

# A STUDY ON PROMOTION/BRANDING OF MAHUA (MADHUKA LONGIFOLIA) IN CHHATTISGARH STATE

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## ABSTRACT

*Mahua is a tree which is found in dense forests of bastar region and is of great importance to tribal people because of its various useful outcomes. The tree is also of great commercial importance. The flower of the mahua tree is used by the people to make liquor. The liquor produced is famous for consumption among local people. It has been observed that various regions of the country has its own variety of liquor. for eg- goa is famous for its variety 'feni'. Similarly in order to market the rural product of Chhattisgarh i.e 'Mahua' the government needs to promote the product by creating a Brand. This will help in its commercialization and also will create employment for rural people. Although the government of India and various states have put a ban on liquor looking it as a social evil, which is deteriorating the culture of society. But as far as the economic view is concerned the liquor market contributes to a large share of the revenue though selling mahua is ban but it is sold through unorganized channel, So for development of rural economy the government should take some measures to promote this heritage liquor of the state.*

**Keywords-** *Mahua Plant, Promotion, Branding, Forest Product, Mahua flower uses*

## 1.Introduction

Whenever people talk about development of India we refer rural areas, we think about empowerment of rural population by providing livelihood to the people. Forest provides various resources to the people to run their livelihood. In tribal areas of Chhattisgarh such as Bastar there are ample resources like fruits, seeds, roots, leaves, flowers, grasses etc. There are hundreds of species of herbs & shrubs which are of medicinal importance. Timber is also very useful. These products are freely available and in abundance, which is a boon to the tribal people. Tendu, Lac, Mahua, Chirongi, Sal, Harra, Tamarind etc are also output of these forests and are of great commercial importance to the local people.

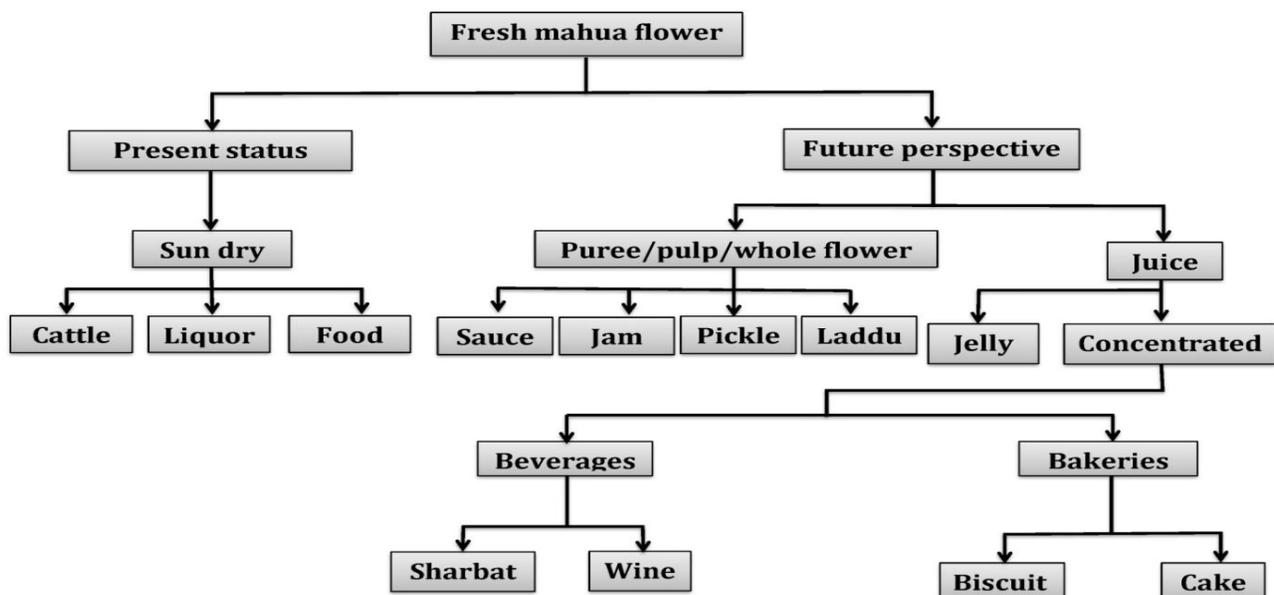
Madhuca longifolia, is its scientific name commonly known as mahua, is a tree found mainly in the central and north Indian forests. It is a fast growing tree that possesses evergreen quality. It is adapted to dry environments, being a prominent tree in tropical mixed deciduous forests in India it is found in the states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Gujarat and Orissa.

It is cultivated in warm and humid regions for its seeds, flowers and wood. The oil extracted from its seeds is used for the care of the skin, to manufacture soap or detergents, and as a vegetable butter. The seed cakes obtained after extraction of oil constitute very good fertilizer. The flowers are used to produce an alcoholic drink. Several parts of the tree, including the bark, are used for their medicinal properties. It is considered holy by many tribal communities because of its usefulness.

The mahua flower is edible and is a food item for tribals. They are used to make syrup for medicinal purposes. They are also fermented to produce the alcoholic drink mahua, a country liquor. Tribals of Bastar in Chhattisgarh and Orissa, Santhals of Jharkhand, Koya tribals of North-East Andhra Pradesh and tribals of North Maharashtra consider the tree and the mahua drink as part of their cultural heritage. Mahua is an essential drink for tribal men and women during celebrations. The main ingredients used for making it are gud (granular mollasses) and dried mahua flowers. Mahua flowers are also used to manufacture jam.

Mahua season lasts for 2-3 months when the tall trees shed them. The pale yellow flowers lie down on the ground making a yellow sheet on the ground. Men, women, and children come out of their homes and start filling their baskets with the flowers. You can see people walking on the road with baskets full of flowers, with small girls carrying small baskets.

At night they burn the dry leaves around Mahua trees so that next morning the flowers can be picked up easily over the dark ash. Mahua tree is considered sacred by the tribals, as almost all parts of it are useful for the humans. The bark has medicinal value, seeds make a good fertilizer and oil can be used as fuel oil. Mahua flower is also used in home recipes both as an ingredient and as a herb. As an ingredient, Mahua flower is added to the dishes for flavoring. So instead of boiled rice, you may get Mahua flavored boiled rice. It is used to make pickles. Mahua flower is fed to the cattle. As a herb, it is given to lactating mothers both human and cattle as it is said to help the body produce more milk.



### Processing of Mahua :

It has a great role in tribal economy and marketing.

There are three distinct and marked phases of flower dropping.

- **Shuru** – this lasts for 5-6 days. During this period, flowers that are collected possess a shrunken appearance. On drying, flowers collected during the phase yield 25% by weight of total collected produce.
- **Bharwari** – this stage follows shuru period, and lasts around a week. The qualities of flowers that drop during this period are highest, with yields going up to 50% post drying. They possess a bold and succulent appearance.

• **Kanwa** – last stage of flower dropping, they indicate end of collection period. The flowers of this stage bear resemblance to that of flowers at initial stage in appearance as well as in yield.

Business Includes collection that may be by hired tribes @ 10-20/- INR or voluntarily seeking extra income by selling it.

The collected mahua is then kept for sun drying for 3-4 days on the roof top, in the open area inside the house or in the front yard depending upon the sunlight. Sun drying may be followed by shade drying before it is finally stored or disposed off. Each day's collections are dried separately so that there is no moisture transfer from one lot to age in years productivity in kgs.

#### **Processing of Mahua occurs at three levels:**

- **Drying:** collectors dry the flowers before they sell
- **Stocking:** traders stock in cold storages
- **Brewing:** brewing of liquours household/bhatti/large brewer level

Drying is done immediately after collection. It is rarely observed that the flower is sold without drying. Hence this is generally put as part of production sub-system.

Stocking, technically, is not a processing activity. However, in the case of Mahua it has a special connotation. In order to retain its colour and quality Mahua is put in cold storage. Generally this is done by the large traders and wholesalers.

The most important processing done with mahua flower is brewing. For household use, the tribal brew it at home. However commercially it is undertaken by Bhattis or large scale brewers.

#### **Processing of Mahua flower into brew-**

Large scale brewing by licensed bhattis is not permitted in Chhattisgarh. Hence brewing is a household industry in the tribal belt of the state. However every household does not engage in brewing. In a village of 60-70 households, barely 5-7 households are engaged in this activity.

#### **The Process-**

Mahua flowers are put in earthen pots filled with water two days before it goes into brewing. After the bubbles are seen on the top of the pot, that pot of flowers is fit for further processing in the furnace and transferred to the brewing brass pot on the bottom.

The brewing room has a hearth/furnace with three pots put on one another. The bucket placed near the furnace is connected to the brew pot with a pipe. The process often takes five to six hours. The skills of brew making are primarily with the women. Often as a business woman, they protect the brew from the male members of their households so that they get the returns expected. They lock the brewing room if they go out for some other work.

Almost ninety per cent of the Mahua flower is used for making brews. Hence tribals who collect and produce are also the ultimate consumers. In the case of Chhattisgarh, tribals are the only legal processors. But what is important is that every other player in chain is expected to contribute to keeping the form intact including colour and texture. Change of form is not desired. Every tribal household sells the collection during the collection season and purchases it round the year. But they do

not have the capacity and wherewithal to store the annual requirements. Those having storage capacity or access to storage facility are the gainers in this game. In our context availability of modern storage facility or even a modest godown is limited to urban places. The state owned warehouses primarily caters to agricultural produces.

To quote a premier Mahua trader, production of Mahua flower may vary between two to four lakh tonnes. However comparing the national production data, it may be an over estimation. But it speaks of the variations. Similarly price varies between Rs 12 to 24 in the retail market. Production in neighbouring states especially Orissa also influences prices. But these swings are not always in favour of the primary producers. These fluctuations in production and prices make availability of storage facility/infrastructure in an accessible place and at affordable cost a critical constraint.!

Currently Chhattisgarh does not allow large scale mechanized brewing. This may be a constraint in tapping the external market, both national and international, where stringent standards in manufacturing processes are expected to be followed.

While many parts of India are considering Prohibition, Assam is nursing its drink. In August, the Assam government announced that country liquor produced in the state could be bottled, branded and sold in two flavours by private companies in Assam. In 2016 the state government had declared traditional brews made by various tribes as “heritage liquors” that could be bottled and retailed within the the state.

Ethnic people used to produce these liquors family wise, Now it can be produced on a commercial basis by any private enterprise. Only 25 per cent of the cakes (the discs of raw material that are fermented into wine or beer) must be bought from self-help groups within the community. The benefits have to go to the community.”

Another state that has successfully cashed in on traditional liquor is Goa. In April 2016, Goa gave its local feni drink the tag of a “heritage spirit”, which the state differentiates from country liquors. Unlike Assam’s new legislation, which allows its local country/heritage liquors to be branded and sold only within the state, feni’s heritage spirit tag has opened up markets for it across the country.

#### Mahua’s unorganized channels of Marketing –

Sub sector players	Role
Mahua producer/collector	Collection, drying
Kuchia	The first level of trader who visits villages for collection of Mahua flower with a bicycle
Haat trader	Storage and sale to haat retailer
Wholesaler	Purchases from both mandi and kuchia, stores in cold storages and sells back to the kuchias and also to bulk traders
Commission agents/brokers	Facilitates transactions without directly taking any responsibility of movement of produce
Retailers	Procure Mahua from whole sellers and sale in retail outlets
Cold storage owners	Storage
Mandis	Facilitate bulk trade, issue mandi tax receipts
Forest department officials	Supposed to play the role of facilitator
Transporters	Bulk transport of Mahua flower
Gunny bag suppliers	Providing packaging materials
NGOs	Advocates interests of primary collectors, facilitates collectivization at village/local level
Bhatti owners(other states)	Bulk consumers and play a role in determining prices

## 2. Conclusion

So if we see the commercial usage of mahua it is of great use to the rural people which can help develop rural economy. If we stop looking liquor as a social evil, it can help rural people earn their livelihood. Since many different states have their heritage liquor Chhattisgarh too can have one. If the government promotes this rural product by declaring 'heritage liquor' an organized way it can help the rural people alot. This can be a boon for rural economy. Branding will help it in getting more value. The mahua heritage liquor can be sold at souvenir shops.

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