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Social aspect of forest as described in Sanskrit Kāvya literature

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Abstract:

This paper outlines about the usefulness of forest in various aspect as depicted in Sanskrit Kāvya Literature. The poets of the Sanskrit Kāvya Literature depicts in their respective work, forest was played an important role for seems to be a boon for humans since ancient times. The forest have various kind of importance for the development of the people's life. Such as – Nivāsa, Vastra, Ornaments, Cosmetics etc. In Sanskrit Kāvya narrated by the poets, there is a mention about the social aspect of forests. Since ancient times, man used to live his life depend directly or indirectly on the forest. Which is the main descriptive theme of this paper.

Keyword: Varṇa Vyavasthā, Āśrama Vyavasthā, education, family life, nivāsa, vastra, food and drinks, ornaments, cosmetics, forest as shelter provider, forest for austerities etc.

Introduction

The Indian social system is well known for its uniqueness and importance in the social system of the world. The Indian social system is made up of elements that encourage the coordinating trend. Indian mystics by their thought and meditation created a system in which society and individuals are equally important. Personality cannot develop without the development of society and the social system cannot be made permanent without proper facilities for the development of personality. In the entire Sanskrit Kāvya Literature depiction about forest in huge forms. Forest was played an important role in social life and society.

To achieve both of these objectives, since the Vedic period, Indian mystics have accepted one of the major arrangements to give order to society. One is called Varṇa - Vyavasthā and the other one is Āśrama - Vyavasthā.

Varṇa Vyavasthā

Varṇa - Vyavasthā is important from the point of view of making social life functionally useful and providing stability to it. Four types of Varṇa have been mentioned in ancient and medieval texts. The first is Brāhmaṇa, the second is Kṣatriya, the third is Vaiśya, and the fourth is Śūdra. In the Ṛgveda's Puruṣa Śūkta, a living awakened body of society is imagined as a great man. Brāhmaṇa was born from his mouth, Kṣatriya from the arm, Vaiśya from the thigh, and Śūdra from the foot [1]. The Mahābhārata [2] and the Gītā [3] also support this view. According to Ācārya Manu, a Brahmin has to study, teach, perform Yajña, donate and take the donation [4]. Teaching was the main work for Brāhmaṇa. The Rāmāyaṇa mentions that a large number of students used to live with Vālmīki, Viśvāmitra, Vaśiṣṭha, Bhāradvāja, and with the sages of Daṇḍakārāṇya (Rām. I. 2. 43) for their study. In ancient times of Dvījavarṇa, Kṣatriya is the second Varṇa who occupied a most important place in the society. The Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa has mentioned that Kṣatriya considers it their duty to protect the sages, as Rāma himself considers that he has to protect the sages in Daṇḍaka forest and also said Sita that he can abandon her and Laxmaṇa, but the promise which is specially made to protect Brāhmins, cannot be discarded (Rām. III. 10. 16-19). Vaiśya varṇa was in the third place in the then society. They also depend in forest for day-to-day life. In the Smṛti texts, the word "Canḍāla" is also mentioned for the Śūdra. Manu has also addressed Śūdra with the word "Canḍāla" [5]. The Śūdra muni Śambūka, who did penance to go to heaven was slaughtered by Rāma with a sword [6].

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Āśrama Vyavasthā

Āśrama - Vyavasthā is useful for developing and strengthening the personality of a person by determining different duties at different stages of life. In this, the entire life of man is divided into four *Āśramas* in the order – *Brahmacaryāśrama*, *Grhasthāśrama*, *Vānaprasthāśrama*, *Sanyāsāśrama*. It is the first among the *Āśramas*. The ancient Indian *Ācāryas* had arranged this *Āśrama* for the sake of learning and power. The first purpose of every student living in the *Gurukul* is for Vedic studies. In the *Śāntiparva* of the *Mahābhārata*, *Brahmacharyāśrama* has been called “*Gurukula*”. Which was mostly performed in the forests (Mbh. ŚP. 61. 19 – 20). The sages like Agastya, Bharadvāja, Vālmiki, etc. lived in the forest by observing the *Brahmacarya* and fasting and a lot of students came to their *Āśramas* and lived with the discipleship under their patriarch. The *Grhasthāśrama* has been very important in Indian society. In *Kumāra* (6. 11-13), Lord Śaṅkara became a household as well. It is known that even sages used to follow the *Grhasthāśrama* while living in the *Āśrama*. After the *Grhasthāśrama*, the *Vānaprasthāśrama* begins. Gautama has used the word “*Vaikhānasa*” for the *Vānaprasthāśrama* (*Brahmacārī grhastho bhikṣuvaikhānasaḥ*- Gau. Dha. – 3/2). According to *Ācārya* Kauṭilya, the dressing sense of *Vānaprasthā* to be *Brahmacārī*, to sleep on the ground, to having twisted hair and wear deerskin (*mṛgacarma*), to perform *Agnihotra Yajña* daily, to worship the deities and ancestors, and to live by eating the fruits of the forest to sustain.^[7] The word “*Sanyāsa*” means to one who has renounced the world. “*Mokṣa*” is possible only through the *Sanyāsāśrama*. According to Kauṭilya, the *dharma* of a *Sanyāsī* is one who has subdued his senses to be away from society, to have a voluntary diet, to move from one place to another in the forest, to keep the mind, words, deeds from external and inner purity^[8].

Education

The *Āśrama*'s of Vālmiki, Kaṇva, and Sandīpani were located in the forests. Described as the most important of the Vedas, *Mahākāvya*s and *Arthaśāstras*, were considered most suitable for studies in lonely forests. That is why the *Āśramas* of sages were situated in the forests.^[9] *Maharṣi* Bhāradvāja's *Āśrama* was located at the confluence of the Ganges- Yamuna. Hut was made of leaves there for study and teaching (Rām. VI. 123.51). The *Āśrama* of *Maharṣi* Agastya was located in “*Dandakāraṇya*” where education of various disciplines and arts was imparted. The *Rāmāyaṇa* mentions that the sages, *Dāityas*, *Gandharva*, *Kinnara*, and *Siddha* also used to come there for their education^[10]. There is mention of the *Āśrama* of *Mārkaṇḍeya* and Kaṇva *Rṣi* of the *Mahābhārata* which were famous for the education of various branches of knowledge. Apart from serving his teachers, students used to collect woods, *kuśa* grass, flowers, etc. from the forest for their sacrificial work^[11].

Family life

In the Himalayan forest, the *Śabara* people knew the routes of the lions from the dissolving of blood due to the melting of snow and seeing the elephant and they knew the routes of those lions from the pearl (*muktās*) that fell from the holes of their claws.^[12] Hunting has been referred to as a profession in ancient times whose lived in the forest. People used to live their lives with this. *Aśvaghoṣa* mentions in his “*Budhhacarita*” that no one has approved to kill him for their profit, that's why he has referred to the hunter as a deceiver

^[13]. At the same time, people used to hunt animals along with deer for their skin, meat, and ivory.

There is a detailed mention of the village being in the forest mentioned in the author *Bānabhaṭṭa* in his “*Harṣacarita*”^[14]. People depended on their day-to-day life in the forest. They hunted animals for their family life and collected their essential food item from the forest. Such as fuel (woods), honey, fruits^[15], etc. and sold in the nearby villages^[16].

Usefulness of forest in human life

Forests are the basic need for usefulness in human life cycle in ancient times which was mentioned in Sanskrit *Kavya* Literature. Flora derived from the forest has great utility for humans' day-to-day life in ancient times. The essential needs of human beings are fulfilled by flora, such as residence, clothing, and food as well as they are also used in other works such as make-up cosmetics.

Nivasa

The ascetics, sages, monks, etc. used to construct habitats with wild vegetation in ancient times. The residences built in this way were called *Kuṭī*^[17], *Parnasala*^[18] and *Uṭaja*^[19]. Mainly wild flora was used to built houses or *Uṭaja* (*uṭajas*) etc.^[20] In the *Meghadūtam*, also mentioned that “*Vāsayajī*” is made of soft strings of bamboo.^[21] In the *Raghuvamśa*, also mentions bower (*kunjah*) which is made of bamboo (13/35, 16/21) and cools the racy air of the rivers. There is a reference to the construction of one type of bamboo, a sort of cane (*Vānīra - grha*)^[22] on the banks of the rivers by the luxuriant people.

Vastra

Flora is also the main factor to fulfill the need for textiles. Although animals skin and “*Kauśeyas*” (silken cloth) were also good products of textiles, mainly the fibers of the flora fulfilled the need for textiles. The art of covering the body with clothes and becoming beautiful and attractive has been adopted by humans from a distance-time. In Sanskrit *Kāvya* Literature, from the point of view of beauty, there are mentions of various types of precious fabrics, coloured, painted, and studded with gold gems^[23]. *Kṣauma* (*Kumāra*. 5/16, 67) and *Dukūla* (*Kumāra*. 7/3, 7/7) garment were made floras fibers. There is a statement of tying *Mangalsutra* made of wool in the hand in the *Pārvaṭī* in the context of her wedding (*Kumāra*. 7/25). In Sanskrit poetry *Valkala* (Rvm. 12/8/8, 11/13/66), Silk (*Kumāra*. 7/3, 7 Me. Ut. 7), Cotton (Na.Ca. 20/159, 21/2), Woolen (*Kumāra*. 7/25), *Kṣauma*, etc. refer to the context of different types of garments. On the way to the forest, Rāma-Laxmaṇa wore the *Valkala* clothes (Rvm. 12/18). *Pārvaṭī* wore *Valkala* (bark of the tree) clothes, in the same way, Arjuna wore tree bark (*Kirāta*. 1/35) and *Valkala* clothes. The *Saptaṛṣis* wore pearl-made sacred thread and golden *Valakala* (which is silk fabrics were called “*Cīnanśuka*” i.e china silk). Damayantī wore silk clothes as depicted in the Na.Ca^[24].

Food and Drinks

Food is of the highest importance from the point of view of life in society. Flora completes the diet of man. Sanskrit *Kāvya* Literatures refers to the use of various foods derived from plants such as- *Sāli*, *Taṇḍula*, *Kalam*, *Nīvāra*, and *Śyāmaka Dhānya*, etc. (Rvm. 5/9, 11/52, 4/20, 17/53). Included flora, the use of flowers, fruits, roots, tubers, leaves, etc. was also used as a food. In the forest, the sages -ascetics used to eat this type of food. For eating fruits included such

as- wild *Gular* (Me. Pū. 44), *Drākṣā* (Na.Ca. 21/152), *Dāḍima* (Na.Ca. 1/82, 83), *Nāriyal* (Rvm. 4/42), *Kharjura* (Rvm. 4/57), *Āmalakī* (Na.Ca. 1/98), *Karkandhu fāla* (Na.Ca. 19/51), *Kadali* (Na.Ca. 2/37), *Jāmun* (Na.Ca. 11/85), etc. are mentioned. When Bharata reached the *Āśrama* of *muni* Bhāradvāja, he was given a drink from the trees to welcome him and said that present here, *Bhagavan Soma*, a variety of flowers, honey, etc. which selected from trees and drinks which is made from various types of fruits pulses ^[25].

Ornaments

Flora has been used extensively for the cosmetics and decorations made for dressing. Poets who love art and beauty have described it vividly in their *Kāvya*s. "*Kalpavṛkṣa*" of *Alakāpuri* is gifted beautiful clothing, honey, sprout, flower, ornament, and "*lākṣārāsa*" (largely used by women to decorate feet and lips) for young women.^[26] To pleased Lord Śiva, *Mātā Pārvatī* used to go ornate with various types of flowers.^[27] *Devi Saraswati* also wears a "*sindhuvāra*" flower with her ear for more attractive also described that the people join the princess "*Rājyasrī*'s" marriage party, adorned their ears with branches of *Śirīṣa* flowers (*śirīṣa kusumastavakarnapureiḥ*- Ha.Ca-U-4, p-63).

Cosmetics

Since ancient times, it has been found that herbs are used as cosmetics. Just like in the modern period, the importance of herbal is very high today. The word "*Aṅgarāga*" (Ha.Ca-U-4, p-69) refers to cosmetics. Writer *Bāṇa* has mentioned in the *Harṣacarita*, that queen *Rājyasrī*, increased her beauty to used powder of *candana* and as a perfume in her body used the flowers (*kusumāmodanirharinim....nirgatam*, Ha.Ca-U-4, p-71). Separate cosmetics were mentioned for various body parts. The forehead, lips, fingernails, and feet are particularly noted in such organs (*Śiśu*. 8/55, 9/46). *Patralekhā* (shape of leaves)^[28] was painted on the forehead and tilak was made.

Forest as shelter provider

Since ancient times, the forest was considered as a place used for the settlement of the sages for years. Forests, *Udyāna*, and *Vanikā* were the suitable place for residence. King *Yayāti* had built a new house in *Āśoka Vanikā* for *Sarmisthā*, who was the daughter of *Vṛṣaparvā* and her ten thousand female slaves.^[29] According to the *Śiva Purāṇa*, in the ancient times in the superior forest called "*Dāru*", *Śiva* devotees used to reside in *Brāhmaṇas* immediately ^[30].

Forest for austerity

In ancient times, the forest was used as the only place of excellence from performing austerities. This means to say that the penance required peace, which was in the forest itself. In the *Kirātārjunīyam* of *Mahākavi* Bhāravi, Arjuna climbed *Indrakila* mountain for austerity and after polishing it on the top of the tree with the weight of flowers, he got the refined and sacred forestland as if it was like a happy heart ^[31]. According to the *Śiva Purāṇa*, it is mentioned that the "*Kāmada vana*" is the best place to do penance. Atri and *Anusūyā* meditated in this forest ^[32]. Austerity done in the forests is a virtue. This witness shows the importance of asceticism in this verse of the *Matsya Purāṇa* ^[33].

Conclusion

Forests social aspect as depicted in Sanskrit *Kavya* Literature. forest was one of the basic need for human beings. Forests are the basis of humane life, we can understand the importance of

forests by the benefits they provide. Which are called direct and indirect benefits. That is why the people at ancient times used to have a sense of fraternity with the forest and lived their lives solely depending on the forest.

संघर्ष सूची

1. ब्राह्मणोऽस्य मुखमासीद्बाहु राजन्य कृतः
ऊरूतदस्य यद्वैश्यः पद्भ्यां शूद्रोऽजायत् ॥ (RV. X. 90. 12)
2. ब्राह्मणो मुखतः सृष्टो ब्रह्मणो राजसत्तम्
बाहुभ्यां क्षत्रियः सृष्ट ऊरूभ्यां वैश्य एव च ।
वर्णानां परिचार्यार्थं त्रयाणां भरतर्षभ
वर्णश्चतुर्थः संभूतः पद्भ्यां शूद्रो विनिर्मितः ॥ (Mbh. ŚP-122. 4-5)
3. चातुर्वर्ण्यं मया सृष्टं गुणकर्मविभागशः
तस्य कर्तारमपि मां विध्यकर्तारमव्ययम् ॥ (Bh. Gī. 4. 13)
4. अध्यापनमध्ययनं यजनं याजनं तथा
दानं प्रतिग्रहं चैव ब्राह्मणानाम कल्पयत् ॥ (Msm. 1.88)
5. न संवसेच्च पतिनैर्न चाण्डालैर्न पुलकसैः
न मूर्खैर्न वलिप्तैश्च नान्यैर्नान्यावसायिभिः ॥ (Msm. 4. 79)
6. शूद्रयोऽन्यां प्रजातोऽस्मि तप उग्रं समास्थितः
देवत्वं प्रार्थये राम सशरीरो महायशः ॥ (Rām. VII. 76. 2-4)
7. वानप्रस्थस्य ब्रह्मचर्यं भूमौ शय्या जटाऽभिधारणमग्निहोत्रभिषेकौ
देवतापित्रतिथिपूजा वन्यश्चाहार । (Kau.Artha. 1. 2. 1)
8. परिव्राजकस्य संयतेन्द्रियत्वमनारम्भो निष्किञ्चनत्वं
सङ्गत्यागे भैक्षमनेकत्रारण्यवासो बाह्याभ्यन्तरं च शौचम् ॥ (Kau. Artha. 1.2. 2)
9. शैलराजस्य विविके पावतेतते
पराशयोः महातपः वेदानऽध्यापयामासः ॥ (Mbh. XII. 327. 31)
10. अन्नदेवा सगन्धर्वा सिद्धश्च परमर्षयः
मगस्त्या नियताहाराः सततं पर्युपासते ॥ (Rām. Aranya Kāṇḍa)
11. विप्राश्च गत्वा वह्निरिधमहेतोः प्राप्ताः समितपुष्पवित्रहस्तः
ततः प्रधानाः कृतबुद्धयोः पितमं द्रष्टुमीयुर्ण मथानभीयुः ॥ (Bu. Ca. 7. 4)
12. पदं तुषारस्त्रुतिधौतरक्तं यस्मिन्नदृष्ट्वापि हताद्विषानाम्
विदन्ति मार्गं नखरन्ध्रमुक्तैर्मुक्ताफलैः केसरिणां किराता ॥ (Kumāra. 1. 6)
13. व्याधो ब्रवीतकामद काममाशादनेन विश्वास्य मृगान निहत्य
अर्थस्तु शक्रोपम यद्यनेन हन्त प्रतीचानय शुक्ल मेतत् ॥ (Bu. Ca. 6. 62)
14. अथ प्रविशन्दूरादेव गृहैरूपेत्तम् वनग्रामकं ददर्श । (Ha.Ca. U-7, p, 123-124)
15. काष्ठसंग्रहार्थमटवीम् प्रविशताभाराश्च मधुनो वनफलपुरित ।
(Ha.Ca. P, 122)
16. भाराकान लोकेनादाय वजता.....
विक्रयचिन्ताव्यग्रभिग्रामेयकभिष्याप्तदिगन्तरम् ॥ (Ha.Ca. P, 124)
17. आतपात्ययसंक्षिप्तनीवारासु निषादिभिः
मृगैर्वर्तितरोमन्यमुटजाङ्गनभूमिषु ॥ (Rvm. 1. 50)
18. पर्णशालामय क्षिप्रं विकृष्टासिः प्रविश्य सः
वैरूप्यपौनरूकत्येन भीषणां तामयोजयत् ॥ (Rvm. 12. 40)
19. विशेषिसत्त्वौज्जितनपूर्वमत्सरं दुमैरभोष्टप्रवार्चितातिथि
नवोटजान्यन्तरसैभूतामलं तपोवनं तच्च बभूव पावनम् ॥ (Kumāra. 5. 17)
20. तत्र तीर्थसलिलेन दीर्घिकास्तल्पमन्तरितभूमिभिः कुशैः
सौधवासमुटजेन विस्मृतः सचिकाय फलनिःस्पृहस्तपः ॥ (Rvm. 19. 2)
21. तन्मध्ये च स्पटिक फलका कान्चनी वासयति

- मूले बद्धा मणिभिरनति प्रौढवंश प्रकाशैः ।
तालैः शिन्जावलयसुभगे नीर्तितः कान्तया मे
यामध्यास्ते दिवसविगमे नीलकण्ठः सुहृद् ॥ (Me. Ut. 19)
22. अत्रानुगोदं मृगयानिवृत्तस्तरंगवातेन विनीतखेदः
रहस्यदुत्सङ्गनिषण्णमूर्धा स्मरामि वानीरगृहेषुसुप्तः ॥ (Rvm. 13. 35)
23. दिने दिने शैवलवन्त्यधस्तात्सोपानपर्वाणि विमुन्चदम्भः
उदण्डपद्मं गृहदीर्घिकाणां नारीनितम्बद्वयसं वभूव ॥ (Rvm. 16. 46)
24. लीनचीनांशुकं स्वेदिनदरालोक्यं विलोकयन्
तन्निताम्बं स निश्वस्य निनिन्द दिनदीर्घताम् ॥ (Na. Ca. 20. 159)
25. विचित्राणि च माल्यानि पादपप्रच्युतानि च
सुरादीनि च पेयानि मांसानि विविधानि च ॥ (Rām. II. 91. 21)
26. वासाश्चित्रं मधु नयनयोर्विभ्रमादेशदक्षम्
पुष्पोद्भेदं सह किसलयैर्भषणानां विकल्पान्
लाक्षारागं चरणकमलन्यासयौग्यस्ते यस्या
मेकः सूते सकलमवलामण्डन कल्पवृक्षः ॥ (Me. Ut. 13)
27. अशोकनिर्भत्सितपद्मरागमाकृष्टहेमद्युतिकर्णिकारम्
मुक्ताकलापीकृतसिन्धुवारं वसन्तपुष्पाभरणं बहन्ती ॥ (Kumāra. 3. 53)
28. वन्यस्तशुकलागुरु चक्रुरङ्गं गोरोचनापत्रविभक्तमस्याः
सा चक्रवाकाङ्कितसैकतायास्त्रिस्तोतसः कान्तिमतीत्य तस्थौ ॥ (Kumāra. 7. 15)
29. अशोकवनिकाभ्याशो गृहं कृत्वान्यवेशयत् । (Mt. Pu. 31. 2)
30. दारूनामवनं श्रेष्ठं तत्रासन्नृषिसत्तमाः
शिवभक्ताः सदा नित्यं शिवध्यानपरायणाः ॥ (Śi. Pu. Ko. Sam. 12. 6)
31. अधिरुह्य पुष्पभरनमृशिरवै परित परिष्कृत तलातरुभिः
मनस प्रसत्तिमिव मूर्ध्निगिरे शुचिमाससाद सवनान्त भवुम् ॥ (Kirāta. 6. 17)
32. दक्षिणस्यां दिशि महत् कामदं नाम यद्वनम्
चित्रकूट समीपेऽस्ति तपसां हतिदं सताम् ॥ (Śi. Pu. ko. Sam. 3. 7)
33. बाहुद्य च नदीपुण्या तथा सिद्धवनं शुभम्
श्राद्धमेतेषु सर्वेषु दत्तं कोटिशतोत्तरम् ॥ (Mt. Pu. 22. 55-56)

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