

Samidhā: A Review

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Abstract. Yagya holds a central place within Indian culture, and its meticulous execution is delineated in scriptures, characterized by attentiveness and devotion. The term "समिध" (Samidh) or "समिधा" (Samidha) refers to wood utilized in Yagya rituals. The Buddhist and Zoroastrian cultures also recognize the samidhā as firewood and use them in fire rituals. Scriptures have clear instructions on the size of samidhā and categorize them as per the requirements of the traditions. Samidhā's role in Yagya encompasses its spiritual and philosophical significance, wood types, quality, and usage. This paper reviews its meaning in the broader context of Yagya, discussing its spiritual, scriptural, material, ayurvedic, and astrological aspect. Drawing from Vedic texts, Puranas, and epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata, the article highlights samidhā's symbolic connection to divine energy and cosmic balance. Specific samidhā types, such as Durva grass and Chandan, are explored for their ritual and medicinal applications. The astrological relevance of samidhā usage is discussed, suggesting its influence on energy equilibrium. The research underscores the holistic wisdom of Samidha embedded in ancient Vedic traditions and the potential to revive this knowledge for promoting well-being and spiritual harmony.

Keywords. Samidhā, Yagya rituals, Scriptures, Spiritual symbolism, Ayurvedic applications, Astrological considerations.

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Introduction

Yagya holds a central place within Indian culture, and its meticulous execution is delineated in scriptures, characterized by attentiveness and devotion. This sentiment is mirrored in the Shrimad Bhagvad Geeta 17/13, where yagya performed devoid of faith, mantras, rituals, and more, is categorized as Tamasic, the lowest form.

विधिहीनमसृष्टान्नं मन्त्रहीनमदक्षिणम् ।

श्रद्धाविरहितं यज्ञं तामसं परिचक्षते ॥ [1]

vidhihīnamasṛṣṭānnaṃ mantrahīnamadakṣiṇam. śraddhāviraḥitaṃ yajñaṃ tāmasaṃ paricakṣate.

This conveys that rituals not aligned with scriptural teachings, lacking prasadam distribution, food offerings, Vedic hymns, priest remuneration, and faith, are modes of ignorance.

Consequently, inner dedication harmonizes with procedural precision and materials in yagya performance. One pivotal material in yagya is samidhā.

As per the Sanskrit dictionary "Vacaspatyam," the term "समिध" (Samidh) or "समिधा" (Samidha) refers to wood utilized in yagya rituals, along with the prescribed size of 1 Pradesh (10 angul) (19 cm) [2].

In Atharvaveda, Kand 19, sukta 64, shloka 1 to 4, it is mentioned:

अग्ने समिधमाहार्षं बृहते जातवेदसे ।

स मे श्रद्धां च मेधां च जातवेदाः प्र यच्छतु ॥१॥

इध्मेन त्वा जातवेदः समिधा वर्धयामसि ।

तथा त्वमस्मान् वर्धय प्रजया च धनेन च ॥२॥

यदग्ने यानि कानि चिदा ते दारुणि दध्मसि ।

सर्वं तदस्तु मे शिवं तज्जुषस्व यविष्ठ्य ॥३॥

एतास्ते अग्ने समिधस्त्वमिद्धः समिद्धव ।

आयुरस्मासु धेह्यमृतत्वमाचार्याय ॥४॥ [3]

agne samidhamāhārṣaṃ bṛhate jātavedase. sa me śraddhāṃ ca medhāṃ ca jātavedāḥ pra yacchatu (1). idhmena tvā jātavedaḥ samidhā vardhayāmasi. tathā tvamasmān vardhaya prajayā ca dhanena ca (2). yadagne yāni kāni cidā te dārūṇi dadhmasi. sarvaṃ tadastu me śivaṃ tajjuṣasva yaviṣṭhya (3). etāste agne samidhastvamiddhaḥ samidbhava. āyurasmāsu dhehyamṛ-

tatvamācāryāya (4)

This verse indicates that samidhā is offered to the deity of Fire (Agni) with faith and devotion to strengthen the fire, whatever samidhā (wood) we are offering to the fire let this most powerful fire consume it and provide us blessings for off springs, wealth, devotion and faith to the God and bestow longevity and enlightenment to our teachers.

In Rigveda Mandal 7 sukta 14, Rishi Vashista Mitravaruna emphasizes the Sadhaka offering samidhā to the Fire deity.

समिधा जातवेदसे देवाय देवहूतिभिः ।

हविर्भिः शुक्रशोचिषे नमस्विनो वयं दाशेमाग्रये ॥१॥

वयं ते अग्ने समिधा विधेम वयं दाशेम सुष्टुती यजत्र ।

वयं घृतेनाध्वरस्य होतर्वयं देव हविषा भद्रशोचे ॥२॥

आ नो देवेभिरुप देवहूतिमग्ने याहि वषट्कृतिं जुषाणः ।

तुभ्यं देवाय दाशतः स्याम यूयं पात स्वस्तिभिः सदा नः ॥३॥ [4]

samidhā jātavedase devaya devahutibhiḥ. havirbhiḥ śukraśociṣe namasvino vayam daśemagnaye (1). vayam te agne samidha vidhema vayam dāśema suṣṭuti yajatra. vayam ghrtenadhvarasya hotar vayam deva haviṣa bhadrāśoche (2). ā no devebhir upa devahūtim agne yahi vaṣaṭkṛtim juṣaṇaḥ. tubhyam devaya dāśataḥ syama yūyam pāta svastibhiḥ sada naḥ (3).

This implies offering samidhā to Agni with reverence and performing rituals. It signifies an invitation to deities for well-being and guidance.

Apart from Vedic scriptures, Buddhist texts in Pali also define samidhā [5]. In Zoroastrian culture, historical references to ātaš-zōhr involve offering dry wood to fire [6]. In Buddhism, "samidhā" refers to firewood [7]. Similar to Vedic traditions, in the Sangha Bed Vastu of Buddhist culture, Anāthapiṇḍada's meeting with the Buddha symbolizes samidhā as the student's dedication to the teacher [8].

Samidhā's role in Yagya encompasses its spiritual and philosophical significance, wood types, quality, and usage. This paper reviews its meaning in the broader context of Yagya, discussing its spiritual, scriptural, material, ayurvedic and astrological aspects.

Spiritual Meaning and Philosophy

Veda

The Rigveda illuminates the concept that light, luminosity, and fire embody the essence of "samidhā" within the Gayatri mantra bestowed by the supreme God.

जगता सिन्धुं दिव्यस्तभायद्रथंतरे सूर्यं पर्यपश्यत्।
गायत्रस्य समिधस्तिस्त्र आहुस्ततो मह्ना प्र रिरिचे महित्वा ॥ [4]

jagatā sindhum divyastabhāyadrathamtare sūryam paryapaśyat. gāyatrasya samidhastisra āhustato mahnā pra ririce mahitvā

This proclamation signifies the Lord's establishment of the vast energy ocean within the radiant realm (Dyu) through the cosmic melodies of the Jagati meter, unveiling omnipotence.

It implies that in the celestial expanse, He installs the sun, an origin of generative brilliance and energy. The threefold divine kindling, they say, comprises the sun in the high heavens, the atmospheric symphony of lightning, winds, and electric vigour, and the terrestrial fusion of fire and magnetic vitality. Through His magnificent omnipotence, the Lord transcends these realms. In the context of the Gayatri, these manifestations are termed "samidhā": luminance, lightning, and fire (Rigveda, 1.164.25).

In another hymn of the Rigveda:

अहं होता न्यसीदं यजीयान्विश्वे देवा मरुतो मा जुनन्ति ।
अहरहरश्चिनाध्वर्यवं वां ब्रह्मा समिद्भवति साहुतिर्वाम् ॥

ahaṃ hotā nyasīdam yajīyānviśve devā maruto mā junanti. aharaharaśvinādhvaryavaṃ vāṃ brahmā samidbhavati sāhutirvām.

This insight unveils "samidhā" as defined by the Divine—a symbol of humans who disseminate wisdom within society. The essence of the verse elucidates, "I am the 'hota,' the conductor of the sacred ritual, beckoning the fire and presenting offerings upon the altar. Seated upon the altar, harmonious with all beings, I am called. The celestial beings and the Maruts, vibrant as storm winds, inspire and invigorate me. O Ashvins, embodiments of nature's complementary forces, and humanity's, men and women's, teachers' and preachers' roles within the socio-

economic system—yours is the orchestration of the daily yajna since dawn's inception. Let the Vedic scholar, radiant and serene as the moon, be the Brahma, the foremost priest, kindling and illuminating the fire. Let that radiant light and fiery fervor be the ultimate oblation unto the fire" (Rigveda, 10.52.2) [4].

Purana

In the Skandha Purana, particularly in the Avantika Khand under the section of Vishnu Sahasranamam, Lord Vishnu reveals Himself as "samidhā" in the 72nd shloka of Vishnu Sahasranama:

महाक्रमो महाकर्मा महातेजा महोरगः ।

महाक्रतुर्महायज्वा महायज्ञो महाहविः ॥ [9]

mahākramo mahākarmā mahātejā mahoragaḥ mahākraturmahāyajvā mahāyajño mahāhaviḥ

In this verse, Lord Narayana delineates His subtle essence and proclaims Himself as "Mahahaviḥ," signifying that the entirety of the universe, conceived as Brahman, is offered as a sacred offering (Havis) into the fire of the Self, which itself is Brahman.

In another shloka, numbered 74, Lord Vishnu declares that He is the physical embodiment of "samidhā" as well:

मनोजवस्तीर्थकरो वसुरेता वसुप्रदः ।

वसुप्रदो वासुदेवो वसुर्वसुमना हविः ॥ [9]

manojavastīrthakaro vasuretā vasupradah. vasuprado vāsudevo vasurvasumanā haviḥ.

Here, "Haviḥ" refers to the sacrificial offerings or "samidhā".

The Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa and Manusmṛti (3.4,8,10) underline the significance of "samidhā" within the context of marriage rituals. According to the Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa, mentioned in shloka 31.77-78; 19.61; 66.38-39, the marriage ceremony is officiated by the family priest before the sacred fire, and offerings of "samidhā" and kuśa grass are presented within the fire [10, 11].

Scriptures encompass not only the physical form of samidhā but also its subtle and superconscious essence. In the fourth khandā of the

Chandogya Upanishad, the rishi defines the Sun as a samidhā [12].

Valmiki Ramayana

In the Balkand Sarga 48 of the Valmiki Ramayana, the term samidha is described as:

गौतमं स ददर्शाथ प्रविशन्तं महामुनिम्
देवदानवदुर्धर्षं तपोबलसमन्वितम् ।
तीर्थोदकपरिक्लिन्नं दीप्यमानमिवानलम्
गृहीतसमिधं तत्र सकुशं मुनिपुङ्गवम् ॥ [13]

gautamaṃ sa dadarśātha praviśantaṃ mahāmunim, devadānavadurdharṣaṃ tapobalasanvītam. tīrthodakapariklinnaṃ dīpyamānamivānalam, grhītasamidhaṃ tatra sakuśaṃ munipuṅgavam.

This passage portrays Indra observing the sage Gautama, unchallenged by celestial beings, powerful in asceticism, adorned with the power of penance, drenched with sacred waters, radiant like fire, and carrying samidhā and Kusha grass as he entered a hermitage.

Mahabharata

In Sarga 13 of the Anushashan Parva, Shloka 07, it is stated:

अग्निकार्याणि समिधः कुशाः सुमनसस्तथा बलयश्चात्रलाजा-
भिर्धूपनं दीपकर्म च । (13/102/07)

agnikāryāṇi samidhaḥ kuśāḥ sumanasatathā, balayaścānalājābhirdhūpanaṃ dīpakarma ca. [14]

Here, Yudhishtira inquired from Bhishma about sacrifices, and Bhishma replied that in yagya, samidhā, kusha grass, flowers, and roots of the vitiver grass (*Chrysopogon zizanioides*) are offered.

Samidhā's dimensions and usage

The Sakandh Purana, in 2.5.12.56, also provides insight into the dimensions of samidhā required for the yagya ritual, as stated:

प्रादेशमात्राः पालाशसमिधश्च घृतप्लुताः ।
इदं विष्ण्विति मंत्रेण होतव्याः कर्मसिद्धये ॥ [9]

prādeśamātrāḥ pālāśasamidhaśca ghṛtaplutāḥ. idaṃ viṣṇviti maṃtreṇa hotavyāḥ karmasiddhaye.

This verse suggests that the samidhā of Palash (*Butea monosperma*), measuring 1 pradesh or 10 angul (approximately 19 cm),

coated with Ghee (clarified butter), is to be offered to the fire with the mantra "इदं विष्णु" (*idaṃ viṣṇu*) for the successful completion of the desired karma (task).

Aligned with the Sakandh Purana, the Sattvata Samhita in shloka number 100 also affirms the dimensions of the samidhā:

चतुष्कमेतदपरमग्रतो विनिवेश्य च ।
प्रादेशमात्राः समिधः प्रभूतं शुष्कमिन्धनं ॥

catuṣkametadaparamagrato viniveśya ca. prādeśamātrāḥ samidhaḥ prabhūtaṃ śuṣkamindhanaṃ.

This verse underscores the use of samidhā measuring 1 pradesh or 10 angul (approximately 19 cm) for the yagya ritual [15].

Param Samhita Panchratra

Numerous Indian scriptures elaborate on the procedures for various yagya ceremonies and tasks. These scriptures emphasize the usage of different types of samidhā (sacrificial wood) and their significance in Yagya Anushthan (rituals) or various Sadhana (spiritual practices). In the Param Samhita Panchratra, Chapter 15, Shloka 20 [16], it is stated:

घृतेन वा समिद्धिर्वा फलेर्वा होम मिष्यते ।
नियतं मन्त्रसिद्धे वर्धे दशवारावमं बुधः ॥

ghṛtena vā samidbhīrvā phalairvā homa miṣyate. niyataṃ mantrasiddha varthe daśavārāvamam budhaḥ.

This verse conveys that the homa (sacrificial fire) may be performed using ghee, samidhā, or fruits, and that, at the very least, it should be conducted ten times to ensure the success of the mantra.

In the same scripture, Chapter 24, Shlokas 6 and 7 (below), describe the concept of vidvatpūjā, wherein instead of physical samidhā, subtle or sūkṣma samidhā is employed for the yagya.

गुप्त्यर्थमात्मरक्षायां द्रव्य शुद्धौ च पावनात् ।
समिदाज्यं न होमेषु योजये देवताश्रयात् ॥

guptyarthamātmarakṣāyāṃ dravya śuddhau ca pāvanāt. samidājyaṃ na homeṣu yojaye devataśrayāt.

Param Samhita in Chapter 29, Shloka 37.10 (below), highlights that samidhā is one of the three indispensable components of yagya [17].

अग्निकार्येतु होमस्य त्रीणि द्रव्याणि पद्मज ।
समिधोहविराज्यं च तैर्नित्यं होममाचरेत् ॥

*agnikāryetu homasya trīṇi dravyāṇi padmaja.
samidhohavirājyaṃ ca tairnityaṃ homamācaret*

Apastamba Dharma-sutra

In the 9th patal, prashna I, of the Apastamba Dharma Sutra, it is prescribed that one should either recite the Gayatri mantra 1000 times or offer samidhā in equal numbers. Additionally, Dharmashastra in the same patal, prashna II, emphasizes the rules of Gṛhya-fire and instructs that offerings of samidhā should be made daily, both in the morning and evening [18].

Bharadvaja Srauta Sutra

The Bharadvaja Srauta Sutra outlines the arrangement of samidhā during yagya rituals, the mantras to be used for their purification, and their offerings to the fire. This guidance can be found in Prashna 8 of the 18th kandika [19].

Architectural (Shilpashastra) Scriptures

Architectural scriptures that pertain to house construction and machinery also mention the importance of samidhā in the context of yagya. In the Manasara, it is advised that during Grahapraveśa (housewarming) or the initiation of any vimāna-lakṣaṇa (structure), yagya should be performed using samidhā, ghee, and Hawansamgri. The significance of the kund (fire pit) in the yagya is also emphasized [20].

Plants used for Samidhā in Hawan

The collection of specific types of wood as samidhā was also a sacred practice carried out in a well-defined manner. In Vedic times, at Gurukuls (traditional schools), disciples would carefully and devotedly gather naturally fallen samidhā from the ground beneath trees as a part of their education. It was ensured that samidhā was not plucked or cut directly from trees or

plants. Instead, the branches or kindling sticks that naturally fell to the ground were collected. Great care was taken to ensure they were free from dust, infectious agents, and of high quality.

Vayu Purana

The Indian scripture Vayu Purana also provides guidance on when to collect or avoid collecting samidhā from certain plants for Yagya:

"निवासा ये च कीटानां लताभिर्वेष्टताश्च ये ।

अयज्ञिका गर्हिताश्च वल्मीकैश्च समावृताः

शकुनीनां निवासाश्च वर्जयेत्तान् महीरुहान् ।

अन्यांश्चैवं विधान् सर्वान् यज्ञियांश्च विवर्जयेत् ।

*nivāsā ye ca kīṭānām lataḥbhirveṣṭatāśca
ye. ayajñikā garhitāśca valmīkaiśca samāvṛtāḥ
śakunīnām nivāsāśca varjayettān mahīruhān.
anyāṃścaivaṃ vidhān sarvān yajñiyāṃśca vivar-
jayet.*

This verse implies that samidhā collected from plants inhabited by insects or entwined with creepers, plants disliked by yagya (ayagyika), those covered with termites or ants, those overshadowed by a throne-like growth, and those where birds have made their nests, should be avoided for Yagya. The wood of Tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*), Jackfruit (*Artocarpus heterophyllus*), and similar plants should be excluded from the yagya procedure [21].

Brahma Purana

The Brahma Purana enumerates a list of plants designated for samidhā.

शमीपलाश न्यग्रोध प्लक्षवैकंकतोद्भवाः ।

अश्वत्थोदुम्बरोविल्वश्चन्दनः सरलस्तथा ।

शालश्च देवदारुश्च खदिरश्चेति याज्ञिकाः ।

*śamīpalāśa nyagrodha plakṣavaikankatodb-
havāḥ. aśvatthodumvarovilvaśchandanaḥ saralas-
tathā. śālaśca devadāruśca khadiraśceti yājñikāḥ.*

This signifies that the plants for yagya include the Ghaf (śami) (*Prosopis cineraria*), Sacred Tree (palāś) (*Butea monosperma*), Banyan (vat) (*Ficus benghalensis*), Ficus (pākar) (*Ficus virens*), Castor (vikrut) (*Ricinus Communis*), Sacred fig (pipal) (*Ficus religiosa*), cluster fig (udumbara) (*Ficus racemosa*), Bela (*Aegle marmelos*), Sandalwood (candan) (*Santalum album*), chir pine (saral) (*Pinus roxburghii*), śail

(*Shorea robusta*), deodar (Devdaru) (*Cedrus deodara*), and Black Cutch (khair) (*Senegalia catechu*). Their samidhā is to be used for the purpose of yagya [22].

Another verse in the Brahma Purana states:
 पलाशाऽश्वत्थन्यग्रोध प्लक्षवैकंकतोद्भवाः ।
 वैतसौदुम्बरो विल्वश्चन्दनः सरलस्तथा ॥
 शालश्च देवदारुश्च खदिरश्चेति याज्ञिकाः ।

palāśā'svatthanyagrodha plakṣavaikamkatodbhavāḥ. vaitasaudumbaro vilvaścandanaḥ saralastathā. śālaśca devadāruśca khadiraśceti yājñikāḥ.

This verse indicates that Sacred Tree (palāśā) (*Butea monosperma*), Sacred fig (aśvattha) (*Ficus religiosa*), Banyan tree (nyagrodha) (*Ficus bengalensis* Linn), Wave craved fig tree (plakṣa) (*Ficus virens*), Bait (*Allophylus edulis*), cluster fig (Gular) (*Ficus racemosa*), Sandalwood (chandana) (*Santalum album*), sāla (*Shorea robusta*), deodar cedar (Devdaru) (*Ce-*

drus deodara), and katthā (*Senegalia catechu*) are also employed for sacrificial offerings in the Yagya [23].

Ayurvedic and Scientific Aspects of samidhā

The Indian scriptures expound upon the classifications of samidhā across physical, subtle, and superconscious realms. They also elucidate its applications and methodologies for diverse yogic practices. However, delving into the intricacies of the subtle and superconscious aspects of samidhā falls beyond the purview of this current exposition. In this paper, we center our discussion on the prominent and frequently employed varieties of samidhā sourced from diverse plants. This exploration draws upon Ayurvedic and astrological principles delineated in scriptures, while concurrently incorporating insights from modern plant science [24].

Samidhā	Prominent Clinical Use [Bhavaprakash Nighantu][24]
Mango (<i>Mangifera indica</i>)	Aamapachana (Digestive aid), Raktapitta (Bleeding disorders) (chapter- ath amradiphalam, shloka 1-18, pg. 550)
śami (<i>Prosopis cineraria</i>)	Krimighna (Anthelmintic), Kasahara (Cough reliever) (chapter- ath Shami, shloka 72, 73, pg. No. 545)
Palāśā (<i>Butea monosperma</i>)	Rakta śodhana (Blood purifier), Kusthaghna (Useful in skin diseases) (chapter- ath palash, shloka 49, pg. No. 535)
Aśvatha (<i>Ficus religiosa</i>)	Vātahar (Alleviates disorders of Vata dosha), Mutrakrichchra (Dysuria) (chapter - ath vatadivarg, shloka 3, pg. No. 513)
Plakś (<i>Ficus lacor</i>)	Pramehaghna (Useful in diabetes), Kashayahara (Astringent). (chapter- ath vatadivarg, shloka 11, pg. No. 518)
Vat (<i>Ficus benghalensis</i>)	Vātashamana (Alleviates disorders of Vata dosha), Kushtaghna (Beneficial in skin diseases) (ath vatadivarg, shloka 1, 2, pg. No. 513)
Udumbar (<i>Ficus racemosa</i>)	Vranaropana (Wound healing), Tvakroga (Skin disorders). (ath vatadivarg, shloka 7, pg. No. 516)
Saral (<i>Picea smīthiana</i>)	Kaphavatahara (Alleviates disorders of Kapha and Vata dosha), Pramehaghna (Useful in diabetes) (chapter - ath saral, shloka 26, 27 pg. no.168)
Bela (<i>Aegle marmelos</i>)	Krimighna (Anthelmintic), Shwasahara (Relieves respiratory disorders) shloka 13, pg. No. 247
Chandan (<i>Santalum album</i>)	Shitapitta (Urticaria), Jvarahara (Fever-reducing) (chapter - ath kapuradivarg, shloka 13, page no. 187)
Devdar (<i>Cedrus deodara</i>)	Kaphahara (Alleviates disorders of Kapha dosha), Shothahara (Anti-inflammatory) (chapter-ath devdaru, shloka 25, pg no. 166)
Katthā (<i>Acacia catechu</i>)	Kandughna (Relieves itching), Pramehaghna (Useful in diabetes) (chapter-athkhadir, shloka 31, pg. 531)

Table 1: Commonly used or scripturally referred list of trees which are used samidhā in Yagya and their Clinical Use as per Ayurvedic text - Bhavaprakash Nighantu.

Amra (*Mangifera indica*)

Mango (*Mangifera indica*) stands as the most prevalent selection for yagya rituals. Pt. Shri Ram Sharma Acharya, in "Yagya Ka Gyaan Vignyan" section 3.31, notes that conducting yagya with mango wood amplifies the grace of Gayatri on yagyakarta [23]. This wood is associated with increased germination and seedling development in Wheat (*Triticum aestivum*) [25], and its fumes elevate water pH [26]. Notably, India's contribution to 50% of global mango production propels it to the zenith of mango producers [27], thereby ensuring abundant availability of mango wood samidhā.

Mangostin, 29-hydroxy mangiferonic acid, and mangiferin, in tandem with prevalent flavonoids, find residence in mango wood's stem bark [28]. The presence of Phenolic Antioxidants, Free Sugars, and Polyols further characterizes mango wood [29]. Khan et al. (1993) reveal constituents such as Indicoside A and B, manghopenal, and derivatives, contributing to the stem bark's composition [30].

Experimental evidence alludes to the antioxidative prowess of mango wood, averting DNA damage by bleomycin or copper-phenanthroline systems [31]. It also manifests remarkable efficacy against iron-induced oxidative harm [32]. Mango wood extract showcases hypoglycemic potential [33], offering promise in diabetes treatment [34]. Furthermore, mango wood exhibits antiviral attributes against Herpes simplex virus type 2 [35], along with anthelmintic, antiallergic, antiparasitic, anti-tumor, and anti-HIV functionalities [36–40].

The Vedic literature presents an array of treatments encompassing both infectious and non-infectious ailments through Yagya, replete with precautions and procedures [41]. Charak Samhita 5/25-61 outlines the utilization of herbal fume inhalation as a therapeutic approach analogous to Yagya fume inhalation for ailment prevention and remedy [42].

The discourse herein thus engages in an exploration of samidhā, channelling the wisdom of ancient texts while interweaving it with contemporary insights from the realm of plant sciences.

Bilva (*Aegle marmelos*)

The Bilva plant holds a profound spiritual significance within Indian Vedic culture, where its leaves are devoutly offered to Lord Shiva. Engaging in yagya rituals with Bilva samidhā bestows wealth upon the yagya karta [43].

In the Vaayviya Sanhita, which extends from the Shiva Puran's Uttarabhāga, Chapter 32, Shloka 55, it is stated:

बिल्वपत्रैस्तु हवनं शत्रोर्विजयदं तथा ।

समिधः शांतिकार्येषु पालाशखदिरादिकाः ॥

bilvapatraistu havanam śatrorvijayadam tathā. samidhaḥ śāntikāryeṣu pālāśakhadirādikāḥ. [44]

This verse elucidates that the yagya performed with Bilva samidhā grants victory over adversaries, while for the purpose of establishing peace, palāśa and khādira samidhā are prescribed.

Bilva, enriched with nutrients, possesses an extensive legacy of traditional medicinal use and pharmacological attributes. *Aegle marmelos*, known as Bela, graces the subtropical terrain, belonging to the Rutaceae family, and brings forth a plethora of health benefits, including antidiabetic, antiamoebic, antimicrobial, antihistaminic, anticancer, and anti-inflammatory activities. Its substantial nutritional content and valuable reservoir of natural antioxidants further enhance its stature [45].

Ayurveda employs the plant in Panchang form to address ailments such as diarrhea, dysentery, and ulcers. In folklore, various parts of the plant are harnessed to alleviate conditions like diabetes, skin disorders, typhoid, wound healing, ulcers, stomachaches, jaundice, hypertension, malaria, cancer, and more. Bilva exhibits a diverse array of therapeutic and pharmacological properties, encompassing antioxidant, anti-diabetic, antihistamine, radioprotective, anti-ulcer, anticancer, cardio-protective, antidiarrheal, antibacterial, antimicrobial, hepatoprotective, anti-inflammatory, and antiviral effects [46].

Dhāka (*Butea monosperma*)

Dhāka, also known as Palāśa or the sacred tree, holds a significant place in Vedic culture, where the manifold uses of Palāśa are well-documented in the Bhagwant Puran. According to Pt. Shri Ram Sharma Acharya, in the book "Yagya Ka Gyaan Vigyan," section 3.27, engaging in yagya rituals with Palāśa samidhā bestows health benefits upon the performer [23].

In the Vayaviya Samhita of the Shiv Puran, in the Uttarbhag, Chapter 32, Shloka 55, [44] it is stated:

पालाशसमिधाद्योतनं शत्रोर्विजयदं स्मृतम् ।
अतो विश्रामकार्येषु पालाशः काष्ठशेषजः ॥

pālāśasamidhādyotanam śatrorvijayadam smṛtam. ato viśrāmakāryeṣu pālāśaḥ kāṣṭhaśeṣajah.

This verse conveys that the radiance emanating from the palash samidhā brings victory over foes and establishes peace and harmony [45].

The esteemed King Bhoj authored the "Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra," a treatise on Vastushastra (architecture), which mentions the use of palash samidhā for yagya rituals following the construction of a building. It is stated:

"तत्राज्यपात्राण्याज्यं च गन्धांश्च कुसुमानि च ।
द्रव्याणि वाचनीयानि समिधश्च पलाशजाः ॥"

tatrājyapātrāṅyājyaṃ ca gandhāṃśca kusumāni ca dravyāṇi vācanīyāni samidhaśca pālāśajāḥ

This verse emphasizes the use of Palāśa samidhā, fragrant substances, and flowers for yagya, underscoring their sanctity and significance [47].

The Padma Purana, in Chapter 28, Shloka 16, "Sṛṣṭikhaṇḍa," declares:

"होमश्च सर्पिषा कार्यो यवैः कृष्णतिलैरपि ।
पलाशसमिधः शस्ताश्चतुर्थेऽह्नि तथोत्सवः ॥"

homaśca sarpiṣā kāryo yavaiḥ kṛṣṇatilaiṛapi. pālāśasamidhaḥ śastāścaturthe' hni tathotsavaḥ.

This passage underscores that offerings should be made with clarified butter and grains, and the use of palash samidhā during the yagya ritual is auspicious [48].

In another verse, numbered 29, from the Bhumikhand, Chapter 125 of the Padma Purana, the sage affirms:

"अष्टोत्तरतिलाज्यैश्च पालाशैः समिधैरपि ।
ग्रहाणामपि कर्त्तव्यं स्थापनं पूजनं द्विज ॥"

aṣṭottaratilājyaisca pālāśaiḥ samidhairapi. grahāṇāmapi karttavyaṃ sthāpanaṃ pūjanaṃ dvija.

This verse suggests that for the grahsthapa ritual, the Dvij (one who wears the sacred thread) should use samidhā from both sesame and Palāśa (sacred tree) [48].

The Lakxminarayan Samhita, in Verse 76 of Chapter 152 of Khanda 2 (Treta-Yuga-Santana), elucidates:

"पालाशय ईश्वरादिभ्यः प्रादेशमात्रिकाः शुभाः ।
साज्याः समिधः प्रत्येकं चाष्टौ चतस्र एव वा ॥"

pālāśya īśvarādibhyaḥ prādeśamātrikāḥ śubhāḥ. sājyāḥ samidhaḥ pratyekaṃ cāṣṭau catasra eva vā.

This verse signifies the auspiciousness of using palāśa samidhā with specific dimensions and highlights the importance of offerings made during yagya [49].

There is another shloka in verse 93 of chapter 148 of Khanda 3 (Dvapara-Yuga-Santana).

"पालाशाः समिधः शस्ता वसोधरा तथोपरि ।
आद्यमासे तु ऋत्विग्भ्यो दद्याद्वै क्षीरभोजनम् ॥"

pālāśāḥ samidhaḥ śastā vasordhārā tathopari. ādyamāse tu ṛtvigbhyo dadyādvai kṣīrabhojanam.

This verse implies that after performing the obligation of Palāśa samidhā, one should offer clarified butter (ghee) to the ritvigs (priests) in the early month, followed by the offering of kheer (a sweet dish made from rice and milk) [49].

Another scripture, the Sātvata Samhitā in Chapter 6, also mentions the use of Palāśa samidhā: "पलाशपूर्वाः समिधाः साग्राः परिधयस्तु वै ।" (18/85) *pālāśapūrvāḥ samidhāḥ sāgrāḥ paridhayastu vai.*

This passage implies that the container for water used in the Yagya should be made from Palāśa [15].

The Puruṣottama Saṃhitā (पुरुषोत्तमसंहिता) also includes a mention of the use of Palāśa in Yagya. In Chapter 5, Shloka 39, it states:

होमं कुर्या चतुर्दिक्षु कुण्डे वा स्थंडिलेपि वा ।
पलाशसमिधं पुष्प फलमाज्यं सपल्लवम् ॥

homam kuryā caturdikṣu kuṇḍe vā sthaṃḍilepi vā. palāśasamidham puṣpam phalamājyam sapallavam.

This verse emphasizes that one should perform the yagya in a square kund or a sthandi (platform), using palash samidhā, flowers, fruits, and leaves [50].

In the 11th chapter, "Yaagshalakundtoran Vidhi," Shloka 38, the scripture mentions the use of samidhā: "पालाशौ दुंपराश्वद्ध प्लक्षास्स मिधय-स्तथा ।" *pālāśau duṃparāśvaddha plakṣāssa midhayastathā*

This suggests the use of both palāśa and plaksha (*Ficus religiosa*) juice along with their respective samidhā [50].

The Ayurvedic formulations derived from the palāśa plant are employed to alleviate vata and kapha imbalances among the three doṣa. Palāśais reported to contain secondary metabolites such as butein, butrin, isobutrin, and isocoreopsin, which exhibit inhibitory activity against inflammatory gene expression. It is also known for its antioxidant properties. Phytochemicals isolated from the methanolic extract, isobutrin, and butrin, have demonstrated anti-inflammatory, anticonvulsant, antidiabetic, and hepatoprotective effects [51].

Madāra (*Calotropis gigantea*)

The divine scripture Lakshminarayan Samhita, in verse 46 of chapter 133 of Khanda 3 (Dvapara-Yuga-Santana), states:

"अर्कः पालाशखदिरावपामार्गश्च पिप्पलः ।
औदुम्बरः शमी दुर्वा कुशाश्च समिधः क्रमात् ॥"

arkaḥ pālāśakhadirāvapāmārgaśca pippalaḥ. audumbaraḥ śamī durvā kuśāśca samidhaḥ kramāt.

This verse implies that one should perform yagya using the samidhā of Madāra, Palāśa, Khādira, pipala gulara śami durvā and kuśa in

sequence to balance the influences of the nine astrological planets [49].

Madāra (*Calotropis gigantea*) is recognized as a weed and is commonly referred to as "crown flower," "giant milkweed," and "shallow wort." It has been reported to possess hepatoprotective activity [52]. *Calotropis procera*, a well-known plant, has traditionally been utilized for the treatment of conditions such as diarrhea, stomatitis, sinus fistula, and skin diseases [53, 54], as well as diabetes, pain, and inflammation [55]. The bark of Madāra is noted for its antimicrobial and antifungal properties [56].

Kuśa (*Desmostachya bipinnata*)

Desmostachya bipinnata holds significance as per Shiv Puran, chapter 13, verse 43, in the Rudrasamhita (3): Parvatikhanda:

"कदाचित्कुशपुष्पाणि समिधं नयति स्वयम् ।
सखीभ्यां स्थानसंस्कारं कुर्वती न्यवसत्तदा ॥"

kadācitchuśapuṣpāṇi samidham nayati svayam. sakhībhyāṃ sthānasamskāraṃ kurvati nyavasattadā.

This verse signifies that during the worship of Lord Shiva, Goddess Parvati herself sometimes gathers the samidhā of Kuśa and flowers, and at times, her companions fulfill this task. This observance upholds the discipline and decorum of the hermitage [57].

Desmostachya bipinnata is abundant in diverse secondary metabolites, offering a wide array of medicinal applications. It contains compounds such as coumarins (scopoletin and umbelliferone), carbohydrates, sugars, proteins, alkaloids, tannins, phenolics, flavonoids, triterpenoids, amino acids, and glycosides. Pharmacological investigations have demonstrated its antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, analgesic, antipyretic, gastrointestinal, anticancer, diuretic, anti-urolithiatic, antioxidant, hepatoprotective, antidiabetic, bronchodilatory, and antihistaminic effects [58]. The plant also serves as fodder for cattle. In Ayurveda, it is mentioned that a decoction made from its leaves can be used to treat fever [59]. The roots of kuśa are utilized for their astringent, diuretic, galac-

tagogue, litholytic properties, and are employed in treating conditions like dysentery, diarrhea, thirst, urinary calculi, dysuria, bladder-related issues, menorrhagia, and skin diseases [60]. Furthermore, they are employed for wound healing and alleviating abdominal pain [61].

Durvā (*Cynodon Dactylon*)

Cynodon dactylon, belonging to the Poaceae family, is a resilient perennial grass and one of the most prevalent weeds in India. It goes by various names such as Dhub, Doba, or Harialil. Reverberating through Vedic culture, this plant holds paramount importance due to its extensive utilization in religious rituals and practices. *Cynodon dactylon* is also an offering to Lord Ganesha and is lauded in numerous scriptures for its spiritual and health benefits.

In verse 22 of chapter 205 of Khanda 2 (Treta-yuga-santana) of the Lakshminarayan Samhita, it is stated:

अस्थापयच्च मुख्यानि कर्णाश्च समिधस्तथा ।
यवव्रीहिकुशान् दूर्वादधिचन्दनसर्षपान् ॥

asthāpayacca mukhyāni kaṇāṁśca samidhastathā. yavavrihikuśān dūrvādadhican-danasarṣapān.

This verse signifies the establishment of essential items including Durva grass as samidhā in fire rituals. Items such as barley, rice, Kusha grass, Durva grass, sesame, sandalwood, and mustard are used in these sacred rites [49].

Similarly, the same scripture, in verse 22 of chapter 293 of Khanda 2 (Treta-yuga-santana), expresses:

स्थालीं सौभाग्यवटिकां दूर्वा काण्डं च वंशिकाम् ।
फलं चान्नं जलं शाकं भूषणं समिधं तथा ॥

sthālīṁ saubhāgyavaṭikāṁ dūrvāṁ kaṇḍaṁ ca vaṁśīkām. phalaṁ cānnaṁ jalaṁ śākaṁ bhūṣaṇaṁ samidhaṁ tathā.

This verse emphasizes the utilization of Durvā grass, among other things, to bring about prosperity and blessings. Its inclusion signifies its significance in ensuring auspiciousness and good fortune [49].

The root's paste, when ingested with water, is employed to address fever. As an analgesic, its paste is applied on the head for headache relief. It possesses antiseptic properties and aids in staunching bleeding. Durvā is traditionally utilized for treating conditions like diabetes, inflammation, kidney problems, urinary disorders, gastrointestinal issues, constipation, abdominal pain, and blood purification. The entire plant serves as a diuretic, addressing dropsy, syphilis, wound infections, and piles. The plant's juice has astringent qualities and is externally applied to fresh cuts and wounds. Its applications extend to treating catarrhal ophthalmia, hysteria, chronic diarrhea, epilepsy, insanity, and dysentery [62].

Chandan (*Santalum album*)

Chandan, scientifically known as *Santalum album*, holds esteemed value both as an industrial commodity and a medicinal plant. Its historical significance spans traditional medicinal systems worldwide.

In Treta Yuga Santana, within verse 16 of chapter 171 of Khanda 2 (Treta-yuga-santana) of the Lakshminarayan Samhita, it is stated:

चन्दनानि समिधश्च मिष्टमहाहृतीर्ददौ ।
साक्षादनादिभगवान् प्रत्यक्षो वह्निमण्डले ॥

candanāni samidhaśca miṣṭamahāhṛtīr-dadau. sāksādanādibhagavān pratyakṣo vahni-maṇḍale.

This verse elucidates the offering of sandalwood and samidhā in fire rituals, symbolizing the divine presence of the Supreme Being within the realm of fire [49].

Furthermore, verse 94 of chapter 207 of Khanda 3 (Dvapara-yuga-santana) conveys:

समिधस्तुलसीपत्रं चन्दनद्रुं फलद्रुमम् ।
तृणं दर्भं चांकुरं वाऽर्पयेन्मे मुक्तिभाक्तु सः ॥

samidhastulasīpatraṁ candanadruṁ phaladrumam. tṛṇaṁ darbhaṁ cāṅkuraṁ vā'rpayenme muktibhāktu saḥ.

This verse reinforces the use of Chandan, along with other elements like basil leaves, fruit-bearing trees, grass, and sacred thread, to invoke devotion and spirituality, leading to liberation

[49].

Chandan is associated with neuroprotective and geroprotective attributes [63]. It is widely utilized in aromatherapy for its antidepressant properties, influencing cognition, psychological and physical well-being, and finds application in fragrances, incense, cosmetics, personal care products, meditation, and spiritual practices [64]. Its active components exhibit a diverse range of pharmacological actions, including chemoprevention [65], antihyperglycemic and antioxidant effects [66], anti-neoplastic potential [67], antiviral activity [68], and anti-inflammatory properties.

Astrological and Seasonal Aspect of samidhā

The scriptures provide specific guidance on the usage of different types of samidhā based on astrological considerations.

होमं तिलघृतैः कुर्यात् अहं नाम्ना तु मन्त्रवित् ।
 अर्कः पलाश खदिरौह्यपामार्गीथ पिप्पलः ॥
 उदुम्बर शमी दूर्वा कुशाश्च समिधः क्रमात् ।
 एकैकस्यात्वष्ट शतमष्टाविंशतिरेव धा ॥
 होतव्या मधु सर्पिभ्यां दध्ना वा पायसेन वा ।
 सप्तमे त्वम संप्राप्ते नक्तं सूर्य सुतस्यतु ॥
 यज्ञेन कृत मात्रेण सर्वे शायत्युपद्रवाः ।

homaṃ tilaghr̥taiḥ kuryāt ahaṃ nāmnā tu mantravit. Arkah palāśa khadirauhyapāmārgītha pippalah. Udumbara śamī dūrvā kuśāśca samidhaḥ kramāt. Ekaikasyātvasṭa śata-maṣṭāvīṃśatireva dhā. Hotavyā madhu sarpibhyāṃ dadhnā vā pāyasena vā. saptame tvama saṃprāpte naktam sūrya sutasyatu. yajñena kṛta mātṛeṇa sarve śavyatyupadravāḥ.

This verse suggests that those who know the mantras should perform Yagya with specific samidhā for each planet: madāra, palāśa, khādira, apāmārga, pipal, gular, śami, durvā and kuśa. Each samidhā should be used 108 times for the respective planet, along with honey, clarified butter, curd, and khīra (sweet dish of rice

and milk). On the seventh day, Yagya should be performed for the son of Surya, Shani (planet Saturn), to harmonize planetary energies and yield positive results.

According to the scripture Lakshminarayan Samhita, verse 68 of chapter 152, Khanda 2 (Treta-yuga-santana),

औदुम्बरः शमी दूर्वा कुशाश्च समिधः क्रमात् ।
 नवग्रहाणां बोद्धव्या दधिक्शीरघृताऽऽक्तकाः ॥

audumbaraḥ śamī dūrvā kuśāśca samidhaḥ kramāt. navagrahāṇāṃ boddhavyā dadhikṣīraghr̥tā'ktakāḥ.

This verse advises performing Yagya with gular, śamī, dūrvā, and kuśa samidhā, along with curd, khīra, and clarified butter, to balance the energies of the nine planets.

For the moon, in the scripture Manjushrim, the samidhā of palāśa and apāmārga is recommended [69]:

चन्द्रग्रहे पलाशसमिद्धिरग्निं प्रज्वालय च्छ्ताहुतीनामष्टसहस्रं जुहुयात् ।
 चन्द्रग्रहे अपामार्गकाष्णैरग्निं प्रज्वालय पलाशसमिधानां ब्राह्मणारे दधिमधुच्छ्ताक्तानां अष्टसहस्रं जुहुयात् ।

candragrahe palāśasamidbhiraṅniṃ prajvālyā ghr̥tāhutīnāmaṣṭasahasraṃ juhuyāt

candragrahe apāmārgakāṣṭhairaṅniṃ prajvālyā palāśasamidhānāṃ brāhmaṇāre dadhimadhughr̥tāktānāṃ aṣṭasahasraṃ juhuyāt.

As per Yajnavalkya Smṛiti [70], in the sections Vinayakakalpa (1.271 to 294) and Grahasanti (1.295 to 309), different samidhā's are offered for respective planets. The scripture prescribes the use of palāśa, khādira, pipala, and śami.

In Susrutasaṃhita (Ayurvedic text) [71], verse 304-305, chapters 27 to 37, the use of parasa, khādira, pipala, and śami in Yagya or Dhumra Chikitsa is recommended for mitigating health issues caused by planetary positions in a person's birth chart.

Sr. No.	Planet	Samidhā	Purpose according to the scripture
1	Sun	Madāra (<i>Calotropis gigantea</i>)	Aid in the treatment of diseases
2	Moon	Palāśa (<i>Butea monosperma</i>)	Achieve success in all endeavors
3	Mars	khādira (<i>Acacia catechu</i>)	To win over enemies
4	Mercury	Apāmārga (<i>Achyranthes aspera</i>)	Improve dialogues
5	Jupiter	Pipal (<i>Ficus religiosa</i>)	Provide wisdom
6	Venus	Gular (<i>Ficus racemosa</i>)	Facilitate ascent to heaven
7	Saturn	Shamī (<i>Prosopis cineraria</i>)	Purify and cleanse from sins
8	Rahu	Durvā (<i>Cynodon Dactylon</i>)	Bestow longevity and stability
9	Ketu	Kuśa (<i>Desmostachya bipinnata</i>)	Fulfill desires and wishes
10	All	Palāśa (<i>Butea monosperma</i>)	Fulfill desires and wishes

Table 2: Samidhā Classified for Different Planets and Their Purpose [72].

Season	Name of samidhā
Vasanta (Spring)	Shamī (<i>Prosopis cineraria</i>)
Grishma (Summers)	Pipal (<i>Ficus religiosa</i>)
Varsha (Rainy)	Palāśa (<i>Butea monosperma</i>); Bilva (<i>Aegle marmelos</i>)
Sharad (Autumn)	Pakar (<i>Ficus infectoria</i>); Mango (<i>Mangifera indica</i>)
Hemant (Pre-winter)	khādira (<i>Acacia catechu</i>)
Shishir (Winter)	Gular (<i>Ficus racemosa</i>); Banyan (<i>Ficus benghalensis</i>)

Table 3: Samidhā as per the seasonal usage

Discussion

The practice of Yagya involves the use of various types of samidhā and specific procedures to attain desired results. Just as different ailments require specific remedies, Yagya rituals with distinct purposes demand particular samidhā. In ancient Vedic times, people were well-versed in these procedures and the materials used, allowing them to fully benefit from Yagya. While much knowledge and plant species have been lost due to neglect and conflicts, some scriptures remain, preserving the potential to revive the ancient Vedic wisdom.

In conclusion, the intricate procedures and various samidhā used in Yagya rituals are reflective of a holistic understanding of nature and spirituality. These rituals aim to harmonize energies, promote well-being, and uphold the cosmic order as envisioned in the ancient Vedic traditions.

Compliance with ethical standards Not required

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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