

# The Medicinal Marvel: Exploring The Health Benefits of The Ashoka Tree

Savita Rani\*, Munish Sharma, Deepak Sharma, Gurwinder Singh, Rohit Chaudhary and Shivani Sharma

Corresponding Author: [savitarana3@gmail.com](mailto:savitarana3@gmail.com)

## Introduction

The Ashoka tree is a majestic & sacred tree in Indian culture, scientifically known as *Saraca asoca* (Roxb.) De. wild and commonly known as the “Ashok Briksh”. The name is derived from the Sanskrit word “Ashoka,” meaning “without sorrow,” which reflects the tree’s association with happiness and the removal of pain. This evergreen tree belonging to the family Caesalpiniaceae and native to the Indian subcontinent is revered for its stunning beauty, medicinal properties, and spiritual significance. In this article, we will explore the botanical characteristics, cultural importance, ecological significance, chemical constituents and Ayurvedic & traditional uses of the Ashoka tree.

## Morphological Characteristics, Habitat and Distribution of Ashoka Tree

Ashoka Tree is a small, erect and medium sized tree that can grow up to a height of 30 feet. Ashoka tree prefers tropical and subtropical climates, thriving in warm, humid environments with well-drained soils. It is a relatively hardy species that can be grown in both rural and urban settings. It is commonly found in South India, Orissa, Assam and Sri Lanka, as well as in the central and Eastern Himalayas up to an altitude of 750 meters. The bark of the stem is largely rough, reddish-brown and uneven due to rounded or projecting lenticels. It has smooth, dark green leaves that grow in pairs and are oval-shaped with a glossy finish. Its flowers are found in clusters and are typically yellow to orange in color with a subtle fragrance. The tree usually starts blooming from February to April and fruits are pods which are flat, oblong and aciculate with ellipsoid to oblong seeds compressed within them (Saxena et al 2024).

## Cultural and Religious Significance

In Indian mythology and religious traditions, the Ashoka tree is considered sacred. It has been immortalized in Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain traditions, where it is associated with purity, love, and tranquility.

1. **Hinduism:** The Ashoka tree is often linked to various deities, including Lord Vishnu and Goddess Lakshmi. According to Hindu legend, the Ashoka tree is the place where the goddess

Sita sought refuge during her exile in the epic Ramayana.

2. **Buddhism:** In Buddhist tradition, the Ashoka tree holds a special place as it is believed to have been the site where Lord Buddha’s mother, Queen Maya, gave birth to him under the shade of an Ashoka tree in Lumbini, Nepal.
3. **Jainism:** In Jainism, the Ashoka tree is considered sacred as it is believed to be the tree under which Lord Mahavira, the 24<sup>th</sup> Tirthankara, attained spiritual realization.



**Fig. 1-4.** Fig.1: Morphology of Ashoka Plant; Fig 2&3: Flowers and Fruits of Ashoka Plant; Fig 3: Ashoka Plant’s Bark Powder.

## Ecological Benefits

Apart from its cultural and spiritual significance, the Ashoka tree offers several ecological benefits. As an evergreen tree, it plays an essential role in maintaining the local ecosystem by providing shade and shelter to various species of birds and small animals. Its dense canopy helps regulate temperature and humidity in urban environments, making it an ideal tree for parks and gardens in tropical regions. The Ashoka tree also

contributes to the biodiversity of the area by attracting pollinators, such as bees and butterflies, with its fragrant flowers. The tree's ability to withstand harsh conditions, including drought and pollution, makes it a resilient species for urban landscaping and afforestation projects.

### Chemical Constituents of Ashoka

Chemicals such as flavonoids, glycosides, saponins, condensed tannin (6%), Haemotoxylin, Ketosterol, Saponin, Calcium and Iron compounds are present in the Ashoka tree extracts (Santosh et al 2024).

### Ayurvedic and Traditional Uses

The Ashoka tree has been extensively used in Ayurveda and other traditional medicinal systems for its diverse therapeutic properties. The parts of the plant that are used medicinally include the bark, leaves and flowers. The key therapeutic uses of the Ashoka tree stem bark include:

- **Gynaecological Anomalies:** The bark of the Ashoka tree has been used to treat various gynaecological anomalies, including hormonal imbalances, endometriosis, menstrual irregularities, fertility issues, PCOD (Polycystic Ovarian Disease), excessive vaginal discharge, postmenopausal health issues, including breast cancer prevention. The bark can also be consumed as a decoction or powder to treat various menstrual and vaginal problems.
- **Respiratory Issues:** The Ashoka tree is used to treat many respiratory issues, including bronchitis, asthma, cough & cold. The bark and leaves of the Ashoka tree have anti-inflammatory and expectorant properties, helping to relieve respiratory discomfort and promote healthy breathing.
- **Various Liver Issues:** The Ashoka tree's bark and leaves have antioxidant and hepatoprotective properties, helping to protect the liver from damage, promote healthy liver function, and support overall digestive health.
- **Skin and Hair Health:** Powdered form of Ashoka tree bark is used to treat various skin conditions like acne, eczema, dermatitis, reducing inflammation, soothing skin irritations improving skin tone and complexion. It is also

used in promoting healthy hair growth and in reducing dandruff.

- **Diabetes:** The bark and leaves of the Ashoka tree can be used to make teas, decoctions, and extracts which help to regulate blood sugar levels and support overall diabetes management.

### Conclusion

The Ashoka tree is not just a plant but a symbol that encapsulates beauty, peace, and spiritual awakening. With its striking flowers, rich cultural significance, and ecological contributions, the Ashoka tree continues to be a cherished part of the landscape in South Asia and beyond. Whether as a religious symbol, as a source of medicine, or as an ornamental plant in gardens, the Ashoka tree holds a unique place in the hearts of people across the world, inspiring feelings of joy and harmony. The Ashoka tree is a treasure trove of medicinal properties, offering a multitude of health benefits in various ailments. From gynaecological issues to respiratory problems, and from skin and hair care to diabetes management, the Ashoka tree's versatility is unparalleled. As we continue to uncover the secrets of this ancient tree, we are reminded of the importance of preserving our natural heritage and embracing the wisdom of traditional medicine. The Ashoka tree is truly a medicinal marvel, and its benefits are waiting to be harnessed for a healthier, happier world.

### References

- Saxena IG, Srivastava K, Sailakwal D, Meena RK (2024). Exploring ashoka tree (*Saraca asoca*), its botanical features, therapeutic uses, and homoeopathic applications. International Journal of Homoeopathic Sciences. Vol 8(2):328-330.
- Santhosh Kumar J, Urumarudappa, Sachin Rosario, Ravikanth, Suchada Sukrong G. (2023). A comprehensive review on *Saraca asoca* (Fabaceae) - Historical perspective, traditional uses, biological activities, and conservation. Journal of Ethnopharmacology Vol. 317(5) 116881. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jep.2023>.

\*\*\*\*\*