



# Mahua Tree

## Why in News?

The **Mahua tree (*Madhuca longifolia*)**, deeply interwoven with the life of [tribal communities](#) in Central India, is gaining attention for its socio-economic and ecological significance amid efforts to document traditional knowledge and conserve native flora.

- It is commonly found in **West Bengal, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar**, parts of Northern and Central India, and also in **Maharashtra, Gujarat, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala**.

## Key Points

- **About Mahua:**
  - **Botanical Identity:**
    - The Mahua tree grows as a **medium-sized deciduous species, reaching heights of 16-20 metres**.
    - It thrives predominantly in the **forested regions of Central India**.
    - The tree **blooms between March and April**, producing creamy-white flowers that fall before dawn.
    - Its fruits mature and ripen from June to August, supporting seasonal harvesting.
  - **Cultural and Religious Significance:**
    - **Tribal communities revere Mahua as the “Tree of Life”**, treating it as sacred.
    - They use every part of the tree—flowers, leaves, fruits, seeds, and even fruit shells—in **daily rituals and significant ceremonies**, including funeral rites.
  - **Nutritional and Economic Importance:**
    - Tribals consume Mahua flowers raw or dried, valuing them for their **high nutritional content**.
    - These flowers are **traditionally fermented into a local alcoholic beverage**, which provides a crucial source of livelihood.
  - **Ecological Role in Forest Ecosystems:**
    - Mahua’s night-blooming, fragrant flowers attract bats, **promoting pollination and seed dispersal**.
    - **Sloth bears** and other wildlife feed on its flowers, highlighting its role in the forest food chain.
  - **Support for Tribal Livelihoods and Innovation:**
    - The collection, drying, and processing of Mahua flowers form a major seasonal occupation, especially for tribal women.
      - This activity ensures **food security**, income generation, and local employment.
    - **Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED)**, in collaboration with the **Foundation for Innovation and Technology Transfer (FIIT)**, has developed the **Mahua Nutra Beverage** to enhance the commercial value of Mahua products.
      - This initiative aims to **boost tribal income** through innovation.
    - This is **India’s first scientific innovation involving Mahua, starting in Jharkhand**, and reflects TRIFED’s focus on value addition of **Minor Forest**

**Produce (MFP)** through technology transfer and innovation.

## **Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED)**

- TRIFED came into existence in **1987**. It is a national-level apex organisation functioning under the administrative control of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- The objective of TRIFED is the **socio-economic development of tribal people** in the country by way of **marketing development of the tribal products** such as metal craft, tribal textiles, pottery, tribal paintings and pottery on which the tribals depend heavily for a major portion of their income.
- TRIFED acts as a **facilitator and service provider for tribes to sell their product**.
- The approach by TRIFED aims to **empower tribal people** with knowledge, tools and a pool of information so that they can undertake their operations in a more systematic and scientific manner.
- It also involves capacity building of the tribal people through sensitization, formation of **Self Help Groups (SHGs)** and imparting training to them for undertaking a particular activity.
- TRIFED has its **Head Office located in New Delhi** and has a network of **15 Regional Offices** located at various places in the country.

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