

BIHAR

State Flower: Kachnar (Hindi).

Botanical Name: *Bauhinia variegata* L.

Family: Leguminosae: Caesalpinioideae

Common Names: Katora, Kurol (Assamese); Raktakanchan (Bengali); Orchid Tree, Variegated Bauhinia (English); Risinantige, Ayata, Bilikanjivala, Irkubalitua (Kannada); Dieng long, Dieng tharlong (Khasi); Vau-favang, Vaube, Chovanna-mandaru, Chuvanna-mandaram (Malayalam); Chingthrao (Manipuri); Kanaraj, Kanchan, Kavidara, Rakta-kanchan (Marathi); Vau-favang,



Vaube, Vaufawang (Mizo); Takki, Koeralo (Nepali); Kachan (Odiya); Ashmantaka, Asphota, Chamarika, (Sanskrit); Mandharai (Tamil); Bodanta, Daevakanchanamu (Telugu).

Etymology: The genus *Bauhinia*, named after Swiss botanists, the brothers, Jean Bauhin

(1541 - 1612) and Gaspard Bauhin (1560 - 1624); and the specific epithet *variegata* refers to the variegated nature of colour of middle petal.

Description: A medium-sized tree; bark nearly smooth and dark brown; young shoots pubescent. Leaves simple, alternate, broadly ovate to suborbicular, 1 - 18 × 1.5 - 20 cm, bilobed with a medium cleft reaching from 1/4th to 1/3rd the way down; lobes obtuse, deeply heart-shaped at base, pubescent beneath when young, 9 - 15-nerved. Inflorescence a few-

flowered, pubescent raceme. Calyx 2 – 2.7 cm long, tomentose, 5-toothed at apex. Petals obovate with long rather broad claw, 5 – 6.3 cm long, all white or 4 petals pale purple and 5th one darker with purple veins. Fertile stamens 5. Ovary stalked, hairy; style long; stigma capitate. Pods 15 – 30 × 1 – 2.5 cm, flat, hard, dehiscent, 10 – 15-seeded.

Flowering & Fruiting: Flowers bloom from February to April. The flowers often make their first appearance in late winter while the tree is bare of leaves, and flowering lasts until early summer.

Range of Distribution: India (Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal), China, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan; widely cultivated in tropics.

Economic Importance: Cultivated as an ornamental plant. Wood is used in construction of buildings and for making agricultural implements. The plant yields gum. Bark is used for dyeing and tanning. Leaves are good fodder. Flowers are edible as potherb and also made into pickles.

Medicinal Uses: It has various medicinal properties. Root is tonic and carminative, the flowers are laxative and the bark is astringent.

Note: Plants can be propagated by seed germination or by grafting.

Vinay Ranjan

Central National Herbarium, Botanical Survey of India, Howrah.