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SOLD SHORT**

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GANJAM KEWDA: FRAGRANCE THAT IS BEING SOLD SHORT

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Sarmistha Tosh

Kewra or Kewda (*Pandanus fascicularis* lam.), also known as screw pine, is distributed along the coastal belt of tropical and sub-tropical regions of the coasts of India, Java, Malaysia & China. The plant belonging to family pandanaceae and order pandanales is a dioeciously bushy shrub which can be found growing widely along roadsides, borders of agricultural fields, banks of rivers and canals & on the seashore. The stem is 3-6 meters high with many thick terrestrial stilt roots. The leaves are in 4 rows or usually spirally arranged, crowded towards the top of the shoots & are caudate acuminate gloss green, margins with forward pointing spinules. The shrub can reach up to a height of 18 feet. The flowers are usually perianthless tiny, white and fragrant with large showy bracts called spathe. The male flower is attractive for its characteristic aromatic odour emitted by the stamens and tender white spathes covering them whereas the female flower is odourless and develops into a woody drupe. The flowers are 25-35 cm long, 6-8 cm in diameter and, on the average, weighing 100 g each. The stamens are in a raceme of spikes more precisely called as spadix & is known as stemonophore, bilocular, basifixed and

split lengthwise. They last only for about a day, with the inflorescence decaying in 3-4 days. A fully mature Kewda tree produces about 30-40 flower spikes each year.

Kewda plants growing in the wild



Kewda flower (male)

Kewda flower (female)



The Kewra belt covers an area of approximately 675 sq. Km, 45 km from north to south and 15 km from east to west along the coast of the Bay of Bengal. About 80-85% of Kewda canopy is concentrated within 10 km radius from the sea coast. It is estimated that about 5000 ha of land constituting 6% of total land area in Ganjam district is covered under Kewra canopy (from Rushikulya river on the north to Bahuda river on the south). In the Ganjam district, 4 blocks



namely Ganjam, Chatrapur, Rangeilunda and Chikiti cover an area of 20%, 56%, 79%, 17% respectively as the Kewda (locally known as 'Kia') plantation out of their total geographical area.



Flowers are prepared to go for distillery unit

The Kewda plantation area is more in Rangeilunda block. 70-80% flowers are available in rainy season (June-Sept); 10-15% in winter (Nov-Jan) & rest in summer (Mar-May). The ideal soil properties of Kewra belt include an alkaline pH ranging from 7.5-8.9, organic carbon content of 0.63-1.24%, soil moisture of 16.53-24.16%, and water holding capacity of 23-40%, soil temperature of 18-32°C & silty clay loam /silty sandy loam soil texture. The mature flowers are harvested early in the morning by pulling with a hooked stick. After that the flowers are supplied to the distillation unit for processing.

The essential oil which is derived from the flower is dominated by 2-phenylethyl-methylether (β - phenyl ethyl methyl ether, 60-80%); minor components are the free alcohol, 2-phenylethanol (β -phenyl ethyl alcohol) and its acidic ester. Furthermore, monoterpenes are found to contribute to the fragrance. The most important terpenes in pandanus flowers are terpinene-4-ol (up to 15%); furthermore α -terpineol, γ -terpineol and diterpenes have

also been reported. The essential oil is obtained by hydro-distillation and is known as Kewda rooh (only male flowers are used). The other products are being attar obtained by absorbing the hot vapours from the Kewda flowers in to the sandal wood oil/paraffin oil/DOP base. Kewra attar which is one of the most popular perfumes from ancient times, is used for scenting clothes, bouquets, lotions, cosmetics, soaps, hair oils, tobacco, agarbati etc. Kewda water is used for flavouring various food items including sweets, syrups, soft drinks and rice (biryani). Kewda flower is used in festivals, weddings, hair decorations and in other social functions in India. The leaves of Kewda plant are used for treating leprosy, syphilis, small pox, scabies and diseases of the heart & brain. A variety of handicrafts such as table lamps, files, purses, vanity bags, wall hangings, pen stands, papers are prepared from the leaves. It is also used for thatching the roofs of homes in the local area. Roots of the plant are used for curing wounds, skin diseases, ulcer, fever, diabetes, sterility, spontaneous abortions etc. The processed roots are used in making baskets and a type of local paint brush. Apart from the commercial, medicinal, recreational & aesthetic value; the plant also plays a vital role in maintaining biodiversity and ecological balance.



Kewda distillery unit



The stilt roots of Kewda plant help in binding the soil thus preventing soil erosion from agricultural fields.

It stabilizes sand dunes along the seashore and protects the coastline from wind erosion. The Kewra belt is a home for many birds, reptiles, insects and microorganisms etc.

P. fascicularis (Kewda) is an important bio resource in the southern coastal areas of the state. It gives employment to the rural people of 200 villages of the coastline who earn their livelihood directly or indirectly from the Kewra plant. In Odisha, about 200 kg of Ruh Kewda are prepared each year at a cost of Rs. 3,50,000 per kg. 90% of Kewda flower alone comes from Ganjam district. It has been estimated that every year nearly 3,00,000 - 4,00,000 trees produces about 10,000,000 male inflorescences which are harvested and sold by the local people. The commercial use of this plant is mainly centered at Kalipolli, Meghra, Patrapur, Sindhigaon, Jagannathpur, Chamakhandi, Matikhal, Badapur, Badaputi, Laxmipur, and Totapalii area of the district. Contribution of the Ganjam Kewda to the national perfume trade is about 50%. Ganjam Kewra flower and Kewda Rooh are also registered under the Geographical Indication

(GI) of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999.

Despite having so much ecological and economic importance, the Kewra cultivation and processing industry is still an underrated industry of Odisha and dying a slow death. The flower production and processing industry demands for a renovation. In the past few years, the number of Kewda distilleries in Ganjam has come down from 200 to 50. The farmers are facing distress sales due to low procurement price (price has come down from Rs. 20-22 to Rs. 2). Apart from this, advanced technology for the distillation are not yet adopted by the local industries. Ban on gutkha and inclusion of GST has hit the industry hard. The oil which was previously used in pan masala and mouth fresheners now is being replaced by the synthetic Kewda essence. Lack of encouragement for the production from local and state authorities is also a factor for low yield of flower and essential oil. Rapid industrialization of these small scale industries will generate employment opportunities in the rural areas of the district which in turn will increase the income of the people involved in production and distillation process as well as boost the national

Kewda Perfume



Kewda essential oil



Kewda Water





economy. Kewda production industry is a potential agro-enterprise and can be economical for the emerging entrepreneurs if taken. Advanced storage facilities must be provided to ensure good quality flowers and floral by-products of high export value. Linkage of the industries with inland and global market by providing strong marketing chain will be helpful in the marketing of the products obtained from the plant. Giving incentives to the flower growers and fixing a remunerative price for the flowers will encourage the people to go for the production. Regulation of transport facilities with less involvement of middlemen is still a challenging job for local and state authorities. Modernization of the Kewda industries with simultaneous promotion of various products obtained from the plant will certainly help in bringing about a radical transformation of the sector.

Trade fairs and online selling of the floral by-products, handicrafts made from roots and leaves will attract more consumers to buy the products. Franchises and private firms can also take up the Kewda production specially to obtain the medicinal value from the plant. Conservation of the Kewda belt in the coastline by enforcing acts and rules is a need of the hour. With the increasing threat to the saline soil, human population, natural flora and fauna and fresh water bodies from the destructive tides of the Bay of Bengal in the recent years due to frequent occurrence of cyclone, proper maintenance of plant diversity of the coastal area must be ensured and the Kewda belt cannot be excluded from the conservation strategies.

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