A ‘Sacred-Bourn’ of 2500 Years: The Culture of ‘Do Ecology’

Tapas Pal

Department of Geography, Visva Bharati University, Santiniketan, India

Author E-mail: geo.tapaspal@gmail.com

Article history: Received 24 May 2012, Received in revised form 11 June 2012, Accepted 12 June 2012, Published 13 June 2012.

Abstract: Culture of ‘do Ecology’ is the pathway of environmental refurbishment. It means meeting the need of the current and future generation without ecological harm. To maintain this we have to search out different green-gateways through which we can reach a sustainable environment. But actually human’s nature has molded to demand and more demand and we forget the health of the environment. To grip the resources we are moving and steeping forward from chilly poles to interior ‘Aowa’ tribe area of Amazon and the actual frame of environment is being deteriorating. So in this phase we have needed some revamp measures and should be given our patient on traditional sciences like Scared Bourne. Author would like to maintain the health of environment with the application and implication of traditional science like Sacred Bourn through this paper.

Keywords: ‘do ecology’; traditional science; Sacred Bourne; ‘Aowa’ tribe; green-gateways.

1. Prolegomena

“Old is Gold” and ‘Gold is Resource’. This folk-believe is the core-gem of every civilizations and it is very true that every development has a limit in respect of time, speed, intensity, magnitude and realm. So after a limit we fail to maintain the health of our eco-environment because of our unusual demand of resource. Thus we searched an avenue through which we can reach a peaceful globe. Modern science and a four-walled laboratory are not enough to decorate the environment. This exasperates a fragile status of nature and being a geographer, searching for a solution, I came up with the concept of ‘Sacred Bourn’. Sacred Bourn is a Sacred Zone or a Sacred Island of the society that conserves Sacred Trees and the folk-tales intertwined that Sacred Periphery. Sacred Bourne is a traditional Gold resource of social geography of any country and that can also maintain the status of physical geography.

2. Objective
To establish the importance of Sacred Bourn in recent environmental crisis.

3. Methodology

To analyze the objectivity author surveyed a sample of Sacred Bourn like: BILWAMANGAL 1008 SOHOMBABA SACRED Bourn of BILWAMANGAL Beluri mouza of Birbhum district of West Bengal and visited the local dwellers of this village to know the folk-tale and observed the present geography of this area with different photography. To compare the present geography different ancient literature like Vedas is consulted here. To search the mythology of Banyan and Tamal trees different tree-related websites also searched here.

4. What is ‘Sacred-Bourn’?

‘Sacred’ means ‘holy’ and ‘Bourn’ means ‘boundary or realm’. Thus Sacred Bourn indicates a part of land which is demarcated as a Sacred Realm or Sacred zone or Sacred Boundary within which all matters are conserved on the basis of Sacredness.

5. Bilwamangal 1008 Sohombaba Sacred Bourn: Folk-Tale of 2500 Years

Bilwamangal Chintamoni Sacred Bourn bears the history and geography of 2500 years. A folklore is associated with this Bourn. Billamangal was a scholarly person who was deeply in love with Chintyamani. River Ajay (in Krishnyakannymritya River Ajay was named as Krishnyakennya) was situated between the love of this couple and they were habited at opposite bank of this Krishnyakennya. Today where the Bilwamangal Chintamqani ashryama is situated once it was the niche of Bilwamangal. During the obsequies of his father he felt the attraction for Chintyaman and that very instant he set for his beloved chintyamani, without even completing the rituals of obsequies. Even the rough weather, the roaring thunder, the upwellng Ajay river water could not deter him seeing his love, in this situation he decided to swim to other side of the river knowing that he wouldn’t get a boat to cross the river. Suddenly he could see a layer like structure passing across him which was actually a dead body floating by on Ajay, though he didn’t realize it as it was enveloped with thick layer of quilt and cloths. After reaching her house Billya saw that the entrance door was closed and locked from inside. To enter the house Billya saw a rope-like thing hanging from the roof of Chintya’s house. When he entered the home Billya told to Chintya that ‘your love is so high that you sent the boat and attached a rope on wall’. But actually Chintya was confused because she did not arrange these. When Chintya realized the truth, she, scolding Billaya told him ‘if you could dedicate all this patient and love for God, then even God will be bound to show up himself”. Billya felt ashamed of what he did left in search of god to Vrindyanan. After some days he accepted the pupilage of an ascetic (Somagar) who named Billya as Lilasur Bilwamangal, but again, after someday, he saw a lady near to a pond and again felt attracted to Chintyamani as he hallucinated her in place of the other lady. Billya followed the lady and reached a Kingdom, were he demanded that lady from the king but when Billya came to know that this lady was the wife of that king and not his Chintya, he again felt the words of scolding of his lady-love and Billay took the pins (that was attached with the bun of that queen) and punched in his both eyes and blinded himself as he realized that it was his eyes that deterred him from...
his goal. After this a cow-boy helped Billya and he helped to reach Vrindyanan. People believed that that cow-boy was Krishnya. This folk-tale attached with this Bilwamangal 1008 Sohombaba Sacred Bourn. So a Sacred Bourn not only bears an environmental importance but also has a great historical importance. And the basat-bhital/dwelling place of Bilwamangal became a Sacred Bourn for a long time. Local people believed the philosophy behind this folk-tale like: “this was the achievement of God (Krishnya) through Love” and holds great importance in religion geography. Another sadhu/an ascetic (PremChand sadhu) visited this Sacred Bourn and he worshipped Billya. Today, the temple of Bilwamangal Chintyamani was once the atur-ghar(room where babies are delivered) of Billya. Local people told me that this atur-ghar/labour room was actually present because they saw some remaining pieces of ancient bricks and it is considered that this happens to be a room used by them. Now the nephew (Sanatan Das) of Premcahnd thakur sadhu baba has inherited. The two sides of River Ajay bear the authenticity of this folk-tale. Because in present, we see, at one side the Bilwamangal Bellure Village (Birbhum district) but Ranipur (Bardwan district) was destroyed during the flood of 1985 (according to Patit Babu of this village). Patit Babu informed “the flood of 1985 completely washed away the 27 years old remains of the house of Chintyamani. Even in the residential place of billaya different ancient bricks were found till date”. So in geography this folk-tale is true and trustable to certain extent.

6. Sacred Bourn of 2500 Years: Contemporary Geographical Identity

An awe-inspiring Sacred Bourn is situated in Bilwamangal belluria mouza (near Jaidev Kenduli) of Birbhum district of West Bengal. This Sacred Bourn is placed in the arena of river Ajay. Actually the both sides of river Ajay are limned to develop this Sacred Bourn. People knew this Sacred Bourn in the name of Bilwamangal-Chintamani Ashryama from a long century. But in most recent, this Sacred Bourn has been identified with a new identity, named as Bilwamangal 1008 Sohombaba
ashryama. The special identity of this Bourn is that, here a Sacred Banyan tree (*Ficus benghalensis*) and one Tamal (*Cinnamomum tamala*) trees are conserved from the later-Vedic era. People of this Mouza told that the age of this tree and this Sacred Bourn is nearer 2500 years. To a certain limit this age calculation seems to be true because some botanist examined recently that this Sacred Tree is being conserved since more than 1000 years. Botanist placed a sign board under this Banyan tree (plate 1 & 2).

7. Banyan and Tamal Tree: Religion, Mythology and Culture

In Hinduism, the leaf of the Banyan tree is said to be the resting place of the lord Krishna, who, after engulfing the universe and all the creation at the time of destruction and turned himself to a child as small as he could fit into the tiny leaf of the Banyan tree and kept floating in the void space, until he himself decides to recreate everything back from within himself. In the *Bhagavat Gita* Krishna, said "There is a Banyan tree which has its roots upward and branches down, and its leaves are the Vedic hymns. One who knows this tree is the knower of the Vedas." Here the materialistic world is described as a tree whose root is upwards and branches are lowered. We have experience of a tree whose roots are upward: if one stands at the bank of a river or any reservoir of water, he can see that the tree is reflected in the water as upside down. The branches go downward and the roots upward. Similarly, this materialistic world is a reflection of the spiritual world. Elsewhere in the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna says: Of all trees I am the Banyan tree. The Banyan tree is also considered Sacred and is called "Vat Vriksha" in Sanskrit, in Telegu known as: *Marri Vrikshamu* and in Tamil known as: *Ala Maram*. God Shiva as Dakshinamurthy is nearly always depicted sitting in silence under the Banyan with rishis at his feet. Buddha is believed to have achieved enlightenment sitting under Banyan in Bodh-Gaya in India while meditating under a Banyan tree of the species Sacred Fig. The tree is known as Bodhi tree. Banyan trees are Sacred in South Asia, particularly to Hindus and Buddhists. Banyan is viewed by Hindus as a male plant to the closely related peepul or bodhi tree (*Ficus religiosa*). It is commendable planting a young
Banyan close to a peepul, and this is done with a ceremony similar to that of marriage. Banyan is mentioned in the Buddhist Jataka tales, which describes the tale of Satyavan and Savitri. Satyavan lost his life beneath the branches of a Banyan. Savitri courageously entered into a debate with Yama, the God of Death, and won his life back. In memory of this couple, in the month of Jyestha during May and June, the tree is worshipped. Married women visit a Banyan and pray for a long life of their husbands. Minor deities such as yakshas (tree spirits), Kinnaras (half-human, half-animal) and gandharvas (celestial musicians) are believed to dwell in the branches on Banyan trees. Ghosts and demons are also associated with its branches. Because it is believed that many spirits are harbored in the Banyan, people should not sleep under it at night. People of Dhaka are still maintaining this though they celebrate their Nababarsha-culture under the shade of Banyan tree of Romana maidan from 1967 (Token, 2012). Even this modernized world did not forget their attachments with sacred Banyan.

According to legend of the Bhagavata the Tamal tree is closely associated with the life of Lord Krishna where Krishna is shown in blue or dark color which is associated with the fact that the meaning of the name Tamal is dark tree with its origin from Sanskrit. Perhaps Krishna’s Tamal tree is related to this Tamala tree, which is called Cinnamomum tamala and its extract is strongly aromatic, somewhat reminiscent to cinnamon or cloves. Again the shade of Tamal tree was also related with the life of Srila Prabhupada. For instance on 1977 in Vrindavan (India) after listening to Srila Prabhupada’s vachan in his garden his admirers or followers would escort him to the temple where he would sit under the Tamal tree and listen to bhajans from about 9 a.m. until about 11 a.m.

8. Geo-environmental Importance of “Bilwamangal 1008 Sohombaba Sacred Bourn”

Under the shade of Sacred Bourn different aspects presented within its boundary are conserved with its long history. And this long history is the source of fruitful contemporary environmental geography.

8.1. Physical Importance

This Sacred Bourn has a great biological and natural significance. There are two Sacred Trees like - Banyan and Tamal tree are being conserved from more than 1000 years. These trees (in general and for the most part) produce huge amounts of oxygen, because of their general huge size. However, in terms of the amount of oxygen-producing capability per tree, (in mass) they are fairly inefficient, and broad leafed plants are better for oxygen production by natural means. Moreover Banyan is the storehouse of Sun’s rays because of its large size. A 50 years Banyan tree provides oxygen for 500 people in an hour. So it can provide $500 \times 24 \times 365 \times X$ dollars worth of oxygen in a year. Banyan is a lung of environment. Like our lungs, a Banyan purifying our entire earth’s atmospheric system. Normally we breathe twenty times/minute. With each breath we inhale about 0.5 liters of air, so if we stay more near or under any Banyan tree we get more of oxygen which in turn gives us a healthier physical status. Again these two Sacred Trees check soil erosion and soil fertility at deeper level of soil horizon. I visited in this Sacred Bourn area and saw the sign of faunal diversity like different types of birds, bats, scurrile, nest of birds etc.
8.2. Historical Importance

From a long time different phases of identical history of this Sacred Bourn has been observed by local people and they inherit this folk-tale. We know about the history of this place through the
Bilwamangal 1008 Sohombaba Sacred Bourn with different historical scenario and information been observed like: the dangerous behavior of river Ajay in past destroying Ranipur village, the atur-ghar/labour room of Bilwamangal and the remaining slice of bricks at its place, the fear of local people about this area because it was completely inaccessible due to a huge jungle, the folk-tale of Bilwamangal and Chintyamani, the visit of Premchand Thakur and establishment of Bilwamangal temple, temple was construct even at the birth place of Bilwamangal, and the 2500 years Banyan tree. So these all historical information are attached with this Sacred Bourn and has special historical importance in context of geographical scenario by which it proves the line “present is the key to past”.

### 8.3. Folk-Religion (Nature Oriented Religious-Culture) Importance

Sacred Bourn has an importance in respect of nature oriented religion. In general Sacred Bourn is located in open air nature and form a specimen of nature based religion. In Billya Mangal 1008 SohomBaba Sacred Bourn nature oriented religious-culture has been observed like: panchya-mundi tantras culture (plate 13) and yagna culture/oblation with Naga Sadhus (plate 12) under the Sacred Banyan tree and its branches (plate 13 A) by SohomBaba, the sign of the representation of any tantras by coins (plate11), attaching the pieces of bricks with the branches of Sacred Tamal tree (plate 9), women’s respect for the Sacred Banyan tree and BILWAMANGAL (plate10), more over their respect for this Sacred Bourn etc. This Sacred Bourn was developed on the basis of Hindu Vaishnava religion and on the peak of the temple the related Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and his special moment was sketched (plate14). That indicates the religious-culture of this Sacred Bourn through wall-culture. Thus it has been proved that a Sacred Bourn has also the religious importance parallel with physical.

### 8.4. Folk-Cultural Importance

Through this Sacred Bourn different folk-rituals and folk cultures are being conserved since a long time like: Baul song, the reading of Gita and Chandi, yagna, Kirtan/to sing song about Radha-krishnya, meditation, opera, Yoga, folk-dance (plate 20) with cronch, worshipping of Vishnu-Bilwamangal-Krishnya-Chintyamani, fair, solemn etc.
8.5. Social Importance

Every Sacred Bourn has some sporadic dimensions in respect of Social issues. In Bilwamangal 1008 Sohombaba Sacred Bourn different social and infrastructural improvements have been identified with the improvement of the status of this ashrama. Parallel to being modernized, local people and the great Tantric 1008 SohomBaba are trying to improve in this Sacred Bourn and under his instruction certain rules have been strictly observed like: this area has been treated completely as ‘No Smoking Zone’ (plate 15), arrangement of modern vehicles (plate16) for this Sacred Bourn, plucking of leaves and flowers are completely restricted (plate19), development of different professions (like ashrama-
scavenger, plate 19), erecting tube well etc. Even people do not enter in this Bourn with shoes. So in this context on the basis of this Sacred Bourn local society can be also improved their tourism, economy, professions and local identity. In our Bengal society the Yang culture is too famous and with arrangement of Yang in this Sacred Bourn the traditional Bengal culture is being conserved in our society. Different folk and tribal dances are the conceit of Bengal culture. During the fair in this Sacred Bourn different tribal-song and dances are arranged and through this the social tradition and identity are conserved (plate 20). Again in Bilwamangal 1008 Sohombaba festival local society experienced with a big solemn that is arranged here (plate 18). From different angle this Sacred Bourn has kaleidoscopic importance. In Vedic society this type of Yagna was found and this Sacred Bourn is till now bearing this age-old tradition (Conducting yagna on 14th and 20th April, 2012, plate 17).

9. Concluding Remarks and Author’s Annotations

Sacred Bourn and its traditional concept is very important in our present days because the health status of our earth and related environment is now at a degradation phases. Global warming, depletion of bio-diversity, pollution, modernization, globalization, heat island, excess industrialization, improvement of accessibility and transport revolution, excess demand of people, urbanization, concretization, changing traditional age old culture (example Sacred Groves); all these effecting our nature with their black shades and noise. So in this context we have to cure our nature naturally itself and try to follow the way of nature through the maintenance of our traditional practices. So this Sacred Bourns happens to be one of the best ways of maintaining our environmental health in all direction. But some notorious matters of Bilwamangal 1008 SohomBaba Sacred Bourn raised a question real advancement or care towards the health of the environment. A Yagna has been conducted within this Sacred Bourn (on 14th & 20th April, 2012) and “different food items (like: ghee/clarified butter, kashew-nut, raisin, pistachio, nut- all these more than 20 kg.), Sari (more than 500 pieces), burring of woods (more than 100 Quintal), gold, silver, flowers, garlands, mutton (more than 10 kg) etc. were burned in the fire of yagna/oblation. Sohom Baba conducted this under Sacred Banyan and Tamal tree with three oblation cavity and according to him “this yagna will reduce all miseries of the people of Bengal”. The tension here is: the burning heat and fire was too dangerous for those Sacred Trees with their biodiversity (plate 23) and the destruction of the aforesaid recourses are not true in respect of global food scarcity stage. Moreover we forget the recent poverty status of India. In 2009-2010, there are 34.47% people belonging under poverty line (29.8% of total population of India); where poverty line demarcated in respect of Rs. 22.41/day (for rural people) and Rs. 28.66/day (for urban people). Thus this type of Yagna is not suitable for the development of mass people. So being a geo-environmentalist I think all traditions can be maintained but the resource destruction yagna cannot be supported in this resource depletion age. Thus in omega theater a special catch line may be painted here, i.e.

“Sustain the ‘do ecology’,
Retain the Sacred Bourn,
Curtail the sacrifice,
Shorten the resource depletion”
References

The Medical Trees of India Website provides the information related the Banyan tree (www.medical-recipe.com, www.invisibleBanyantree.com).

The Economic India Website provides the information related the Banyan tree (www.ecoindia.com).

The Music Meditate Website provides the information related the importance of Banyan tree in environment (www.musicmeditate.smfforfree.com).


Source of Photos: All photos are taken & captured by Author (April, 2012).