leguminosae: Papilionoideae.

Etymology: The generic name, **Butea** is named after Lord John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute, KG, PC (1713 – 1792), a Scottish nobleman and a Member of Parliament, who served as Prime Minister of Great Britain (1762 – 1763) under George III. He was a patron of botany. The specific epithet, **monosperma** in Latin (mono means one; sperma means seed) means one-seeded fruit. Historical battle field of Plassey (Palasi) is said to have taken its name from then common Palash trees in the area.



***Butea monosperma* (Lam.) Taub.**

Description: Deciduous trees, 10 – 15 m tall; trunk crooked with irregular branching; bark pale brown or greyish. Leaves pinnately 3-foliolate; lateral leaflets broadly obovate; terminal one ovate-rhomboid, 10 – 20 cm long, rounded at apex, grey tomentose beneath; lateral ones oblique and

smaller; petioles 7 – 15 cm long. Flowers in fascicles on 8 – 10 cm long racemes, borne on leafless branches, spectacularly beautiful, *c.* 5 cm long. Calyx jet black velvety, 5-toothed. Corolla scarlet to orange, silky outside; standard 2.5 – 5 cm

long; keels semicircular, beaked. Pods 10 – 20 × 2.5 – 4 cm, stalked, rounded at base, 1-seeded at apex, silky-white; seed reniform.

Flowering & Fruiting: February – June.

Distribution: Widespread in the Indian subcontinent ascending to 1200 m in the Himalaya and 1300 m in hills of southern India.

Economic Importance: Leaves are used for making plates and cups and as cattle fodder. Dried leaves are used as 'bidi' wrappers. Flowers yield a yellow dye. Root, bark and seeds are used in medicine.

Traditional Uses: Sacred utensils are made from its wood. The flowers are used in place of blood in sacrifice rituals to Goddess Kali. The dry stem pieces are offered to make sacred fire. It is an anthropogenic tree of several castes.

Medicinal Uses: Roots are useful in night blindness, helminthiasis, piles, ulcer and tumours. It is reported to possess antifertility and analgesic activities. Gum is given in diarrhoea. Leaves have astringent, depurate, diuretic and aphrodisiac properties. Plant stimulates and promotes diuresis and menstrual flow. Seeds have anthelmintic property. Seeds are pounded with lime juice and applied to the skin, act as a rubefacient.

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