

Cochlospermum religiosum

[Synonyms : *Bombax gossypium*, *Bombax religiosum*, *Cochlospermum gossypium*]

YELLOW COTTON TREE is a deciduous shrub or tree. Native to Burma (now called Myanmar) and central India it has bright yellow flowers with many red-based, orange stamens.

It is also known as *Appa kutakka* (Malayalam), *Bebaru* (Malay), Buttercup tree, Cotton shellseed, *Ela-imbul* (Singhalese), *Gangal* (Hindi), *Ganglay* (Marathi), *Golgol* (Bengali), *Gone* (Persian), *Kadachogund* (Gujarati), *Katira* (Arabic, Singhalese, Urdu), *Kindagagu* (Telugu), *Kinihiriya* (Singhalese), *Kongu* (Tamil), *Kumbi* (Hindi, Punjabi), Silk-cotton tree, *Su-phan-ni-ka* (Thai), and Yellow silk-cotton tree.

The tree yields an insoluble, edible gum, known as katira or hog gum.

Religosum is Latin (holy, sacred) meaning 'sacred or used in religious ritual'.

The trees can be a familiar sight growing around Buddhist temples and the large yellow flowers are often picked as temple offerings.

The gum has not only been used in printing calico and dressing leather but has also been used in making ice cream, and in cosmetics.

Bark fibre has been used locally to make rope.

The seeds have been roasted and eaten. In at least one part of India the wood is steeped in water for eight days and the strained liquid is mixed with flour. This batter is then fried to give what is considered to be a nutritious dish.

Today the silky fibre (in which the seeds are embedded) is harvested commercially for stuffing upholstery.

Medicinally, the gum has been used in India to treat some venereal disease and coughs.