



## Silk Cotton Tree Under Threat

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**Silk Cotton trees** (*Bombax ceiba L.*) are under threat in Rajasthan due to overuse in tribal religious traditions, particularly in **Holika-dahan rituals**.

- It is also called **Semal**, or the **Indian Kapok tree**, or **Shalmali** in Sanskrit.
  - Tribals see the act of burning as a virtuous ritual by mythological Holika and Prahlad.
  - In 2009, around 1,500-2,000 trees were cut, debarked, and ignited during Holi in the Udaipur district in that year.
- It is mainly found in **moist deciduous** and **semi-evergreen forests**, also in the plains.
  - In India, this species is commonly found in Andaman & Nicobar Island, Assam, Bihar, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.
- This tree is of high medicinal value; its roots and flowers are used for their **stimulating, astringent and hemostatic properties**, as an **aphrodisiac, to stop diarrhoea, strengthen the heart, induce vomiting, soothe inflammation, treat dysentery, and lower fever**.
  - It also has **antibacterial and antiviral properties**, provides **pain relief, protects the liver, acts as antioxidants, and lowers blood sugar levels**.
  - It is also used in [agroforestry](#) for livestock feed. The wood is strong, elastic and durable for **ship building**.
- The **Kathodi tribe** of Rajasthan uses **wood for musical instruments** such as the Dholak and Tambura and the **Bhils** use it to make kitchen spoons.

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