

# Plant Wealth as Revealed in the *Śrī Rudram*

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## Abstract

Lord Rudra is the deity mentioned in all four Vēdic texts at multiple places and in multiple forms. Also, Rudra is highly admired in the Vedas, Purāṇas, Epics and later Sanskrit texts. There is a detailed section in praise of Rudra in the *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda* (KYV) and *Śukla Yajurveda* (SYV) *Samhitās* and it is termed as the '*Śrī Rudram*'. The Mantras/liturgies in the *Śrī Rudram* describe agriculture crops, plants, trees and botanical and agriculture terminology. In *Śrī Rudram*, one wild grass, seven cereal crops, four legume crops, one oil seed crop, two creepers and eleven trees are revealed. These plants/trees and their derivatives are the key for the ritualistic activities and their significance is described. Yajña is the subject matter of entire Veda. The general requirements to perform *Yajñas* and *Yāgas* are also detailed in the *Śrī Rudram*. The crops mentioned in the *Śrī Rudram* are being cultivated even today for food and fodder. The present article elucidates the botanical facets of the *Śrī Rudram* with mantras and their implications.

## 1. Introduction

Trees and forests augment manifold the beauty of the earth. They are the very basis of human life and the biosphere. Plants are one of Earth's greatest resources. They are sources of food, medicines and materials with vast economic and cultural importance. They stabilize ecosystems and form the habitats that sustain the planet's animal life. In Vēdic texts, plants and trees have often been considered as God themselves. The *R̥ṣis* in the *Vājasaneyā Samhitā* (VS), show immense respect towards the trees and say one should have reverence and devotion towards all eatables, grains, medicinal herbs, trees, forests and vegetation. One should hold trees/ plants in high esteem because they are an indivisible part of our lives. Here below are some important

mantras/liturgies extracted from the YV that are in praise of plants, trees and forests:

1. |पृथिव्यासंभवनस्पतेशतवल्शोविरोहसहस्रव  
लशाविवयगुरुहेमयत्वायगस्वधितिशतेतिजानःप्र  
णिनायमहतेसौभगायाच्छिन्नोरायस्सुवीरः||

[| pṛthivyā sam bhava vanaspatē śatavalśō vi rōha sahasravalśā vi vayagum ruhēma yam tvāyaggsvadhitistētijānaḥ praṇināya mahatē saubhagāyācchinnō rāya ssuvīraḥ ||] – TS 1-3-5.

My Salutations to huge trees and these trees should grow with innumerable branches, flowers and fruits.

The Yajurveda (TS 1-3-5) classified trees into two categories. They are called *yūpyamulu* and *ayūpyamulu*. The *yūpas* are

obtained from the trees Palāśa (*Butea monosperma*), Bilva (*Aegle marmelos*), Khādira (*Acacia catechu*), Udumbara (*Ficus racemosa*) and Nyagrōdha (*Ficus benghalensis*) to tie animals in Yajña and are called the *yūpyamulu*. The rest of the trees are called as *ayūpyamulu*.

2. |सुपिप्पलाभ्युस्त्वौषधीभ्युदद्विवग्गस्तभानान्तरि  
क्षंपृणपृथिवीमुपरैणदृग्दृतेतेधामा"न्युश्मसी||  
[| supippalābhyastvauşadhibhya uddivagg  
stabhānāmtarikṣam pṛṇa pṛthivīmuparēṇa  
dṛgumha tē tē dhāmānyuśmasī ||] – TS 1-3-6.

My Salutations to the herbaceous plants (medicinal plants), that are being kept at the top of the *yūpa* for the plants to develop more flowers and fruits and to fully ripe.

3. |नमोवृक्षेभ्योहरिकेशेभ्योनमस्तारायनमः||  
[| namō vṛkṣēbhyō harikēśēbhyō namastārāya  
namah||] – TS 4-5-8 and VS 16-20-20.

My salutation to the stately trees with green tufts of leaves and pervasively present in huge trees that are useful in various ways.

4. |नमोवृक्षेभ्योहरिकेशेभ्यः ...  
रोहितायस्थपतयेवृक्षाणांपतयेनमः||  
[| namō vṛkṣēbhō harikēśēbhyah ... rōhitāya  
sthatpatayē vṛkṣāṇām patayē namah ||] – TS 4-  
5-2 and VS 16-20.

My salutations to Rudra who is the provider and is omnipresent in the scared trees like Palāśa (*Butea monosperma*), Bilva (*Aegle marmelos*), Aśvat'tha (*Ficus religiosa*), Nyagrōdha (*Ficus benghalensis*) and also present in general trees.

The hymns of the Vedas contain references to sacred trees and plants on account of their being associated with certain deities and also because of their potent medicinal properties (Dymock *et al.*, 1893). The ritualistic, magical, medicinal and secular

significance of trees is well documented (Sudarsana Sarma, 1989; Boddupalli and Ramasastry, 2018; Boddupalli, 2019). *Sthala Vṛkṣās* (derived from Sanskrit, i.e. *sthala* – place; *vṛkṣa* – tree) or sacred trees are found all over in India. Trees have been praised in all Hindu Scriptures, like the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābharata*, *Purāṇas* etc., and many rituals related to trees have even continued to modern times. Many trees find place with stories of Lord Krishna; like the *kadamba* (*Neolamarckia cadamba*) is always seen with him in most of his pictures. It is said that Lord Viṣṇu lives in peepal (*Ficus religiosa*), Goddess Lakshmi in neem (*Azadirachta indica*), Lord Śiva in bargad and others. Even the Jain and the Buddhist scriptures have named many trees as sacred and all *Tirthankaras* and *Buddhas* are known to have attained enlightenment under specific tree (Edwardes, 1922). The worship of trees in India can be traced to the *Indus Valley Civilization*, as clearly indicated in the *Indus Valley Seals*.

Trees are considered as *Dēvatas* (deities). *Dēvatameans* one who keeps giving incessantly. Trees have always been beneficial to us and they possess the divine qualities that qualify them to be addressed as *Dēvatas*. Trees in Indian mythology and folklore are widely considered as sacred and worshipped across the country for their benevolence. Indians believed that certain trees are the abode of gods and goddesses. This is emphasized in the Śrī Rudram Mantras/liturgies at many places. Lord Rudra is considered as '*Vanaspati*', means 'forests and head of forests', indicating that He is in the form of trees/forests.

*Yajña* is the subject matter of the entire Veda. *Yajñas* and *Yāgas* are being performed as spiritual and scientific approaches for the welfare of the people, benefit of the society and for world peace. It is almost impossible to perform *Yajñas* and *Yāgas* without using plants or trees and their related products. Therefore, the plants, herbs, shrubs and the trees revealed in the YV are the vital elements in performing *Yajñas*, *Yāgas*, *Hōmas* and *Iṣṭis* (Boddupalli and Ramasastry, 2015 and 2018; Boddupalli, 2019). For this purpose, we pray Lord Rudra in the *Śrī Rudram* and plead Him to provide the requirements to perform *Yajñas* - as *Yajñēna kalpantām* (TS 4-7-5 and VS 18-1), *Yajñēna kalpētām* (TS 4-7-9) and *Yajñēna kalpatām* (TS 4-7-10 and VS 18-2). Many a times, Veda Saṁhitās do provide the Mantra, but the very minute details and particulars are well explained in the Brāhmaṇas, Śrauta and Gṛhya Sūtrās or Purāṇas. This means, the *Yajñas* and *Yāgās* are proposed in the Veda Saṁhitās and the Śrauta Sūtrās (Kashikar and Dandekar, 1958) describe in detail the procedures and on the requirements and other aspects of the same. Similarly, at many places in the *Śrī Rudram*, the term ‘*Vṛkṣa*’ is mentioned, but the details regarding the name and utilization of the plant/tree products are provided in the *Śrauta Sūtrās* or in the Brāhmaṇa texts.

### 1.1. Rudra and Forms in Vedas

Rudra is a deity of the Vedic period. He finds mention in the *Rgveda* (RV).

| तेनोमित्रोवरुणोअर्यमायुरिन्द्रऋभुक्षामरुतो जुषंत  
| नमोभिर्वीयेदधतेसुवृक्तिंस्तोमं रुद्रायमीळहुषेसजोषाः |  
|

[| tē nō mitrō varuṇō aryamāyurimdraṛbhukṣā marutō juṣamta | namōbhirvā yē suvr̥ktim stōmam rudrāya m̄lhuṣē sajōṣāḥ ||]– **RV 5-41-2.**

There is a detailed section in praise of Lord Rudra in the *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda* (KYV) and *Śukla Yajurveda* (SYV) Saṁhitās. The name ‘Rudra’ is mentioned in all seven Kāṇḍas of the *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda Taittirīya Saṁhita* (KYV-TS). He provides people with the best education, grants wisdom, eradicates all sorrows and ensures a comfortable life for humans (Sundararama Sastry, 1969 and 2012; Prasad Sastry, 2011). He treats the physical and mental illnesses of humans and cattle, alike and removes ignorance (Raghunathachari, 2003). The mere utterance of His name, ‘*Om Namaśśivāya*’ (TS 4-5-8), can purify anything (Shanmukha Sarma, 2012). This famous ‘*pancākṣarī mantra*’ occurs in the eight *anuvāka* at the very center of the Rudra Praśna. The 16<sup>th</sup> chapter in the *Śukla Yajurveda Saṁhita* (SYV) and the 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Prapāthakas of the 4<sup>th</sup> Kāṇḍa of the KYV-TS are dedicated to the ‘*Rudra*’ in its entirety. The name ‘*Rudra*’ occurs 98 times in the RV, 113 times in the KYV-TS, 22 times in the SYV, 4 times in the SV and 45 times in the AV. In the *Śrī Rudram* alone, the name ‘*Rudra*’ occurs 18 times and the name ‘*Śiva*’ occurs 14 times in the Namaka Praśna. The frequency of occurrence of the names, ‘*Rudra*’ and ‘*Śiva*’ in the KYV-TS is presented in **Table 1**.

Rudra has two major forms, *Ghora* or terrible form and *Śiva* or auspicious form. Quite often the name *Śiva* and *Rudra* are used interchangeably. Hence, *Rudra* is one side and *Śiva* the other side of the same coin. They are not two, but the same. The *Taittirīya*

*Brāhmaṇa* text which interprets the Rudram states: “Rudra is verily the fire. He has two forms; one terrible, the other, auspicious. If man does Yajña/sacrifice to Rudra by chanting the *Śrī Rudram*, that man pacifies the terrible form of Rudra”. Hence Rudra is considered as a deity who teaches the supreme knowledge (*Mōkṣajñāna*) to all and whose energy flows in everything.

## 1.2. Significance of *Śrī Rudram*

The prominence of *Śrī Rudram* is beautifully explained in the following verse:

|विद्यासु श्रुतिरुत्कृष्टा रुद्रैकादशिनी श्रुतौ|त्र  
पञ्चाक्षरी तस्यं शिव इत्यक्षरद्वयम्||- Abhinava  
Sankara Bhaṣyam

[[vidyāsu śrutirutkrṣṭā rudraikādaśinī śrutau tatra  
pañcākṣarī tasyaṁ śiva ityakṣaradvayam ||]]

Among the sources of learning, the Vedas are the supreme; in the Vedas, *Rudra Ekādaśī* is supreme; in the *Rudram* the *Pañcākṣarī* yajus mantra (Namakaṁ 8<sup>th</sup> anuvaka, 11<sup>th</sup> mantra) *Namaśśivāya* is supreme; in the *Namaśśivāya* mantra the two letters *Śivastands* supreme and ultimate.

Vedas are infinite. Veda itself is *Śiva*, and *Śiva* is Vedam.

| वेदश्शिवश्शिवोवेदः||[[vēda śśiva śśivō vēdaḥ ||]]

The *Vāyu Purāṇa* extends *Śrī Rudram* greatness and significance in the below famous verse:

|नमकं चमकं चैव पुरुषसूक्तं तथैव च|  
नित्यं त्रयं प्रयुञ्जानो ब्रह्मलोके महीयते||  
[[namakaṁ camakaṁ caiva  
puruṣasūktam tathaiva ca|  
nityaṁ trayaṁ prayuñjāno brahmaloke  
mahīyate||]]

The meaning of this mantra is that reciting and applying the *Camakaṁ*, *Namakaṁ* and *Puruṣa Sūktam* as a daily routine prayer, he will be honoured in the *Brahmaloka*.

## 1.3. Formation of *Śrī Rudram*

The earliest hymns paying homage to Lord Rudra is the *Śrī Rudram* found in the Yajurveda (TS 4-5, TS 4-7 and VS 16). The *Rudrādhyāya* (colloquially *Rudram* or *Śrī Rudram*) occurs in all four Yajurveda Saṁhita texts with minor variations. Conventionally, Vedas are three in number - the *Rgveda*, *Yajurveda* and *Sāmaveda*. Yajurveda is in the center of the three Vedas. The *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda Taittirīya Saṁhita* (KYV-TS) is divided into seven Kāṇḍas and the 4<sup>th</sup> Kāṇḍa forms the center of the TS. The *Śrī Rudram* is in the center of the 4<sup>th</sup> Kāṇḍa. It is believed that those Mantras that are traditionally significant are placed in the center in order to protect them. These Yajurveda hymns that have gained particular importance are the ‘Rudra Namakaṁ’ (TS 4-5-1 to 4-5-11) and the ‘Rudra Camakaṁ’ (TS 4-7-1 to 4-7-11), which constitute the ‘*Śatarudrīyam*’ or the ‘*Śrī Rudram*’ or ‘*Rudrapraśna*’. ‘Rudram’ occurs in all the original 100 branches (*Śākhās*) of the Yajurveda, thus giving rise to the name ‘*Śatarudrīyam*’. Traditionally, during *Rudrābhiṣekam* along with *Namakaṁ* and *Camakaṁ*, *Puruṣa Sūktam* is also recited.

The word *Śatarudrīyam* is derived from the grammatical root word (*dhātu*) - शतरुद्र+च्छ - शतं रुद्राः देवताः यस्य - means ‘the chapter in which the hundred Rudras are deities’.

|शतेशाखासुपठ्यतेरुद्रीयं - शतरुद्रीयम्||

[| śatēśākhāsu paṭhyatē rudrīyaṃ - śatarudrīyaṃ ||]

As *Śrī Rudram* is prominent in all the hundred branches (*śākhās*) of *Yajurveda*, it is called the '*Śatarudrīyaṃ*'. Also, the term '*Śatarudrīyaṃ*' is revealed at three instances in the KYV-TS as following:

- 1) | यजमानं च ध्यायेच्छतरुद्रीयं जुहोति || [| yajamānam ca dhyāyēt śatarudrīyaṃ juhōti ||] – TS 5-4-3(1).
- 2) | अन्येशतरुद्रीयगृह्णत्वा || [| anyē śatarudrīyagum hutvā ||] – TS 5-5-9(40).
- 3) | शिवान्यायच्छतरुद्रीयं जुहोति || [| śivānyā yacchatarudrīyaṃ juhōti ||] – TS 5-7-3(11).

The popular name '*Namaka Praśna*' is due to the repeated utterance, 187 times, of the word "*Namah* or *Namo*" (salutation). Following this, the '*Camaka Praśna*' is chanted wherein the words "*Ca me*" (meaning 'and me'), repeated 338 times, hence popularly named '*Camakam*'.

The *Mahā Mrtyumjaya Mantra*, is first revealed in the RV, and is preserved in the TS.

|त्र्यंबकं यजामहे सुगन्धिं पुष्टिवर्धनम् | उर्वारुकमिव बन्धनान्मृत्योर्मुक्षीय मामृतात् ||  
[| tryambakam yajāmahē sugandhiṃ puṣṭivardhanam |urvārukamiva bandhanānmrtyōrmukṣīya māmṛtāt ||]– RV 7-59-12 and TS 1-8-6(11).

While chanting the *Śrī Rudram*, it is customary after reciting the 11<sup>th</sup> Anuvāka of the *Namaka Praśna*, the additional eight Mantras that are chanted which contain the famous *Mahā Mrtyumjaya Mantra*, and the other Mantras are revealed in the TS, but elsewhere. The following are the other seven Mantras:

1) | योरुद्रो अग्नौ यो अप्सु यो षधीषु यो रुद्रो विश्वा भुवना विवेश तस्मै रुद्राय नमो अस्तु ||

[| yō rudrō agnau yō apsu ya oṣdhīṣu yō rudrō viśvā bhuvanāvivēśa tasmai rudrāya namō astu ||]– TS 5-5-9(39).

2) | तमुष्टु द्वियः स्विषुः सुधन्वा यो विश्वस्य क्षयति भेषजस्य | यक्ष्वा महेशौमनसाय रुद्रं नमो भिर्देवमसुरं दुवस्य ||

[| tamu ṣṭuhi yaḥ sviṣuḥ sudhanvā yō viśvasya kṣayati bhēśhajasya | yakṣvā mahē saumanasāya rudraṃ namō bhirdēvamasuraṃ duvasya ||]– RV 5-42-11.

He who holds a beautiful and powerful shaft and a strong bow, He who is the source and repository of all medicines, praise Him alone. To gain the favor and goodwill of that supreme and effulgent God Rudra, let us worship Him, honor and adore Him by salutations.

3) | अयं मे हस्तो भगवानयं मे भगवत्तरः | अयं मे विश्वभेषजोयं शिवाभिर्मर्शनः ||

[| ayam mē hastō bhagavānayaṃ mē bhagavattaraḥ | ayam mē viśvabhēśajōyam śivābhimarśanaḥ ||]– RV 10-60-12.

Due to its contact with the Lingam, this right hand of mine is fortunate. Indeed this hand of mine is a panacea for all human beings for all ills.

4) | ये ते सहस्रं मयुतं पाशा मृत्यो मर्त्या य हन्त वे | तान्युजस्य मायया सर्वा न वयजामहे ||

[| yē tē sahasramayutaṃ pāsā mrtyō martyāya haṃtavē | tān yajñasya māyayā sarvānavayajāmahē ||]– TA 10-57.

Oh Death in the form of Rudra. Those countless nooses of yours by which You destroy all mortal creatures, we shall loosen them by the efficiency of our worship of you.

5) | मृत्यवेस्वाहामृत्यवेस्वाहा"||  
 [| mṛtyavē svāhā mṛtyavē ssvāhā ||]– TA 10-58.

This offering of fire is offered to death, this offering of fire is offered to death.

6) | प्राणानां ग्रन्धिरसिरुद्रोमां विशान्तकः |  
 तेनाग्नेनाप्यायुस्व |  
 [| prāṇānam graṁdhirasi rudrōmā viśāntakaḥ |  
 | tēnānnēnāpyāyasva ||]– TA 10-74.

Lord Rudra, who is everywhere, and to the Rudra let not death (premature) come near me. He who lives in the junction of the soul and senses, I pray to you who destroy everything, to be within me, and due to that be satisfied, with the food that I take as offering.

7) | नमोरुद्राय विष्णवे मृत्युर्मे पाहि || [| namō  
 rudrāya viṣṇavē mṛtyurmē pāhi ||] – TA 10-75.

My salutations to Rudra and Viṣṇu and they protect me from untimely death.

Among these eight Mantras, three Mantras are revealed in the RV, four Mantras in the TA and one Mantra from the TS. These Mantras are brought together and merged after the 11<sup>th</sup> Anuvāka of the Namaka Praśna and together are described as ‘*Rudra Namaka*’. By chanting these Mantras, we are praying Lord Rudra to protect us from untimely death. Similarly, after the 11<sup>th</sup> Anuvāka of the Camaka Praśna, a *Śānti Mantra* that is routinely recited is obtained from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Kāṇḍa of the TS [3-3-2(4)]. With this, the chanting of the ‘*Śrī Rudram*’ is completed. The three Mantras that are adopted from the RV into the *Śrī Rudram* are provided with the YV *swara*. The additional Mantras might have been appended by the *R̥ṣis*.

## 2. Botanical Facets in Śrī Rudra Mantras

As mentioned in the formation of Śrī Rudram, the 11 Anuvākas of the TS 4-5 is called as Namaka Praśna. The 11 Anuvākas of the TS 4-7 is termed as Camaka Praśna. In this article, the Mantras that are connected to the botany and plant vegetation are provided. The botanical and agricultural terminology provided in the *Śrī Rudram* is explained in detail in conjunction with the literature (Macdonell and Keith, 1982). The plants and trees mentioned in the Camaka Praśna are more in number when compared with the Namaka Praśna. Cereal and legume crops, trees and their derivatives that are required to perform *Yajñas* and *Yāgas* are revealed in the Camaka Praśna of the Śrī Rudram. Plants, trees and crops mentioned in the *Śrī Rudram* are listed in [Table 2](#).

### 2.1. Namaka Praśna - TS 4-5

|नमो वृक्षेभ्यो हरिकेशेभ्यः नमः: || [| namō vṛkṣēbhyō  
 harikēśēbhya namaḥ ||]– TS 4-5-2(2).

**Vṛkṣēbhyaḥ** = For trees, Rudra in tree form;

**Harikēśēbhyaḥ** = green coloured trichomes (hair-like structures) on the leaves.

My Salutations to the Lord Rudra who is in the trees tufted with green leaves. I bow my head to the Rudra who lives in the trees with green coloured trichomes (hair-like structures) and leaves.

This can be explained that some trees containing trichomes (*kēśa* or hair-like structures) on both sides of the leaves, i.e. dorsal and ventral surface of the leaf. Both the leaves and the trichomes (hair-like structures) are containing the chlorophyll

(hari or harita) and hence they are green in colour.

|नमःसुस्पिञ्जरायत्विषीमतेपथीनांपतयेनमः||  
[| namaḥ saspiñjarāya tviṣīmatē pathīnaṃ patayē namaḥ ||]– TS 4-5-2(3).

**Saspiñjarāya** = tender grass in the colour of red and yellow.

My Salutations to the Rudra, whose hair is like tender grass mixed colour of red and yellow and the great radiating person.

|नमोरोहितायस्थपतयेवृक्षाणांपतयेनमः||  
[| namō rōhitāya sthapatayē vṛkṣāṇām patayē namaḥ||]– TS 4-5-2(9).

**Rōhitāya** = Red or Ruby colour; **stapatayē** = Lord Rudra; **vṛkṣāṇām** = for Trees

My Salutations to the ruby-coloured Lord Rudra, He who is the protector, guardian, ruler and the governor of all trees in the Universe.

Here, the red-tree can be attributed to the Red-sander or Raktachandan, *Pterocarpus santalinus* (Fig. 01) belongs to family the Fabaceae.

|नमोभुवन्तयेवारिवस्कृतायौषधीनांपतयेनमः||  
[| namō bhuvantayē vārivaskṛtāyauṣadhīnaṃ patayē namaḥ ||]– TS 4-5-2(11).

**Ōṣadhi**= an annual plant or a herb or a plant with medicinal properties. Also, a plant that dies immediately after it produces seeds or a herb one that lasts for one year or season.

My Salutations to the Lord Rudra, who nourishes the earth, the Bestower of wealth and the protector of plants.

|नमोजघ्न्यायच्चबुद्धियायच्च ||[| namō jaghanyāya ca budhniyāya ca ||]– TS 4-5-6(4).

**Jaghanyāya** = posterior side of cows; **Budhniyāya** = Root of a tree. The buttress roots of huge trees or the aerial roots of huge *Ficus* trees.

My Salutations to the Lord Rudra, who is present in the posterior side of cows, as such in calves and in the roots and its branches of the trees.

Here, one can observe the large buttress roots formed in huge trees during its growth on the surface of ground. These roots can be seen from trees like *Ficus* species and others.

|नमोवन्यायच्चकक्ष्यायच्च ||[| namō vanyāya ca kakṣyāya ca ||]– TS 4-5-6(9).

**Vanyāya** = those in the forests; **Kakṣyāya** = those trees that are not having the trunk. This means the shrubs, plants, and creepers.

My Salutations to Him, who is in the form of trees in the forests and the creepers in the bushes and in the shaded areas.

|नमोवृक्षेभ्योहरिकेशेभ्यः||[| namō vṛkṣyēbhyō harikēśēbhyāḥ ||]– TS 4-5-8(7).

**Vṛkṣyēbhyō** = for trees; **harikēśēbhyāḥ** = green hair-like structures, botanically called the ‘trichomes’.

My Salutations to Lord Rudra, who is in the form of trees and in the green-hair-like structures, the trichomes, present on the leaves of the trees. This infers that the Lord is present in smallest of the life and largest structures like trees in this Universe.

Just as hair are innumerable in number and that protect the skin and the head of the human beings, leaves are also numerous and protect the tree and plants.

The importance of this mantra is that being in the form of trees like **Plākṣa** (*Ficus virens*), **Parṇa** (*Butea monosperma*), **Bilva** (*Aegle marmelos*, Fig. 02), **Aśvat’tha** (*Ficus religiosa*) and other huge trees. Lord Rudra helps in performance of *Yāgas* in this world, and being in the form of *Kalpaka* tree in the upper world, He grants all enjoyments.



Hence, Lord Rudra will be worshipped by those desirous of these benefits.

The leaves are enormous on the trees and they prepare food material by accumulating the energy from the Sun rays and nourish the entire tree. And hence, the reference to trees and is associated with the use of wood and leaves in various *Yajñas* and *Yāgas*. The reference is also to the *Kalpa vṛkṣa* tree, which is Lord Rudra Himself, who fulfills the wishes of all His devotees. The reference is also to the ‘Tree of Veda’, whose branches are the *Śākhās* (branches) of the Vedas. Thus, a comparison of Lord Rudra to be a Tree and its green leaves is appropriate.

नमःशष्प्यायचफेन्यायच||| nama śśaspyāya ca phēnyāya ca |||– TS 4-5-8(16).

**Śaspa** = Darbha grass (*Desmostachya bipinnata*); **Phēnyāya** = He is present in the froth of the river.

My Salutations to Lord Rudra who is in the grass and the river froth!

The term **Śaspa** is mentioned in the YV Saṃhitās [TS 4-5-8(16) and VS 21-29] and in RV Brāhmaṇa (AB 8-5-3 and AB 8-8-4), YV Brāhmaṇa [SB 12-7-2(8) and SB 12-9-1(2)]. Sāyaṅāchārya (1970) in his commentary on *Taittirīya Saṃhita* mentioned that **Śaspa** means a just born **Darbha** grass (*Desmostachya bipinnata*) grows on the banks of the Ganga River. It also denotes ‘young’ or a ‘sprouting grass’ (Macdonell and Keith, 1982).

नमःकाट्यायचगह्वरेष्ठायच|| | namaḥ kātyāya ca gahvarēṣṭhāya ca |||– TS 4-5-9(6).

**Kātyāya** = creepers with thorns; **gahvarēṣṭhāya** = Poisonous mountain caves.

My Salutations to Lord Rudra!

To the Lord who is in a place not accessible because it is full of creepers and plants with thorns and in the rugged and

rough mountain caves. Here, several creepers and plants that are having thorns can be given as examples - *Capparis decidua*, *Ziziphus mauritiana*, *Prosopis cineraria*, *Bombax ceiba* etc.

नमःशुष्क्यायचहरित्यायच ||| nama śśuṣkyāya ca harityāya ca |||– TS 4-5-9(9).

**śśuṣkyāya** = Dried tree wood; **harityāya** = moist-green tree wood.

My Salutations to the Lord Rudra, who is in the dried tree wood and also in the moist-green tree wood.

नमःपर्णायचपर्णशुष्क्यायच ||| namaḥ parṇyāya ca parṇaśadyāya ca ||| – TS 4-5-9(12).

**Parṇyāya** = in the green leaves; **Parṇaśadyāya** = in the heaps of dried leaves.

My Salutations to the Lord Rudra, who is present in the leaves and in the heaps of dried leaves.

मीढुष्टमशिवतमशिवोनस्सुमनाभवपरमेवृक्षआयुधंनि  
धायकृत्तिवसानाचरपिनांकुबिभ्रदागहि||

[mīdhuṣṭama śivatama śivō na ssumanā bhava | paramē vṛkṣa āyudham nidhāya kṛttim vaśāna ā cara pinākam bibhradā gahi ||] – TS 4-5-10(10).

My Salutations to the Lord Rudra, the bestower of all desired objects to worshippers! Please be granter of auspiciousness, well-disposed and kind to us. As an indication of this, please leave all your terrible weapons in the superior banyan tree in *Kailasa* out of our sight and come before us, wearing tiger-skin and holding your bow in hand as a decoration.

Here, Lord Rudra’s weapons like *Trisūla* and others are made out of an important and highest quality wood comparable to that of a **Nyagrōdha** (*Ficus benghalensis*). It has been described that Lord is seated in a banyan tree in *Kailasa*, which is 100 *Yōjanas* tall and 175 *Yōjanas* wide (*Yōjana* is a Vedic measure of distance



that was used in ancient India. One *Yōjana* is about 12 – 15 kilometers in length) and that banyan tree is the refuge of those anxious to get *Moksha*. Here it is prayed that the weapons be left in that tree.

|येवृक्षेषुसस्पिञ्जरानिलग्रीवाविलोहिताः||  
[| yē vṛkṣēṣu saspīñjarā nilagrīvā vilōhitāḥ ||]  
– TS 4-5-11(5).

*Vṛkṣēṣu* = in the Trees; *Saspiñjarā* = tender grass that in reddish-yellow colour.

My Salutations to the Lord Rudra and other Rudras present in the trees. Like on earth, there are Rudras of different colours, living in trees as their lords. This mantra refers to them. And also the Rudras present in the grasses that are in reddish-yellow colour.

|त्र्यंबकंयजामहेसुगन्धिपुष्टिवर्धनम्|उर्वारुकमिवबन्ध  
नान्मृत्योर्मुक्षीयमामृतात्||  
[| tryambakaṃ yajāmahē sugandhiṃ  
puṣṭivardhanaṃ |urvārukamiva  
bandhanānmṛtyōrmukṣīya māmṛtāt ||] – TS 1-  
8-6(11).

My Salutations to Lord Rudra, as the scent, colour etc. are all superior as mentioned by Upanishad in ‘*Divyagandha:*, the **Sri Gandha tree** (*Santalum album*, Fig. 03), ‘*Divyarasa:*’ etc., has been used here. Also, in this Mantra it is an invocation made with a request to release the clutch of ‘*Mṛtyu*’ (death).

The essence of this Mantra signifies the fact that just as the ripened **Urvāruka** (Fig. 04) (cucumber fruit = *Cucumis sativus*) separates on its own from the stem, in the same way I would like to liberate myself from the cycle of life and death.

## 2.2. Camaka Praśna - TS 4-7

### 2.2.1. Agriculture Crops and Grain Filling

|कृषिश्चमेवृष्टिश्चमेजैत्रचमौद्धिद्यंचमे.....त्रिभुचमे  
प्रभुचमेबहुचमेभूयश्चमेपूर्णचमेपूर्णतरंचमेक्षितिश्चमेकू  
यवाश्चमेन्नचमेक्षुचमेव्रीहयश्च मे यवा"श्चम मे माषा"श्च

मे तिला"श्च मे मुद्गाश्च मे खल्वा"श्च मे गोधूमा"श्च मे  
मसुरा"श्च मे प्रियङ्गवश्च मेणवश्च मे श्यामाका"श्च मे  
नीवारा"श्च मे||

[| kṛṣīśca mē vṛṣṭīśca mē jaitram ca ma  
audbhidyam ca mē ..... vibhu ca mē prabhu  
ca mē bahu ca mē bhūyaśca mē pūrṇam ca mē  
pūrnataram ca mēkṣitīśca mē kūyavāśca  
mēnam camēkṣucca mē vrīhayaśca mē  
yavāśca mē māśāśca mē tilāśca mē mudgāśca  
mē khalvāśca mē gōdhūmāśca mē masurāśca  
mē priyaṅgavaśca mēṇavaśca mē śyāmākāśca  
mē nīvārāśca mē ||] – TS 4-7-4.

**Kṛṣiḥ** = Agriculture / ploughing (Macdonell and Keith, 1982); **Vṛṣṭiḥ** = rain; **Jaitram** = successful; – These three together can mean good yielding land; **audbhidyam** = growth of the plant, creeper etc.; (1) **Vibhu** = Superior grains, (2) **Prabhu** = More superior grains, (3) **Bahu** = Much Superior grains, (4) **Bhūyaḥ** = Much more superior grains, (5) **Pūrṇam** = Filled grains, (6) **Pūrnataram** = Fine-filled grains, (7) **Akṣitīḥ** = Not destructed grains. These seven words indicate progressive increase in growth of food grains, the second indicating a higher growth than the first and so on; the seventh indicating the highest growth; **Kūyavāḥ** = Yava of not good quality; **Annam** = reputed food; **Akṣut** = relief from hunger; **Vrīhi** (Rice) = *Oryza sativa*; **Yava** (Barley) = *Hordeum vulgare*; **Māṣa** (Black gram) = *Vigna mungo*; **Tila** (Sesame) = *Sesamum indicum*; **Mudga** (Green gram) = *Vigna radiata*; **Khalva** (Bengal gram) = *Cicer arietinum*; **Gōdhūma** (Wheat) = *Triticum aestivum*; **Masurā** = *Vicia hirsuta*; **Priyaṅgu** (Indian millet) = *Setaria italica*; **Aṇu** (Proso millet) = *Panicum miliaceum*; **Śyāmākā** (Indian barnyard millet) = *Echinochloa frumentacea*; **Nīvāra** (Wild rice) = *Oryza rufipogon*.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Anuvāka of the Camaka Praśna starts with ‘energy’ so much needed for day to day living. It then lists various sources of energy and the means to procure them (agriculture, conquest, etc.). It asks for

the abundance of those sources. It indicates the requirements for the success of Agriculture, growth of the plants and creepers. For the reputed food, the *Annam*, revealed the major, minor food grains, legumes and an oil seed crop that would give relief from hunger. Here, seven cereal crops, four legume crops and one oil seed crop are revealed (Fig. 05). It prays for the condition in which one never has to go hungry (*akṣut*) and the condition in which one never runs out (*akṣitih*) of any item required in a given day. One also gets the message that having food and drink with many more people is more elevating for the nourishment of the body and mind. All these actions are energy-imbibing (eating, drinking etc.) are to be done with a sweet and pleasant manner of speaking, which will definitely reflect in the subtle portion of the food which goes to the mind.

The Yajurveda records twelve types of food-grains in the above-mentioned mantra. It is very interesting to note that most of these cultivated grains are known as 'dhānya' in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (BU 6-3-13) as all these grains are most essential for sustaining life. According to this Upaniṣad there are ten cultivated grains and are - rice, barley, sesamum (tila), green gram, aṇu, priyaṅgu, gōdhūma, masurā, khalva and khalakula. So these are of rich carbohydrates, proteinaceous pulses, beans and lentils, and also containing major and minor millets. Here below is the Mantra:

दशग्राम्याणि धान्यानि भवन्ति त्रीहियवास्तिलमाषाअ  
णुप्रियंगवोगोधूमामसूराश्च खल्वाश्च खलकुलाश्च ता  
न्पिष्टान्दध्निमधुनिघृत उपसी चत्याज्यस्य जुहोति ॥  
[| daśa grāmyāṇi dhānyāni bhavaṃti trīhi yavāstīlamāṣā  
aṇupriyaṅgavō gōdhūmāśca masūrāśca khalvāśca khalakulāśca

tāmpīṣṭāṃdadhani madhuni ghrta  
upasīmcatyājyasya juhōti ॥]—BU 6-3-13.

### 2.2.2. Agriculture Fields

कृष्टपच्यं च मे कृष्टपच्यं च मे... ॥ [ | krṣṭapacyam ca  
mēkrṣṭapacyam ca mē... ॥] – TS 4-7-5.

| कृष्टपच्यं [ | krṣṭapacyam ॥] - Grain plants  
grown in one time ploughed field.

| □कृष्टपच्यं [ | akrṣṭapacyam ॥] - Grain plants  
grown in an unproductive or unploughed  
field.

This means that the left out seeds of the  
previous crop in the field will germinate soon  
after the rains and along with the crop, weeds  
also would germinate and grow  
simultaneously.

### 2.2.3. Major Requirements of Yajña

इधमश्च मे बर्हिश्च मे वेदिश्च मे धिष्णिण्याश्च मे स्रुचश्च मे चम  
साश्च मे ग्रावाणश्च मे स्वरवश्च म उपरवाश्च मे धिषवणे च मे  
द्रोणकलशश्च मे वायव्यानि च मे पूतभृच्च म आधवनीयश्च म  
आग्नीध्रं च मे हविर्धानं च मे गृहाश्च मे सदश्च मे पुरोडाशाश्च  
मे पचताश्च मे वभुथश्च मे स्वगाकारश्च मे ॥

[ | idhmaśca mē barhiśca mē vēdiśca mē  
dhiṣṇiyāśca mē srucaśca mē camasaśca mē  
grāvāṇāśca mē svaravaśca ma uparavāśca  
mēdhiṣavaṇē ca mē drōṇakalaśāśca mē  
vāyavyāni ca mē pūtabhṛcca ma  
ādhavanīyaśca ma āgnīdhram ca mē  
havirdhānam ca mē gṛhāśca mē sadaśca mē  
purōdāśāśca mē pacatāśca mēvabhṛthaśca mē  
svagākāraśca mē ॥] – TS 4-7-8.

The requirements to perform *Yajñas*  
and *Yāgas* are detailed in this Anuvāka. For  
this purpose, *Idhmaśca* = the faggots or  
kindling fire or Samidhas collected from  
different trees; *Barhiśca* = a bunch of holy  
grass or Darbha grass (*Desmostachya  
bipinnata*); *Vēdiśca* = *Yajña* fire-altar;  
*Dhiṣṇiyāśca* = Priests for performing  
*Yajña*; *Srucaśca* = wooden ladles [*Sruc* - made  
out of Parṇa (*Butea monosperma*), *Sruva*,

made of Khādira wood, (*Acacia catechu*), Juhu made out of Parṇa (*Butea monosperma*) and others]; **Chamasāśca** = wooden cups made of Nyagrōdha wood (*Ficus benghalensis*) for storing and drinking of Soma juice); **Grāvāṇāśca** = stones for pressing out the Soma juice; **Svaravaśca** = wooden knives to cut Darbha grass and Soma shoots (*Sarcostemma acidum*, Fig. 06); **Uparavāśca** = pits dug in *havirdhāna* positioning apart a portion of the sacrificial material or the grains intended for it; **Adhiṣavaṇa** = *Adhiṣavaṇaphalaka* made of Khādira wood, (*Acacia catechu*) to press the soma shoots (*Sarcostemma acidum*); **Drōṇakalaśa** = a large vessel made of hard wood like Vikaṅkata (*Flacourtia indica*) or Varaṇa (*Crateva magna*) to store the Soma juice; **Vāyavyāni** = Praises (*Sūktas*) of Vayu deity; **Pūtabhṛta** = mud vessel; **Ādhavanīyaśca** = a vessel in which the Soma shoots are kept and cleaned; **Āgnīdhra** = the priest who sits in the North-side of the *Yajña* altar and the same priest who kindles the sacrificial fire, ‘*Yajñāgni*’, using the instrument ‘*Agni-manthana*’. He is an assistant of Brahman. His main function is to pronounce “*Astu Śrausaḥ*” in response to the *Adhvaryu*’s “*āśrāyaya*”. He holds the ‘*Sphya*’ (made of Khādira wood, *Acacia catechu*) with his hand turned southwards; **Havirdhānam** = place kept for keeping the *Havis*; **Grhāśca** = houses for the wives of the *Yajña* priests; **Sadaśca** = seats for the Sāma Veda singers; **Purōdāśa** = rice cakes specially prepared for *Yajña havis*; **Pacatāśca** = place and vessels for cooking the *havis*; **Avabhṛtaśca** = a purification bath taken at the end of the *Yajña* for protection; **Svagākāraśca** = with the intent

of dispatch the essence of the *havis*-offering to the intended deity.

योरुद्रोअग्रौयोअप्सुयओषधीषुयोरुद्रोविश्वामुवनाविवे  
शतस्मैरुद्रायनमोअस्तु॥

[| yō rudrō agnau yō apsu ya oṣdhīṣu yō rudrō viśvā bhuvanāvivēśa tasmai rudrāya namō astu ||] – TS 5-5-9(39).

I bow to Lord Rudra who is omnipresent in fire, in water, in trees and in plants and pervaded in the entire universe.

### 3. Conclusions

Lord Rudra, the Vēdic deity, is mentioned in all four Vedas. The Yajurveda hymns that have gained particular importance are the ‘Rudra Namakaṁ (TS 4-5)’ and the ‘Rudra Camakaṁ (TS 4-7)’ which constitute the ‘*Śrī Rudram*’. The Rudra Namaka and the Rudra Camaka Mantras reveal botanical and agriculture terminology, names of plants and trees. In Vedas and in particularly the *Śrī Rudram*, the significance of trees is emphasized and given utmost importance due to the various special qualities they possess. *Yajña* in itself is seen as the very essence of the Veda. The general requirements of *Yajña*, in the form of preparation of *Yajña Vēdi*, *Samidhas*, plant-derived oblations, *Yajña* implements and others are clearly indicated in the *Camaka Praśna* of the *Śrī Rudram* (TS 4-7-8). The plants and trees mentioned in the *Camaka Praśna* are more in number when compared with the *Namaka Praśna*. The general requirements to perform *Yajñas* and *Yāgas* are detailed in one of the *Anuvāka*’s of *Camaka Praśna* (TS 4-7-8). In *Śrī Rudram*, one wild grass, seven cereal crops, four legumes, one oil seed crop, two creepers and eleven trees are revealed (Table 2). The agriculturally relevant crops are depicted in

**Fig. 05.** Even today, these crops are being cultivated by our farmers for the utilization by mankind and cattle on day to day basis as food and fodder, respectively. The different qualities of cereal grains and their progressive increase in growth of food grains are detailed in the *Camaka Praśna* (TS 4-7-4). The plant species that are mentioned in the *Śrī Rudram* are listed in **Table 2**.

The study of trees mentioned in the Holy Scriptures of different nations is a fascinating subject. Mythological significance of these trees is certainly not without reason and relevance, though this relevance might have undergone a number of transformations over the centuries. As old civilizations give place to new, many ideas and ideologies change. But in case of tree / plant life and its myriad forms, few have been chosen for prominence in religious observances and they seem to have survived over the centuries and are still looked upon with awe and reverence (Bhatla *et al.*, 1984).

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**Table 1: Frequency of occurrence of the names 'Rudra' and 'Śiva' in the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda Taittirīya Saṃhita (KYV-TS).**

Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda Taittirīya Saṃhita (KYV-TS)								
	Kāṇḍa 01	Kāṇḍa 02	Kāṇḍa 03	Kāṇḍa 04	Kāṇḍa 05	Kāṇḍa 06	Kāṇḍa 07	Total
<b>Rudra</b>	28	25	17	30	26	19	12	157
<b>Śiva</b>	04	01	03	43	08	-	03	62

**Table 2: Agriculture crops, plants and trees disclosed in the Śrī Rudram.**

Category	Botanical Name	Family Name	Reference
<b>Wild Grass</b>			
1. Śaṣpa (Darbha)	<i>Desmostachya bipinnata</i>	Poaceae	TS 4-5-8(16)
<b>Cereal Crops</b>			
1. Vrīhi (Rice)	<i>Oryza sativa</i>	Poaceae	TS 4-7-4
2. Yava (Barley)	<i>Hordeum vulgare</i>	Poaceae	TS 4-7-4
3. Gōdhūma (Wheat)	<i>Triticum aestivum</i>	Poaceae	TS 4-7-4
4. Priyaṅgu (Indian millet)	<i>Setaria italica</i>	Poaceae	TS 4-7-4
5. Aṅu (Proso millet)	<i>Panicum miliaceum</i>	Poaceae	TS 4-7-4
6. Śyāmāka (Barnyard millet)	<i>Echinochloa frumentacea</i>	Poaceae	TS 4-7-4
7. Nīvāra (Wild rice)	<i>Oryza rufipogon</i>	Poaceae	TS 4-7-4
<b>Legume Crops</b>			
1. Māṣa (Black gram)	<i>Vigna mungo</i>	Fabaceae	TS 4-7-4
2. Mudga (Green gram)	<i>Vigna radiata</i>	Fabaceae	TS 4-7-4
3. Khalva (Bengal gram)	<i>Cicer arietinum</i>	Fabaceae	TS 4-7-4
4. Masurā (Lentil)	<i>Vicia hirsuta</i>	Fabaceae	TS 4-7-4
<b>Oil Seed Crop</b>			
1. Tila (Sesame)	<i>Sesamum indicum</i>	Fabaceae	TS 4-7-4
<b>Creepers</b>			
1. Urvāruka (Cucumber)	<i>Cucumis sativus</i>	Cucurbitaceae	TS 1-8-6(1)
2. Soma (Somalata)	<i>Sarcostemma acidum</i>	Asclepiadaceae	TS 4-7-4
<b>Trees</b>			
1. Śrī Gandha (Sandalwood)	<i>Santalum album</i>	Santalaceae	TS 1-8-6(1)
2. Khādira (Catechu tree)	<i>Acacia catechu</i>	Fabaceae	TS 4-7-4
3. Varaṇa (Varuna)	<i>Crateva magna</i>	Capparaceae	TS 4-7-4
4. Udumbara (Cluster fig)	<i>Ficus racemosa</i>	Moraceae	TS 4-7-4
5. Vikaṅkata (Indian plum)	<i>Flacourtia indica</i>	Flacourtiaceae	TS 4-7-4
6. Śamī (Indian desert tree)	<i>Prosopis cineraria</i>	Fabaceae	TS 4-7-4
7. Raktachandan (Red sander)	<i>Pterocarpus santalinus</i>	Fabaceae	TS 4-5-2(9)
8. Bilva (Bael)	<i>Aegle marmelos</i>	Rutaceae	TS 4-5-8(7)
9. Palāśa or Parṇa	<i>Butea monosperma</i>	Fabaceae	TS 4-5-8(7)
10. Aśvat'ha (Peepal tree)	<i>Ficus religiosa</i>	Moraceae	TS 4-5-8(7)
11. Nyagrōdha (Banyan tree)	<i>Ficus benghalensis</i>	Moraceae	TS 4-5-10(10)



**Figure 01 - Raktachandan (*Pterocarpus santalinus*) - (a) Entire tree, (b) Wood, (c) Flowering stage, (d) Fruiting stage, (e) A log of Redsander and (f) Redsander wood pieces**





**Figure 02 - Bael or Bilva (*Aegle marmelos*) - (a) Entire tree showing the wood and the crown, (b) Flowers close up, (c) Tree in fruiting stage and (d) Bael fruit slices**



**Figure 03 - Sandalwood (*Santalum album*)** - (a) Entire tree, (b) Wood close up, (c) Sandalwood logs, (d&e) Flowering stage, (f) Wood pieces, (g) Wood pieces and sandalwood power, (h) Fruiting stage and (i) Dried fruits





**Figure 04 - Urvāru (*Cucumis sativus*) - (a) Cucumber field, (b) Flowering stage, (c) Cucumber fruit intact with the plant, (d) Cucumber fruits and (e) Seeds**



Figure 05: Cereal, legume and oil seed crops revealed in the Śrī Rudram.



Vrihi : *Oryza sativa*  
 Yava : *Hordeum vulgare*  
 Godhuma : *Triticum aestivum*  
 Priyangu : *Setaria italica*  
 Anu : *Panicum miliaceum*  
 Syamaaka : *Echinochloa frumentacea*  
 Nivara : *Oryza rufipogon*

Mudga : *Vigna radiata*  
 Khalva : *Cicer arietinum*  
 Masura : *Vicia hirsuta*  
 Tila : *Sesamum indicum*

07 Cereal crops

04 Legume crops

01 Oil seed crop

**Figure 06 - Soma (*Sarcostemma acidum*) - (a) Soma plant, (b) Flowering stage, (c) Flowers close up, (d) Fruiting stage and (e) Seed dispersal stage**

