



Nakshatra Vanam

Shathabhisha (Sadhayam)



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|------------------------|--|
| Botanical Name: | <i>Neolamarckia cadamba</i> (Roxb.) Bosser |
| Tamil Name: | Kadambu |
| Sanskrit Name: | Kadambarya |
| English Name: | Burrflower tree or Kadam |

Habitat:

These are deciduous trees, to 20 m high, bark 6 - 8 mm, pale brown, vertically shallowly grooved, exfoliating in small rectangular flakes; blaze yellowish-brown; bole straight; branches horizontal. Leaves opposite, decussate; stipules interpetiolar, lanceolate, cauducous; petiole 20 - 45 mm, stout, glabrous; lamina 10 - 25 x 6 - 12 cm, ovate or elliptic-oblong, base truncate or obtuse, apex acuminate, margin entire, glabrous above, pubescent beneath; lateral nerves 10-14 pairs, pinnate, prominent; inter-costae scalar form, prominent. Flowers bisexual, yellowish, in globose heads, 2 - 4.5 cm across; calyx tube 2-3 mm in diameter, tube globose, lobes 5, 5 - 6 x 3 - 4 mm, membranous; corolla tube 6-8 mm long, lobes 5, oblong, acute, 3 - 4 cm long, glabrous; stamens 5, 3 mm long, anthers sagittate, sessile; ovary 3 - 4 mm long, 2-celled at base, 4-celled above, inferior, ovules many; style exerted to 5 - 6 mm, entire; stigma clavate. Fruit a capsule on a fleshy globose receptacle, 3.5 - 5 cm across, orange yellow, capsule membranous; seeds may, angular, minute (India Biodiversity Portal).



Religious Association

The Kadambu tree is associated with Lord Shiva and Lord Karthikeya. There are many references to the tree found in Sangam literature. Kadambu is not only sacred to the Hindus but is also sacred to Buddhists. According to Bhattacharya (1974), Vasupujya, a Jain Tirthankara, acquired his divine knowledge under this tree. The tree has also been associated with the subject of astrology under the constellation Sadhayam.

Temples associated with the Kadambu tree

| <i>District</i> | <i>Village/Town</i> | <i>Temple</i> | <i>Deity</i> |
|-----------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Madurai | Madurai | Meenakshi Amman | Amman |
| Tiruchirapalli | Kulithalai | Kadambavaneswarar | Shiva |

(Source – Sacred Trees of Tamil Nadu – 2005 by M. Amirthalingam)

Medicinal uses and other benefits

The leaves are made into a decoction and can be used for gargling in cases of stomatitis and aphthae. The dried stem bark is useful in the treatment of the female genital tract and bleeding disorders. The dried bark contains alkaloids, steroids, reducing sugars and also tannins (The Ayurvedic Pharmacopoeia of India).

Bark is febrifugal, anti-diuretic, anthelmintic, hypo-glycaemic. Gastric irritability in children can be treated with fruit juice mixed with cumin seeds and sugar. The fruit is cooling, a blood purifier and analgesic.

The timber of the tree can be used as plywood, to make pulp and paper, boxes and crates, canoes and furniture.

Mythology/ Folklore

According to Tirumurugatrupadai, Lord Muruga was placed to wear garlands of red Kadamba flowers. He also dwells in the tree, thus acquiring the name Kadamban. The Tirumurugatrupadai says that among the places frequented by Lord Muruga, the Kadamba tree smiling with new blossoms is also one (Tirumurugatrupadai-225). Thus the ancient people thought that worshipping the Kadamba tree was equivalent to worshipping Lord Muruga.

According to the Vishnu Purana, the Kadamba tree is associated with Sri Krishna. It has been widely mentioned in the childhood stories of Sri Krishna. According to the purana, though the Kadamba tree is associated with the extraction of liquor, wine does not exude from it but its flowers are said to yield a spirit in distillation. This distilled spirit is called Kadambari.

According to the Vishnu purana, the original Kadamba tree grows on the Gomantha Mountain, one of the mythical sacred mountains of the Hindu religion (Hopkins, 1968).





According to the Sthala purana of the Meenakshi Sundareswarar temple at Madurai, once the temple area was covered by a dense forest of Kadamba trees. Indra, the Lord of Heaven, used to come to this forest at night and worship the Swayambu lingam which stood under the Kadamba tree to get rid of Brahmahatya dosha. The particular tree under which the lingam appeared became the sacred tree of the temple. The stump of the ancient tree is still preserved and is covered by silver plate. According to the purana, it was a primeval forest overgrown with Kadamba trees and was the habitat of the Goddess Parvati. Therefore, Goddess Parvati is adored as Kadamba Vana Vasini.

Conclusion

The tree can be suitably grown along roads and in villages as it provides good shade. The tree is also extremely suitable for reforestation programmes. The leaves and non-leaf litter can be decomposed. This improves the macro and micro nutrient capacity. The Kadamba tree is also very suitable to be planted in city parks, schools, colleges and various public places as it yields good shade.

The tree should also be used in the practice of intercropping in agricultural areas. Farmers can also plant this tree on large areas of land as it gives good economic benefit within a period of 10 to 15 years. Steps should therefore be initiated to plant more Kadamba trees so that future generations can benefit from the manifold uses of this tree.

