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Religious Significance Of Forest In Sanskrit Kavya Literature

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Abstract :

Forests hold a profound religious and cultural significance in Sanskrit Kāvya literature and classical Indian thought. Ancient Indian scriptures such as the Vedas, Purāṇas, and epics like the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata present forests not merely as physical spaces but as sacred abodes of divinity, penance, and spiritual practice. Deities are believed to reside in forests, and specific trees such as Bilva, Aśvattha, Tulsi, and Vaṭa are worshipped as divine embodiments. Literary sources detail how sages performed yajñas (sacrifices) in forests and how these natural environments served as ideal settings for meditation and enlightenment. Forests like Naimiṣāraṇya, Daṇḍakāraṇya, and Citrakūṭa are celebrated for their religious sanctity and mythological associations. Furthermore, trees provided essential ritual materials—wood for sacrificial fires, leaves for offerings, and flowers for worship. This tradition of sacred ecology reflects an integrated worldview where nature and spirituality are inseparable. By portraying forests as divine entities and sanctuaries of spiritual pursuit, Sanskrit literature promotes a deep ecological awareness, emphasizing conservation through dharma (righteousness). Thus, the religious reverence for forests in Sanskrit Kāvya literature illustrates a sustainable cultural ethos rooted in spiritual ecology and respect for nature.

Keywords : Sacred forests, Sacredness of trees, yajña, Trees for rituals, worship materials etc.

Introduction :

Religion is the basis of Indian culture. Indian society is a religion-life society and here religion has got importance in every field. Religion affects the life of the individual, family, society, and the entire nation in innumerable ways. Religion is a means of attaining supernatural credit. *Dharma*, like a huge tree, has been enumerated on earth since time immemorial in the *Puruṣārtha* of worldly and transcendental goodness along with *Artha*, *Kāma*, and *Mokṣa*. *Dharma* means to hold, maintain or strengthen. That is the element that holds the life of the whole world, without which the position of a person in the world is not possible and through which everything remains controlled and maintained that is religion.

In the hymns of the *Rgveda*, the word “*dharma*” is used in the sense of religious activities or religious rituals,¹ by which the law of religion reveals the meaning of the principle, system, practice, etc. In the *Atharvaveda*, the definition of religion has been done in this way, where “*dharman*” is also described along with religion. There, it is accepted as a religious activity.² The word *Dharma* has been used more and more often in Brahmanic texts also. In the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, the word *Dharma* has appeared in the sense of all religious duties.³

The definition of religion has also been presented by our philosophers, thinkers, and mystics in different forms as a result of the thought and contemplation of their time.⁴ In Indian culture, trees, and forests have been given great importance religiously. It is said that Lord Śiva himself is a worshiper of the *Bilva* tree. This tree is the favourite tree of Lord Śiva, the law of worshipping him with its leaves is well known. It has been said in the *Purāṇas* that Śiva should be worshiped with the previously kept sesame seeds, leaves, and lotus flowers, and especially with *Bilva* leaves.⁵

God himself resides in the forests, so the forest is always revered. According to *ŚivaPurāṇa*, one who travels to *Badari Vana* attains liberation.⁶ The beloved place of Lord Śiva is the undisturbed area. That holy *Tapovanais* very secret. Adequate material is available in *Purāṇas* regarding *Vana*, *Upavana*, etc. Forest is an important part of our life. On the one hand, forests have been considered as the first stage of earning a living and on the other hand. Generally a wide area of land covered with trees, whose extension is more than that of forest land, that wide area is called a forest.

The Sanskrit poets had so much affection, reverence, and identification for the forests that they had conceived of the deities for forests. The deity of the forest is mentioned as a female deity, she keeps the flora and fauna of the forest in her discipline. These forest gods were pleased and could provide the desired boon and gifts to the devotees and those who loved them. The forest deity was also imagined to have human sensibility. *Daṇḍakāranya* forest deity Vāsanti had a good relationship with Sītā. She was deeply distressed on hearing the news of Sītā’s banishment by Rāma(URC. Act-III).

Sacred forests :

In the *Vedic* period, the sages introduced their scientific concept by consecrating divinity in the trees and plants and by relating it to religion and rituals that protected the plants and trees. Since ancient times, in Indian culture, the revered mind of trees and plants, etc. and the affection and respect towards them have been reflected. According to the descriptions received in the *Vedas*, not only the trees were respected, but the guardians of trees and forests were also respected. In the YV, the seer “Kutsa” while saluting the forest says ⁷ that the harmful rays of the sun are absorbed by these and thus they are the defenders of evil things of the *Vedic* Āryans. Salute to such great trees. Salutations to the protectors of forests, salutations to those who protect trees and medicines and salutations to the protectors and maintainers of all forests. The ancient people worshipped the deities for the protection of the forest. That is why the forest has religious significance since the ancient times. Many religious elements of the forest have been mentioned in the Hindu mythology.

The representation of the natural beauty of the forests untouched by the influence of cultured humans is described as *Vindhya Vana*, which is full of animals and birds and also rich in religious significance. *Vindhya Vana* is mentioned in both *Raghuvansam*⁸ and *Meghadūtam* where cloudy rain has been described on the summit of *Vindhyācala* forest.⁹ In the *Raghuvamsa*,¹⁰ sage Agastya mentions his mythological incident while detaining *Vindhya* forest that- *Vindhyācala* was stopped from moving upward. He also drank the water of the whole ocean, and later being pleased by the prayer of ocean he expelled it from his mouth. The etymological derivation of *Nandana* is “*NandayatiitiNandanah*” meaning one who provides joy. So ‘*Nandana Vana*’ means the forest which gives pleasure to the concerned. The name of this forest is virtuous. *Nandana Vana* is the forest of heaven. Lord Śiva and Pārvatī visited this forest after married. Śiva adorned Pārvatī with the flowers of this forest with an abundance of *Pārijāta* trees. Indrāñī was also adorned with this flower.¹¹ *Pārijāta*, is the main tree of this forest. *Kumāra* Kārtikeya was very angry at Tarakāsura for destroying the beauty of this forest and eventually, this anger caused Tarakāsura’s death.¹² The description of this forest is also delightful in *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (3. 23. 40-41). Rāvaṇa did penance in this forest for ten thousand years.¹³ *Prayāga Vana* is which is very beautiful and vast connected to the banks of the river Ganges.¹⁴ This forest is adorned with many trees, vines, and bushes. Various types of animals and birds who forgetting all their hatred and roaming with love, live happily are found in this holy forest. Many ascetics used to reside here by making *Parṇasālā*. *Muniśreṣṭha* Bhāradvāja used to reside in this forest while chanting and doing penance (Rām. II. 89. 21- II. 92. 40). It is clear from the description received in the *Rāmāyaṇa* that in ancient times, gods, demons, sages, and various types of wild animals and birds lived in the *Śvetāranya*.¹⁵ Śiva killed Andhakāsura in this deep forest. This forest was full of beautiful fruit-bearing trees, vines, and flowers. Due to the beauty of the forest it was also the place of circumambulation of gods and humans. According to myth, this forest is also rich in religious significance. Rāma ordered Laxmaṇa to build a huge *Yajñamaṇḍapa* on the banks of Gomati of *Naimiṣāranya* because

this forest is very religious and holy.¹⁶ *Naimiṣāranya* is a beautiful and sacred forest in which various types of trees are found. In the past, the kings used to perform *Āśvamedhayajña* and religious rituals in the beautiful forest area of *Naimiṣāranya* and they also used to go for a walk with their wives in the beautiful area (*AnāndaRāmāyaṇa*. II. 9. 31). On the banks of the river *Sarayū*, there is a famous divine forest named *Vaibhrāja*.¹⁷ According to Mt. Pu, there is the description of god *Mahākāla* situated in the forest that comes in the province of *Avanti*. A fierce battle took place near this forest. In that terrible war, God Śiva, being deeply hurt by the *Andhaka*, used the very furious *Pāśupata* weapon.¹⁸ The forest named *Kālinjar* is very dear and most sacred area of Lord Śiva. This forest has attained extreme purity by the consecration of Lord Śiva.¹⁹ *Nāgeśvara Jyotirlinga* incarnation is present in *Dārūka Vana* in the form of *Jyotirlinga* of Lord Śiva, who performs various kinds of pastimes and it appears that this place is very favourite to Lord Śiva.²⁰ *Badarī Vana* mentioned in *ŚivaPurāṇa* is a very religious place. Lord Śiva always resides in this forest. One who travels and rests in this forest becomes free from life (*Jīvanmukta*).²¹ In the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* the depiction of *Citrakūṭa* forest is very rich in religious importance. During the exile of Rāma, sage Bhāradvāja has advised Rāma to settle in the *Citrakūṭa Vana*, which is situated in *Prayāga*, at a distance of ten *Krosas*.²² The *Daṇḍakāranya* is also known as a religious forest. where many sages lived there.²³ The name *Daṇḍakā* is derived from the demon *Daṇḍaka* who once lived there. Another origin may be from the *Daṇḍa* plant, a type of tall grass known as *daṇḍatṛṇa* flourished in this area. The *Āśrama* is full of tall forest groves, sacred trees, and fruit-bearing trees described in the *AranyaKāṇḍa* of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.²⁴ This forest, worshiped by *Balivaiśvadeva* and *homa*, used to resonate with the sound of recitation of sacred *Vedic* hymn.²⁵ *Pañcavaṭī* forest mentioned in the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* has religious significance. According to the mythological story, Rāma stayed there for a long time along with Laxmaṇa and Sītā during the exile.²⁶ There is a beautiful description of *Pañcavaṭī* in *Aranya Kāṇḍa* (Rām. III. 15. 2,12,13,14,15). *Mahākavi* Kālidāsa has also described the *Pañcavaṭī* in many places of *Rvm*. The verse of *Rvm*, shows how he used to spend time in this forest with Sītā and Laxmaṇa during exile²⁷ and for this reason this forest is known as the holy forest. The *Mātāṅga* forest has also religious significance because of this forest, the disciple of *Mātāṅga Muni* named Śabari, an old *Tapasvinī*, who was engaged in her religious practice, as a result of which her *guru* this forest has been named as *Mātāṅga*.²⁸

Sacredness of trees :

The tradition of divinity in trees and their worship in our country has been very ancient. In the *Vedas* and *Āranyaka* texts, Nature is expressed with supernatural experience. In the *Gītā*, *Kṛṣṇa* describes himself as “*Āśvattha*” among all the trees and talks only of leaves, flowers, and fruits not counting the names of gold, gems, and valuables among the things offered to himself.²⁹ There are many references to tree worship in Indian literature. The *Ādiparva* of the *Mahābhārata*, it is said that the tree with ample leaves and fruits should be worshipped in every village.³⁰ The great poet Bāṇabhaṭṭa depicted in the mention of the *Sunyāṭavi* of “*Kādambarī*” that many religious people had carved the idol of *Durgā Devi* in the lower part of the trunk

of the tree.³¹ Here the intention of carving the idol of the goddess in the root of the tree is to give divinity to the tree. Where religious people want to worship their *īṣṭa*(goddess), they are also seen engaged in the worship of the tree. Anyway, the description of the worship of the *VaṭaVṛkṣa* by the queen is found similar to the worship of the goddess elsewhere.³² In the *Harṣacarita*, the poet has described the place where the idols of *Kātyāyanī* were carved on the trees of the forest, which are shown to be saluted by the wanderers.³³ *Mahākavi* Viṣṇuśarmā has given him special respect by imagining divinity in trees. The description of the tree deity obtained in the “*Pañcatantra*” named *Mitrabheda* and in the context of ‘*Aparikṣitakāraka*’ the deity resides on the tree, it is the concept of divinity in the trees.³⁴ In ancient times remains used to worship the *Aśoka* tree like a deity.³⁵ According to Mt. Pu, god himself protects the trees.³⁶ Lord Śiva himself resides in *Akṣayaavaṭa*, so it is the ultimate duty of man to protect the trees.³⁷ For Hindus *Aśoka* is a sacred tree. The name *Aśoka* itself would allude to “the sad tree of India”. This tree is considered the symbol of love in North India. Lovers and separated couples worship the tree on every 13th day of *Chaitra māsa*. There is a beautiful description of the *Aśoka* tree in Sanskrit *Kāvyas*.

According to *Purāṇas* many trees have related to different festivals and *Vrata* such as – *AśokaPurṇimā* (Mt. Pu.-181. 1), *Āmalakyeḥkādaśī*(Pa.Pu.- 6. 47. 33) ,*Durvāṣṭami* (Mt. Pu.-p-137) , *Dhātrivrata* (Pa. Pu.- 5. 58. 1-11) ,*AśokaDvādaśī* (Mt. Pu.- 81. 1-28) etc. In the ancient text, many plants are mentioned as highly sacred. Plants are associated with many folklore and myth by the social customs and traditions where the protection of plants and forest wealth were strengthened. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (Śa. Br. 9. 1. 1. 42), the leaves of the *Arka* plants are closely related to Lord Śiva. In the *ŚatarudriyaYajña*, the wood produced from this plant has a very important role in giving the desired result to the one who sacrificed. There are references to it in the *Taittirīya Samhitā* and more interestingly the references show the birth of these plants.³⁸ In the context of the performance of the “*Navagraha homa*” particular use of this *Arka* plant is mentioned in the *Vedas*.³⁹ The large leaves of this tree are used for sacrifices. The *Aśvattha* tree has relevance from the religious point of view. It is extremely pure so that the meaning and significance for people as holy in their lives. There are many references mentioned in *Vedas*.⁴⁰ Whoever plants of *Aśvattha* anywhere in proper methods, he goes to the abode of Hari.⁴¹ By planting this tree once in a lifetime, a man may never go to hell. It is believed that the *Aśvattha* tree is the symbol of Viṣṇu and has been worshiped since long time. Another belief is that the tree represents the *Trimūrti* – the roots devote Brahṁā, the trunk Viṣṇu and the leaves Śiva. Lord *Buddha* attained enlightenment under this *Aśvattha* tree. According to Hindu mythology, the leaf of this tree is dedicated to being the resting place of Lord Kṛṣṇa. In the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa said that “There is a *Aśvattha vṛkṣa*, whose roots are upwards and branches are downward and the *Vedic Mantras* are its leaves. One who knows this tree is the knower of the *Vedas* In the *Vālmikī Rāmāyaṇa*, there is mention of Mātā Sītā worshipping *Vaṭavṛkṣa* during exile and Mātā Sītā bowed her head after reaching near the *Vaṭavṛkṣa* and said – “Great tree! salutations to you. May you be please so that my husband may complete his exile vow.”⁴² The *Vaṭavṛkṣa* is the tree of *Pañcavatī*(Rām. II.

55. 23-24). This tree is also a symbol of *Trimūrti*- Lord Viṣṇu, Śiva, and Brahmā. In many Hindu cultures, the tree is also a symbol of life and fertility. That is why the Banyan tree is worshiped by the childless people and this tree should never be cut off. There myths is that on the day of *JyeṣṭhaPurṇimā* or *Amāvāsyā*, married women worship the *Vaṭa* tree for the long life of their husbands. They also by tying them with sacred protective thread (*rakṣāsūtra*) and by listening to the sacred Sāvitri-Satyavān story desire the longevity of their husbands. *Khadira* tree is originated from the mid-region of the *Brahmā*'sbody (*VāmanaPurāṇa*- 17. 4-5). Another description is found that in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, *Khadira* was originated from the bones of *Prajāpati*, that's why the woods of the *Khadira* is very hard. *Taittirīya Samhitā*⁴³ mentions the birth of *Khadira*. The tree is considered sacred to Lord Kārtikeya. *Khadira Vana* was situated in *Mathurā*. According to *VarāhaPurāṇa* who visits the *Khadira Vana* once goes to the abode of Viṣṇu (*VarāhaPurāṇa*- 153. 42). This tree is very holy, charming, and extremely sacred in the *Naimiṣa* forest as described in the *Varāha Purāṇa*.⁴⁴ Brushing of tooth is discussed in the context of praying. Before bathing and worshiping, the devotee should brush his teeth with the stick of *Nyagrodha* or *Khadira*.⁴⁵ The *Devadāru* tree is worshiped as a religious tree. The word “*Devadāru*” can be divided into two parts- ‘*Deva*’ means God and ‘*Dāru*’ means tree. Hence it was named as *Devadāru*. A forest mainly covered with *Devadāru* is considered as a suitable place for Hindu saints and their families who were great devotees of *Siva*. The *Bilva* tree is considered a very sacred tree and it is associated with Lord Śiva. Hindus worshiped Śiva by offering *Bilva* leaves, flowers, and fruits of the *Bilva* tree. The *Bilva* tree is sacred to Jains as well. *Bilva* tree is not only big but equally auspicious as *Udumbara*.⁴⁶ One who plants a *Bilva* tree will always see his offspring living a happy life with prosperity at their doorstep.⁴⁷ Lord Pārasnāthji attained “*Nirvāṇa*” under a *Bilva* tree called thereafter as the 23rd *Tirthaṅkara*. One who worships Goddess Pārvatī with *Bilva* leaves with full devotion, gets everything that he desires (*VāmanaPurāṇa*- 62. 10). *Bilva* is the most suitable for sacrificial purposes (*VāyuPurāṇa*- 75. 71-72). *Tulsī* tree is very nearer to Lord Viṣṇu and leaves are offered to Lord Viṣṇu, Rāma, and Kṛṣṇa. They cannot take *bhoga* without *Tulsī*. *Tulsī* tree is married to *Śāligṛām* on the day of *Devotthāna ekādaśī* in the month of *Kārtika Śukla pakṣa*. *Nidhi Vana* which means “forest of *Tulsī*” is the extremely sacred forest site of *Vṛndāvana*. One should worship Kṛṣṇa with the thousands of *Tulsī* sprouts (*Skanda Purāṇa*- 2. 9. 29. 16). It also states that one who worships *Hari* and *Hara* with bunches of *Tulsī*, does not take rebirth in any other womb (*Skanda Purāṇa*- 2. 4. 23. 13). By worshiping even one's with pure, fragrant, and intact leaves of *Tulsī*, *Yama* destroys the sins of that person. By offering *Tulsī* to Rāma, sins are destroyed (*Skanda Purāṇa*- 2. 5. 8. 5).

Yajña :

The word *Yajña*— “*yajayācayatavicchapraccharaksonaṅg*” is derived from the Pāṇinīya *Sūtra* by suffixing *naṅg*. According to *Nirukta*, where the wishes of the subjects, food, rain, and happiness and prosperity are made, the name of the same is ‘*Yajña*’ - “*yañcnayobhavatītivāyajubhiyannobhavatītivā*”.

In the Mt. Pu, while expressing the symptoms of *Yajña*, it has been said that the combination of these five particular substance – Deity, sacrifice material, *Veda Mantra*, *Ṛtvij*, and *Dakṣiṇā* is the *Yajña*.⁴⁸ When the smoke of fragrant substances from the *Yajña* pervades the space, it is capable of eliminating the pollution present there, hence the importance of the *Yajña* process in the protection of the elements is known, it is mentioned in the *AgniPurāṇa* in this context.⁴⁹ According to sages, there is only one way to avoid the ill-effects of Nature i.e. punishment that the feeling of thanks and humble effort towards the trees and plants should be realized, its second name is *Yajña* it is mentioned in *Purāṇa*. Daśaratha got four sons only because of performing *Yajña* which fulfilled the wishes in the form of *PutreṣṭiYajña* by Ṛṣyaśṛṅga (MVC. 1. 24). The great poet Bhavabhūti has described the *VājapeyaYajña*, the *AśvamedhaYajña*, and the *Soma Yajñas*. Laxmana told Śrīrām that the great *Yajña* called *Raghunandana*, *Aśvamedha* was the one who removed all the sins and was the most difficult.⁵⁰ In ancient times only the king could perform the *AśvamedhaYajña*. In the past, king Daśaratha had performed this *Yajña*. According to the classical method to get a son and to prove himself as the king of the whole earth (Rām. I. 8. 2, I. 13. 41). King Daśaratha along with his queens *AśvamedhaYajña* was performed wonderfully on the north banks of river *Gomati* at *Naimiṣāranya*⁵¹ and after that also Rāma performed many *AśvamedhaYajñas* during his lifetime. This *Naimiṣāranya* was a beautiful and holy place.⁵² The proximity of a river, forest, *Āśrama*, or holy mountain was considered suitable for performing a *Yajña*.⁵³ At the end of the *Yajña*, both king Daśaratha and Rāma had satisfied *Ṛtvijas* and the petitioners by donating all the things including money to them. This *Yajña* was the most sacred and difficult one to remove all sins. In the Rvm epic, the banks of the river were decorated with golden pillars of *Yajña* and in this context, the context of *AśvamedhaYajña* has come.⁵⁴ To perform this *Yajña*, it is necessary to have a wife, that is why Rāma performed the *Yajña* by making the golden idol of Sītā as his companion (Rvm. 14. 87). From the point of view of the great poet, this is *Kāmyeṣṭi*⁵⁵ the childless king Kuśanābha performed the *PutreṣṭiYajña* to get the son.⁵⁶ Daśaratha after the completion of the *AśvamedhaYajña*, performed a *Yajña* named *Putreṣṭi* in consultation with the Vedic sages Ṛṣyaśṛṅga and others.⁵⁷ This *Yajña* is performed to have the desired results. According to the *Kamba Rāmāyaṇa*, it was performed by Daśaratha on the banks of the river *Sarayu*. This *Yajña* was completed after 12 months with the help of Vedic scriptures (Ka. Rā. , I. 5. 33-86)

VaiṣṇavaYajña had also been systematically organized by the ancient Aryans.⁵⁸ Rāma had duly performed *VaiṣṇavaYajña* in the outer of *Parṇakuṭi* in the *Citrakūṭa* forest to get rid of the defects like *Pañcasunā* during the exile period. At that time Rāvaṇa’s son *Meghanāda* also organized *VaiṣṇavaYajña* in

the city of *Lañkā*.⁵⁹ This *Yajña* pacifies the sins and gives virtue. That is why *Devraj* Indra also performed this *Yajña* to remove his sins.⁶⁰

Importance of trees for rituals :

Recognizing the need and importance of trees for the rituals of *Yajña*, it is mentioned in the *Agni Purāṇa* that the *toraṇas* of the *yajñamaṇḍapa* should be *Plakṣa*, *Udumbara*, *Aśvattha*, and *Vaṭa* respectively.⁶¹ Trees play an important role in the environment, that is why trees have been glorified a lot in the *Purāṇas* and direction has been given for their conservation. The wood of *Khadira* is very hard, hence it is considered highly useful for the *Yajña*. From the *Khadira* wood, the sacrificial post is made. For the performance of the *Yajña* wooden made implements are required which was made from *Khadira* trees such as *Sruva* (offering spoon), *Abhri* (wooden scraper), *Yupa* (a pole), etc. in the *AśvamedhaYāga* and the *VājapeyaYāga* also, the *Sruva* made from *Khadira* tree is used for doing *homa*.⁶² The wood of the *Khadira* should be used for the lighting sacrificial fire. It is mentioned in the *KātyāyanaŚrautasūtra*, *Sahya* (sword made of wood), *Sruva* (dripping spoon) should be made from *khadira* tree (Kā.Śrau. 1. 3. 32-33). The dried twigs of the plant are used in the sacred fire “*homa*”. Wood is used to make utensils that are used for sacred purposes. *Yajñasthāli* was made of *Palāśa* wood.⁶³ *Sthāli* was a utensil used for cooking for the *Yajña*.⁶⁴ Many other elements were made from *Palāśa* wood which were used in rituals. *Palāśa* wood was also used for the sacrificial fire.⁶⁵ In Indian tradition it believes that those who just touch and see the *Palāśa* tree then get rid of all sins.⁶⁶

Worship materials :

Describing the religious importance of plants, the extreme love and affection for plants gave birth to religious faith in them. In Sanskrit literature, the purity of plants is expressed at the site. Sages and poets had given religious importance to these plants. This religious sentiment became so strong that forests, gardens, and trees were conceived as deities. The sacred feeling of trees and the concept of divinity were prevalent from time immemorial. Flora has also had special importance in religious rituals.

In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Akṣata* is described as raw rice grains used in worship.⁶⁷ Rāma, at the time of entering Kauśalyā's palace to inform about the exile, had seen it kept for worship near mother Kauśalyā, who was doing *havan*.⁶⁸ *Akṣatas* were also kept along with the worship material for the coronation (Rām, IV. 26. 27). Thus rice derived from paddy had special significance in worship and auspicious occasions like marriage, coronation. At the time of Rāma's coronation, the fragrance of *Agurū* was pervasive in *Ayodhyā*. The splendour of the *Rājapatha* was adorned with a highly fragrant *Agurū*. It is evident from this evidence that *Agar* incense made from the *Agurū* tree was used for all kinds of worship, purification of things, making things fragrant and pleasant, and for the cleanliness of the environment. The *Agurū* wood is used for *havan* (*śatamagurusamidhā*- Da. Ca. , P-242).

Sandalwood is very fragrant, it is used in auspicious work. Red sandalwood is used as the *tilaka* of *Durgā*.⁶⁹ Red sandalwood is used to offer *Arghya* to the sun (KB, p-146) a lot of quantity is found in *Vindhya* forest (*raktacandanālaṅkṛta*- KB, p-57). *Vindhyāṭav iVana* is covered with coconut trees.⁷⁰ This tree is very tall and coconut is used to worship the deities. The *Pārijāta* tree was adorned in the middle of the *Nandana Vana* like the *Kaustubhamaṇi* of Lord Viṣṇu's chest (KB, p-204). Its place of origin was considered to be *Kṣirasāgara*. This tree was mostly found in the *Nandana Vana* (*pārijātapādapambhunandanavanasya*, Ha. Ca. , p-116, 222). *Kuśa* was found in abundance in the *Vindhya* forest of Madhya Pradesh, it was especially used in marriages, rituals, etc.⁷¹ ascetics used to wear them. *Yajña*, *havan* work was completed through them, that is, they were used in *Yajña*, etc.⁷² green coloured *Kuśa* was used to lay over the *HavanaKuṇḍa*.⁷³ All the materials for the *Yajña* like *Kuśa*, *Kusuma*, *Samidhā* and *Palāśa* etc. were collected from the forest by the sages.⁷⁴ Wild deer have been discussed in many places in the *Harṣacarita* (*vanamṛgividgrivavilokayanti*, Ha. Ca. , p-54). Rāvaṇa worshiped *Śivaliṅga* with sandalwood near *Vindhyagiri*.⁷⁵ *Atharvaveda* (II. 8. 3), *Taittirīya Samhitā* (VII. 2. 10. 2), *Maitrāyaṇi Samhitā* (IV. 3. 2), *Vājasaneyi Samhitā* (18. 12), *ŚatapathaBrāhmaṇa* (IX. 1. 1. 3) mention about the *Tila*. The sesame seeds that originate from the forest are known as wild sesame and *Alpatila*. At the time of *Aśvamedhayajña*, Rāma ordered ten thousand animals to carry sesame seeds (Rām, VII. 91. 19). The *yajñavedi* in *Citrakūṭa* was built from *Darbha*.⁷⁶ Flowers have a special place in religious ceremonies. Flowers were used at the time of *balivaiśva karma* and *homa*. The brahmins themselves used to offer flowers to the deities with the chosen flowers. *Bharata* had seen the flowers collected for worship in front of Rāma's *parṇasālā* at *Citrakūṭa* on his departure.⁷⁷ Indrajit worshiped *Agni deva* with sandalwood flowers (Rām, VI. 73. 22). The wood fuel which is needed to ignite the fire in the *yajña* is called *Samidhā*. *Samidhā* should be of *Khadira* or *Palāśa*. *Samidhās* are used for deities. In *Daṇḍakāranya*, the *Samidhās* were used to enhance the beauty of the *Āśramas*.⁷⁸ At *Pañcavaṭī*, Rāma ordered Laxmaṇa to find such a place for the construction of *parṇasālā* where there would be facilities for *Samidhās*.⁷⁹

Conclusion :

From the ancient times to the present, forests and trees have played an essential role in the religious and cultural life of India. The Sanskrit Kāvya, Vedas, Purāṇas, and other classical texts illustrate a deep reverence for forests, depicting them not only as natural habitats but as sacred spaces inhabited by deities and sages. Thus, the religious significance of forests in Sanskrit literature reflects an enduring legacy of ecological consciousness and spiritual ecology, emphasizing that protecting nature is equivalent to upholding righteousness and cosmic order.

References :

१. आ प्रारजासिं दिव्यानिपर्थिवा क्षोकंदेवः कृणते स्वाय धर्मेण ।
धर्मेणमित्रवरुणाविपश्चिताव्रता रक्षये अनुरस्य मायया ॥ (Rgveda. IV. 53. 3)
२. ऋतं सत्यं तपो राष्ट्र क्षमो धर्मश्चकर्म च ।
भूतंभविष्यदुच्छिष्टे वीर्यलक्ष्मिर्बलंजले ॥ (Atharvaveda. XI. 9. 14)
३. धर्मस्य गोसाजनीति समभ्युत्कृष्टमेव ।
विदिभवेक्षन्नेतपचाभिमन्त्रयेत ॥ (Aitareya Brahmana. 8. 17)
४. धारणात् धर्ममित्याहुः धर्मो धारयते प्रजा ।।
यः स्याद् धारण संयुक्तः स धर्मोऽतिनिश्चितः ॥ (Mahabharata. 14. 18-21)
५. पूर्वस्तलयवैश्चाथ कमलैः पूजयेच्छिवम् ।
बिल्वपत्रैर्विशेषेण पूजयेत्परमेश्वरम् ॥ (Śiva Purana Ko. Sam. 38. 62)
६. तथैव रुपं दृष्ट्वा च सर्वपापैः प्रमुच्यते ।
जीवन्मुक्तोभवेत्सोऽपि यो गतोबदरीवने ॥ (Śi. Pu. Ko. Sam. 19. 20)
७. नमो वृक्षेभ्यो हरिकेशोभ्यो वनानां पतये नमः
वृक्षाणां पतये नमः औषधिनां पतये नमः
वृक्षाणां पतये नमः अरण्यानां पतये नमः ॥ (Yajurveda. 16. 17-20)
८. पञ्चवट्यांततोरामः शासनात्कुम्भजन्मनः ।
अनपोढस्थितिस्तस्थौ विन्ध्याद्रिः प्रकृताविव ॥ (Raghuvansam. 12. 31)
९. सरित्समुद्रान्सरसीश्चगत्वारक्षाः कपीन्द्रैरुपपादितानि ।
तस्यापतन्मूर्ध्निजलानिनिष्णोर्विन्ध्यस्य मेघप्रभवाइवापः ॥ (Rvm. 14. 8)
१०. विन्ध्यस्य संस्तम्भयति महाद्रेर्निःशिषपीतोज्जितसिन्धुराजः ।
प्रीत्याश्वमेधावभृथार्द्रमूर्तेः सौस्नातिको यस्य भवत्यगस्त्य ॥ (Rvm. 6. 61)

११. तां पुलोमतनयालकोचितैः पारिजातकुसुमैः प्रसाधयन् ।

नन्दने चिरमयुगमलोचनैः सस्पृहसुखधूभिरीक्षितः ॥ (Kumārasambhavam. 8. 27)

१२. नर्लूनलीलो पवनामपश्यदृःसंचरीभूतविमानमार्गाम् ।

विध्वस्तसौधप्रचयां कुमारोविश्वैकसाराममरावतीं सः ॥

गतश्रियं वैरिवराभिभृतांदशांसुदीनामभितोदधानाम् ।

नारीमवीरामिव तामवेक्ष्य स बाढमन्तः करुणापरोऽभूत् ॥ (Kumāra. 13. 35-36)

१३. दशवर्षसहस्राणितपस्तस्वामहावने ।

पुरा स्वयंभुवे धीरः शिरांस्युपजहार यः ॥ (Rāmāyana. III. 32. 17)

१४. सा पुण्या ध्वजिनी गङ्गां दाशैः संतारिता स्वयम् ।

मैत्रेमुहूर्ते प्रययौ प्रयागवनमुत्तमम् ॥ (Rām. II. 89. 21)

१५. स पपातस्वरोभूमौदह्यमानः शराग्निना ।

रुद्रेणैवविनिर्दग्धः श्वेतारण्ये यथान्धकः ॥ (Rām. III. 30. 27)

१६. यज्ञवातश्च सुमहान् गोमत्या नैमिषे वने । (Rām. VII. 91. 15)

१७. तस्मात्प्रभवते पुण्या सरयूलोकपावनी ।

यस्यस्तीरे वनं दिव्यं वैभ्रजंनामविश्रुतम् ॥ (Matsya. Purana. 121. 17)

१८. अवन्तिविषये घोरेमहाकालवनंप्रति ।

थस्मिन्नयुद्धे तदा रूद्रश्चान्धकेनातर्मीडितः ॥ (Mt. Pu. 179. 5)

१९. कालिंजरवनं चैव शंकुकर्णं स्थलेश्वरम् ।

एतानि च पवित्राणि सांनिध्याद्धि मम प्रिये ॥ (Mt. Pu. 181. 26)

२०. वैद्यनाथश्चिताभूमौनागेशोदारुक्वने । (Śiva. Purana. US. 16. 18)

२१. तथैव रुपं दृष्ट्वा च सर्वपापैः प्रमुच्यते ।

जीवन्मुक्तोभवेत्सोऽपि यो गतोबदरीवने ॥ (Śi. Pu. Ko. Sam.19. 20)

२२. दशक्रोशइतस्तात गिरिर्यस्मिन् निवत्स्यसि ।

महर्षिसंवितः पुण्यः पर्वतशुभदर्शनः ॥

गोलाङ्गलानुचरितो वानरर्क्षनषिवितः ।

चित्रकूटइति ख्यातो गन्धमादनसंनिभः ॥ (Rām. II. 54. 28-29)

२३. प्रविश्य तु महारण्यं दण्डकारण्यमात्मवान् ।

शमोददर्शदुर्धर्षस्तापसाश्रममण्डलम् । (Rām. III. 1. 1)

२४. पूजितं चोपनृत्तं च नित्यमप्सरसां गणैः ।

विशालैरग्निशरणैः स्त्रुग्भाण्डैरजिनैः कुशैः ॥

समिद्धिस्तोयकलशैः फलमूलश्चशोभितम् ।

आरण्यैश्च महावृक्षैः पुणैः स्वादुफलैर्वृतम् ॥ (Rām. III. 1. 4-5)

२५. बलिहोमार्चितं पुण्यं ब्रह्मघोषनिनादितम् ।

पुष्पैश्चान्यैः परिक्षिप्तं पद्मिन्या च सपद्मया ॥ (Rām. III. 1. 6)

२६. पन्चवट्यांततोरामः शासनात्कुम्भजन्मनः ।

अनपोढस्थितिस्तस्थौ विन्ध्याद्रिः प्रकृताविव ॥ (Rvm. 12. 31)

२७. एषा त्वया पेशलमध्ययापि घटाम्बुसंवर्धितबालचूता

आनन्दयत्युन्मुखकुण्णसारा दृष्टाचिरात्पन्चवटीमनोमे ।

अत्रानुगोदंमृगयानिवृत्तस्तरंगवातेनविनीतखेदः ।

रहस्त्वदुत्सङ्ग निषण्णमूर्धास्मिरामिवानीरगृहेषुसुप्तः ॥ (Rvm. 13. 34-35)

२८. मतङ्गवनमित्येव विश्रुतंरघुनन्दन ।

तस्मिन्नन्दनसंकाशे देवारण्योपमे वने ॥ (Rām. III. 73. 30)

२९. तत्रपुष्पम्फलं तोयम् यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति । (Bhagvat Gīta. 10. 20)

३०. एको वृक्षो हियो ग्रामेभवेत्पर्णफलान्विता ।

चैत्यो भवति निर्जातिरर्चनीयः सुपूजितः । (Mbh. I. 138. 25)

३१. महापादप-भूतलोत्कीर्ण-कान्तार-दुर्गया- (Kadambari. P-394)

३२. अश्वत्थप्रभृतीनुपपादितपूजान्महावनस्पतीकृतप्रदक्षिणाववन्दे । (KB. P-138)

३३. पथिकजननमस्क्रियमाणप्रवेशपादपोत्कीर्णकात्यायनीप्रतियातनम् । (Harsa Carita. P-97)

३४. तदत्रविषये मम वृक्षदेवताः साक्षिभूताः तिष्ठन्ति । (Pancatantra Mitrabheda. p-213)

तत्र वृक्षे कश्चित्वन्यन्तरः समाश्रितः आसीत् । अथतेन अभिहितम्भो

मदाश्रयोऽयं पादपः सर्वथा रमणीयः ॥ (Pancatantra Apariksita-karaka. P-561)

३५. एवंसाशोक वृक्षं तामार्ता वै परगिम्य ह । (Mbh. III. 64. 108)

३६. तंवटंरक्षतिसदाशूलपाणिर्महेश्वरः ।

स्थानंरक्षन्ति वै दैवाः सर्वपापहरंशुभम् ॥ (Mt. Pu. 104. 10)

३७. माहेश्वरोवटीभूत्वातिष्ठतेपरमेश्वरः । (Mt. Pu. 111. 10)

३८. अङ्गीरसस्सुवर्गलोक यन्तोऽजाया धर्मम्प्रासीचन् सा शोचन्तीपर्णपराजहीत

सोऽर्कोऽभवत् (Taittirīya Samhitā)

३९. यथासित प्रथयते वशाम् अनुब्रूयिषि कृण्वन् अनुस्य मायया

एवाते शेष महासायम् अर्कोगनाङ्ग समयक कृणोतु ॥ (AV. I. 72. 1)

४०. अत्राहतद्वेद्वेधमध्वआहुति यमश्वत्थमुपतिष्ठन्त जायवोऽस्मि ते सन्तु जायव

साकगावसुवते पच्यते यवो न ते वायुपदस्यन्ति धेनवोनाप दस्यन्ति धेनव ॥

(RV. I. 135. 8)

द्वासुपर्णा सयुजा सखाया समान वृक्ष परिष्वजाते

तयोरन्य पिप्पल स्वाद्वत्यनश्नन्नयो अभि चाकशीति ॥ (RV. I. 135. 20)

पुमान्पुसपरिजातोश्चत्थखदिराद्अधि

स हन्तुशत्रून्मामकान् यान् अहद्वेष्मि ये च माम् ॥ (AV. 3. 6. 1)

४१. एकमेवहि योऽश्वत्थ रुपयेद्विधिना नर ।

यत्र कुत्रापि वा स्थानेगच्छेत्सभवनंहरे ॥ (Vṛkṣāyurveda. 11)

४२. ते तीर्णाः प्लवमुत्सृज्य प्रस्थाय यमुनावनात् ।

श्यामं न्यग्रोधमासेदुः शीतलंहरितच्छदम् ॥

न्यग्रोधं समुपागम्य वैदेही चाभ्यवन्दत ।

नमस्तेऽस्तुमहावृक्ष पाययेन्मे पतिर्व्रतम् ॥(Rām. II. 55. 23-24)

४३. वषट्कारो वै गायत्रियै शिरोच्छिनत्तस्यै रसः परापतत्स पृथिवीप्रविशत्स

खदिरोऽभवद्यस्य खदिरस्त्रुवोभवतिच्छन्दसामेवरसेनावद्यतिसरसा

अस्याहुतयो भवन्ति ॥(Taitariya. Samhita. III. 5. 7)

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४५. न्यग्रोधं दन्तकाष्ठमथवाखदिरं वृक्षः । (Mt. Pu. 62. 29)

४६. महान् वै भद्रोबिल्वोमहान्भद्रउदुम्बर । (AV. XX. 136. 13)

४७. यस्तु सरोपयैद्विल्व शङ्करप्रितिकारकम् ।

सत्कुलेऽपिसदालक्ष्मीसन्तिष्ठेत्पुत्रपौत्रिके ॥(Vr. Āy. 58)

४८. देवानां द्रव्य हवषि ऋक्सामयजुषांतथा ।

ऋत्विजांदक्षिणानां च संयोगो यज्ञ उच्यते ॥ (Mt. Pu. 254. 44)

४९. भूमिंभत्वौषधीश्छित्वाहत्वाकीटपिपीलिकान् ।

पुनन्तिखलु यज्ञेन कर्षकादेवपूजनाम् ॥ (Agni Purana. 152. 3)

५०. अश्वमेधो महायज्ञः पावनः सर्वपाप्मवान् ।

पावनस्तवदुर्धर्षोरोचतांरघुनन्दन ॥ (Rām. VII. 84. 2)

५१. शतशश्चापिधर्मज्ञाः कुतुमुख्यमनुत्तमम् ।

अनुभूय महायज्ञं नैमिषे रघुनन्दन ॥ (Rām. VII. 91. 17)

५२. यज्ञवाटश्च सुमहान् गोमत्या नैमिषे वने ।

आज्ञाप्यतां महाबाहोतद्वि पुण्य मनुत्तमम् ॥ (Rām. VII. 91. 15)

५३. श्रीमांश्च सहपत्नीभीराजादीक्षामुपाविशत । (Rām. I. 13. 41)

५४. ऋतुपुतेनवसिर्जितमौलिनाभुजसमाहृतदिग्बसुनाकृताः ।

कनकयूपसमुच्छ्रपेशोभिनो वितमसातमसा सरयूतटाः ॥

अजिनदण्मृत कुशमेखलां यतगिरं मृगशृङ्गपरिग्रहाम् ।

अधिवसंस्तनुमध्वरदीक्षितामसभा समभासयदीश्वरः ॥

अवभृयप्रयतो नियतेन्द्रियः सुरसमाजसमाकमणोचितः ।

न्नमयति स्म स केवलमुन्नतंवनमुचे नमुचेररये शिरः॥

(Rvm. 9. 20, 21, 22)

५५. अथ तस्य विशांपत्युरन्ते काम्यस्य कर्मणः ।

अनुप्रवेशादाद्यस्य पुंसस्तेनापिदुर्वहम् ॥ (Rvm. 10. 50)

५६. कृतोद्वाहेगतेतस्मिन्ब्रह्मदत्ते च राघव ।

अपुत्रः पुत्र लाभाय पौत्रीमिष्टिमकल्पयत ॥ (Rām. I. 31. 1)

५७. इष्टितेऽहंकरिष्यामि पुत्रीयां पुत्रकारणात् अथर्वशरसिप्रोक्तैर्मन्त्रैः सिद्धांविधानतः ॥

ततः प्राक्रमदिष्टितां पुत्रीयां पुत्रकारणात् जुहावाग्नौ च तेजस्विमन्त्रदृष्टेनकर्मणा ॥

(Rām. I. 15. 2-3)

५८. वैश्वदेवबलिकृत्वारौद्रं वैष्णवमेव च ।

वास्तुसंशमनीयानि मङ्गलानि प्रवर्तयन् ॥ (Rām. II. 56. 31)

५९. अग्निष्टोमोऽश्वमेधश्च यज्ञो बहुसुवर्णकः ।

राजसूयस्तथा यज्ञो गोमेधो वैष्णवस्तथा ॥ (Rām. VII. 25. 8)

६०. तेनत्वंग्रहणं शत्रोर्यातो नान्येन वासव ।

शीघ्रं वै यज यज्ञं त्वं वैष्णवं सुसमाहितः ॥ (Rām. VII. 25. 8)

६१. प्लक्षोदुम्बरकाश्वत्थवटजास्तोरणाः क्रमात् । (Ag. Pu. 95. 28)

६२. खदिरैस्त्रुवैस्सर्वारात्रिमन्त्रहोमान्जुहोति । (Tai. Br. III. 8. 14)

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६७. ददर्शतंराजपथंदिवि देवपतिर्यथा ।

दध्यक्षतहविलजैर्धूपैरगुरुचन्दनैः ॥ (Rām. II. 17. 6)

६८. देवकार्यनिमित्तं च तत्रापश्यत् समुद्यतम् ।

दध्यक्षतघृतं चैवमोदकान्हविषस्तथा ॥ (Rām. II. 20. 17)

६९. कात्यायनी प्रचलित खड्गभीषणारक्त चन्दनालङ्कृता । (KB. P-57)

७०. अतिकठोर नारियल केतकिकरीरबकूलपरिगतप्रान्तैः । (KB. P-56)

७१. ववाहभूमिरिवहरितकुशसमितकुसुमशमीपलाशशोभिता । (KB. P-59)

७२. अग्निकार्यादिदग्धसिमसिमायमान कुशसमित्कुसुमम् । (KB. P-120)

७३. अग्निहोत्रवेदि विप्रकीर्यमाण हरित्कुशम् । (Ha.Ca. P-138)

७४. कुशकुसुमसमिधात्पलाशपूलिकांवहन्तीतत्रैवतपोवनेवनमृगीव नीयते।

(Ha.Ca.P-320)

७५. बालुकावेदिमध्ये तु तल्लिङ्गं स्थाप्य रावणः ।

अर्चयामास गन्धैश्चपुष्पैश्चामृतगन्धिभिः ॥ (Rām. VII. 31. 43)

७६. उपविष्टं महाबाहुं ब्रह्मणमिव शाश्वतम् ।

स्थण्डिलेदर्भसंस्तीर्णे सीतया लक्ष्मणेन च ॥ (Rām. VII. 99. 28)

७७. शालायास्त्वग्रस्तस्या ददर्शभरतस्तदा ।

काष्ठानि चावभग्नानिपुष्पाण्य पचितानि च ॥ (Rām. II. 99. 5)

७८. समिद्धिस्तोयकलशैः फलमूलैश्चशोभितम् ।

आरणेश्चमहावृक्षैः पुण्यैः स्वादुफलैर्वृतम् ॥ (Rām. III. 1. 5)

७९. वनरामण्यकं यत्र जलरामण्यकं तथा ।

संनिकृष्टं च यस्मिंस्तु स्मत्पुष्पकुशोदकम् ॥ (Rām. III. 15. 5)

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