

## JHARKHAND

**State Flower:** Dhak, Palash, Tesu (Hindi); Morud (Mundari, Ho); Murup (Santhali)

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

**Family:** Leguminosae – Papilionoideae

**Vernacular Names:** Bastard Teak, Flame of the Forest, Parrot Tree (English); Kesudo (Gujarati); Pangong (Manipuri); Palas (Marathi); Keshu (Punjabi); Kinshuk (Sanskrit).

**Etymology:** The generic name **Butea** is after John Stuart, third Earl of Bute (1713 – 1792), who negotiated the end of the Seven Years' War with France.



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

Photo courtesy: C.R. Magesh

**Description:** Deciduous trees; branches tomentose when young. Leaves pinnately trifoliolate, glabrescent; terminal leaflet broadly ovate, obtuse or retuse at apex, 12.5 – 20 × 11 – 17.5 cm; lateral leaflets obliquely ovate, slightly smaller than the terminal. Inflorescences a terminal or axillary raceme, 10 – 17.5 cm long; bracts and bracteoles small, velvety; pedicels 1.2 – 2.5 cm long, velvety. Calyx c. 1.2 cm long, velvety

inside; teeth deltoid, the upper 2 teeth united. Corolla silky pubescent outside, bright red, tinged with orange; standard petal 3.7 – 5 cm long. Fruits 10 – 20 × 2.5 – 5 cm, silky, 1-seeded at apex; stalk 1.2 – 1.8 cm long.

**Flowering & Fruiting:** Flowers bloom at early summer or at the end of winter (March to April).

**Note:** Plant grows easily from seed and succeeds best on cotton soil.

**Range of Distribution:** It is native to tropical and subtropical parts of the Indian Subcontinent and Southeast Asia (India, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam).

**Economic Importance:** The tree is one of the most important hosts for the lac insect. It is used for timber, resin, fodder, medicine and dye. The wood is dirty white and soft, being durable under water, is used for well-curbs and water scoops. Good charcoal can be made from its wood. Leaves are much used for plates and as wrappers. Leaves are good fodder. It is also cultivated as an ornamental tree.

**Traditional Uses:** Flowers are used to make colour for the festival of Holi. In Manipur, there is an interesting cultural use of the wood of this tree with beautiful flowers – when a member of the “Meitei” community dies, and for some reasons, his body cannot be found, the wood of this tree is cremated in place of the body. It is said that the tree is a form of Agnidev, God of Fire. In the Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh, these flowers are specially used in the worship of Lord Shiva on occasion of Shivratri. In Telugu, this tree is called Modugu chettu. In Kerala, this is called 'plasu' and 'chamata' derivative of Sanskrit word 'Samidha' means small piece of wood that is used for 'agnihotra' or fire ritual.

**Medicinal Uses:** Flowers are considered as drug in many ailments like eye disease, chronic fever, gout, liver disorders, leucorrhoea, epilepsy, leprosy, and enlargement of spleen. Flowers also have antifungal, anti-inflammatory, and contraceptive properties. The plant parts are used in the form of extract, juice, infusion, powder and gum.

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