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TABOOS AND SACRED SACRAMENTAL BELIEFS IN BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION PREVAILING IN VALSAD DISTRICT, GUJARAT, INDIA

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ABSTRACT:

In today's world man is not at all afraid of anybody but still there are some taboos and some sacred sacramental beliefs that are responsible to check the humans from doing the wrong things. As per the demand man has overexploited the natural resources, but somewhere he is afraid of taboos and the sacred sacramental beliefs prevailing in their area and by this indirectly the biodiversity is conserved. This paper tries to project some of the taboos and sacramental sacred belief prevailing in Valsad district which have directly or indirectly helped in biodiversity conservation. Some of the interesting sacred beliefs have kept the greenery alive in the concrete jungle like if someone started doing pooja of the peepal tree and some sacred story is spreaded that there is the presence on "Baliya dev" or "Brahma dev" then nobody dares to cut that tree. There are special trees on which the hen is sacrificed and tied by the people to cure illness. By this way tree is totally secured and nobody will ever try to trim that tree. In short the taboos and sacred beliefs have helped to conserve the biodiversity.

KEY WORDS: *Taboos, Sacred, Beliefs, Biodiversity, Conservation, Valsad.*

INTRODUCTION:

A taboo is a strong social prohibition (or ban) relating to any area of human activity or social custom that is sacred and or forbidden based on moral judgment religious beliefs and or scientific consensus. Breaking the taboo is usually considered objectionable or abhorrent by society.

The term comes from the Tongan word 'tabu', meaning set apart or forbidden, and appears in many cultures. In many cultures, a taboo often has specific religious associations. The word itself (taboo) is used in more than one signification. Some taboo activities or customs are prohibited under law and transgressions may lead to severe penalties. On the other hand taboos result in embarrassment, shame, and rudeness. Although critics may oppose taboos, they are put into place to avoid disrespect to any given authority, be it legal, moral or religious, but sometimes it may be a boon for example for conserving biodiversity there are many taboos and sacred beliefs which help in conserving biodiversity. In the same way

sacred sacramental beliefs are also helping in some or the other way for conserving the biodiversity.

METHOD:

During our survey we found many sacramental beliefs which people followed and because of that indirect conservation and plantation of the specific species is done. Every God and Goddess is having their importance and connection with some tree so every temple has a tree connected to the God worshipped there, in addition to that now a day's people have started believing in vastu shastra so there is specific plantation done. Here is the list of the plants which have sacred sacramental beliefs or taboos prevailing in the area.

Taboos and Sacred sacramental beliefs in Biodiversity conservation.

***Accacia nilotica* (L.) Del**

At Gundlav GIDC at Valsad there is one plot where there is grove of *Accacia* trees with other plants. People sacrifices hen and ties on this trees, giving all their bad luck to these trees and due to this nobody is using this plot making it unused and due to this one can find a green plot between the industries.

***Achyranthes aspera* L.**

Roots of *Achyranthes aspera* are very popular amongst the bhagat and bhuva's as it has many effects for evil spirit, but still it is very effective when its roots are mixed with *Mimosa pudica* leaves and worn in taveez to protect you from the evil spirits.

***Adansonia digitata* L.**

An *Adansonia* tree in Ramwadi area of Valsad was just saved after having lots of construction work as it was believed that the presence of Brahmadev is there on this tree and a temple is constructed and people offer regular prayer to this tree. No one in this area even dares to cut a twig from this tree.

***Aegle marmelos* (L.) Corr.**

Where there is Lord Shiv this tree has to be there as the leaves of this tree are honored to Shiva, but with that many adivasi believes that if you have any frustration just chant Lord Shiva's name sitting under this tree one will feel relaxed and Lord Shiva will shower blessings to you.

***Asperagus racemosa* Willd.**

Neckless made from the roots of *Asperagus* is worn during person suffering from jaundice, but before taking the roots one has to do the 'sankalp' i.e. has to take an oath that he will plant one more saplings of the plant then and then only the jaundice will get cure.

***Caesalpinia bonduc* L.**

The nuts of these plants are used for making bracelet, neckless and rosaries etc. The neckless of its seed are string upon red thread and are worn by the pregnant women as charm to prevent the abortion. Besides the women against witch craft wear its nuts on amulets.

***Calotropis gigantia* (L.) R. Br.**

In some parts of Dharampur taluka of Valsad district some adivasi tribes can marry two women. It is believed that if they marry second time or second women she may die immediately after marriage, so this women is first married to *Calotropis* plant and then a branch from the plant is cut and burnt, so it is believed that now there will be no problem for the second marriage. Then the plant is worshiped further as a life saver plant.

***Cynodon dactylon* (L.) Pers.**

This grass is cultivated near many temples as it is useful in religious ceremony like Satyanarayan pooja and the Hawans.

***Ficus benghalensis* L.**

It is recommended to perform the thread ceremony of this tree for various religious beliefs and festivals.

Vows are made to it and worshipped, male offspring is entreated for under its shade, pious women moving around its trunk 108 times.

***Ficus racemosa* L.**

The plant is considered as a sacred tree and it is common belief that there runs a hidden stream near every *Ficus racemosa* tree, so no one tries to cut it and try to preserve it.

***Ficus religiosa* L.**

This tree at Segvi area of Valsad has now become popular as “mannat tree” as many people worship this tree and tells their problems to this tree, if you are clean with your heart it is believed that tree will help you to solve your problems. This tree was at the edge of fencing between the two owners, but due to this spiritual belief both the landlord left their land and made this tree independent.

It is believed that without pooja one cannot cut the peepal tree as it brings bad omen and due to this there are many peepal tree on the buildings which are not chopped, though it is destructing the building it is not cut, a building at tithal road, Valsad have a peepal tree on the wall which is 4 yrs old.

***Gmelina arborea* L.**

Many adivasi's have diverted and accepted the panth i.e have accepted the religion and have become pure vegetarian. The ancestors of this adivasi use to scarifies the animals on their respective festivals, but now they don't sacrifice the animals but they do the pooja of the

Gmelina arborea tree and cut a branch and sacrifice it in the yagya, with that they take care of the tree and worship the tree.

***Ipomoea turpenthum* (L.) R. Br.**

Pluck the roots of *Ipomoea turpenthum* and tie it with red thread. Tie it on hand and it will cure the fever, and because of this many people conserve this plant at the fencing.

***Putranjiva roxburghii* Wall.**

As the nuts of this plant are supposed to preserve the wearer from the harms, hence they are strung up in rosaries by women whose male child dies immediately after birth and the tree is also named as ‘child- life tree’.

***Peristrophe bicalyculata* (Retz.) Nees**

This plant has lots of superstitious and sacramental beliefs in this area, this is popularly used for many rituals and for that it is conserved. The popular use for this plant is to facilitate smooth delivery. Women suffering from pregnancy pain is given a piece of root in her hand or tied in her hair to get smooth delivery.

***Sterculia urens* Roxb.**

At Dharampur there is one dargha where there are lots of *sterculia urens* tress. Many lovers come here and write their names on the tree and they believe that by writing their names on this tree their marriage will be organized without any hassle.

Plantation based on Vastu Shastra is also becoming popular in this area and as per the directions plants are suggested.

East:	<i>Ficus benghalensis</i>	North East:	<i>Phyllanthus emblica</i>
West:	<i>Ficus religiosa</i>	East South:	<i>Punica granatum</i>
North:	<i>Pushpa vatika</i>	South West:	<i>Tamarindus indica</i>
South:	<i>Ficus racemosa</i>	North West:	<i>Aegle marmelos</i>

OBSERVATIONS:

The survey revealed that there are many taboos and sacramental beliefs prevailing in the Valsad district especially in the region of Dharampur, Kaprada and Umargam region. This is just the oral and audio video collection from this region and is described as per the facts. This may not be scientific at all but due to this taboos and sacramental beliefs in this area we could find many grooves and patches of biodiversity which are conserved, preserved and cultivated.

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