

DETAILED CONCEPT NOTE

Khejri (*Prosopis Cineraria*) is a small to medium size tree, found mainly in the Thar Desert of Rajasthan. Khejri is the golden tree of Indian deserts, plays a vital role in preserving the ecosystem of arid and semi-arid areas. It is the symbol of socio-economic development of the arid regions. Since all the parts of the tree are useful, it is called kalp taru. It is also known as the 'king of desert', and the 'wonder tree'. Khejri is a tree which is worshipped by a large number of people such as Bishnoi a great environmentalist community in Rajasthan.

The Bishnois, a community in Rajasthan, is an example of human beings living in harmony with nature. The name "Bishnoi" ("Twenty-nine") represents the number of principles espoused by their prophet, Lord Jhambheshwar. It is said that Lord Jhambheshwar attained saintly enlightenment while meditating beneath a tree in a place that would later become the village of Jhamba. There, where he discovered a water source that rescued his people from a 20-year drought, he established his ideal community, a society of people living in harmony with each other and with their environment.

Among the 29 principles propounded by the founder of the sect prophet, Lord Jhambheshwar, three concern nature conservation. Cutting and lopping of green trees is strictly prohibited. They maintain groves, locally known as orans, for the animals to graze and birds to feed. Orans serve as important recharges of rain water in the aquifers in the desert, where every single drop of water is precious.

In most orans, particularly in western Rajasthan, the dominant tree, *Prosopis cineraria* or Khejari, a tree species, is worshipped for its immense ecological value. Leave aside orans, they would not even cut Khejari trees even from their agricultural fields. The tree enriches soil nitrogen, and during drought and famine, the bark of the tree is mixed with flour for consumption.

In accordance with their principles, the Bishnoi never cut living trees for firewood or building materials.

In 1847, the Jodhpur king sent his army out to cut trees to build his palace. When his army started to log a Bishnoi forest, they staged a non-violent protest, offering their bodies as shields for the trees. The army's axes killed 363 before the king, hearing of their courage, halted the logging and declared the Khejarli region a preserve, off limits for logging and hunting.

The Khejri tree has been appropriately being used as a theme stamp which was released on 5th June, 1988, World Environment Day, by the Department of Posts, Government of India.

So it seemed appropriate for us to use Khejri leaves as a symbol for the 19th National Children's Science Congress which is to be held in Jaipur as a symbol of conservation of land resources in Rajasthan.

The logo has been developed by a team of professionals from Indian Institute of Crafts and Design.