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Anogeissus latifolia

[Synonyms : *Conocarpus latifolia*]

GHATTI TREE is a deciduous tree. Native to India and Sri Lanka it has petalless flowers and leaves that turn red in Autumn.

It is also known as Axle-wood tree, *Chirimanu* (Telugu), Country sumac, *Dabria* (Gujarati), *Dhamora* (Marathi), *Dhaoya* (Bengali), *Dhava* (Hindi, Sanskrit), Gatty gum, Ghatti gum, Gum ghatti, Indian gum, *Marukinchiram* (Malayalam), and *Vellay-naga* (Tamil).

Latifolia is made up of Latin *lati-* (broad, wide) and *-folia* (leaved) components.

The edible gum (that has properties akin to those of gum arabic, *Acacia senegal*) is used primarily in confectionery, and locally it is chewed by children. It is also an ingredient in pharmaceuticals today and it provides a fixative or mordant for calico printing. This gum has been used for sizing paper too. One unusual use for it however is to be found in drilling for oil when the gum is one of the materials added to the mud that is pumped down the drill pipe.

The leaves yield a black dye, and the bark and leaves are also used for tanning. The leaves provide food for a species of silkworm as well.

The strong, tough and durable, purplish-brown wood has been used for making cart shafts and axles, as well as poles, rafters, farm implements – and skis. It yields a good charcoal and is also burnt as fuel. It is used today commercially for construction work but, at the beginning of the 21st Century, the wood's value as paper pulp is only beginning to be appreciated.

Medicinally, the plant has been used to treat snake and scorpion bites. In India the bark is used in local remedies to treat diarrhoea, dysentery and headaches.