

MADHYA PRADESH

State Tree: Bara, Bargad, Vat.

Botanical Name: *Ficus benghalensis* L.

Family: Moraceae.

Common Names: Banyan (English); Barh, Bargad, Bat, Ber, Bor, Bahupada, Nayagrodha, Vat (Hindi); Peral (Malayalam); Ala Maram (Tamil); Pedda Mari (Telugu).

Etymology: *Ficus* is the Latin name of fig tree; *benghalensis* refers to Bengal.



Description: Huge spreading evergreen trees, up to 18 m tall; branches with numerous aerial roots, which later thicken and become secondary trunks to support the crown. Leaves alternate, 8 – 20.5 × 5 – 12.5 cm, ovate or ovate-orbicular, rounded at base, obtuse at apex, thick-leathery, puberulous beneath; petioles 1.5 – 2.5 cm long, thick. Figs in axillary pairs, sessile, to 2.2 cm across, puberulous. Male flowers

numerous, near the ostiole of fig; tepals 3; stamen 1. Female flowers sessile. Gall flowers pedicellate. Figs red on ripening; fruit an achene, globose-ellipsoid.

Flowering & Fruiting: October – April.

Distribution: It is distributed all over India from sub-Himalayan region to deciduous forests of Deccan and Southern India. It is also grown in gardens, near temples, and roadsides for shade.

Economic Importance: Leaves are used as plates. Wood is used for well curbs, door panels, boxes and furniture. It is also suitable for paper pulp. Wood of the aerial roots is stronger and is used for tent poles and cart yokes. Bark, leaves and fruits are used as medicine.

Traditional Uses: This tree has a special place in the Indian culture and is regarded as one of the most sacred trees, worshipped by the Hindus. Twigs are used in sacred fire.

Medicinal Uses: The bark, leaves and fruits are used as astringent, haemostatic, antiseptic, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant and anticancer agent and also in the treatment of diarrhoea, dysentery, skin diseases, ulcers, vaginal disorders, leucorrhoea, menorrhagia and deficient lactation. Latex is used in lumbago and toothache.

Botanical Survey of India, Central Regional Centre, Allahabad.