

Forest and Trees Associated with Lord Buddha

– Basanta Bidari

The relationship between culture and ecology is an integral one in Buddhism. The basic concept in it entails that tree, plants in short the entire environment is our friend.

Nature according to the ancient sages was the sustaining source and pre-requisite for life on earth. Hence the Vedic seers who lived in close proximity with nature stressed that care and goodwill should be showered on tree and plants to invoke their blessings. That is why there are beliefs that plants have supernatural powers to both, bless and punish. Tree-planting has, and still continues to be an act of great religious merit, associated with peace, health, wealth, happiness and abundance of grains.

Traces of ecological protection can be found in ancient scripture like vedas, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Upanisads, Puranas, Tripitakas, Jataka stories. Most of the Buddhist literatures mentioned about the forest and tree which are associated with Lord Buddha.

Vedic Period: Worshipping, mainly the flowering, shadowy and medicine tree were common practice in the vedic period. Not only worshipping even various gods had the symbolic identity with the trees they are Kadam (Anthocephalus chinensis) for Sri Krishna, Asoka (Saraca indica) for Kamadeva, Palash (Buteamonosperma) for Shiva, Koiralo (Bauhinia veriegata) for Laxmi, Kamal (Nelumbium nucifera) and Tulsi (Ocimum sanctum) for Vishnu, Amaltas (Cassia fistula) for God of fortune, Japa-puspi or China rose (Hibiscus rosasinensis) for Durgā or Kālī, Pipal (Ficus religiosa) for Sani, Bar (Ficus benghalensis) for Brahmā, Need (Azadirachta Indica) for Sitalā, Asoka, Pipal, Sāla (Shorea robusta) for Buddha etc.

The leaves of Bar tree has special importance when the newly married bride groom enters in her new house (Grihaprabesh ceremony).

Flowers and leaves of Palās had the great importance in the flower festivals. The flower of Mahuwa (*Engelhardtia spicata*) tree was used to decorate the bride groom.

Similarly, the Apa (*Mangifera indica*) tree was also vested with supernatural powers. The leaves of this tree still used on all joyous occasions - birth, marriage Griha Pravesh (Celebration in the new house) etc. Strings made of mango leaves are hung at the entrance of the house and also within, to ward of evil spirits, hence, these leaves are symbolic of good luck. Asoka leaves are associated with Gautama Buddha, Indra, Vishnu and Aditya.

The banyan (*Ficus benghalensis*) tree is still worshipped in the month of July by Hindu women who fast for the long life of their husbands. This day is associated with the pauranic legend of Satyavān and his wife Sabitri. This tree is also associated with various other Gods and Goddesses like Brahmā, Vishnu, Maheshwara, Krishna, Kubera, Yākshini and Laxmi.

According to Kalpastura Bar, Durmi (*Ficus glomerata*) Supāri (*Acacia catechu*), Palās, Bel (*Aegle marmelos*) etc. were mentioned in many religious texts and had a big influence among the people of that period. Among the grasses Dubo (*Cynodon dactylon*) and Kusha (*Desmotachya bipinnata*) had a great significance. Further there are many names of the tree mentioned in various religious texts in vedic period they are Bar, Dumsi, Palāsh, Bel, Barro (*Terminalia belerica*) Neem. Bakāino (*Melia azedarach*) Chatiwan (*Alstonia scholaris*) Simal (*Ceibamalabaricum*) Koiralo (*Bauhinia vereigato*) etc.

Rāmāyana Period: Puspa Vātika of King Janaka, Asoka-Vatikā of Ravana, Alakapuri of Kubera, Nandan Vana of Vali, Madhuvana of Sugriba were the most popular forests and gardens find liveliness description in Rāmāyana. There are many references of the garden in the towns, villages and private houses. It shows us that the flower and gardens were more popular in this period than Vedic time.

Rāmāyana described that the Arjuna (*Terminalia arujuna*), Kaner of Karvir (*Nerium oderum*), Jupa puspa or Karnikār (*Hibiscus mutabilis* or *H. rosasinensis*) were the favourite tree of Sitā. This epic further mentions that Hanumān first show Sitā in Asoka garden of Ravana and she was having red flower's garland. The Asoka garden of Ravana used to have Sāla (*Shorea robusta*) Asoka (*Saraca indica*) Champā (*Michelia champaca*), Neem (*Azadirachta Indica*) and Aap (*Mangifera indica*) Sisso (*Dalbergia Sisso*) in Rāmāyana period there were well planned towns and systematic road channels. Both sides of the road there were rows of shadowy flowers and fruit trees. Among the tree the Chandan or Sāndal wood (*Santalum album*) was very popular for fragrant and wood.

This epic further gives the story that the tragedy of the separation with Sitā, Rāma asked about Sitā with the Kadam, Arjuna, Asoka trees. When Rāma could not get the information he roamed in the forest along with Laxmana. On the way, near the Pampā pond they enjoyed the flowers and trees of Chameli (*Quisqualis indica*), Mallikā (*Jasminum auqustifolium*), Kamal (*Nelumbium nucifera*), Ketakti (*Yucca smalliana*), Malsari or Bakulā (*Mimusops*

elengi) Champā (*Michelia champaka*) Kadam. Aap (*Mangifera indica*), Koiralo (*Bahunia Variegata*) Sirisa (*Albizia labbek*) Shimal (*Bombox malabaricum*) Palāsh (*Butea monsperma*) Candan (*Santalum album*) etc.

Mahābhārata Period: Mahābhārata mentioned the very famous forest Vrindavana where Krishna and Radhikā played in their childhood on the kadam tree. The town of Indraprastha was decorated with garden, waterfalls and Asoka, Bar, Pipal, Champā, Palāsh, Amaltash Rājvriksha (*Cassia fistula*) trees.

Prajāpati Kasyapa in his treaty 'Vriksha Aurveda', suggested the following trees should plant in the different types of land. For the normal land Dumri (*Ficus glomerata*), Arjuna (*Terminalia arjuna*) Rukh Katahar (*Artocarpus integrifolia*) Bāns (*Bambusa Spp.*) Kāgati (*Citrus aurantifolia*) Jāmūnā (*syzygium cumini*), Tilak (*Chlerodendron pholomoides*) Supāri (*Areca catechu*) Kerā (*Musa paradisiaca*) Palāsh, Ketuki (*Pandanusis*), Nariwol (*Cocos nucifera*) trees are good to be planted. For the dryland Bel, Asoka, Neem, Bhalāyo (*Semecarpus anacardium*) and near the pond area Bar, Pipal, Khayera (*Acacia catchu*), Bhoja Patra (*Betula bhojpatra*) Bāns, Kadam tree is suitable. For the pleasurable places Palāsh is advised. Kasyapa further mentioned that near the religious site or temple are the Aap. Supāri, Mālati (*Tuisqualis indica*) Dumri, Arjuna and Neem trees are best to be planted.

Buddha Period: This period is the landmark of the tree plantation and conservation of the forest. There are lot of forests and various type of tree which are

directly or indirectly associated with Lord Buddha. Gardening was quite popular among the people of this period. Most gardens were made near the monasteries and stupas. We find the description of gardens of Nalanda and Takshasila, which were very famous gardens of that time. There are many literary and sculptural references that Lord Buddha was born, enlightened and passed away under the tree. There are more than sixty one name of the forests mentioned in various Buddhist literatures. (The names are attached in the last page) These names are mostly found in Tripitakas, Attakathas, Jatakas and geography of the Buddha period. According to these references there were many natural forests, man made forests, various deer parks and sub-forests. Lord Buddha during his travel generally spent his night either near the pond or in the Amravana (mango grove)/ Amalakavanat (emblic myrobalan)/ Arandyavana (natural forest).

The Pāli Tripitakas and Attakathas mention mainly very popular forests of Madhya desa (central country) they are Anandhavana of Srāvasti, Anjana vana and Kantaki vana of Sāketa, Ketakivana of Nalakapan, Mahāvanas of Kapilvastu and Vaisāli, Lumbinivana of Sākya, Sālvana of Mallas of Kusinagar, Veshakalavana of Vajja, Parilekyavana of Chedi, Ambatakavana of Kasi, Sisapavana of Alabi and Kausambi, Veluvana of Rajgriha and Kimbila, Pippalivana of Moriya, Nāgavana of Vajjiya etc.

Some of the forest are directly associated with Lord Buddha they are:

- 1: **Jetavana:** Jetavana was the forest belonged to prince Jeta of Srāvasti. According to Mahapadāna sutra Anātha pindika a merchant, purchased that forest and built three monasteries (Kareri kuti, Kosāmba kuti and Gandha kuti). One Salalaar kuti was constructed by king Prasenjit and these monasteries were presented to Lord Buddha and community of monks. Lord Buddha preached Lakshena-sutra and seventy Sutras of Majjima nikaya in this forest. According to Anguttara nikāya and Buddhavamsa Lord Buddha spent his twentyone to fortyfive rainy seasons (Varsābash) in this forest (at Gandakuti).
- 2: **Nyagrodhvana:** According to Attakathā (Manoratha Purani) of Anguttara nikāya and Buddhavamsa Attakathā (Madhurattha vilasini) mentioned that Lord Buddha spent his fifteenth rainy season at Nyagrodhvana of Kapilvastu. This is the place where Lord Buddha met his father Suddhodana for the first time after the enlightenment. Here, Lord Buddha preached five strutras of Majjima nikāya. This vana is visited by the Chinese traveller Yuan-Chwang in seventh century A.D. and mentioned in his travel account.
- 3: **Mahāvana:** There were three Mahāvanas of Vaisali, Urubela and Kapilvastu as mentioned in the Buddhist literatures.
 - (a) Mahāvana of Vaisāli: Mahali sutta mentions that Lord Buddha was seen in the Kutirasāla of Mahāvana at Vaisāli and spent fourtysixth rainy season in this place.
 - (b) Mahāvana of Uruvela: This place was within the Malla kingdom and Lord Buddha visited here many times. According to the Anguttara nikāya Lord Buddha told to Ananda about this forest and Lord Buddha spent five years following five Brahmin's preaching before enlightenment.
 - (c) Mahāvana of Kapilavastu: Various Buddhist sutras have mention about this vana. Attakathā of Vinaya-pitaka is very important for the geographical history of Buddha period. This history specially for the Mahāvana of Kapilvastu gives the detail description. This vana extended from Himalaya to Vaisali thus this was called Mahāvana of Kapilavastu.
- 4: **Lumbini Vana:** According to Pāli literatures Lumbini vana was lying in between the Kapilavastu kingdom to the west and Devadaha kingdom to the east. Divyavadāna gives the detail description of this forest and mentions that Lord Buddha was born in this forest under an Asoka tree. Both the Chinese travellers Fa-hsien and Yuan-Chwang in fifth and seventh centuries A.D. visited this place and named it Lā-Fa-ni Grove.
- 5: **Venuvana:**
 - (a) Venuvana of Kajangala: Anguttara nikāya states that Lord Buddha spent many time in this forest. Pāli Tripitakas mention that Venuvana of Kajangala was the eastern boundary of central kingdom.

(b) Venuvan of Rājgriha: In this forest Lord Buddha preached various sutras of Majjima-nikāya. According to suttā nipata and Sumangala vilāsini, king Bimbisāra met Lord Buddha at Rājgriha and presented Venuvana (Bamboo grove) to him and monk community. Vinaya pitaka further tells that there were other forests too, they were Jivakarma vana, Latthivana etc. Lord Buddha spent his second, third and fourth rainy seasons at this Venuvana. The Chinese traveller Yuan-Chwang had seen a big cave in Venuvana where Mahākasyapa used to live along with his five hundred monks.

- 6: **Amravana:** According to Papanchasudini Amravana near Rājgriha was presented to Lord Buddha by one medicant Jivaka. This place was so peaceful and tranquil that ven. Rāhula (son of Siddhartha Gautama) spent most of his time in this forest.
7. **Ambapāli vana:** Various Buddhist literatures have described about this vana which was situated towards south of Vaisāli. Lord Buddha before travelling to kusinagara for his Mahāparinirvāna he spent last year of his life in this vana. Before he travelled to Kusinagara, Lord Buddha accepted the food offered by Amrapāli the owner of this vana and she presented this vana to Lord Buddha and monk community. Both the Chinese travellers visited this place and Yuan Chwang even mentions in his account that he saw that particular place from where Lord Buddha had observed Vaisali for the last time.

Trees directly associated with Lord Buddha:

1. Birth Tree:

So far the birth tree is concerned there are five different species (may be more) of trees mentioned in various Buddhist texts, travellers account and early sculptural panels.

- (a) **Asoka tree:** Asokavadāna, the traveller account of Emperor Asoka mentions that Upagupta the spiritual teacher, pointed to the emperor, the actual Asoka tree under which Lord Buddha was born. Fa-Hsien saw this asoka tree still alive when he came to Lumbini at fifth century A.D. Yuan-Chawng saw this asoka tree in its place, but dead.

According to the Sarvata Vinaya and other authorities, it was an asoka tree. Vinayavasta mentions that when Māyādevi went to Lumbini garden, she gave birth by holding the branch of the tree Tathāgata.

Some modern literatures also support the asokan tree as the birth tree. 'The Teaching of Buddha' by B.D. Kyokai states that. 'All about here were Ashoka blossoms and in delight she reached out her right arm to pluck a branch and as she did so a prince was born'. 'Flowering Trees and shrubs in India' by D.V. cower also supports the asoka tree as the birth tree.

- 1: **Asoka tree:** There are some early sculptures which depict the branch of asoka tree which Mayadevi hold, during

the time of delivery. These sculptural panels clearly shows the leaves of asoka tree.

- (a) The sculptural Panel from Nāgarjunakonda, now is in the National Museum, New Delhi. On the dexter of the relief, of the third century A.D. is the bent figures of Māyā, grasping the bough of a (asoka) tree, with two attendants.
- (b) The birth of Buddha and seven steps, Nalanda, now in Indian Museum, Calcutta, As shown here, the birth is attended not only by Indra and Brahmā but also by Vishnu. Here to Māyā holding a branch of a (asoka) tree indicated by its leaves.
- (c) A panel from Goli (Andra Pradesh) depicted Veswantara Jātaka where Veswantara is seen driving a bullock-cart; his wife and two children are within the wagon. In this panel an asoka tree is clearly seen by its leaves. The panel is now in the Government Museum, Madras.
- (d) The birth of Sākyamuni, stone plaque from Gāndhāra, is now in Victoria and Albert Museum, London. This plaque illustrates the birth of the infant Sākyamuni from right side of his mother and also shows the child on the ground. Here Māyā is holding a branch of a tree (Asoka), Birth of Siddhārtha, from Mous C, Sahri-Bahiol, Pākistan, now in Peshāwar Museum, Pesāwar, Pākistan. This plaque represents the birth of Siddhārtha, when Māyā grasping a

(asoka) tree with the child emerging from her right side.

- 2: **Pipal Tree:** Lalitavistāra and some other Buddhist literatures make the tree to have been a pipal tree. All the Buddhist literatures and sculptural panels agreed that Lord Buddha was enlightened under a pipal tree.

Some Sculptural panels which show Lord Buddha seating under this tree. They are:

- (a) Enlightenment represented by a pipal tree sanctuary, Relief on the Prasenajit Pillar of the stupa; from Bharhut, Madhya Pradesh, India; 2nd cent. B.C. Here pipal tree with its characteristic pointed leaves and rich decoration of parasols and garlands and the throne symbolically represent the Buddha.
- (b) The first meal after Buddha's Enlightenment. Stone slab from the dome of a stupa; from Nāgarjunakonda. Andra Pradesh, India, 3rd-4th cent. A.D. now Nāgarjunakonda Archaeological Museum. Here, Buddha is shown seating in front of a pipal tree and receives the four alms bowls that the four Great Kings who guard the points of the compass have brought.
- (c) Māra's Attack: On the wall of Cave 26 at Ajantā. On the dexter of the relief, Māra is mounted on his elephant, with his demonic hosts threatening Gautama with various missiles and weapons in order to dislodge him from his seat under a pipal tree.

- (d) Miracle of Vaisali, on the northern gateway of stupa 1 at Sanchi: the relief, of the first century B.C. depicts monkey approaching Buddha (represented by a seat below a pipal tree) with a begging-bowl which has been filled up with honey.
- (e) Temptation and Assault of Māra on a Slab from Ghantasāla, Andhra Pradesh, Now in the Musée Guimet, Paris. This Lime Stone Slab formed part of the stone vaneer of the main stupa. It depicts Mara's assault and retreat and Mara's daughters tempting Buddha but in vain. The latter's presence indicated symbolically by a throne below the pipal tree.
- (f) Devotion to the Pipal tree and Vajrasana at Bodha Gaya, from Amarāvati, Andhra Pradesh India, 1st cent. B.C. This scene represents the sacred place of Bodh Gaya, the sacred pipal tree under which the Buddha sat to achieve his enlightenment and his seat vajrasana.
- (g) Sākya-muhi's Victory over Māra, from Bactro-Gandhara region, Pakistan, now in Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institute Washington D.C. Here the pipal tree above Buddha's head and his Bhūmisparśa mudra (earth touching posture) are key elements.
- 3: **Sāla Tree:** There are some high authorities like Hardy and Bigandet, D. Mitra, S.L. Huntigton identified the tree as the Sāla tree under which Lord Buddha was born.

Their main observation is on the basis of sculptural panel, but if these panels are observed keenly their leaves are more similar to the Asoka than Sāla. Nevertheless, most of the Buddhist literatures mention that Lord Buddha passed away (entered into Mahāparinirvāna) under the Sāla tree.

There are some sculptural panels which show that Lord Buddha passed away in between two Sāla Trees.

- (a) Great disease: from the Gandhara region, now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. In this panel Buddha is seen lying on his right side with one leg resting over the other on a couch spread between two sāla trees (only one tree exists on the slab; the other was presumably carved on another slab which depicted the continuation of the scene).
- (b) The final Nirvāna of the Buddha, from Kapisa, Afghanistan, Gandhara art, now in Kabul Museum, depicts the figure of the Enlightened One lying on his right side, his head resting on the palm of his hand and his left arm stretched out and there are the figures of two Sāla trees.
- (c) Mahāparinirvāna, cave 26, Ajanta. This sculpture panel depicts that Buddha is lying on a couch between two Sāla trees with his eyes closed and head resting on the pillow. Monks and nuns surround him morning. Indra and other gods, are seen descending from sky to welcome the Great Being to heaven.

(d) The final Nirvana and cult of the stupa, from East India (exact provenance unknown); now in British Museum. In this panel Buddha is lying in between two Sāla trees and above him is the stupa which indicates that the stupa making tradition was started among the Buddhist after master's nirvana.

4: Some of the literatures and sculptural panel dipictions indicate that Lord Buddha was born under a mango tree. This tree was variously associated with lord Buddha in his life time. Amrapālī a dweller of Rajgriha presented her Amravana (mango grove) to the lord Buddha during Buddha's visit to Vaisāli. One Chinese translation merely has "Lim-pi (Lumbi-Manog ? trees " and under one of them the Pusa is born.

(a) The birth of Sakya muni: Relief sculpture; from the Sundhāra Fountain, Deo Pātan, Nepal, early Licchavi period, now National Museum, Kathmandu, This relief shows Sākyamuni immediately after his miraculous birth from the right side of his mother, Queen Maya. She is holding the branch of mango tree and shows the panel where leaves and mango fruits are clearly identified.

(b) Vedikā rounded showing purchase of Jetavanārāma at Sravasti, From Bhārhut, Madhya Pradesh, India, Sunga period Ca. 100-80 B.C. now in Indian Museum Calcutta. The relief illustrates the story of the purchase of a grove by Anathapindika, who wanted to donate it to Sākyamuni

Buddha and the Buddhist community. This event is depicted in the right half of the composition by the workers who are covering the ground with pieces of gold in order to meet the outrageous piece requested by Prince Jeta, owner of the grove. The grove is represented with five trees and one of them as the mango tree and mango fruits are clearly identified.

(c) Vedika roundel showing Mahakapi Jataka, from Bharhut, Madhya Pradesh, India, Sunga period now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. This panel demonstrates the performance of good works toward one's relatives. Since the story concerns an animal incarnation, there is no reason to expect an anthropomorphic depiction of the Buddha. Once when he was king of eighty thousand monkeys, the monkey Bodhisattva stretched his body from one tree to another across a river so that the other monkeys could use it as a bridge and escape attack from a human king and in his entourage who had come to find a famous mango tree that bore extraordinarily luscious fruit. The last monkey, who was the incarnation of the Buddha's evil cousin Devadatta, stomped on the bodhisattva's back and broke it. Impressed by the generosity of the monkey king's sacrifice, the human care for him and the monkey king then taught the human king the virtue and meaning of his own actions.

(d) Sculpted cell and guardian, lower level, Rani Gumpa, Udayagiri (Khandagiri), Orissa, India. This small chambers may have been intended as guard station. The carving of the relief is extremely lively and freely composed and there is a great sense of crowding of the surface with numerous elements such as elephants, mango trees and figures.

(e) Bodhisattva at school, stone, Borobudur, Java 8th century A.D. depicts long stone carving sculptural panel, south side of the Bodhisattva a big mango tree with its fruits are early identified.

- 5: There are some Buddhist Sutras in which they mention that Lord Buddha was born under a Plaksha tree, locally known as Pakada of Kabhro (waved-leaf fig tree ficus Infectoria), but sculptural panels are not available showing this tree.

The Abhiniskramana-Sutra describes that "When the time come for the perfect Buddha, the Blessed One, to be born in Lumbini Garden, his mother stretched up and held the branch of a tree with her hands. What kind of a tree was it? It was a plaksha tree!

It also says in the Buddhavamsaka-sutra: "O son of a good family, when the mother Mahamayadevi arrived at the site of the plaksha tree, the bodies as well as all the messes of offerings of all those who were intent upon presenting offerings to the great Bodhisattva," "

In the Aryaupaya Kausalya mahayana-sutra, it is stated: "Question: Why was the Bodhisattva born while his mother was standing upright and turned, holding the limb of a plaksha tree?" Reply: He was born easily in order to remove the kind of doubt that would think" "

We find various species of trees mention in Buddhist literatures and sculptural representation which had direct or indirect association with the Lord Buddha. They are:

- 6: Bar or Banyan tree: From the ancient time this tree has continued to be an object of worship with religious and sacred values. Thus bar tree has been worshipped by both the Hindus and Buddhist. Buddhist literatures describe that the lord Buddha spent his fifteen rainy season at Kapilavastu in Nigrodharam (monastery constructed in the bar forest). There are some sculptural representation which depicts the bar tree along with the lord Buddha and sometime bar tree alone.

(a) The Cutting of the Hair, Borobudur, Jāvā, 8th century A.D. In this panel Bodhisattva is shown in the middle and cutting of his hair with a sword. Behind him are chandaka and horse. There are two bar trees to the right and left side of the Bodhisattva.

(b) Buddha's Journey to Banāras, Borobudur, Jāvā, This represents the Buddhas meeting with an Ajivika monk to whom he declared that he was going to Banaras for setting in motion the wheel of his perfect

Dharma. Buddha is seen here with his right hand raised. The Ajivika with his companions is seen to the left. This panel has six different species of trees and to the right side, (lower one) is the bar tree.

- (c) King Suddhodana Paying Homage to Buddha at Kapilvastu, North gate, Stupa 1, Sanchi, 1st century B.C. Here, King Suddhodana is shown with his hands joined in adoration near a banyan (Bar) tree. A throne symbolizes the presence of Buddha. An attendant holds an umbrella over the head of the king.
- (d) Banyan or Bar tree capital, from Vidisa (Besnagar) Madhya Pradesh, India, Sunga period, Ca. 100 B.C. now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. Evidence of a stone pillar having been erected at Vidisa is found in a pillar capital carved in the form of a banyan tree, easily recognized by the shape of the leaves and roots, which have been set down by the limb.
- (e) Nāgarāja Muchilinda at the foot of Buddha's seat, On the western gateway of stupa at Sanchi, Buddha spent six weeks after Enlightenment in the company of the serpent king Muchilinda who shielded him during a rain-shower by his coils and hoods. In this relief (1st century B.C.) however Muchilinda with a five headed hood is seen seated below the seat of Buddha under a banyan tree, over which is an umbrella. The full retinue of the king consists of his two

queens, attendants and a troupe of a dancer and five musicians, all single hooded nagis.

- 7: Jamun or Black berry (Syzygium cumini) This tree is very common in Nepal and India. It is a large evergreen shady tree with smooth grey bark. There are several references regarding the association of this tree with the lord Buddha. The Buddhist people consider the Jamun as a sacred tree. There are some sculptural panels which shows the Jamuna tree associated with the Lord Buddha.
- (a) First meditation of Siddhartha (Sakyamuni Buddha) from Mound c, Sahri-Bahlol, Pakistan, Kusāna period, now in peshāwar Museum, Peshāwar. This sculpture shows one of the important event of the Bodhisattva's life. While a young man living at his father's palace, he was brought to sit under a Jamun (Jambu) tree, where he was to witness a ploughing contest as representative for the king. While sitting he practiced yogic breathing and attained his first trance. When his attendants returned sometime later, they noticed that the shadows of the other trees nearby had moved, but that of the Jamun tree had remained stationary over the meditating prince. In this representation, this specific meditation is indicated by the jamun tree above the head of Bodhisattva and the ploughing scene at the lower right.
- (b) The Ploughing Festival and the First Meditation, Ananda Temple, Pagan,

Myanmar 11th century A.D. This sculpture shows Siddhartha as lying on his head under the Jamun *Syzgygium cumini* with eight nurses attending on him.

- (c) The Ploughing Festival and the First Meditation, Ananda Temple, Pagan, Myanmar, 11th century A.D. Siddhartha is shown here in meditation under the jamun tree, while his father, King Suddhodana and his foster-mother, Mahāprajāpati kneel in adoration. Eight nurses are attending on him.
- 8: **Tada Tree:** In order to attract the mind of the Bodhisattva to worldly life, king Suddhodana got him married to a girl called Gopa or Yasodhara. At this time he was sixteen years of age. The *Lalitavistara* tells us that when Suddhodana wanted to perform the marriage of his son, five hundred Sakyas offered their daughters. The choice of Siddhartha, how-ever, fell on Gopa, the daughter of Dandapani or Suprabuddha who refused to comply until Siddhartha proved his skill in archery and other arts. Although the Bodhisattva was not interested in such feats, he accepted the challenge. The competitors were all defeated in the contest, as the arrow of the Bodhisattva hit not only farther than theirs but crossed the seven Tāda trees, pierced the ground and vanished completely.
- The present sculpture: The Archery contest, Borobudur Jāvā, 8th century A.D. shows the Bodhisattva holding a strong bow with the arrow released. Other competitors including Devadatta and

Ananda are also shown. To the left are the seven Tāda trees, which were used as targets.

- 9: **Veluvana:** Most of the Buddhist literatures mention that king Bimbisara of Rajgriha presented the Velu vana (Bamboo grove) to Lord Buddha and community of monks. This sculpture the Veluvana, North gate, East Pillar, Stupa I, Sanchi, 1st century B.C. identified of the spot is suggested by the bamboo plants shown on either side of the relief.
10. **Unidentified trees:** Many sculptural panels depicts the various flower and fruit trees which are very difficult to be identified. For example: the conversion of the Kasyapas, East gateway, stupa 1, Sanchi, 1st century B.C.

Buddha had to perform a series of other miracles before he could fully convince the Kasyapas of his superiority and convert them. Once a heavy rain fell out of season and there was a flood in all the land. The Kasyapas thought that Buddha had been carried away by the water and hastened in a boat to rescue him.

- (a) In this panel shows the elder Kasyapa and one of his disciples, hastening in a boat over the river Neranjana in flood, presumably to the rescue of the Master. In the lower part of the picture, Buddha (represented by his promenade) is shown wading on the surface of the water. In the foreground, the figures of Kasyapa and his disciple are twice repeated, on dry ground, and doing homage to the

Master (represented by the throne at the right hand bottom corner of the panel) There are six trees, three in each side and right side of the middle one is the mango and other five trees are difficult to identify.

- (b) Miracle of Vaisāli, on the northern gateway, stupa 1, Sanchi. The relief of the first century B.C. depicts a monkey approaching Buddha (represented by a seat below a pipal tree) with a begging-bowl which has been filled up with honey. There is a second monkey behind. Two men, four women and a child possibly represent the crowd which witnessed this miraculous spectacle. In this panel there are three trees one of course a pipal and right one is locally called Salifa (?) middle flower tree is unidentified.

- (c) The Bodhisattva receiving a leaf of grass from Svastika, Borobudur Java 8th century A.D.

Here the Bodhisattva (Who stands on a lotus cushion on the road) is seen receiving the present. There are rows of nine trees which are difficult to identify.

There are many names of the trees mentioned in Buddhist literatures like Tripitaka, Jatakas, Attakathas, Nikāyas sutras etc. These trees have directly or indirectly association with the Lord Buddha. These trees have to be identified with the shape of the leaves, fruits, flowers depicted in the sculptural panels. These trees are:

- 1: Kadam (Anthocephalus Cadamba)
- 2: Sirisa or Parrot tree or East Indian walnut (Albizia labbek)
- 3: Harro or Black Myrobalam (Terminalia chebula)
- 4: Barro (Terminalia balerica)
- 5: Amalā or Emblica Myrobalan (Phyllanthus emblica)
- 6: Bel or wood Apple (Aegle marmelos)
- 7: Palash or Bastard Teak (Butea monsperma)
- 8: Kera or Banana or Plantain (Musa paradisiaca)
- 9: Neem or Margosa tree (Azadirachta indica)
- 0: Srikhanda or chandan or Sandalwood (Santalum album)
- 1: Dumri or Gular (Ficus glomerata)
- 2: Chyuri or Butter fruit (Bassia buty racea)
- 3: Sal or Silk cotton tree (Bombax malabaricum)
- 4: Koirālo or Kachnar (Bahunia variegata)
- 5: Kābhro or Plaksha (Ficus lacor)
- 6: Ukhu or Sugarcane (Saccharum officinarum)
- 7: Rukha Katahar or Jack fruit (Artocarpus integrifolia)
- 8: Amaltāsh or Rajvriksha or Indian Laburnum (Cassia fistula)
- 9: Sāj (Terminalia alata) etc.

The Jatakas also mention various names of the cereals which were grown in Buddha's time (even today). They are: (1) Pady Plant of Dhan or rice (*Oryza sativa*), (2) Vajara (*Pennisetum typhoides*), (3) Chana or gram (*Cicer arietinum*), (4) Mung or mungi or golden gram

(Phaseolus aureus), (5) Til or sesame (Seasmum indicum), (6) Sarasau (Brassica compestris), (7) Khursani or chilly (capsicum annum), (8) Jira (Cuminum cyminum), (9) Pan or betel (Piper betle), (10) Supari or arecanut or betel nut palm (Areca catechu), (11) Ukhu or sugarcane (Saccharum officinarum) Kapasa or cotton (Gossypium arboreum) etc.

There are few names of the vegetables which are mentioned in Jatakas. They are: Pyaza or Onion (*Allium cepa*), Lasun or garlic (*Allium sativum*) Lauka or gourd (*cucurbita pepo*) etc.

At least:

In this present technological age trees play a very important role in our daily life. From the very remote past our primitive ancestors depend upon the trees and forests for shelter, they clothed with tree bark, fruits and later made weapons and tools from the wood. The belief and veneration rendered to plants and trees is what makes greenery precious enough to be preserved. The traditions associated with them are conducive in giving them long term effects and these also prove beneficial to society as a whole.

With the discovery of iron and the Industrial Revolution, several trees were chopped off to make place for factories and also because trees provide us with several things that make our daily existence more comfortable, like furniture, houses, paper etc. So, for their preservation we need to go back to our traditional values and maintain an ecological equilibrium with nature, because it would have several long-term effects not only for us, but also for the generations to come.

Name of the forests as mentioned in Buddhist literatures.

1: Amrapāli vana, 2: Ambataka vana, 3: Amalaki vana, 4: Udaka vana, 5: Karanda vana (Rajgriha), 6: Karandaka vana (Himalaya), 7: Karanda veluvana, 8: Kalaka vana, 9: Kundadhana vana, 10: Kunda vana, 11: Kuru Jangal, 12: Kausa kala vana, 13: Khemica amra vana, 14: Guna vana, 15: Chitralatā vana, 16: Jambu vana, 17: Jātiya vana, 18: Jivakamba vana, 19: Jeta vana, 20: Dandaka vana, 21: Dava vana, 22: Patash vana, 23: Pippali vana, 24: Nyaghrodha vana, 25: Nāga vana, 26: Veshakatla vana, 27: Buddha vana, 28: Mahā vana (Vaisali), 29: Mahāvana (Kapilavastu), 30: Mahā van (Rajgriha), 31: Mahāvana (Uruvela), 32: Mahāsaka vana, 33: Basti vana, 34: Lumbini vana, 35: Vrinda vana, 36: Velu vana (Buchagala), 37: Velu vana (Rajgriha), 38: Sāka vana, 39: Sisapā vana (Setavya), 40: Sisapā vana (Alavi), 41: Sisapā vana (Kausambi) etc.

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