CHAPTER - I

THE CULT OF TREE

Tree is the earliest and the constant companion of man. For the survival of man, tree is indispensable. In every stage of life, from his cradle to grave, man has been supported by tree for his sustenance in the earth. Tree is the source of food, shelter, medicine, fuel and above all it is the protector of environment, and the source of life on the earth. In gratitude the reverence, which man shows towards trees has given rise to the "Tree Cult", which happens to be the oldest and the most widely extended form of worship. "The adoration of trees and plants, in virtue of supernatural qualities or divine essence, supposed to be inherent in them, is almost universally diffused over the globe and that this form of religion is of greatest antiquity". (Pillai, 1948 :1).

The reasons for promoting the cult of tree are many but, as regards the philosophy which initiates this cult, the animistic theory of nature seems to form the basic one. Under this theory, tree, like other objects of nature, is regarded as animate. It has a soul of its own, it is sensitive. So it should not be harmed. If it is worshipped, its soul will be satisfied and it will render better service to man. Frazer (1950) visualises life in trees because they are animate, they are sensitive, cutting causes suffering to them. He makes certain references to ascertain life in trees i.e. Chinese books mention about trees that bleed and cry out of pain, when they are hacked. In some parts of Austria, old peasants believe that forest trees do not allow an incision to be made in the bark without special cause, because a tree feels the cut as much as a wounded man feels his injury. In upper Palatinate, old woodmen still secretly ask a tree to forgive them, before they cut it down. Frazer (1950) further mentions that the conception of trees as animate beings has resulted in treating them as male and female, who, even can marry each other. The practice prevailing among Hindus is cited here, i.e. a Hindu, who plants a grove of mangoes, will not taste the fruit, even his wife will not taste, until he performs the marriage of one of the trees as a bridegroom to a tree of a different sort, commonly a tamarind tree. In the Moluccas, there is a tradition to treat the clove-trees in blossom as pregnant women. Precautions are observed at this stage so that the tree is not alarmed which may result in the loss of fruit, as it happens in case of a pregnant woman, who is frightened in her pregnancy.
In so far as 'spiritism' is implied in 'animism', in case of trees, it is the spirit which is regarded to be present in it and animate it. The spirit suffers and dies with the tree. In the early stage of tree worship, spirit was thus regarded as the soul of the tree, which caused awe and reverence in the mind of the devotee. But in course of time the conception changed, when trees were regarded not as body of tree spirit, but as only an abode of the spirit. Such spirits were the supernatural beings, who in course of time became the forest gods or sylvan deities. In subsequent years, when man's conception of deity assumed an anthropomorphic form, the early representation of sylvan deities also underwent a change. The change was exhibited in attempts to place masks or statues of gods under trees. In the course of such changes, the philosophy behind tree cult, passed from animism to polytheism but the relation between man and tree continued to flourish on the solid rocks of religion.

TREE CULT IN INDIA

"Hinduism" as William's (1951) writes "is a creed based on original, simple, pantheistic doctrine, but branching out into an endless variety of polytheistic superstitions like the sacred fig tree of India, which, from a single stem, sends out numerous branches, destined to send roots to the ground and become trees themselves, till the parent stock is lost in a dense forest of its own offshoots". The "Tree Cult" is one such branch, which has survived and widened through all stages of Hindu religion from the primitive to the modern times. In order to trace the antiquity of Tree Cult in India, one should start with a reference to its prevalence in the Indus Valley Civilization. Because, we can presume that, during the period preceding it, the religion of all the parts of the world was the same, when man was directly placed in the lap of nature and viewed all the natural objects as animate beings. So during this period, tree being the greatest benefactor must have received the highest veneration from man. The Indus Valley Civilization is the contemporary of those river valley civilizations of the world, which came into being only when man realised the value of cultivation. The knowledge of cultivation which changed the status of man from a nomad to a civilized one, must have enriched in him the reverence which he had towards trees. The seals of Mahenjodaro and Harappa can focus some light on the adoration of trees during this period. Pictures of tree gods and goddesses, engraved on seals have been excavated. On one seal, a Peepal tree is represented by two branches and in between the two, the indwelling deity appears in a nude form with tripple
horns and armlets. In front of the tree there is the figure of a half-kneeling suppliant. On another seal, there is the picture of a woman, from whose naval a plant evolves. Another seal bears the picture of a well-formed Peepal tree, guarded by two unicorns sprung from altar. On another seal, the picture of a Peepal tree, enshrining a god is engraved. Moreover, Historians have referred to such pictures on the Indus Valley seals, where sages are seen meditating at the roots of trees and gods are seen as taking shelter in the branches as well as at the trunk.

The tree cult flourished in the Aryan Civilization also. But the Aryans who came to India after the Dravidians, cannot be regarded to have borrowed the prevailing tree cult from the Indus valley people. Rather, it was an original feature of their religion. Because, "in the religious history of the Aryan race in Europe, the worship of trees has played an important part........ tree worship is attested for all great European families of the Aryan stock" (Frazer, 1950). In India, after the advent of the Aryans, a significant change occurred in the existing tree cult, in so far as it was given scriptural sanction.

Tree cult is not confined to ancient India only. In modern times, inspite of the philosophical developments, it enjoys the same degree of veneration as it did in ancient times. It flourishes equally in classical, popular and tribal levels of Hinduism, non borrowing it from the other. The belief in the notion of sacred trees, the supernatural qualities of trees and their association with gods and goddesses and religious festivals are almost common in these three streams of Hinduism. The difference lies only in rituals.

**CLASSICAL ASPECT OF THE TREE CULT**

Classical aspect of the Tree Cult can be conceived by referring to the sanctity accorded to trees in Hindu mythology, holy scriptures and also by referring to the association of trees with Brahmical gods and goddesses.

Indian mythology sanctifies trees by attributing to them a divine origin, i.e. different plants and trees have originated from the body parts of gods and goddesses. Referring to the *Vamana Purana*, Gupta (1971) mentions that the following plants had divine origin.
Gupta (1971) further mentions that trees have a mother called Ira, who is the daughter of Daksha and one of the wives of Kashyapa. Ira is the mother of three daughters - Lata (Creeper), Valli (Creeping plant) and Virudha. They became in turn mothers of trees, plants and shrubs. Lata creates flowerless wild plants standing in sandy regions and also trees with flowers and fruits. Valli creates bushes and grass of all kinds.

Certain trees and plants are mentioned in the mythological stories and legends, which seem to possess supernatural qualities. Upadhyay (Gupta, 1965) mentions some such trees. The Kalpataru of the royal garden (Nandanavana) of Lord Indra had emerged out when gods and demons churned the ocean. The gods took it to the heaven and planted it in the Nandanavana. It has been described in sanskrit literature as the source of plenty and prosperity. It is because of this tree that the heavenly gods live in eternal happiness. Upadhyay (Gupta, 1965) refers to Kalidasa, who wrote that "Kalpabriksha" used to supply all the cosmetics desired by the wife of Yaksha, who was exiled under the curse of Kubera. The
Soma is another mythological plant. It is famous for its milky and narcotic juice. In vedic age, this juice was mixed with milk, butter, barley and water and was offered to Lord Indra in the Vedic sacrificial rites. The plant as well as its juice are considered, by the Vedas, as divine. Soma occupies third important place in the galaxy of Vedic gods. The Vedic warriors used to drink this juice before going to the battlefield. “Soma deity, which was mountain born, comes after Agni and Indra in importance. It is said that Varuna who placed the Sun in the heaven and fire in the earth, placed Soma on the mountains. Like fire, Soma is brought to men by superhuman agency. Whereas fire was brought to earth from heaven by Matarishvan, Soma was brought from the mountains by a falcon. The original Soma plant grows in the heaven”. (Gupta, 1971).

Gupta (1971) mentions about some more mythological trees. On the south of Nila and north of the Nishadha, there is a huge Jambvu (rose apple) (syzygium cumini) tree, which is eternal and wishfulfilling. The dvipa (island) is named after the tree. The height of the tree is a thousand and hundred yojanas (the unit of measurement, used in ancient times). Two thousand and five hundred cubit measure the circumference of the fruit of that tree. When the fruit is ripe, it bursts and falls on the ground making a loud noise and a silvery juice pours out of it. This juice becomes a river, which passing circulatory, round Meru (Pole), comes to the region of the Northern Kurus. One who drinks this juice becomes ever strong and gets peace of mind.

The classical aspect of the 'Tree cult' can also be dealt with by referring to the mention of various trees and plants in the holy scriptures. Vedas, the most ancient holy literature of India, make a brisk reference to the sacred trees. Rig Veda, the earliest of the Vedas, mentions the spiritual, magical and medicinal use of trees. It mentions trees as the greatest antiquity of the world. They have tremendous power to cure diseases. Plants are regarded as the source of miraculous power, who can bless man with success, health and prosperity. So, he, who has stores of herbs at hand can be compared to a king, amidst a crowd of men. Plants free men from the sufferings, which are caused by the wrath of god. (Rig Veda - 10.97).
Rig Veda (10.146) mentions of the deity *Aranyani* as the tutelary deity of the forest and wilderness. This sylvan deity, the mother of all sylvan things is described as the store house of food. She never harms anyone by herself, rather she provides man with her savoury fruits.

Rig Veda (10.97) mentions the sanctity of the wood of the trees like Asvattha (*ficus religiosa*), Palasa (*butea frondosa*), Parna (*uraria lagopoides*), which are used to make sacrificial vessels.

During the days of Atharva Veda, people believed that, diseases were caused by the wrath of deities or by one's own sins, and that they could be cured by plants. The Atharvavedins considered plants to be useful for magical and medicinal purposes. Plants formed the source of universal remedy. The Atharvanic priest invoked the plants on behalf of the patient to resume him from diseases. He prepared medicine from plants. It was believed that, if the priest saw at trees, whether known or unknown to him, they were charged with magical power. The eyes and words of the priest produced magical power on the plants to cure diseases of the patients. (Shende, 1952).

The hymns of Atharva Veda consist of prayers to the plants that cured different diseases. The *Kushtha* plant is regarded as the destroyer of *takman* or fever. This plant, born upon the mountains, is regarded as the potent of plants, the visible manifestation of ambroisal or *amrita*, as born of gods and as *Soma's* good friend. It is prayed to exercise its superior power to cure every *takman*, the pain in the head, affliction in the eye and ailment of the body of the patient.

Plant *arundhati* is prayed to cure fractures. Plant *Silaki*, which was used to cure wounds, is described as the sister of the gods and the refuge of men. It is invoked as a plant, growing upon noble and sacred trees like Plaksha (*butea monosperma*), Asvattha (*ficus religiosa*), Khadira (*acacia catuchu*), Nyagrodha (*ficus bengaalenis*) and Parna (*uraria lagopoides*).
Plant *agarsini* is regarded as the slayer of *rakshasas* (demons). So it is invoked to drive out the *rakshasas* (demons), *apsaras* (angels), *gandharvas* (semi Gods, associated with fine arts). The plant *prisniparni uraria* is described as the goddess *prisniparni* (*uraria*), which is a source of prosperity for men and mishap for *Nirrti*, the goddess of destruction.

An amulet, derived from the *gangida* tree was believed to have thousand virtues and was used to keep off diseases and demons. An armlet from the *Varana* tree was also used to cure diseases.

The plant *Sadampushpa* was invoked to expose demons and enemies. The plant *apamarga* (*achyranthes aspera*) is described as a thing of thousand fold strength. It was used to wipe out death from hunger, death from thirst, poverty in cattle, failure of offspring etc., and also the inherited ills and curses.

Amulet, made from the wood of the *Sakya* tree is described as an armour of thousand fold strength. It is full of force and, thus, can stay enemies, make heroes of men, furnish shelter and provide good luck. The *Asvattha* (*picus religiosa*), which climbs upon trees and renders them sub-ordinate, is invoked to destroy enemies.

Amulet derived from *Parna* (*urania lagopoides*) tree is described as the strength of gods and is invoked to provide energy and strength and a long life. The *Pata* plant helped *Indra* to overthrow the demons. So, it is invoked to help to overcome opponents in a debate. During the sowing of seed, the grain is referred as god and is invoked to raise itself up like the sky and to become inexhaustible as the sea.

Planting and worshipping of trees was a remarkable feature of the epic age. Afforestation was always encouraged and attempts were made to obtain rich harvest. Along with manpower and wealth, trees were considered equally important for the prosperity of the country. Like the *Vana Mahotsava* of modern times, which is celebrated every year in the rainy season, in the epic age, there was a practice of planting trees. It was regarded as a sacred affair. Pande (Gupta, 1965:36) refers to the *Matsya Purana*, in describing the
ceremony of planting trees - "Clean the soil first and then water it. Decorate trees with garlands, burn the 'guggual' perfume infront of them and place one pitcher, filled with water by the side of each tree. As you offer prayers and oblation to the sacrificial fire, do likewise for the trees. By singing benedictive songs and reciting hymns from the 'Rig', 'Sam' and 'Yajur' Vedas, then sprinkle holy water on trees from the pitchers kept nearby. Water the plants four times a day and offer oblation with the seeds of mustard, barley and those of the sesamum plant. Kindle fire from the *Palash* (*butea frondosa*) wood. After worshipping them in this way, celebrate the actual plantation. He, who plants even one tree, goes straight to the heaven and obtains the highest perfection".

*Purohita Karmakanda* deals with the sanctity of *Panchadruma* (five trees) and *Pancha pallava* (five leaves). The *Panchadruma* includes *Asvatha* (*ficus religiosa*), *Nimba* (*Azadirachta Indica*), *Champaka* (*nichelia champaka*), *Vakula* (*minuspos elengi*) and *Narikela* (*cocos nucifera*) trees. *Panchapallava* consists of the sprouts of the five trees like *Asvatha* (*ficus religiosa*), *Amra* (*mangifera indica*), *Vata* (*ficus bengalenis*), wave-leaved fig and Glamorous fig.

*Skanda Purana* mentions of *Panchadruma kashaya* (juice of the leaves of five trees), which is needed at the time of the preparation of the altar of the chariot (*ratha vedi*). This Panchadrumpa includes *Asvattha* (*ficus religiosa*), *Vata* (*ficus bengalenis*), *Plaksha* (*butea monosperma*), *Madhuka* (*madhuca longifolia*) and *Nimba* (*azadirachta indica*).

*Devi Purana* (60.3) mentions that a kind of sacrifice called *Panchavati* is performed in order to acquire *Dharma* (virtue). In this type of sacrifice five trees like *Asvattha* (*ficus religiosa*), *Vilva* (*aegle marmelos*), *Vata* (*ficus bengalenis*), *Amlaki*(*emblica officinalis*), and *Ashoka* (*saraca asoca*) are needed.

Sometimes five particular trees are planted in a group to make a spot of special sanctity. It was under such a group of trees that Ramakrishna Paramahansa attained the knowledge of the Absolute Reality at the Dakhineswara temple near Calcutta. (Basak, 1955).
Finally, the classical aspect of the 'Tree Cult' can be dealt with by referring to certain trees, which are associated with Brahmanical gods and goddesses and as such have a national appeal. Such trees may be inside the campus of a temple, or on the road-side or on the side of a pond, but are considered divine. Their divinity is common to all the parts of the country. A list of such trees is given below.

(1) **Asvattha (ficus religiosa)**

Asvattha is a huge structure and it lives for an exceptionally long period. So, it is known as an immortal tree, a tree of creation. It is highly considered as the benefactor of mankind. So, it is the holy duty of every Hindu to circumambulate it and to seek its blessings. The roots of this tree can spread far and wide and can undermine colossal buildings. Still, people deem it a sin to uproot this tree.

Its divinity has been acknowledged from very ancient times. In the days of Indus Valley Civilization, this tree was associated with Mother Goddess. Its sanctity became still more multiplied in the Vedic age. The holy scriptures of this period can be cited to ascertain the sanctity of this tree. The *Upanishadas* describe this tree as the 'World tree' or *Samsana Vriksha*. In the *Bhagbat Gita* also this tree is called the *Samsana Vriksha*. In the 15th chapter of this holybook, the mortal world is compared with an *Asvattha* tree. In the same book (10,26), Lord Krishna, in his discourse with Arjuna has said that, He, Himself is the *Asvattha* tree and also compared the place of *Asvattha* among trees to that of *Narada* among *devarshis* (divine sage), *Chitrarathah* among *Gandharvas* (semi God) and to that of *Kampilyamuni* among sages.

*Brihat Stotra Ratnakara* regards *Asvattha* as the dwelling place of *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Maheswara*. In the Encyclopaedia of Religion & Ethics (XII) it is mentioned that the trunk of this tree is the abode of *Brahma*, the twigs of *Vishnu* and its branches, that of other gods. It is deified under the name of *Vasudeva*. One of the thousand names of *Vishnu* (*Vishnu Sahashranam*) is set after this tree- i.e. *Nyagrodhadumbaroswattha*. In *Satpatha Brahmana*, this tree is regarded as the seat of dead ancestors. In Buddhist literature, this tree is regarded as the tree of supreme knowledge, as Lord Buddha had attained his enlightenment under it. Jainas venerate this tree as *Kalpavrikshya*.
Vilva (aegla mormelos)

Vilva is associated, in Hindu mythology, with Lord Shiva, who is also called Vilvadanda, the one endowed with the staff of the Vilva tree. Its trifoliate leaves, which seem to stand for Lord Shiva's or (Mahadeva) Trishula (trident) as well as for His three eyes, are offered to Him. Because, these leaves, offered to Him, cause cooling effect on His body and thereby lessen the heat, caused by the drinking of poison. To describe Lord Shiva's, fondness for the Vilva leaves, we can cite an anecdote, mentioned by Mitra (1963:134) that "a fowler, once lost his way in a forest, and, night coming on, took shelter on the branch of a bael tree. He was weeping for having been obliged to pass the night in a forest, away from his family, and his tears falling on a sear yellow leaf, carried it down to where there was a Linga (Phallus) of Mahadeva. The god was greatly pleased with this unwilling but grateful offering of water and leaf". Such fondness is also referred to in the Brihat Thakura Puja Paddhati (1965), that Lord Mahadeva Himself has expressed that He is more pleased with a man who worships Him by placing Vilva leaves on His head. In Shiva (Mahadeva) temples, the Vilva leaves, offered to the Lord are taken by the devotees as Prasada (offering). The nut of this tree is worshipped by the Saivites as Linga (Phallus). The tree itself is worshipped by devotees with an offering of milk and flowers.

Vata Briksha (ficus indica)

Its huge structure, with its chief and secondary trunks and innumerable branches, has been venerated by man from very ancient times. At the time of the Deluge, the Eternal power had been transformed into the Vata tree. Markandeya muni (Sage) had meditated a great deal, in order to find out a shelter, in the midst of the devastation, caused by the Dehuge. Finally, he could recognise the Eternal Power in the Vata tree and then worshipped it (Pande, 1965). In the Ramayana of Valmiki and Uttara RamaCharita of Bhavabhuti, the mention of Akshaya Vata is made, which was situated on the confluence of Ganga, Yamuna & Saraswati at Prayaga (Allahabad). It was believed in the ancient and medieval times that suicide committed at this place, by throwing oneself from the top of this tree into deep waters of the Ganga, will lead to salvation (Upadhyay in Gupta, 1965).
Nimba (Azadirachta indica)

It is a huge tree associated with Mother Goddess, specially with Goddess Kali. Those, who decorate and masquerade themselves as Kali, always carry a branch of Nimba (Azadirachta Indica) leaves in their hands. The Nimba (Azadirachta Indica) is the exclusive temple of Kali, the furious goddess of the demons. Its leaf is a potent against all devils and witchcraft. The leaves also have germicidal tendencies and sanitary properties. It is believed that if the doorways and wooden frames of a house are made of the timber of a Nimba (Azadirachta Indica) tree, that house would be devil proof and no spirit would enter inside. (Pillai, 1948).

Kadamba (Anacardium occidentale)

Kadamba tree is associated with Lord Krishna and its flowers are offered to Him. According to a Puranic legend, the distillation of liquor is the reason behind such association. One day, Shesh Nag, the serpent who is supposed to support the earth, was moving in the forest along with his companions in the guise of a mortal. In order to provide him with pleasure and recreation, Lord Varuna sent his wife Varuni, the goddess of wine. As per the commands, Varuni went and hid herself in the hollow of a Kadamba tree, in the Brindabana. Lord Krishna became delighted to smell the pleasant fragrance of liquor, collected the drops of liquor. Coming out of the Kadamba tree and drunk it, along with his herdsmen and gopis. Since that day Lord Krishna and the Kadamba tree came to be associated with each other. (Gupta, 1971). About the Kadamba tree, Pillai (1948) mentions that, before entering the arena of bull fighting, the combatant worshipped the gods, dwelling under the shade of the banyan and the holy Kadamba trees, with due care and devotion, so that, they might be vouch safed with success in the ensuing fight. Garlands were tied round the trunk and the branches of these sacred trees and the gods were believed to be pleased.

The Bamboo (Bambusa tulda)

The Bamboo is also associated with Lord Krishna, because he used to play on flute, made of green bamboo. So the green bamboo is considered as sacred. Bamboo grows in clusters. So, it is regarded as the symbol of progeny. In Sanskrit, it is known as Vansh which literally means a clan or family.
(7) **The Ashoka** (*saraca indica*)

This is considered divine, because of the legend that, goddess Parvati had pleased Lord Shiva by worshipping Him with Ashoka flowers. So these flowers are offered to Lord Shiva. The Ashoka flowers are also believed to possess charms to preserve chastity. It was, perhaps, for this reason that Sita, when abducted by Ravana, preferred to stay in Ashokavana, i.e. a grove of Ashoka trees. The name Ashoka, implies another virtue i.e. its power to remove sorrow.

(8) **The Sami** (*minosa suna*)

The Sami tree is held sacred because of its being pregnant inside with fire. There is a myth to support the association of Agni (fire) with the Sami tree. Frightened at the curse of Bhrigu, Agni had concealed himself within the entails of the Sami wood. At his disappearance, all gods, searched for him and at last found him in the entails of the Sami wood. As Agni (fire) is believed to reside inside the Sami wood, it is regarded as the right wood to produce fire in sacrifices. Sacrificial fire is produced by rubbing together two pieces of Sami wood. Sami is a very inflammable wood and therefore, is used in all sacred rites where holy fire is kindled. Sami is also regarded as the goddess incarnate. (Gupta, 1971).

(9) **The Chandan** (*santalum album*)

This tree is a sacred tree which grows in Malay mountains of Karnataka. In Hindu mythology, it has been described as surrounded by snakes, which are attracted by its fragrance. The devotees of Vishnu apply sandal paste on their forehead, which is a distinct feature of their sect. Sandal, cut into pieces, powdered and mixed with ghee, is thrown into fire as an offering to the gods. It is also offered along with barley and as an oblation. Sandal paste exerts a cooling effect on the body. So, with the beginning of summer deities receive an extra smearing of sandal paste.

(10) **Rudraksha** (*elaeocarpus ganitrus*)

Rudraksha beads are associated with Lord Shiva (*Rudra* is one of the names of Lord Shiva). The Saivites consider these beads as very sacred. It is believed that Rudraksha beads dispel evil eye, and, if kept in house, they avert misfortune. There is a myth
associating these beads with Lord Shiva. The Lord was very indifferent to Parvati's desire to wear ornaments. Once, on the Himalayas, when spring followed a prolonged winter, Parvati could not resist her desire and insisted on demanding ornaments. So Shiva stretched his hands and Rudraksha fruits fell from heaven into his hands, which he presented to Parvati to make her ornaments. (Gupta, 1971). Gupta (1971) also quotes Agni Purana that the god himself has laid the method and types of Rudraksha beads to be worn. Beads, having, two, four, six mouths with unbroken thorns on the surface, not having been eaten by worms or marked by any fixture are considered as the most auspicious. The class of Rudraksha known as Haimis should be worn by consecrating them with the Shivamantra (the incantation to please Shiva).

(11) Amlaki (embelica myrobalan)
This tree is also known by the name of Dhatri, which means Earth or Mother. It is regarded as the abode of Jagadhatri or Mahalaxmi. There is a myth, associating this tree with both Shiva and Vishnu. Once, the goddesses Laxmi and Parvati went to Prabhasa to worship, where Parvati told Laxmi that she would worship Vishnu with a new material and Laxmi told Parvati that she would worship Shiva with a new material. At that, the two goddesses wept and from their tears the Amlaki tree emerged out. So, it became the favourite of both Shiva and Vishnu. The leaves of these tree are essential in the worship of both Shiva and Vishnu (Gupta, 1965).

(12) Plantain (musa sapientum)
This tree is believed to be the incarnation of both Parvati and Laxmi. Its leaves are considered sacred in all religious ceremonies. This tree is placed at the entrance of the house of marriage and also at the side of the marriage pandals, because, they are considered as auspicious and also the symbol of plenty and prosperity.

(13) Sala (shorea robusta)
This tree is associated with Lord Vishnu. Because, it is mentioned in the Ramayana that Rama, after promising Sugriva to help him against Bali, wanted to convince him of his strength. So, Rama shot an arrow at seven Sal trees, standing on a row. The arrow pierced all the trees and then returned back to Rama's quiver. As Rama is an incarnation of Vishnu, this tree is held sacred by the Vaishnavites. This tree is worshipped in full blossom specially by those who desire for offspring. (Gupta, 1971).
(14) **Vadari (zizyphus jujaba)**

This tree is associated with Lord Vishu, who is called Vadrinath or Lord of the Vadari. It is mentioned in the Ramayana that, when Ramachandra was wandering in the forest in search of Sita, a Sabari offered him the fruits of this tree. The Sabari first tasted the fruits herself and then offered to her Lord. Ramachandra accepted them, because he was pleased by the genuine love and devotion with which they were offered. In so far as the holy river Ganges arises from the roots of a Vadari tree on mount Kailasa, the tree is regarded sacred by the Saivites, and its fruits are offered to Shiva. The fruits and leaves of this tree are included in many religious ceremonies and are offered to various deities.

(15) **Plaksha (butea monosperma)**

This tree grows abundantly in the Indian forests. Its wood is used in producing sacrificial fire. Its leaves are symbolic of the Hindu Trinity. Brahma Vishnu and Maheswara. (Gupta, 1965). The utensils made of this wood are used for sacred purposes. The staff placed in the hands of a Brahmin boy at the time of sacred thread ceremony is made of this wood. When a Brahmin boy renounces worldly life to become a Sadhu (saint), he is given the Plaksha leaves to eat. Its orange red flowers are offered to gods especially to goddess Kali. The dye made from these flowers is used to sprinkle during Holi. So this tree is associated with Lord Krishna. This tree is associated with Lord Brahma because of the legend that, under the wrath of goddess Parvati, Brahma was born as the Plaksha tree.

(16) **Khadira (acacia catechu)**

This tree is regarded as a sacred tree, because its wood is used in the making of sacrificial post and sacrificial ladle. It is also used to produce sacrificial fire.

(17) **Coconut (cocos nucifera)**

This tree is sacred, because its fruit is quite essential in all Hindu religious ceremonies. Even in areas, where the coconut tree does not grow, its fruit has the same religious significance. Gupta (1971) mentions that the offering of coconut to the deities is symbolic of human sacrifice, which was prevalent in very early times, because the round and fibrous outer covering of the coconut resembles the human head and the two dark spots on it represent the human eyes. The sanctity of the coconut is also guaranteed in so far as, it is placed on a Purna Kumbha (a pot filled with water) to ensure an auspicious beginning and success in a mission.
(18) **Tulsi** *(ocimum sanctum)*

Basil or *ocimum sanctum* is such a plant, whose sanctity stands unparalleled. Every part of this tree is considered as divine. According to Hindu mythology, Ganga lives in its roots, Brahma in its branches and other gods live in other parts of the plant. As the Vilva leaves are essential in the worship of Shiva, the leaves of the Basil (Tulsi) plant are essential in the worship of Vishnu. There is a legend, associating this plant with Lord Vishnu. Demon Jalandhara caused so much hardship to other beings on the earth, that life on earth had become quite miserable. He could not be challenged, because of the purity, chastity and truthfulness of his wife Brindabati. Lord Vishnu had no other way to kill Jalandhara, but to outrage the modesty of Brindabati in the guise of her husband. Thereafter, he could kill Jalandhara. When Brindabati realised the fact, she could not tolerate and died out of remorse. Out of her ashes, the sacred Basil plant grew up, which became the favourite of Lord Vishnu. It is the sacred duty of every Hindu to worship the plant regularly. There are specific Mantras (hymns) which should be chanted while pouring water at the root of this plant and also at the time of circumambulating the plant. It is so sacred a plant that, the earth under it also becomes sacred. Whoever bears this earth on his forehead will remain free from sin. Those who cut the blades of grass, growing near the root of this plant, will be relieved from their sins. It is a pious duty to spread a carpet on an umbrella over this plant during summer. Any religious activity, performed, at the root of this plant, yields the most sacred outcome. (Brihat Thakura Puja Paddhati).

(19) **Durba** *(poa cynasuroides)*

It is a grass which has a long life and bears utmost sanctity. During the churning of the sea by the gods and demons, this grass, is believed to have emerged out. It is believed that, Brahma lives in its roots, Vishnu in its middle and Shiva at the top. The Vaishnavites look upon this grass as Vishnu, so they use it in all religious ceremonies.

(20) **Kusa** *(eragrotis cynasuroides)*

It is also a grass which is equally divine as the durba. The origin of this grass has been mentioned in the Ramayana that, when Sita appealed to earth to take her back and entered into the cracks that were made, her son Kusa ran after her and tried to catch her. So,
her hair remained in the hands of Kusa. The grass, that grew out of her hair was named after Kusa and thus is known as Kusa grass. This grass is so sacred that, no sacrificial rite can be performed without it. It is mentioned in the Purohita Karmakanda (Part-1) that Kusa grass is collected by priests once a year, on the new moon day, in the month of Bhadraba (August-September). The sanctity of the Kusa, thus collected, remains valid for one year. As clouds are the weapon of Lord Indra (Rain god), Sudarsana Chakra (wheel) is that of Vishnu and Trisula (Trident) is of Shiva, Kusa grass is the weapon of the priests.

Some evergreen trees like cereals, pulses, oil seed plants, fibre crops etc. which are useful and nutritious are also considered as sacred. Because they are offered to the deities. Hindu devotees think in the line of Bhagabat Gita (The Holy Scripture of the Hindus) that, those who enjoy the object (of food) given by the gods, without offering them in return (in sacrifice and worship) are veritable thieves. In the worship of gods and ancestors and on ceremonial and festive occasions, rice, barley, and sesame seeds, with sandal paste are important requisites. The food value of these grains and seeds for the staple diet of the Hindus is very great and probably led to the recognition of their value in worship. (Basak, 1995), Purohita Karmakanda (Pt.1) mentions the sanctity of Panchasasya (five cereals), which constitute paddy, black gram, til (lin seed), jawar, and small gram. Paddy (oriza sativa) is the oldest of the cereals to be consumed by man. All over India, it is considered as a symbol of fertility and is used on all auspicious occasions. It is regarded as goddess Laxmi. Even in those areas in India, where rice is not grown and it does not constitute the staple food, it is obtained only for religious purposes.

Flowers, the most beautiful part of trees are regarded as the glorious creation of the divinity. As they strike the human mind with joy and wonder, they have been used in worship and adorations. In the Hindu worship of gods and goddesses, flowers are indispensable. The epic Mahabharata (Anusasanaparva) mentions about the types of flowers that should be offered to deities. Flowers, that have an agreeable scent should be offered to the deities. Flowers destitute of thorns and white in colour, are also offered. Garlands of aquatic flowers, like the lotus, should be offered to the Gandharvas (Semi God), Nagas (Cobra) and Yakshas. Flowers, growing on thorny plants, deep red or black in colour, should be offered to evil spirits and unearthly beings. Flowers, growing on mountains and valleys,
having an agreeable colour and scent should be offered to the deities. The deities become
gratified with the scent of the flowers, the Yakshas and Rakshasas (demons) with their sight
and the nagas with their touch.

Particular flowers are associated with particular deities. Red China roses are
essential for the worship of Siva, white flowers for Laxmi, yellow flowers for Saraswati,
mango blossoms for Kamadeva, red lotus for the Sun, blue flowers for planet Saturn etc.
Shoe flowers is the favourite of goddess Kali. The Saktas offer it to Durga in their daily
worship. In view of such a tradition of associating certain flowers with certain deities, there
has developed a convention in Hinduism that certain flowers are prohibited for particular
deities and some others are favoured. Seasonal flowers are offered to the deities at their major
festivals.

Gupta (1971) mentions from Garuda Purana about flowers offered in various
months of the year to various deities. On the day of Ananga Trayodasi, i.e. the thirteenth
day of the bright half of the month of Margasira (November-December), Lord Shiva should be
worshipped with the offerings of Datura (datura furtuosa) twigs, Mallika, Vilva leaves (aegele
mormelos), twigs of Kadamba (anthocephallus cadamba) and sandal paste. God Nateswara
is worshipped with Kunda flowers and Plaksha (buteamonsperma) twigs. In the month of
Phalguna (February-March), Lord Visveswara is to be worshipped with Muruvaka flowers,
pot herbs, Chuta (mangifera indica) trees and twigs of Vata (ficus indica). In Vaisakha
(April-May) god Shambhu is to be worshipped with an offering of Ashoka (saraca indica)
flowers, twigs of Udumbara (ficus glomerata) and nut meg. In the month of Jyestha
(May-June), Pradyumna, an incarnation of Kamadeva, the god of love, is to be worshipped
with Champaka (michelia champaca) flowers and Vilva (aegele mormelos) twigs. In Ashadha
(June-July), gods are worshipped with flowers of Apamarga and Agaru twigs. In Shravana
(July-August), gods are worshipped with Karavira (nerium indicum) flowers. In Asvina
(September-October) god Suradhipa, lord of celestials is worshipped with Bakula (mimuspos
elengi) flowers and twigs of Madhavi (inchnocarpus frudescens). In Kartika
(October-November) Rudra is worshipped with twigs of Vadari (zizyphus jujaba). At the end
of the year, pot herbs and lotus flowers are offered to the deities.
Just as most gods and goddesses in India are associated with some tree, shrub or creeper, similarly, all the nine planets, which are believed to control the destinies of man are associated with plants. Planet Ravi (Sun) after whom Ravivasara or Sunday is named, is offered the burnt offerings of Aak plant. Palasa (*butea frondosa*) is sacred to plant Soma (Moon) after whom Somavara or Monday is named. Planet Mangala is identified with Kartikeya and the plant Khadira (*acacia catechu*) is considered as sacred for him. Planet Budha (Mercury) has Apamarga as its sacred plant. Asvattha (*ficus religiosa*) is sacred to planet Brihaspati (Jupiter). The plant Udumbara (*ficus glomerata*) is sacred to planet Shukra (Venus). Sami (*minosa sum*) is sacred to planet Sani (Saturn). Durba (*poa cynasuroides*) grass is sacred to planet Rahu and Kusa (*eragrotis cynasuroides*) grass is to Ketu (Gupta, 1971).

**POPULAR ASPECT OF THE TREE CULT**

The sanctity of the trees mentioned under the classical aspect of the 'Tree Cult' is acknowledged throughout the country. But in popular beliefs and practices of different regions, this cult has assumed specific significance, on account of its implementation in different regional festivals.

The popular aspect of the 'Tree Cult' is dealt here with a reference to the religious practices of Orissa. Orissa is a land of forests. Forest products form the backbone of Orissan economy. If 'Tree Cult' is regarded to have originated from the gratitude, shown to trees in return of their services rendered to man, then no other part of India can be more grateful to trees than Orissa. Sacred trees are there in almost all the regional temples of Orissa, where they bear the same religious significance as the main deities of the temple. But veneration of such sacred trees, is not the only aspect of the 'Tree Cult' in Orissa. Its major aspect lies in the association of trees in the Oshas (religious fastings) and Bratas (religious vows) performed by the people. The people, at large, are concerned with their daily necessities and personal ambitions. Through the seasonal festivals, they pray god to fulfill their desire. Their beliefs may not be, always, logical, but they are consistently followed, generation after generation, as a matter of tradition.
In the list of such trees, that are associated with the fares and festivals, the Tulsi (ocimum sanctum) (Basil plant) stands supreme. This plant, being the favourite of Lord Vishnu, is not confined to the premises of the leading Vaishnava temples. It is, rather, found in the courtyard of every Hindu house. It is placed in an elevated platform and is worshipped daily, at least twice. In some houses, the stone statue of a typical oriya woman, in her traditional dress and ornament is placed on a small platform on the head of such a statue, a pot with a Tulsi (ocimum sanctum) plant is placed. The services of a Brahmin priest is not required in the worship of this plant. The women members, specially elderly ladies of the family, deem it as a sacred duty to take bath early in the morning and pour water at the root of the plant and then worship it. During the month of Kartika (October-November) widows perform special worship of the plant. Early in the morning, after taking bath, they clean the pavement of the plant, pour water at its roots and draw the figures of Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra, Sankha (conch), Chakra (celestial wheel), Gada (mace), Padma (lotus) etc., with rice powder. They give fruits as offerings, but the special offerings consists of pieces of coconut and sprouted gram (Moong dal). Sitting near the pavement, they sing one chapter of the Purana called Kartika Mahatmya each day. In this book, Sanskrit verses, extracted from the Padma Purana are translated and explained in oriya, in which the heroic achievements of Lord Vishnu in his different incarnations are mentioned. Prominent among them is the killing of demon Jalandhara and the birth of the Tulsi plant. After the death of Jalandhara his wife Brindabati, jumped into fire and burnt herself alive. The three aspects of her soul Raja, Tama and Sat (symbolic of dynamism, inertia and equilibrium) got mingled with goddess Saraswati, Laxmi and Gouri and from these three, grew up the three trees Amla (embelica myrobalen), Malati (aganosoma caryophyllata) and Tulasi (ocimum sanctum) respectively. All these, three plants, became favourites of Lord Vishnu. The Kartika Mahatmya also mentions the sanctity of Bata (ficus indica), Asvattha (ficus religiosa) and Palasha (butea fondrosa) trees, by citing the legend about the birth of Maheswara, Vishnu and Brahma as the above mentioned trees respectively. So, it is believed that, the women who perform Kartika Brata (vow) near the altar of the Tulsi plant, sing the glory not only of the Tulsi (ocimum sanctum) plant but also of the Amla (embelica myrobalen), Malati, Bata (ficus indica), Asvattha (ficus religiosa) and Palasha trees. Besides narrating, the glories of Lord Vishnu, mentioned in the Padma Purana, the performers of Kartika brata also sing another
story (Katha), known as the "Rai Damodara Brata Katha". This story is believed in Orissa only. As per the story, the chief priest (bada panda) of Lord Vishnu, once, cherished a desire to give his daughter Rai in marriage to the Lord. The lord fulfilled his wishes and married her accordingly. After marriage, Rai expressed her desire to be worshipped along with the Lord. But Lord Vishnu wanted her to please goddess Laxmi by serving at her feet and then to seek the boon. Accordingly, Rai could please Laxmi and in return expressed her desire. Goddess Laxmi became reluctant to grant her the right. Thereafter Rai requested her to allow her to be worshipped only in the month of Kartika (October-November). Accordingly, Laxmi granted her the right to be worshipped along with Vishnu during the first twenty five days of the month of Kartika (October-November). So the women of Orissa worship Rai-Damodara (Damodara is a name of Vishnu), during the first twenty five days and give banana, pieces of coconut, sprouted gram, which are the favourites of Rai as the offering. During the last five days of the month, they worship Laxmi along with Vishnu in the pavement of the Tulsi (ocimum sanctum) plant.

Housewives worship the plant daily and pray for children and prosperity. Unmarried girls also perform certain Oshas (religious fasting) at the root of this plant on full moon day, in the month of Asvina (September-October), famous in Orissa as Kumara Purnima virgins worship at the pavement of the Tulsi plant. For this purpose, girls clean the pavement in the evening, decorate it with designs made of rice-powder and make a special offering called Chanda which is prepared with fried rice corn (Khai), cheese, banana, coconut etc. It is believed that girls performing this worship can marry young and handsome grooms. In the Ganjam district, virgins observe Kharkhari on every Sunday of the month of Chaitra (March-April). Kharkhari is the name of the goddess of the fast. She is worshipped in the pavement of the Tulsi (ocimum sanctum) plant. The virgins pray the goddess for kind and noble husbands.

On the day of Panasankranti in the month of Baisakha (April-May), a small earthen pot with a hole at its bottom is filled with water and is hung over the Tulsi plant, with the support of bamboos. The water falls drop by drop on the plant and causes cooling effect to lessen the heat of the Summer. On certain other festive occasions like the Kanji Amla Navami in the month of Margasira (November-December) the Nagal Chaturthi in the month
of **Kartika** (October-November), the **Somanatha Brata** (a religious vow) in the month of **Bhadraba** (August-September) women in Orissa, perform worship at the altar of Tulsi. The Tulsi plant is worshipped in a number of folk festivals, because, it is regarded as the symbol of many local deities. It is believed that any offering made at the root of the Tulsi plant is certainly received by the concerned deity. Leaves and twigs of the Tulsi plant are the favourites of Lord *Vishnu*. So, in every Vaishnavite temple in Orissa, wreaths are specially made with seasonal flowers and the leaves and twigs of Tulsi (*ocimum sanctum*) to offer to the God. In the Jagannath temple, at Puri there is a grove of Tulsi plants, in order to meet the daily requirement of leaves and twigs for the deities. Beads, made up of dry twigs of Tulsi plant are worn by Vaishnavites. In the villages of Orissa, there are instances of poor parents giving their daughters in marriage only with a Tulsi (*ocimum sanctum*) leaf in hand.

**Amla** (*emblica myrobalen*) is another tree to have special importance in Orissa. In the classical aspect of the 'Tree Cult' it has already been mentioned from the Padma Purana that Amla tree is born out of the elements of *Saraswati*. Lord *Vishnu* himself has said that He lives in the tree during the month of **Kartika** (October-November). So, one should not pluck the leaves and fruits of the tree in the month of **Kartika** (October-November). One has to collect them in the month of **Asvina** (September-October) and preserve carefully for the month of **Kartika** (October-November). Because in this month, Lord *Vishnu* is pleased to have an offering of the fruits of Amla (*embelica myrobalen*) along with Tulsi (*ocimum sanctum*) leaves. Whoever performs **Bhajana**, **Kirtana** (prayers) in the shadows of **Dhatri** or Amla in **Kartika** enjoys blessings of the Lord. Taking **prasada** (offering), of the Lord in the shade of this tree is also pious. (Kartika Mahatmya).

The ninth day in the bright half of the month of **Kartika** (October-November) is known as **Amla Navami**. On this day, wherever, there is an Amla (*embelica myrobalen*) tree whether inside the campus of a temple or in the courtyard of house women worship this tree. They light **deeps** (earthen wick lamps) and incense sticks at its roots and pray for the fulfilment of desire, and for protection against all dangers.

**Paddy** (*oriza sativa*) plant is also deified in Orissa. It is regarded as the symbol of goddess *Mahalaxmi*. Her special worship is performed on every Thursday of the
month of Margasira (November-December). Married women in every Hindu family perform 
this worship, in which, ears of corn, artificially joined together and decorated, represent the 
goddess of wealth, i.e. Mahalaxmi. By the time of the Garvana Sankranti, in the month of 
Asvina (September-October), ears of corn appear in their womb. So it is celebrated with the 
worship of Mana, Gauni, Pakhia (the units of measuring corn). On that day, people take full 
meal, so as to enjoy the blessings of goddess Mahalaxmi and hope to get the same through 
out the year. Every year, on the last day of reaping, some ears of corn are left, without being 
cut, on one corner of the field. They are cut only after performing due worship and then they 
are treasured in the barn. On that day, the labourers of the field are given the Prasada or 
offerings, made to the goddess, which is known as Khetabadha. That is the last ceremony of 
reaping. (Das in Gupta, 1965).

On the new moon day in the month of Pausha (December-January), Baula 
amavasya is celebrated. This is the season, when mango (mangifera indica) trees begin to 
blossoms. This tropical fruit is a common and popular food and all enjoy it. So, on this day 
women worship mango trees and offer round cakes called Manda. It is believed that, if thus 
worshipped, the trees would yield mangoes as good as the cakes.

The plantain tree is regarded as the symbol of prosperity and good fortune. On 
auspicious occasions like the wedding and sacred thread ceremony, it is planted near the altar. 
The eighth day of the dark half of the month of Asvina (September-October) is known as 
Mulastami. On this day, married women perform an Osha (religious fasting) called Dutiya 
Osha. On this occasion, they place a plantain (musa sapientum) plant in the courtyard and 
assemble together to perform the worship, in which they give an offering of twenty one kinds 
of fruits and vegetables.

On the first day, in the dark half of the month of Pausha (January-February); 
Bata Osha is celebrated. On this occasion, elderly women of the family sweep the outside 
court yard of the house with a Bajramuli tree. This sweeping is known as Dandapahanra. 
Then, they strike the tree on the heads of their family members for five to six times and 
thereby pray for their longevity. Because, the Bajramuli tree symbolises thunder's force and 
onece a person takes symbolic protection under it he/she is supposed to escape an accident 
with thunderbolt, called Bajra or a mishap will not be fall him/her.
The eighth day in the bright half of the month of Chaitra (March-April), celebrated as Ashokastami has a special significance in Orissa. Because, the famous car festival of Lord Lingaraja takes place on this day, at Bhubaneswar. It is believed that when Sita desired to free herself from the clutches of Ravana took eight Ashoka (saraca indica) buds on this day. So, people in order to free themselves from sufferings take eight Ashoka (saraca indica) buds on this day. It is believed that, in olden times, girls used to exchange Ashoka buds on this day and hoped to maintain everlasting friendship.

The sanctity of bael(aegle marmelos) leaf is acknowledged throughout the State of Orissa, as it is indispensable in the worship of Lord Siva. In the prominent Saiva temples of Orissa, like the Lingaraja in Bhubaneswar and Sri Lokanath in Puri, innumerable bael leaves are offered on the day of Shiva Chaturdasi, i.e. fourteenth day in the dark half of the month of Phalguna (February-March). During the thirteen days, preceding Durgastami (in the month of Aswina (Sept.-Oct.), goddess Durga is worshipped with an offering of bael (aegle marmelos) leaf. It is believed that she had expressed this desire to Brahma.

The religious vow of Savitri amavasya is performed by married women on the new moon day of the month of Jyestha (May-June) praying for the longevity of their husbands. It is also known as Bata savitri as Bata (ficus bengalensis) tree is worshipped on this day. Because, it is believed that, Savitri had spent the three nights preceding that day, under a Bata (ficus bengalensis) tree and had kept her vow. So, on this day, women, after taking bath in the morning, pour sufficient water at the root of Bata tree and pray it to fulfil their vow. On this day along with Bighnaraja Saraswati, Tribikrama, Uma, Maheswar, Jamaraja, they also worship five trees like Bata (ficus bengalensis), Asvattha (ficus religiosa), Palasha(butea frondosa), Madhuka (madhuca longifolia) and Nimba(azadiracsta indica).

The coconut tree (cocos nucifera) is regarded as sacred, throughout the State of Orissa. Because, coconut is essential in all religious fastings and vows and in fact on all auspicious occasions. Whenever, a vow is kept, coconut is offered to the concerned god or goddess. Usually, gods and goddesses are invoked and worshipped through the symbol of
**Puma Kumbha.** It is a pitcher, full of water, placed on some white paddy, with a branch of mango tree and a coconut, decorated with sandal paste, flowers and vermilion, placed on it. This *Kumbha* is indicative of full success in one's mission. This is placed at the door, when one goes out of the house. A complete coconut without coir is used to prepare the face of goddess Saraswati, the presiding deity of learning.

Like many other states of India, in Orissa, the Peepal tree (*ficus religiosa*) is worshipped as the abode of *Nagas* (cobra) on the occasion of *Naga Panchami*, which falls on the fifth day in the dark half of the month of *Shravana* (July-August), the women folk of Orissa, worship the image of *Nagas* (cobra) engraved under Peepal (*ficus religiosa*) tree. They pour water and milk at its roots and then anoint it with vermilion, sandal paste and then make an offering of flowers and fruits. Then they circumambulate the tree 108 times and pray for male offsprings, longevity of their husbands and for the fulfilment of their desires. When, their wishes are fulfilled, they again go to the same Peepal (*ficus religiosa*) tree on the day of *Naga Panchami*, install there, another image of snake made of copper or silver and make votive offerings.

In some villages, Sami (*minosa suna*) tree is worshipped outside the village or on the eastern corner of it. It is believed that such a worship, protects the village against enemies.

The sanctity of the sandal wood tree is acknowledged, in so far as smearing of sandal paste is essential in the worshipping of gods and goddesses. With the beginning of summer, sandal paste is abundantly smeared on gods and goddesses, because the heat, caused by the hot Sun, needs a cooling down. With this purpose, the *Chandana Yatra* (Summer aquatic cruise) is celebrated for twenty one days, starting from *Akshaya Trutiya*, which falls on the third day in the bright half of the month of *Baisakha* (April-May). This ritual coincides with the first sowing paddy seeds, the principal crop of the State of Orissa. During this period, the deities, all over Orissa are applied an extra smearing of sandal paste. In Puri, the proxy of Lord Jagannath and four *lingas* (phallus) are carried to the *Narendra tank*, where the deities play in their respective tanks, smeared with sandal paste, known as *Chandana Kunda*. Equally famous is the *Chandana yatra* of Lord Lingaraja of Bhubaneswar whose proxy is taken to the
Bindusagara, a tank, where the deity plays and a lot of flowers and sandal paste are offered. It is believed that the sight of Lord Siva, decorated with excess amount of sandal paste on the day of Akshya Trutiya is very auspicious. Whoever sees it, is freed from all his sins.

In olden times palm leaf manuscripts were given the status of god. But, even to-day, in villages of Orissa, there are Bhagabata tungis (village community cottage, which is the seat of Hindu sacred scripture, Bhagabat geeta) where the palmleaf manuscripts are worshipped and read for the enlightenment of the laity in the village.

Durba (poa cynasuroides) grass and Kusa (eragris cynasuroides) grass are essential in many religious ceremonies and sacrificial rites. The Durbastami brata is celebrated on the eighth day of the bright half of the month of Bhadraba (August-September). As Durba grass has long life, it is believed that this vow ensures long life for children in seven generations. On this occasion Durba (poa cynasuroides) is worshipped along with Vishnu. Purohita Karmakanda (Pt. IV 157) mentions specific mantra (hymn) which is chanted while dipping the Durba (poa cynasuroides) grass in unboiled milk. Eight Durba grasses are tied in eight plies of thread, dipped in turmeric and are worshipped. On the occasion of Sudasa Brata which is performed, when the tenth day in the bright half of a month falls on Thursday, ten Durba (poa cynasuroides) grasses are worshipped along with ten grains of rice.

Bark of the plantain tree is used to make beats which are decorated with lamps and are floated in river, pond etc. on the full moon day of the month of Kartika (October-November). This is celebrated in reminiscence of the glories of ancient Orissan trade - when the Oriya merchants conducted flourishing trade with the South Asiatic countries.

In the Orissan villages, when a baby is born, a branch of a Siju (a variety of hedge cactus) tree is hung on the door, for twentyone days, so as to ensure protection of the baby against evil eye. Goddess Shasthi is worshipped by women praying for the longevity of their children. The Orissan women celebrate Shasthi Osha (fasting) on the sixth day of the bright half of the month of Bhadraba (August-September). On this occasion leaves of trees like Bajramuli (a wild plant), weed plants, paddy, arum, and bamboo are collected and tied
together. Elderly women of the family after worshipping the god bless, lightly strike seven times with these leaves on the heads of the youngsters and pray for long life, sound health and continued prosperity.

The wood of Palasha (butea frondosa), Badari (zizyphus jujaba), Mango (mangifera indica), and Sal (shorea robusta) are necessary in connection with the performance of several religious sacrifices. In many religious functions, pots, prepared from the leaves of jackfruit (artocarpus integrigolia) are needed. Very often, offerings are made to gods and goddesses on plantain leaves. The tradition of Nabapatrika (Nine leaves) is prevalent during Durga puja, celebrated in the month of Asvina (September-October). Nabapatrika is the symbol of goddess Durga. It consists of plantain (musa sapientum), turmeric, bael (aegle marmelos), Ashoka (saraca indica), rice corn, arum, Jayanti (sesbania sesban), dalimba (pomegranate) and mahana. Along with Nabapatrika, a branch of bael tree is also carried to the altar of worship.

The food obtained from plants, is regarded as the blessing of god. So, there prevails the tradition of offering the first crops of the season to god. For instance, on the occasion of Makara Sankranti (first day of the Hindu month of Magha (January-February) new rice and all the new plant products of the season are offered to the gods. On the occasion of Dhanu Sankranti (first day of the ninth solar month), the special offering made to the gods is Muan. It is a type of cake, made of parched new rice, just harvested and newly made molasses. This cake has an agreeable flavour. In every seasonal festival a special offering is made to the gods, which constitutes the first crop and fruit of the season. Besides this, in the famous temples of Orissa, i.e. the Jagannath temple at Puri and the Lingaraj temple at Bhubaneswar, dressed food of all kinds are offered to the deities in profusion and then are sold to the visitors.

In the Orissan villages, there can be traced, the instances of performing Girigobardhanapuja (kind of worship). When, rain does not occur for a long time, Lord Indra, who is regarded as the god of rain, is worshipped. At the end of the village, a tree is worshipped as the symbol of Lord Indra. It is performed only after Sunset. Individual villagers do not perform the worship themselves. On behalf of the village, a Brahmin priest worships
the tree and reads out *Bhagabata* (Hindu sacred scripture). He gives fruits and dry offerings to the tree representing the presiding deity of rain (*Indra*). It is believed that, at least a few drops of rain fall after the performance of this worship.

Ayurvedic system of medicine is very popular in Orissan villages. It is a tradition to use different parts of the plants, seen around, to prepare medicine. Whenever, the branch or any part of the tree is to be obtained for this purpose, the required worship is performed, which is known as *barana* (auspicious welcome). On this occasion, the person concerned takes bath and then offers milk and *arura* rice (sundried rice) to the tree.

In Orissa, tree marriages are in vogue. In such marriage, Bata (*ficus indica*) tree is regarded as the bride and the Asvattha (*ficus religiosa*) tree as the groom. Purohita Karma Kanda - I (a text on priestly craft) mentions details of the procedure of such marriage. For this purpose, the Bata (*ficus indica*) and Asvattha (*ficus religiosa*) trees are planted in an auspicious time. Thereafter, on the eighth or eleventh or twelfth year, the marriage of the trees is performed. Like the marriage of man and a woman the tree marriage also implies a lot of expenditure and arrangement. So, usually richmen take up this pious work. It is believed that, he, who performs this task, earns enormous ritual merit and virtue, and the two trees continue to bless the people allthrough their life. In Orissa, the marriage between human beings and trees is also prevalent. If a man loses two wives in succession before he can be married for the third time he is first married to a tree. Because it is believed that his ill luck would be carried away by the tree. In case of a girl, if her marriage can not be arranged, she is first married to a tree, thereafter, she can be given away informally to any boy or to a boy of an inferior caste.

The *Karma* festival which is celebrated in most of the Orissan districts from Sambalpur to Phulbani, is a manifestation of tree worship. This festival, of course, cannot be traced in the coastal areas of Orissa. It is a famous autumnal festival which starts from the eleventh day of the bright half of the month of *Bhadraba* (August-September) and continues for some days into the month of *Asvina* (September-October). The Karma (*naucleoparvifolia*) tree represents a god named *Karma*, who is regarded as the god of fortune. The devotees wash the trunk of a *Karma* tree and worship it by putting sandal paste and flowers on it. They cut down, a branch of that tree, take it with due ceremony, wrap a cloth around it and plant it
in the middle of the altar, built for the purpose. Plantain trees are planted to decorate the pandal. The devotees drink wine, burn it in the lamps and dance round and round the canopy, singing the *Karma* song. The *Karma* story describes the *Karma* god as the controller of human destiny. The *Karma* dancers have their professional party. Whenever, childless parents get blessed with a son, under the grace of the *Karma* god, they invite the party of dancers in the month of *Asvina* (September-October). The *Karma* songs resemble these of *Patua* and *Dandanata*. (Das, 1953).

Das (1953) further mentions that it is most probable that *Karma* god is an aboriginal god. The people of the areas, mentioned above, must have taken it up, under the influence of their neighbouring tribes.

**THE TRIBAL ASPECT OF THE 'TREE CULT'**

The process of acculturation is consistently going on in the religion of Orissa. The inter-group interactions between the classical, popular and tribal branches of Hinduism are a regular feature. The impact of the classical religion on the tribals is very often remarkable in modern times. Factors like urbanisation, industrialisation, tribal welfare and community development programmes, modern system of education, improvement in the means of communication etc. have intensified the process of transformation in rural and tribal societies. But it, certainly, has not resulted in the total absorption of the tribals by the relatively developed societies. In spite of this process of transformation, the tribals have retained the original spirit of their religion. The following report of Martin Orans with regard to Santalas, truly speaks of the love of the tribals for their religion. "We should not leave our religion, we should continue to use rice bear, we should have our worship at the sacred grove, also we should not stop eating beaf. We will call our religion Sarna (sacred grove) Dhorom" (Troisi, 1978). So deification of trees enjoys the same predominance in the tribal religion of to-day as it did in the past. To-day the tribals are no longer food gathering nomads living in the dense forests, but there are certain factors which tempt them to carry on their tree cult. Agriculture is the main occupation of some of the tribal communities, which consumes major portion of their activities and which is associated with a number of festivals, performed with a hope to increase the production. Spiritism is the root of their religion and so trees are worshipped as the abodes of spirits. The tribal mode of worship is more congregational than domestic and
their prayers are more communal than individual, so it is quite natural that they prefer trees as their shrines. Above all the tribal religious beliefs and rituals are so simple that, they are best performed under trees.

The tribals of Orissa, who constitute 22.22 per cent of the total population, worship the trees for various reasons. Certain trees are regarded as the receptacle of tribal deities or spirits and so sacrifices are offered under it. Certain other trees are deified for possessing mysterious power. The Santalas believe that bongas or spirits regulate the course of nature, so they should be propitiated with the performance of rituals. Their principal spirits are Jaher Era, Moreko-Turuiko and Maran Buru, who are represented by stones placed under three Sarjom trees (shorea robusta) in their sacred grove. Jaher Era is also known as the "Lady of the sacred grave. She is believed to be a benevolent spirit who is concerned with the welfare of the village. During all the festivals, a fowl is offered to her. Gosae Era is worshipped under a Mahua tree (bassia latifolia) and Pargana Bonga is worshipped under a Sarjum Tree (shorea robusta). Trees at the end of the streets are dedicated to Sima Bongas, a group of malevolent spirits. Rongo Ruji is another bonga, who is represented by a stone under a Terel tree (diaspyros tomentosa) inside the forest. Fowls are sacrificed for the spirit at the start of a hunting expedition, so that no harm would be caused to the hunters. (Troisi, 1978).

(Roy, 1972) points out the reason of sanctity attached to certain trees among the Oraons. Some Oraons do not sit upon a Tund tree (cedrela toona). This is borrowed from the Hindus for whom the Tund wood is sacred as it is used as planks in the Car or Chariot of Lord Jagannath. The Oraons do not cut the wood of the Bael (aegle marmalos), Pipar or Chikhu (ficus religiosa) and Gulaichi (plumeria acutifolia) trees. They cut certain trees for particular festivals with which they are associated. An erendi or castor oil plant can be cut for Phagu festival a Karma tree can be cut for Karma festival and Bhetwa tree can be cut for Kadlota festival. It is a taboo for the Oraons to use the Karma tree as fuel or as door frame. "The other trees named above may be burnt only when they dry up. But these taboos are now-a-days often violated for dire economic stress.

For the Oraons, some trees are sacred for the mysterious beneficent power they possess. Some Mahua (bassia latifolia) or Mango (mangifera indica) or any other tree having
big hollow in their trunk belong to this group. Because the rain water which gets accumulated in this hollow is believed to cure fever or certain other ailments. To obtain this benefit the patient has to take some unbleached thread, fresh from the spinning wheel, to wind it in three plies around the hollow trunk of the tree, and to place, with his fingers three marks of vermillion on the trunk. Then he has to take out the water of the hollow in a new earthenware vessel and to bathe in it.

"Sometimes an Oraon may be seen carrying to the Jatra (Fair) ground a curiously gnarled bamboo stump of a fantastic shape, profusely anointed with vermillion. Owing to its fantastic shape, this is believed to possess a strong 'soul' and as such is regarded as sacred and sometime treated as a fetish to bring luck". (Roy, 1972).

Roy (1972) mentions the belief of the Oraons to worship "Muichitkha" tree (*ficus religiosa*) when rain is delayed. For this purpose, the women folk of the village clean the floors and yards of their house with cowdung, take bath early in the morning and go to the tree by taking water in earthen jars. They pour the water at the root of the tree at times, the "Pahan" (Chief Priest of the village) also burns incense. The Oraons believe that after this worship at least a few drops of rain fall or the rain begins within two or three days.

*Mahadania* is a terrible village spirit believed by the Oraons. According to Roy (1972) the spirit is ordinarily represented by a wooden peg with a thin iron rod stuck into it, but Sahay (Gupta, 1965) mentions to have found the seat of this spirit in some villages on trees.

Sahay (Gupta, 1965) speaks of the most important and beneficent god of the Hos, named *Dessauli* who is usually represented by a flat stone under a tree. No one can pluck leaves of the tree or cut its branches, fell it or plough the land under it. This good protects the villagers against diseases and epidemics, averts hail storms and gives them rain and good harvest. During the *Maghe* festivals, held in January and February the *Dehuri* offers a hen and a cock to this deity during the *Hero* festival held in June, every family offers a fowl or subscribes to the acquisition of a he-goat to be sacrificed.
The Saoras believe in the sanctity of trees, but they do not have any specific respect for them. As Elwin 1955 writes "only in a few cases do the Saoras connect gods with trees in any permanent relationship. On the other hand, gods and ancestors visiting the earth often rest in or under trees, and the shades before their translation to the under World". The Saora belief in the existence of spirits in trees is well evident from Elwin's description of a common formula used by a Shaman when summoning spirits to a sacrifice, which runs as follows "All you who are living in the forest, come, you who are in the Mango, in the Banyan, in the Tamarind, in the Ebony, in the Jackfruit tree ... and so on, taking the name of every tree they can think of".

For the Saoras, it is a taboo to cut the mango (mangifera indica), mahua (bassia latifolia), tamarind (tamarindus indica) and a few other fruit bearing trees. This taboo took its origin from the fears of Kittung, the Saora term for god. Kittung, who is the creator of the earth, of mankind and the originator of many human institutions, is the lover of trees, whenever any harm is caused to the tree he loves, he weeps and vacates it in search of a new one.

Elwin (1955) gives a list of trees which are associated with certain gods and also about the leaves, branches or wood of certain other trees which are used for ceremonial purposes among the tribal communities. Pudoisum is the god of the Pudoi tree, who is worshipped by a man whose first child dies. The Shaman (village priest) offers prayer to this god for the survival of the next child. Tabarbasum is the god of the banyan tree. Any one who suffers from blood motions offers sacrifice to this god under the banyan tree. Tangsirbasum is the god of the Tangsir tree who causes headache.

The Saoras make abundant use of leaves in their rituals. A minor functionary called the Olabamaron is entrusted with the duty of checking the proper supply of leaves. The trifoliate leaves of the bael tree (aegle marmelos) are used in divination. The thorns are used in the name giving ceremony and are placed above doors to keep away spirits. It is a taboo to cut a jackfruit tree (artocarpus integrifolia) even though it is not connected with any god. The fruit is very popular and in some sacrifices it is used as a substitute for a goat. It is a taboo to cut the Mahua (bassia latifolia) tree as it is the abode of spirits and as it provides food and oil.
In some villages it is believed to be the home of Kinchesum. Its leaves are used in the Sikunda ceremony. The cotton tree (*bombax malabaricum*) is associated with Jaliyasum in some places and in some other place, it is regarded as the abode of Buttamboi, a female ghost. The chariot of Mardisum who is escorted from the village during cholera epidemic is made of the wood of this trees. The Banyan tree (*ficus bengalenis*) is the Sadru-Shrine of gods. It is a taboo to cut this tree. If anyone cuts it out of ignorance, has to sacrifice a goat to the gods and *kittung* living there. At the Guar and Karja rituals cups are made of the leaves of this tree. In some villages banyan is regarded as the mother and offerings are made to it at the harvest festivals. The Peepal (*ficus religiosa*) is sacred in so far as its leaves are used in sacrifice to Ratusum who will not accept offerings in any other kind of cup. The branches of the mango tree (*mangifera indica*) its ripe fruit and the Kernel of the fruit are used in certain festivals. Its leaves are used to decorate the shrines. The leaves of the plantain tree (*musa sapientum*) are used is many sacrificial feasts. Its leaves, fruits and roots are offered to Kittungsum and Mardisum and bunches of its fruits are used as a substitute for something expensive in the offerings made to any tutelary or ancestor. The Sal tree (*shorea robusta*) is sacred because the images and birds in a shrine are normally made of this wood. Its leaves can be used in any sacrifice where special leaves are not required (Elwin, 1955).

So, in the tribal religion, tree occupies a prominent place. But the system of associating trees with particular gods, as is prevalent in the classical and popular religion cannot be traced in the tribal religion. This is because, the names of their gods vary from place to place. The sanctity attributed to a particular type of tree may not be the same all over the tribal world. If for the Santalas, Hos and Mundas, the Mahua tree (*bassia latifolia*) is the abode of Gosae Era, for the Saoras, it is the abode of Kinchesum. The Kittung of the Saoras can choose any tree as its abode. But in the classical and popular religion, the belief of the association of the Basil (*ocimum sanctum*) tree with Lord Vishnu and that of Bael (*aegle mormelos*) tree with Lord Siva is the same every where. Bael leaf can never be offered to Lord Vishnu nor can the Basil leaves to Lord Siva. However, the worship of Basil tree has been borrowed by some tribes. Sinha (1989) mentions that some Kharia families place Basil plant in a pavement inside their courtyard and worship it. Similarly, the Bada Gadaba, Bhuiyan, Juang, Bathudi and Bhumij tribes of Orissa plant the Basil tree in their courtyards and regularly propitiate.
Agriculture, especially paddy cultivation, consumes much of the time and energy of the tribals. To-day agriculture is no longer placed entirely at the mercy of nature nor is it regarded solely as the boon of god. But festivals and offerings to gods are still a part of agricultural life, the performance of which is believed to enrich the production. Both in the popular and tribal levels agricultural festivals are performed with equal hope and zeal. Because along with manual activity, religious and magical beliefs and rituals are equally indispensable for the success in agriculture.

The Santal agricultural festivals, as mentioned by Troisi (1978) are Baha, Erok Sim, Hariar Sim, Ira Gundli Nawai, Janthor, Sohrae, and Magh Sim. The Baha Parab or flower festival is celebrated after the full moon in the month of Phalguna (February-March) when the Sal (shorea robusta) and mahua (basia latifolia) trees begin to blossom. This festival marks the beginning of the Santala New Year. It is only after the performance of this festival, they start gathering Mahua blossoms. On this occasion Naikae, Kadam Naikae and Godet offer sacrifices to the gods at the zahes-eraor sacred grove. Erok Sim is celebrated in the month of Asarh (June-July) on the occasion of the sowing of winter paddy (Erok). The Naikae, Kadam Naikae and Godet offer fowls to Jaher bonga and Manjhi Haran, in order to ensure the fertility of the soil and to receive sufficient rainfall. In the month of Sravan (July-August) when the paddy seeds germinate and push new shoots, the Santals perform Hariar Sim and offer sacrifices to the village deities, so that paddy may grow green. Janthor is celebrated to offer the first fruit of the winter rice crop to Pargana Bonga, who is represented in a Sal (shorea robusta) tree in the sacred grove. It is a taboo to eat the first fruits until ceremonial rituals have been performed before the spirits, on behalf of the whole village. Sohrae is celebrated after the paddy is harvested and Magh Sim is celebrated on the occasion of the cutting of the thatching grass.

About the agricultural festival of the Oraons, (Roy, 1972) mentions that Sarhul is the principal one. It is celebrated in the village sacred grove where fowls are sacrificed under the main tree to each Oraon deity and the principal spirit. This was originally a festival of the food gathering economy which gradually took the complexion of an agricultural festival. The Phagu festival which marks the birth of a New Year is performed in the sacred grove. In the month of Phalguna (February-March) Oraon young men bring branch or young plant of the
Erendi or castor oil (*palma christi*) plant, one or two branches of the Semar (*bombax malabaricum*) tree and plant in some open space in the village where the Hindu Land Lord, if any, or the village *Pahan* makes offerings. Then fire is set to the branches amid loud shouts of rejoicing (Roy 1972).

Among the principal annual agricultural festivals Hariari is one. It is the festival of green (rice) plants, which is celebrated in the month of *Asarh* (June-July) after paddy, *gondli, marua* and *kapas* or cotton seeds have been sown in all the fields of the village. The individual Oraons make private Hariari puja whereas the public *(Gairahi)* Hariari festival is celebrated on behalf of the whole village. The Kadleta or *Kadlota* is another agricultural festival of the Oraons. When the rice grains wait to be harvested they apprehend the adverse effect of evil eye or evil tongue on the crops. In order to ward off such evil effects, they perform the Dandakatta ceremony. On the day of the *Kadleta* festival young men of the village bring from the forest bundles of *semicarpis anacardium* (Hindi-Bhelwa), Kend (*drosyros melanoxylon*) and failing that shrubs of Sindur (*vitex negundo*), pieces of *bhelwa* of Kend or Sindur branches or twigs are planted in the various fields of each Oraons cultivator.

Karama is another festival, which is celebrated on the day after the *Kadlota*. On the morning following the *Kadlota* festival the young bachelors of the Oraon village go out, dancing, singing and playing music, to cut down and bring home, three branches of the Karama tree (*nauclea parvifolia*) for the Karama festival. They select branches which are straight and not damaged by worms or pests and the leaves of which are fresh. The selected branches are not allowed to touch the ground. The three branches are brought to the village in a procession and are ceremonially planted in the middle of the Akara and are installed as "Karam Raja". The Karam Raja is decorated with wreaths of flowers, armlets, bracelets and necklets of wild grass. Men and women sit down in rings round the Karam Raja and listen to the Karam legend recited by the *Pahan* or some other village elder. The women pray for the prosperity of themselves and their brothers. After the rituals of worship are over the Karam branches are carried by three women in a procession to the *Pahan's* house, to the village Mahto's house and then to the Pujari's house. In each house, the mistresses anoint the branches with oil and vermilion and offer three pieces of bread. Finally, the branches are drowned in some stream or tank.
Twelve days after the Karama festival, the Jitia festival is celebrated, which is borrowed by the Oraons from the Hindus. It is not regarded by them as a feast proper of their own. It is not celebrated at a public place such as a sacred grove or open upland or the Akhra, but is celebrated in particular houses. Every year, the villagers select some individual villager in whose house, the festival is to be celebrated. Women observe fast on the day preceding the festival. On the day of the festival, in the evening, one two or three Jitia Piper branches are planted on the courtyard or in open space in front of the house by the Pahan. Women burn incense, ghee and molasses in front of the Jitia Piper branch. A Brahman priest performs the worship and recites the Jitia story. Next day the women before they take any food, take up the branches and throw away. That day, women make curry of at least twelve kinds of vegetables and serve them on Jitia Pipar leaves. (Roy, 1972).

Another feature, which regulates the tribal veneration for tree is 'Totemism'. 'Totemism' is quite an ancient religious belief, which ascertains a mystical relationship between a group of human beings and some class of natural phenomenon, usually, a plant or an animal species. In the primitive society, members of a particular clan considered themselves as the descendants of the 'totem' and as such established rituals to be performed in the honour of the totemic object (plant or animal). The 'totem' is treated as the guardian of the totemites.

In India, there are many tribes which claim to have mystic ties with totemic objects. In case the totemic object is a tree, they show reverence to it and don't destroy it nor do they eat its fruit or flower. (Sahay in Gupta, 1965).

So far, an attempt has been made to establish the significance of the 'Tree Cult' in the classical popular and folk aspects of Indian religion. It, not only significantly prevails in the three levels, but it exhibits a remarkable sense of co-existence between them. A single tree stands as the abode of a number of gods and goddesses worshipped by different levels, castes, creeds and communities of Indian people. It is not possible to say which tree is presided over by which particular god, nor is it possible to determine which god came first to preside over a particular tree and in what order others followed suit. When an individual or group worship a tree, they take up the symbol or image of their choice, but they do not challenge others choice.
or belief. Here lies the recognition of the fact that all the gods and spirits are the manifestations of one Supreme Being. A list of certain trees and the names of gods they are identified with, is mentioned below.

(1) **Asvatha** (*ficus religiosa*) : Vishnu, Buddha, Krishna, Brahma, Lakshmi, Alakshmi, Surya, Aditya, Vanadurga, Apsara, Gandharva, Ancestor worship etc.

(2) **Bata** (*ficus indica*) : Brahma, Vishnu, Maheswara, Sasthi, Panchanana, Kubera, Lakshmi, Makhadam Pir, Jakshini etc.

(3) **Tulsi** (*ocimum sanctum*) : Krishna, Vishnu, Rama, Narayana, Sri Hari, Brindavati, Jagannatha, Moon, ancestor worship, Lakshmi, Rai Damodara etc.

(4) **Soma** : Moon.

(5) **Bilva** (*aegle mormelos*) : Maheswara, Durga, Lakshmi, Sun, ghosts, spirit etc.

(6) **Ashoka** (*saraca indica*) : Buddha, Yakshini, Indra, Vishnu, Gandharva, Aditya, Apsara etc.

(7) **Amla** (*embelica myrobalen*) : Lakshmi, Kartika, Vishnu, Gandharva, fertility cult etc.

(8) **Tal** : Spirits, ghosts, Buddha, Yakshini etc.

(9) **Mango** (*mangifera indica*) : Lakshmi, Gobardhana, Dhenki, Buddha, Gandharva, fertility cults.

(10) **Plantain** (*musa saprientum*) : Lakshmi, Nabapatrika, Vanadurga, Sakambari, fertility cult, ancestor worship etc.
(11) **Kadamba** (*antho cephallus cadamba*): Krishna, fertility cult, Yakshini etc.

(12) **Neem** (*azadirchta indica*): Sitala, Devil, witches, fertility cult etc.

(13) **Bamboo** (*benduvija pentapati*): Krishna, ancestor worship, different tribal cults, fertility cult etc.

(14) **Palasa** (*butea fondrosa*): Brahma, Gandharva, Apsara etc.

(15) Old shady trees: Spirits, ghosts, devils etc.  

(Gupta, 1980)