

The Jungle in its heyday

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Semal/Cotton Tree



The cotton tree, botanically known as *Bombax Ceiba*, is typically known for its beautiful red color flowers. Standing tall in all its might, Semal is a real feast to the eyes especially, when it transcends into a feasting habitat of birds- big and small, thriving on its nectar rich florets.

The trees are leafless during this season in central India typical of the deciduous prototype, and shed mature leaves at this time. The locally available flowers are gorgeous to engage in art of sorts. Used in

floral decor and traditional rituals during Mahashivratri, Semal hints at the onset of spring. The other variety of Semal/Cotton tree (however off-white in color), is more suited for its nomenclature. Locally known as Kapok, and botanically named as *Ceiba*, the cotton like fiber obtained from this tree is universally extracted, and used in duvets, mattresses, and other cloth furnishing. Belonging to the same species, Kapok and Semal are laden with sugary nectar attracting a variety of birds and bees

in the forest. These fibrous flowers, could give a boost to community groups like Self-Help Groups, engaging in sustainable small businesses, thus contributing to livelihood generation, and development of rural areas utilizing the concept of effective usage of natural capital, abundant in rural peripheries of India. These cotton tree flowers, however,

Coral/ Erythrina



A very common tree found in tropical, sub tropical regions. Christened with several names such as Tiger Claw or Coral, this tree is largely known for its ornamental quotient and is often planted in open spaces. The spectacular bright red clusters

aren't just limited to the countryside. The city of Delhi is blessed with many of these varieties, flowering in red and orange during this season. A ride in the Delhi Metro during the day through Central belt of the city is testimony to this 'survival' tree's existence in the middle of the city's hustle bustle, and sprawling concrete.

flower, while the tree is deciduous- black and red seeds of which facilitate traditional rituals and worshipping in many parts of the country.

Flame of the forest/ Butea Monosperma



Palash, which paints the crown of deciduous cover of central India with its bright orange parrot beaked flowers, are the most common to spot in the forests of central India. Used by communities to prepare yellow herbal color on Holi, this flower has a historical and cultural legacy in history, art, literature and fiction. Ranging from Rabindranath Tagore's 'Ore Grihobhashi' to finding its mention in Rudyard Kipling's Jungle Book, Palash is in its full glory, just before Holi, and is emblematic of prosperity, according to many indigenous communities. Jungles of Pench, Kanha, Satpura, and districts of

Hoshangabad and Betul are particularly rich in this dazzling ornament of nature.

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