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EIACP *Newsletter*



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From the EIACP Desk...

The **Environmental Information, Awareness Capacity Building and Livelihood Programme (EIACP)** at CPREEC of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), Government of India is the Programme Centre – Resource Partner (RP) for the thematic area of **“Ecological Heritage and Sacred Sites of India”**.

Heritage is the cultural, social and spiritual legacy that we inherit from our past and pass on to the future. Indian heritage is unique in its reverence for Mother Nature in all her manifestations. Ancient traditions, rituals and practices have embedded this reverence in religion and even in normal day-to-day living. The respect for nature and the belief that every organism on earth has a special role in life’s cycle forms the core of our ecological heritage.

To maintain humankind’s resilience in the face of change, it is necessary to draw on the best available knowledge, regardless of its origins. The process of updating knowledge systems provides opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of observed events and their consequences. It facilitates and leads to a joint assessment of information, resulting in new insights and innovations, and in better informed actions.

The main purpose of this **“Newsletter”** is to bring forth and publish articles concerning all aspects related to the knowledge of ecological traditions in India as well as novel interpretations and theoretical issues related to the conservation of the same.

This issue has an article titled, **“Hinduism and Ecology”**.

The verses of the Vedas express a deep sense of communion of man with God. Nature is a friend, revered as a mother, obeyed as a father and nurtured as a beloved child. It is sacred because man depends on it and because of this everything is sanctified, including man and even the terrifying aspects of nature: landslides, earthquakes and storms. Natural phenomena are the manifestations or expressions of the gods and not the gods themselves. In Vedic literature, all of nature was divine, part of an indivisible life force uniting the

world of humans, animals and plants. The concept of the sacred environment was established in the Vedas themselves. Five thousand years ago, the sages of the Rig Veda showed a clear appreciation of the natural world and its ecology, the importance of the environment and the management of natural resources.

This issue has news on “A festival devoted to snakes”.

Unfortunately, several snakes are captured and force-fed milk during Nag Panchami. Milk is poisonous for snakes and they die from consuming milk.

CPREEC EIACP PC – RP has already published books on the *Ecological Traditions of the sixteen (16) states of India*, The Centre has, over the years, promoted and encouraged communities to adopt local traditions, practices and rituals that possess ecological significance

The Centre also focuses on eco-restoration, conservation, creation of environmental assets and advocates the sustainable use of natural resources. The Centre has restored several degraded sacred groves in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

The Centre has also documented sacred groves/forests (10,470), sacred gardens (64), sacred plants (94), sacred animals (57), sacred rivers (33), sacred water bodies (365), sacred mountains (203), sacred cities/sites (234), sacred seeds (10), sacred caves (209) and green pilgrimages (20), traditional ecological knowledge (44) and UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India (36) till date.

We would like to thank our readers for sharing their articles, photographs and also for their queries and feedback regarding our newsletters, publications and about information provided in our website <http://cprecenvis.nic.in/>

We cordially invite other scholars and interested persons to share their knowledge and information by contributing popular articles and good quality photographs on the subject areas present on our website.

Cover Story

HINDUISM AND ECOLOGY

Nanditha Krishna

(Source: 'Religion and Ecology' edited by Nanditha Krishna,
Published by C.P.R. Environmental Education Centre, EIACP Resource Partner on
Conservation of Ecological Heritage and Sacred Sites of India, 2019.)

At the beginning and end of every Hindu ritual, a *shanti mantra* is invariably recited, such as this stanza from the *Yajur Veda* (36:17):

“May peace radiate in the whole sky and
in the vast ethereal space,

May peace reign all over this earth,
in water, in all herbs and the forests,

May peace flow over the whole universe,
May peace be in the Supreme Being,

May peace exist in all creation, and peace
alone, May peace flow into us.

Aum—peace, peace and peace!”

Every *shanti mantra* invokes peace on the forces of nature: if there is harmony among the elements, in Nature, there will be harmony on earth.

The basis of Hindu, Buddhist and Jain culture is *dharma* or righteousness, incorporating duty, cosmic law and justice. Environmental protection is a *dharma* or law of righteousness. It is *san tana*, or eternal, for it is without beginning or end, and it supports the whole universe. “*Dharma* is meant for the well-being of all living creatures. Hence that by which the welfare of all living creatures is sustained, that for sure is *dharma*” (*Mahābhārata*, XII.109.10). *Dharma* means many things: righteousness, duty, justice and law. Every divine incarnation is born to restore *dharma*. Every person must act for the general welfare of the earth, humanity, all creation and all aspects of life. Thus Hinduism is called *Sanatana Dharma* by its adherents.

The verses of the Vedas express a deep sense of communion of man with God. Nature is a friend, revered as a mother, obeyed as a father and nurtured as a beloved child. It is sacred because man depends on it and because of this everything is sanctified, including man and even the terrifying aspects of nature: landslides, earthquakes and storms. Natural phenomena are the manifestations or expressions of the gods and not the gods themselves. They express the principles that govern the world and the cosmic order, *ṛta*.

In Vedic literature, all of nature was divine, part of an indivisible life force uniting the world of humans, animals and plants. The Vedas are dedicated to a variety of pantheistic deities called *Devas* or the Shining Ones, representing the stars in the firmament and forces beyond human knowledge or control. Man recognized that there were powers of Nature beyond his control and he was thus compelled to resort to prayer to win the cooperation of the winds and rains to ensure the regularity of the monsoon, control earthquakes, forest fires and all major elements of nature. Thus Indra was Rain, and Agni was Fire. Vishnu was the all-pervading Sun, along with Surya and Savitr, while Ushas was the Dawn. Pushan represented Agriculture. Dyauspitr was the Father of the Shining Ones and Prithvi was Mother Earth. The rivers were sacred, and so on.

The concept of the sacred environment was established in the Vedas themselves. Five thousand years ago, the sages of the *Rig Veda*

showed a clear appreciation of the natural world and its ecology, the importance of the environment and the management of natural resources (I.115, VII.99; X.125). The *Rig Veda* dedicates a whole hymn to the rivers – the *Nadistuti Sūkta*. The hymn to the earth - *Prithvī Sūkta*, Book 12 of the *Atharva Veda* - consists of sixty-three stanzas in praise of Mother Earth and nature, and human dependence on the earth. Creation is described in the *Nāsadiya* (non-existent) *Sūkta*, described as “India’s tradition of sceptical questioning and unselfconscious humility before the great cosmic mysteries”.

Creation comes from the Supreme Being. “In the beginning there was the Self alone. He transformed himself into man and woman. Later, He transformed Himself into other creatures: bipeds and quadrupeds. In this way He created everything that exists on earth, in water, and sky. He realized: ‘I indeed am creation, for I produced all this.’ Thence arose creation”. (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 1-5).

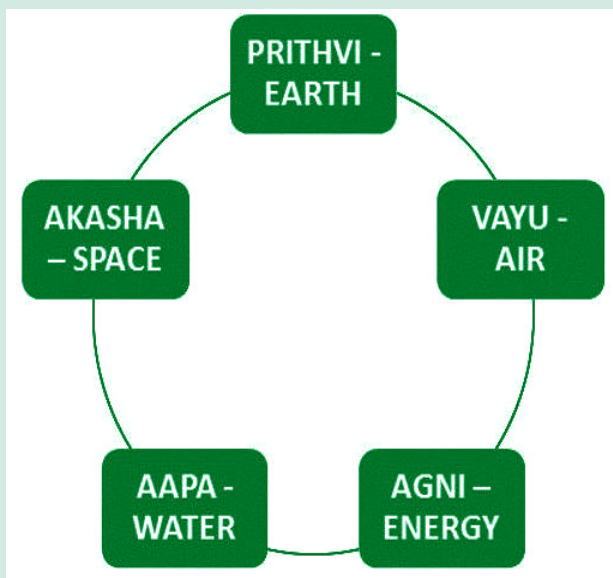


Fig. 1

The primordial or cosmic matter of nature is made up of five elements - *prithvī* (earth), *vāyu* (air), *agni* (fire or energy), *āpa* (water) and *ākāsha* (space) - better known as the *pancha-mahā-bhūta*. Their proper balance and harmony are essential for the well-being of humankind, and maintenance of this harmony is a *dharma*, or righteous duty (Fig.1).

The *Maitrāyani Upanishad* has a beautiful analogy of Brahman as a tree with its roots above and its branches below, the branches being earth, water, air, fire and space (Fig.2).

The fusion of air, water and sky produced fire. These four elements originate from the same source. When these four elements moved downward, earth was produced. Later, the five elements caused the birth of *śrishti* (creation) and *prakritī* (nature). The harmonious coexistence of these five elements is essential for the well-being of life on earth. Nature is thus an indivisible part of the existence of all beings. The earth and its

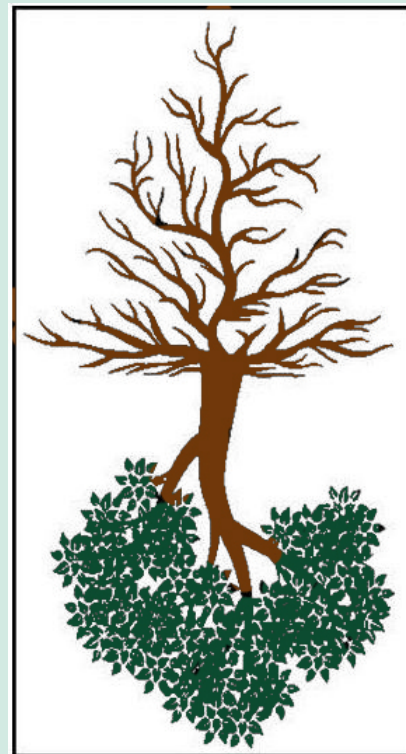


Fig. 2

inhabitants are part of a highly organized cosmic order called *ṛta*, and any disruption results in a breakdown of peace and the natural balance. The Supreme Being or *Brahman* is the underlying power of unity, pervading all creation: forests and groves, trees and plants, animals, rivers, waterbodies, mountains, gardens, towns and precincts and seeds.

Finally, Mother Earth is acknowledged as the world itself: ‘O Mother Earth! You are the universe and we are but your children. Grant us the ability to overcome our differences and live peacefully and in harmony, and let us be cordial and gracious in our relationship with other human beings’ (*Atharva Veda*, XII.1.16).

Hinduism has a definite code of environmental ethics. According to it, humans may not consider themselves above nature, nor can they claim to rule over other forms of life. Hence, traditionally, the Hindu attitude has been respectful towards nature. Five thousand years ago, the sages of the *Atharva Veda* said, “The earth’s attributes are for everybody and no single group or nation has special authority over it” (XII.1.18). The hymn also describes the earth as the mother of all species living on it. “Let the whole of humanity speak the language of peace and harmony and let all living beings live in accord with each other” (XII.1.16).

Pollution or *pradushana* was once a punishable offence. “Punishment . . . should be awarded to those who throw dust and muddy water on the roads . . . A person who throws inside the city the carcass of animals . . . must be punished” (Kautilya, *Arthaśāstra*, 2.145). Environmental pollution (*vikriti*) was identified several millennia ago. “From pollution two types of diseases occur in human beings. The first is related to the body and the other to the mind, and both are interrelated . . . coolness, warmth and air—these are three virtues of the body. When they are balanced in the body it is free from disease” (*Mahābhārata*, XIII.16.811).

Charaka was prescient when he predicted, “Due to pollution of weather, several types of diseases will come up and they will ruin the country. Therefore, collect the medicinal plants before the beginning of terrible diseases and change in the nature of the earth” (*Charaka Samhitā, Vimānasthānam*, 3.2)

Tamil Sangam literature describes the *aindu tinai*, the fivefold division of the geographical landscape. These are: *kurinji* (mountains), presided over by Lord Murugan or Karttikeya; *mullai* (forests), whose reigning deity was Lord Krishna; *marutham* (agricultural lands), ruled by Lord Indra; *neithal* (coastal regions), the world of Lord Varuna; and *pālai* (wasteland /desert), the region of Goddess Korravai (Durga). Each *tinai* has its own characteristic flowers, trees, animals, birds, climate and other geographical features.

Hinduism has a definite code of environmental ethics. Humans may not consider themselves above nature, nor can they claim to rule over other forms of life. There is a very strong and intimate relationship between the biophysical ecosystem and economic institutions. The two are inextricably held together by cultural relations. Hence, traditionally, the Hindu attitude has been respectful towards nature. “The earth’s attributes are for everybody and no single group or nation has special authority over it” (*Atharva Veda*, XII.1.18).

*Atas samudrā girayaś ca sarve asmāt
sandante sindhavas sarva rūpāh*

*Atas ca sarvā oshadhayo rasaś ca yenaisha
bhūtais tishṭhate hyantar ātmā*

“From Him, all the seas and mountains,
from Him flow rivers of every kind;

From Him are all the herbs and their juices
too;

by which, together with the elements,
the inner soul is upheld”

(*Mundakopaniṣad*, 2.1.7)

Vidyā vinaya sampanne brāhmane gavi hastini

śuni caiva śva pāke ca panditāh sama darśinah

“Those who are wise and humble treat equally the Brahmin, cow, elephant, dog and dog-eater”

(*Bhagavad Gītā*, 5.18).

“So long as the earth is able to maintain mountains, forests and trees

Until then the human race and its progeny will be able to survive”

(*Durgā Saptashati, Devī Kavacham*, 54).

Hindu traditions acknowledge that all biotic and abiotic forms - humans, animals and plants - are equal and sacred, and are thus even appropriately placed to take on contemporary concerns like deforestation, intensive farming of animals, global warming and climate change.

Sacred forests

The sacred forests of ancient India are today the sacred groves of rural and tribal India. The sacred gardens of ancient India, the *nandavana* of literature, continue to be the *nandavanam* of temples. Sacred trees may be seen in the *sthalavrikshas* of temples. Every river is sacred, while waterbodies and tanks were imbued with sanctity by association with temples. Every sentient being is sacred, with some animals like the elephant and the monkey attaining divine status. And sacred mountains dot the landscape from cold Kailas in Tibet to Sabarimala in the south.

There was a close symbiotic relationship between people and nature in ancient India. The country was thickly forested. The Indus-Sarasvati seals contain figures of wild animals such as the elephant, water buffalo, tiger, rhinoceros, deer, gazelle, antelope, wild sheep and goat and ibex. Obviously, the area was once covered with dense forest. Forests were

places of retreat, a source of inspiration, for all Vedic literature was revealed to the sages here. “So may the mountains, the waters, the liberals (wives of the gods), the plants, also heaven and earth, consentient with the Forest Lord (Vanaspati) and both the heaven and earth preserve for us those riches” (*Rig Veda*, VII.34.23).

Āranya means forest. Early Vedic literature includes the *Āranyakas*, which represent the earlier sections of the *Vedas*, the speculations of the philosophy behind rituals. They were composed by sages living in the forest. One of the most beautiful hymns of the *Rig Veda* is dedicated to Aranyani, the goddess of the forest. Aranyani never returns in later Sanskrit literature or modern Hinduism, yet her spirit pervades the goddesses of Hinduism: Prakriti, or nature; Bhū, the earth goddess; Annapurna, the giver of food; Amman in Tamilnadu and so on.

Rama’s entire journey from Ayodhya to Lanka was through forests. The *Rāmāyana* is a botanist’s delight with detailed descriptions of forest types and plants that grew there. Rama stays in four different forests during his exile: at Chitrakuta, a deciduous forest; at Dandakaranya, also a deciduous forest with sal, *badari* and *bilva* trees, among others; at Panchavati, where Sita was abducted, a tropical dry deciduous forest named after the *pancha* (five) *vata* or banyan trees that can still be seen there; at Kishkinda, a dry and moist deciduous forest. The last forest - the Aushadhi mountain of Kailas, Rishabha and Mahodaya - is situated in the trans-Himalayan region with alpine plants. Finally, the author describes the evergreen forests of Lanka, situated off the Indian mainland. It is amazing how much Valmiki knew and how little has changed, except in the devastation caused in the name of development.

Among the many uses of the forest, three categories were set aside for religious purposes:

tapovana, *mahāvana* and *śrīvana*. The *tapovana* was a refuge for meditation, an *abhayāranya* or sanctuary, where kings and commoners sought the guidance of sages. The *mahāvana* was the great forest in which all species could find refuge. The *shrīvana* was the forest which provided prosperity (Shree = Lakshmi = prosperity). It was maintained by temples and set aside exclusively for religious use. Deforestation and illicit tree felling was punishable by *deya* (levy) and *atyāya* (fine). Ecological balance was maintained by the appointment of forest managers. Protection of different species of animals was an important duty of the state. These rules were generally in force till about the 7th century. The importance of plants in Indian culture can be seen from the fact that many towns and villages in India were – and still are – named after plants and animals, such as Vrindavan from the *vrindā* or *tulasi* plant and Mylapore, the town of peacocks.

The sacred forests of ancient India live on in the sacred groves of rural and tribal India. Sacred groves or forests are the home of local flora and fauna – a mini biosphere reserve. Their rich plant life retains subsoil water. This is a unique form of biodiversity conservation, whereby religion and traditions are used to conserve the ecology as a natural heritage. They are an area of conservation as well as a spiritual retreat. Sacred groves are the single most important heritage of the ancient culture of India: the tradition goes back to food-gathering societies who venerated nature and natural resources. They were the *tapovana* where the *āshramas* of rishis were located. Today they are significant reservoirs of biodiversity, conserving unique species of plants, insects and animals.

Sacred plants

Tree worship is as ancient Indus Sarasvati civilization, for there are definite scenes of tree worship on the Indus seals. Trees were recognized as being animate and having life.

The value of several plants was known. The *pipal* was sacred for its air-purifying value while the *pipal* and *shami* together produced fire. The most sacred tree of India is the pipal or *ashvattha*, whose importance goes back to the Indus-Sarasvati culture. On a steatite seal from Mohenjo-Daro, a figure with a horned headdress, long braid and bangles on both arms stands within a pipal tree. Is this the spirit of the tree, a *yaksha*? On one side, there is a kneeling worshipper and a gigantic ram, possibly a sacrificial offering. Seven figures stand in a row below, possibly the Saptarishis of Vedic religion, identified with the seven stars of the Big Dipper or Ursa Major - a hierarchy working under the guidance of the Supreme Being. Or, in deference to the bangled arms, could they be the Sapta Matrika of popular religion? All the seven figures are dressed identically, with a single plumed headdress, bangles and folded *dhotis* (Figure 3).



Fig. 3

The worship of the tree, pervaded by the *yaksha* or spirit within, is apparently as old as the Indus-Sarasvati civilization. Even today, Hindus circumambulate the pipal seven times, chanting,

*Mulato Brahma rupaya, Madhyato Vishnu
rupine,*

Agrato Shiva rupaya, Vriksha rajaya te namah.

(Whose root is the form of Brahma,
whose middle is the form of Vishnu,

Whose top is the form of Shiva,
My salutations to you, O King of Trees.)

Sthalavrikshas are those trees that initially sheltered the deity beneath the sky, to be later replaced by a temple. Then the sacred tree became secondary and was worshipped along with other nature gods as the *sthalavriksha* of the temple, becoming a part of the faith.

Plants were regarded as sacred because

- ◆ There was a close association with a deity. For example, the *Bilva* (*Aegle marmelos*) is associated with Lord Shiva, *Neem* (*Azadirachta indica*) with Goddess Mariamman and *Tulsi* (*Ocimum sanctum*) with Lord Krishna.
- ◆ They sheltered the deity or an object of worship
- ◆ Some plants are believed to have originated from the Gods themselves, and hence the sanctity. For example, the flame of the forest (*Butea monosperma*) is believed to have originated from the body of Lord Brahma and the *Rudraksha* tree (*Elaeocarpus ganitrus*) arose from the tears of Lord Shiva.
- ◆ Some plants became sacred through what might have occurred in their proximity. E.g., the Pipal tree (*Ficus religiosa*), under which Gautama Buddha attained enlightenment
- ◆ Plants with an important social or economic or ecological role were also considered sacred. For example, veneration of the Khejri (*Prosopis spicigera*) by the Bishnois of Rajasthan is related to the crucial role the tree plays in desert ecology. It provides the community with food, fodder and building material.

Ancient Indians apparently knew the ecological value of plants, such as the production of oxygen by the pipal and its effect on the brain:

the Buddha attained enlightenment beneath the pipal. They realised the importance of trees like the banyan as a home for fruit-dispersing bats, the medicinal value of plants like the *tulasi* and *neem*, and the economic value of several other plants. And thus gave them sanctity as a means of protection.

Sacred waters

The waters were most sacred. Almost all rivers, lakes, springs were attributed to and associated with the local pantheon of Gods and Goddesses.

Rivers are sacred, for they provide life. Rivers were given a divine status and have been worshipped as divinities. As rivers were believed to be divine manifestations, polluting water was a great sin, according to Sanskrit texts. Many appear as deities in temples, each has an origin myth and important pilgrimage sites are situated along the banks of rivers. In ancient India, all the rivers were and are regarded as goddesses: Ganga, Yamuna, Sindhu, Sarasvati, Godavari, Narmada and Kaveri, not to mention the great Brahmaputra, son of the Creator Brahma. Small local rivers were likened to the great rivers, for they too provided water for life, sustenance and agriculture. By respecting the greatness of rivers, ancient Hindus ensured their cleanliness and longevity too. Unfortunately, in this age of reason, rivers are no longer respected and are used as receptacles for offloading sewage and other pollutants. This has created a great water scarcity in India.

Natural, rain-fed lakes were very sacred too, for they were the gifts of the divine. Manasarovar in Tibet is an example of a sacred lake whose waters are maintained with pristine purity. On the other hand, the constant failure of the monsoon resulted in man-made lakes such as the Brahma *sarovar* in Kurukshetra and Pushkar in Rajasthan, among many, many others scattered all over the country. They were the lifeline during the summer and in times

of drought. In the hot and dry desert lands of Rajasthan and Gujarat, step wells or *vāv* combined the joint functions of water harvesting and storage and cool covered halls to avoid the blazing heat. In Tamilnadu, rainwater harvesting lakes were called *yeris* and the annual desilting was a *dharma*, a duty and the silt used for making clay figures, that were never baked, of Ganesha and other deities. Different parts of India gave these artificial tanks different names, but their usage was the same: to harvest rainwater. The rain-fed lands of the Deccan plateau and the drylands of western India developed the tradition of digging temple tanks as rainwater harvesting structures. It is likely that the so-called Great Bath of Mohenjo Daro was also a temple tank. The temple tanks maintain the ground water table. The waters are medicinal, for the herbal *abhishekha jalam* goes into the tanks. The tanks support a variety of life forms and are maintained by temples.

Sacred animals

India's greatest contribution to world thought is the concept of *ahimsa* or non-violence, in thought, word and action. Killing animals has been prohibited since the Vedic period: “No person should kill animals who are helpful to all; By serving them one should obtain heaven.” (*Yajur Veda*, XII.47).

The term *ahimsa* is an important spiritual doctrine shared by Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, which implies the total avoidance of harm to any living creatures by thought, word or deed. *Ahimsa* has been described as a ‘multidimensional concept’, inspired by the belief that the Supreme Being lives in all living beings—human or animal. Therefore, to hurt another being is to open oneself to possible karmic repercussions.

The earliest reference to the idea of non-violence to animals (*pashu ahimsa*) is in the *Kapisthala Kathā Samhitā* of the *Yajur Veda* (31.11). The *Atharva Veda* (XII.1.15) says

“The earth was created for the enjoyment of bipeds and quadrupeds, birds, animals and all other creatures, not humans alone”. The *Chandogya Upanishad* (8.15.1) bars violence against all creatures (*sarvabhūta*) and the practitioner of *ahimsa* is said to escape from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth, the transmigration of the soul of a human being or animal into a new body of the same or of a different species. It also names *ahimsa*, along with *satya vachanam* (truthfulness), *arjavam* (sincerity), *dānam* (charity) and *tapah* (meditation), as one of the five essential virtues (3.17.4).

Interestingly, the concept of veganism first appeared in the *Rig Veda*: “The *yatudhana* who fills himself with the flesh of man, He who fills himself with the flesh of horses or of other animals, And he who steals the milk of the cow: Lord, cut off their heads with your flame (*Rig Veda*, X.87.16).

Ahimsa as an ethical concept started evolving in the *Vedas* and became increasingly central in the *Upanishads*. *Atharva Veda* (XII.1.15) says: “Born of Thee, on Thee move mortal creatures; Thou bearest them—the biped and the quadruped; Thine, O Earth, are the five races of men, for whom, Surya (Sun), as he rises spreads with his rays”. *Manu Samhitā* (5.45) says, “He who injures innocent beings with a desire to give himself pleasure never finds happiness, neither in life nor in death.” *Tirukkural*, written about 200 BCE and sometimes called the *Tamil Veda*, dedicates several chapters to the virtues of compassion and *ahimsa*, particularly vegetarianism, the non-harming of animals and non-killing of all life forms.

Albert Schweitzer said that “there hardly exists in the literature of the world a collection of maxims in which we find so much of lofty wisdom. Like the...*Bhagavad Gītā*, the *Kural* desires inner freedom from the world and a mind free from hatred. Like them it stands

for the commandment not to kill and not to damage. There appears in the *Kural* the living ethic of love”

Animals were elevated in several ways. Some were Gods, like Ganesha or Vaghdeo of Central India / Maharashtra / Karnataka. The elephant, a keystone species, was the remover of obstacles. The tiger was the prime ecological indicator. Many were divine vehicles- *vahana* - of the Gods. Some, like Hanuman and the dog, were man's friends – of Rama and Bhairava respectively. Some were divine incarnations: the fish or Matsya was an ecological indicator, Kurma was the God of the Bhils, assimilated into *Sanatana dharma*, Varaha the boar was an indicator of rain and ploughed the soil, teaching and aiding the farmer and Narasimha was the much-admired lion. Some were deemed sacred because of their economic value, such as the cow, which was essential for milk and the bull, a draught animal. The blackbuck was essential for the survival of the *khejri* plant which was the mainstay of the desert.

Some animals were a part of social history. Mahisha, the buffalo vehicle of Yama, was the deity of ancient India, with many kingdoms named after him, such as Mysore (Mahisha-ur) and Mahishmati. The buffalo was worshipped by the indigenous pastoral tribes of India. The war between Mahisha and Goddess Durga replicates the conflict between the buffalo-worshipping pastoral tribes and the Dravidian farmers who worshipped the Mother Goddess. When the latter won the war, the former became a demon. But Mahisha lives on as the buffalo god of the Todas, Gonds/Maria Gonds, as the deity Mhasoba in Maharashtra and Bhainsāsur in Madhya Pradesh.

The totemic tradition was widespread in ancient India: many Sanskrit *gotra* (lineage) names and names of sages are of animal origin, such as Bharadwaja (owl), Garga (crocodile), Rishyashringa (born of a doe), Jambuka (jackal)

and Gautama (rabbit). Many clan names have animal origins, such as Maurya, More (peacock) and Ghorpade (monitor lizard).

In the Hindu tradition, animals are recognized as having feelings and passions as human beings. They can also understand human speech, thus becoming divine. By recognizing the divinity in animals, they had a unique position which helped protect many species. The deification of several animals led to their protection, a safeguard that was lost in the medieval, colonial and post-colonial period when many animals were described as vermin and hunted to death.

There are three paths (*m rga*) to the liberation (*moksha*) of the soul: *jn na* or knowledge of the illusory nature of life is the highest; *karma* or action follows; *bhakti* or total devotion or surrender to one's personal god is the third. A human being can consciously choose his path. Animals too can rise above the limitations of their birth and need not be subject to the cycle of life, death and rebirth. They too can attain liberation.

Several medieval saints, like Ramananda, Mirabai, Kabir, Tulsidas, Surdas, Jnaneshwar, Namdev, Ekanath, Sant Tukaram, Ramdas, Purandaradasa, Kanakadasa, Vadiraja, Basavanna, Akka Mahadevi, Shri Krishna Chaitanya, Sankaradeva, Narasimha Mehta and Narayana Guru preached kindness to animals and vegetarianism. In 1536, Guru Jamboji died leaving behind guiding principles for his community, and said that he would be reborn in every blackbuck. Thanks to him, the Bishnois have never allowed anyone to kill any living being or cut any green trees.

Sacred mountains

Mountains play an important role in Indian ecology. They are the source of water, life, fertility and healing. Hindus look up to the Himalayas as the source of sacred rivers, such as the Ganga. Mountains and hills play a vital

role in the conservation of local ecology. Many sacred mountain traditions are an important link between cultural identity and traditional patterns of land conservation. They are exceptionally comprehensive ecosystems. Due to their topographic location and bio-cultural richness, they provide opportunities for climate change adaptation and act as a refuge for plants and animals during environmental change and from competing species. They play a vital role in the survival of top predator species like the snow leopard. Sacred mountains and sacred sites within mountains have resulted in communities maintaining and preserving their natural resources in often pristine conditions. Indigenous communities have long realized the value of the high diversity and natural resources within mountains, which nurture precious resources of nature. Beliefs and attitudes held by people who revere them can function as powerful forces to preserve the integrity of natural environments, promote conservation, restore damaged environments and strengthen indigenous cultures. These mountains highlight values and ideals that profoundly influence how people view and treat each other and the world around them.

Many temples have been designed as symbols of Mount Meru, which is a part of the cosmic ocean: the sun, planets and stars are believed to circle the mountain as a single unit. Mount Meru is clearly mythical, but was the epitome of a sacred mountain. The best recreation of Meru is the Hindu temple of Angkor Wat in Cambodia, with its five spires representing the five peaks, the (original) seven walls symbolic of the seven continents and interspersed with moats that represent the oceans. Meru sits on Jambudvipa, the earth's landmass. To the south of Jambudvipa is Bharatavarsha.

Some mountains may be associated with individual gods or saints, or may contain sacred sites such as temples and groves. E.g. Mount Govardhana at Vrindavan for its association

with Lord Krishna. Some are revered as places for spiritual attainment, such as Arunachala Hill in Tiruvannamalai. Tirumala and the Mukurthi Peak in the Nilgiris.

Festivals

Festivals are a celebration of nature, generally taking place during certain phases of the moon or on specific asterisms and *nakshatras* (lunar mansions) or during the change of seasons. On 14 January, Hindus celebrate *Makara Sankranti*, when the sun transits to Capricorn in the northern hemisphere, marking the end of winter and the beginning of longer, warmer days. People all over India pray to the sun, the source of life and warmth. Ancient Indians knew their astronomy. It is known as *Lohri* in the north, *Bihu* in Assam and *Pongal* or the celebration of harvest in the south. The previous day old domestic items, such as mats, brooms and unwanted wooden furniture are burnt in a bonfire. The disposal of useless items is considered to be symbolic of the discarding of vices and attachment to material items. It is also an opportunity to throw away those items which can deteriorate, become a hideout for termites and insects, decompose and become a source of disease. *Holi*, in the month of *Phalgun* (February-March), is a celebration of the spring harvest in north India and the fertility of the land. The *Holika dahan* is held the previous night, when old items in the house are burnt. *Akshaya Tritiya* is yet another spring festival.

Several festivals celebrate the role of Mother Earth. The earthen tanks constructed for harvesting water are desilted during May-June, and the clay is used to make unbaked images of Ganesha which, after the festival, are put into a water source—sea, river or lake. Unfortunately, today the idols are baked or made of plaster of Paris and painted with toxic colours, becoming a source of pollution. The *Navaratri* festival also celebrates clay in the form of beautiful

images of Durga in Bengal and Bihar or small *kolu* dolls of Tamil Nadu. Again, these simple figures of Durga have been supplanted by huge painted and elaborately decorated images of the goddess.

Festivals like *Bathukamma* in Telangana and *Onam* in Kerala celebrate flowers. In Telangana, they are made into elaborate *bathukammas*, and later floated in lakes, rivers and tanks, along with turmeric powder to clean the water source. *Onam* is the harvest festival of Kerala, which celebrates the annual return of Maharaja Bali to see his subjects. Hindus, Muslims and Christians make elaborate *pookalams* on the floor with flowers, fruits and leaves to welcome him.

Tribal people in different states celebrate the diversity of nature and the importance of clay in elaborate festivals that are an integral part of their lives.

The *Atharva Veda* (XI.1.16) says that it is up to the progeny of Mother Earth to live in peace and harmony. “O Mother Earth! You are the world for us and we are your children; let us speak in one accord, let us come together so that we live in peace and harmony, and let us

be cordial and gracious in our relationship with other beings.” All life is to be treated with reverence and respect. The family of Mother Earth - *vasudaiva kutumbakam* - must promote the welfare of people, animals and trees - *sarva bhūta hita* (*Yajur Veda*, XII.32). In order to be sustainable over the long term, environmental policies and programmes need to take values and ideals into account. If forests and trees, fresh water and clean air disappear, so will all life on earth.

While disposing of a writ petition filed by the owner of a commercial building in Chennai, the Hon’ble Justice S. Vaidyanathan of Madras High Court made this observation: “Our tradition and values, passed down to us from our ancestors, are not wrong beliefs. They are scientific, rational and logical. That is why they worshipped nature. Even now, many of them who follow our ancestral beliefs continue to do so as they have got abundant sanctity... It is not at all irrational. When nature gets the sanctity, it will not be ruined . . . Thus, nature was protected in those days. However, in the name of rationality, religious taboos were violated, the result of which we suffer these days” (*The Hindu*, 27 August, 2017).



— News —

List of 43 UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India

The UNESCO World Heritage Convention, which was established in 1972, recognizes and protects important cultural and natural sites around the world. India has recently added two more sites to the UNESCO World Heritage list, bringing the total number of Indian sites to 42. This makes India the sixth country in the world with the most UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Of the 43 Indian Sites, 35 are cultural, 7 are natural, and 1 is mixed (both cultural and natural).

In other words, UNESCO has recognized 43 places in India as being of outstanding universal value, worthy of protection for future generations. These sites include ancient temples, forts, palaces, caves, national parks, and wildlife sanctuaries. India's rich cultural and natural heritage is on display in these sites, which are a must-see for any visitor to the country.

1. **Ajanta Caves:** Famous for Buddhist Rock-cut Cave Monuments. It is richly decorated with paintings and frescoes like Sigiriya paintings.

2. **Ellora Caves:** Jain and Hindu temples and monasteries. These caves were excavated out of hills, and it is a rock-cut architecture.

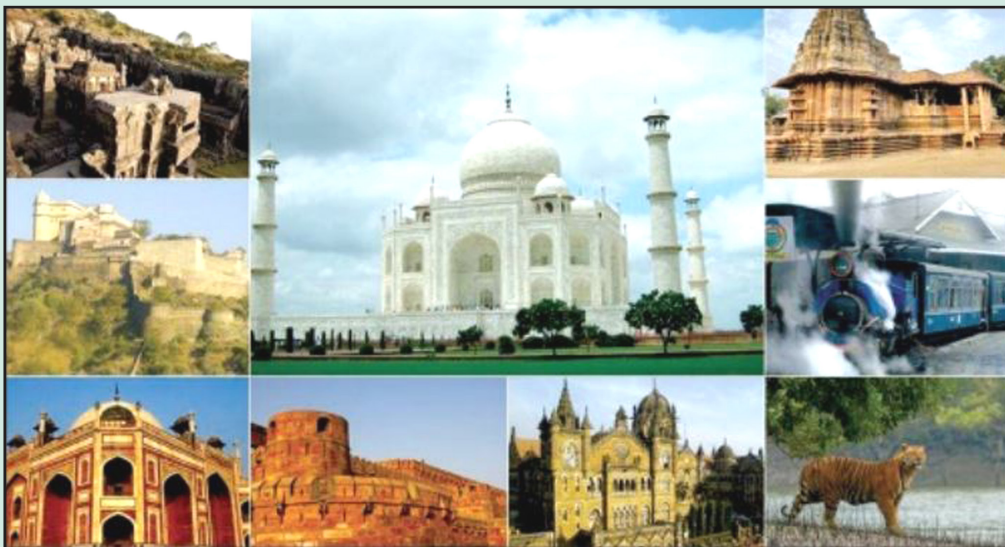
3. **Agra Fort:** This is one of the most prominent monumental structures by the Mughal empire.

4. **Taj Mahal:** This is one of the Seven wonders of the world. King Shahjahan had built this structure in the memory of his third wife Begum Mumtaz Mahal.

5. **Sun Temple:** This temple is famous for the traditional style of Kalinga architecture.

6. **Mahabalipuram Monuments:** This monument is famous for the Mahabalipuram largest Open air rock relief, *mandapas*, Chariot temples (it is a Pallava dynasty architecture).

7. **Kaziranga National Park:** Famous for the world's 2/3rd population of the great one-horned rhinoceros. It has the highest density of tigers in the world, wild waterbuffalo, elephants, swamp deer, and the park is also recognized as an important bird area.



8. **Keoladeo National Park:** This national park is popular for man-made wetland bird sanctuary a hotspot for ornithologists, and Siberian cranes.
9. **Manas Wildlife Sanctuary:** This sanctuary is famous for the Project Tiger reserve, biosphere reserve and elephant reserve.
10. **Churches and Convents of Goa:** It is famous as Rome of the Orient, first Manueline, Mannerist and Baroque art forms in Asia, first Latin rite mass in Asia.
11. **Monuments of Khajuraho:** This monument is popular for a group of Jain and Hindu temples. It is situated 175 kms. southeast of Jhansi. Well known for their Nagara style symbolism and erotic figures and sculptures.
12. **Monuments of Hampi:** Prosperous kingdom of Vijayanagar. The ruins at Hampi depict the fine Dravidian style of art and architecture. The most important heritage monument in this site is the Virupaksha Temple.
13. **Fatehpur Sikri:** Its structure consists of four main monuments. The Jama Masjid, the Buland Darwaza, Panch Mahal or Jada Baai Ka mahal, Diwane-Khas, and Diwaneaam.
14. **Elephanta Caves:** It is popular for Buddhist and Hindu caves. It is situated on an island in the Arabian sea and has basal rock caves and Shiva temples.
15. **Great Living Chola Temples:** This temple is popular for Chola architecture, sculpture, paintings, and bronze casting.
16. **Pattadakal Monuments:** It is popular for its Chalukya style of architecture that originated in Aihole and blended with the Nagara and Dravidian styles of architecture.
17. **Sundarbans National Park:** This national park is popular as a biosphere reserve, largest estuarine mangrove forest, Bengal tiger, and salt-water crocodiles.
18. **Nanda Devi & Valley of Flowers National Park:** It is famous for the snow leopard, Asiatic black bear, brown bear, blue sheep, and Himalayan monal, world network of biosphere.
19. **Monuments of Buddha:** It is popular for monolithic pillars, palaces, monasteries, temples Mauryan architecture, Ye Dharma Hetu inscriptions.
20. **Humayun's Tomb:** It is popular as the precursor to the Taj Mahal and Mughal architecture. It constitutes a tomb, a pavilion, water channels, and a bath.
21. **Qutub Minar and its Monuments:** Includes Qutub minar, Alai Darwaza, Alai Minar, Qubbat-ul-Islam mosque, tomb of Iltumish and iron pillar.
22. **Mountain Railways of Darjeeling, Kalka Shimla & Nilgiri:** The mountain railways of India comprises the Darjeeling Himalayan railway, the Nilgiri mountain railway, and the Kalka-Shimla.
23. **Mahabodhi Temple:** An important religious centre for the Buddhists as this was the place where Mahatma Buddha attained enlightenment. Bodh Gaya is considered as the holiest pilgrimage spot for the Buddhists.
24. **Bhimbetka:** It is famous for rock paintings within natural rock shelters, stone age inscriptions, sitting place of Bhima (Mahabharata).
25. **Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus:** It is popular for central railways headquarters, terror attacks on Mumbai in 2008, Gothic style architecture.
26. **Champaner Pavagadh Archaeological Park:** This place is the only complete and unchanged Islamic pre-Mughal city. The park also houses some of the ancient Chalcolithic Indian sites, from the Stone age era.
27. **Red Fort:** It is popular for Shahjahanabad, Persian, Timuri and Indian architectural styles, red sandstone architecture, Moti Masjid.

28. **Jantar Mantar:** Famous for architectural astronomical instruments, Maharaja Jai Singh II, the largest of its kind observatory.
29. **The Western Ghats:** Famous for being among world's ten "Hottest Biodiversity Hotspots". includes many national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, and reserve forests.
30. **Hill Forts:** This place is famous for its unique Rajput military defence architecture. It includes six majestic forts in Chitorgarh, Kumbhalgarh, Ranthambore Fort, and Jaisalmer Fort.
31. **Rani Ki Vav:** It is an explicit example of fine ancient Indian architecture which was constructed during the time of the Solanki dynasty.
32. **Great Himalayan National Park:** It is home to about 375 fauna species and several floral species, including some very rare species of plants and animals.
33. **Nalanda:** A centre of learning and a Buddhist monastery from the 3rd century BCE to the 13th century CE.
34. **Khangchendzonga National Park:** The national park is famous for its fauna and flora, with snow leopards being occasionally sighted.
35. **Architectural Work of Le Corbusier (capitol Complex):** Recognized as a World Heritage Site, as part of an outstanding contribution to the modern movement.
36. **The Historic City:** A walled city on the banks of Sabarmati where communities following Hinduism, Islam, and Jainism have co-existed for centuries.
37. **Victorian Gothic and Art Deco Ensembles:** It is a collection of 94 buildings of great cultural importance, located in the Fort area of Mumbai.
38. **The Pink City:** Jaipur is home to many magnificent forts, palaces, temples, and museums and also filled to the brim with local handicrafts and trinkets.
39. **Kakatiya Rudreshwara (Ramappa) Temple:** The Ramappa temple is situated in Palampet village, Telangana. The temple is especially known for lightweight porous bricks which are known as floating bricks.
40. **Dholavira:** Dholavira is an architectural site situated in the Kutch district of Gujarat. It is one of the most prominent Indus valley civilisation sites.
41. **Santiniketan:** Santiniketan, the cultural and educational hub founded by Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore, has earned a coveted spot on UNESCO's world heritage list. This recognition marks a significant milestone for India and celebrates the enduring legacy of this unique institution located in Bengal's Birbhum district.
42. **Hoysala Temples:** The sacred ensembles of the Hoysala, the famed Hoysala temples of Belur, Halebid and Somanathpura in Karnataka have been added to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage list. This inclusion marks the 42nd UNESCO world heritage site in India and comes just a day after Rabindranath Tagore's Santiniketan also received this distinguished recognition.
43. **Moidams:** In a significant cultural milestone for India, the "Moidams – the mount-burial system of the Ahom dynasty" from Assam has been officially added to the UNESCO world heritage list. Announced on 26th July 2024 during the 46th session of the world heritage committee in New Delhi, this recognition makes it the 43rd UNESCO world heritage site from India.

Source: The Mizoram Post Aizawl, 06/08/2024, pg.8, accessed on August 12, 2024.



— News —

A festival devoted to snakes

Nag Panchami is a traditional Hindu festival dedicated to the worship of serpents (*nagas*), celebrated on the fifth day of the bright half of the lunar month of Shravana that arrives in July or August of the western calendar. The festival highlights the cultural and religious significance of snakes in Hindu mythology and beliefs.

Hindu Goans celebrate Nag Panchami with great fervour. “The people who celebrate Ganesh Chaturthi usually have the tradition of celebrating Nag Panchami as well”, says Prachi Panjikar, adding that the celebration takes place differently in every house.

Some families in Goa worship live snakes while most get the snake idols to pay their respects to the snake deity. According to Subhadra Malik from Harvalem, it all depends on the availability of resources and family traditions, which means those who stay in the interiors of rural areas can worship live snakes, while those who do not, get the idol at their place.

Panjikar who hails from Marcel says that they get the Naga idol either on the day prior to the Nag Panchami or on the morning of the same day. Meanwhile, artist and retired teacher Udaysing Rane from Netravali has been making a clay idol for the last two years. “we have also drawn an image of Naga on the wall in our house temple, which is repainted every year prior to Nag Panchami,”he adds. Indeed, due to monsoon hurdles, some families prefer to draw an image of Naga on a paper which is stuck on the wall in the house temple.

On the day prior to Nag Panchami, the women in the house fast throughout the day. Malik says that those who fast can only have fruits and fluids. The next day, the Naga deity is worshipped. “In the morning we go to the snake

nest where we follow certain rituals. Initially, Ganesh puja is done, following which we offer ‘*patri*’, ‘*durva*’, *bel* and flowers to the Naga. We also keep milk and *lahi* rice. Fruits and are also kept as ‘*naivedya*’. Cotton *vastra mala* is kept on the nest or wrapped around the idol or Naga image”, she says. On this day, people prepare vegetarian dishes. *Patoleo* is a significant dessert relished in every house on this day. Some also keep it as ‘*naivedya*’ during the rituals around the nest or the Naga idol. The women who fast, break it during the lunch on the day of Nag Panchami.

People have immense faith in the Naga deity. “It is believed that any wish is fulfilled by the Naga deity. While performing the puja, people ask for a certain wish that they want to be fulfilled, and it comes true,” says Malik.

In the evening, the ‘*visarjan*’ (dismissal) is performed of the Naga idol or image. Malik says, “Just before the ‘*visarjan*’, a little milk and *lahi* rice is fed to the idol or image. Some even pour a little milk on the snake nest and keep some *lahi* rice on the top of it”.

Udaysing Rane believes that Nag Panchami is a way of paying respect to the serpents. Many people died in earlier times due to snake bites especially in the monsoons which is their breeding season. According to Hindu belief, killing a snake is one of the greatest sins, hence to prevent such as a sin, and furthermore to protect and prevent these beings from going extinct, Nag Panchami is celebrated. “People especially from rural areas believe that serpents are dangerous and celebrating this festival will protect them from snake bites,” says Rane.

Snehalata Rane from Sanquelim who celebrates Nag Panchami as an age-old tradition of their house adds that serpents are farmer’s friends.

“They eat the creatures that ruin the farm. Hence, as a mark of respect and to thank serpents, Nag Panchami is celebrated,” she states. She further suggests that people should not harm or kill them as they are equally important on Earth.



The legends behind the festival

Nag Panchami festival has a more than 5000-year-old tradition.

According to the Hindu Puranas, Kashyapa, the son of Lord Brahma, the creator, created Kadroo, who belonged to the Naga race of Pitru Loka and she gave birth to Nagas. According to the *Mahabharata*, Astika the

Brahmin son of Jaratakarus stopped the ‘*sarpa sastra*’ (snake sacrifice) of Janame-jaya, the ruler of the Kuru0 empire while he was performing a ‘*yagna*’ to decimate the race of all snakes to avenge the death of his father Parikshita who died of snake bite.

The day that ‘*yagya*’ was stopped and all the snakes got their lives back was Shukla Paksha Panchami day of Hindu Shravan month. Hence, Hindus worship snakes on this day.

Nagapanchami puja performed on this day is highly auspicious, rewarding, and is said to usher good things in one’s life. The Vedas consider snakes very significant and highly divine. Although there are several serpent gods, 12 are worshipped during Nag Panchami. Among them, the serpent god Anant is highly divine as Lord Vishnu takes a four-month long yogic sleep on it in the Ksheer Sagar. The other serpent god Vasuki is worn by Lord Shiva around his neck. So Hindus believe Nag Puja to be highly auspicious and celebrate it by observing fast, performing puja rituals and seek its blessings for protection and good health.

Source: The Navhind Times Panaji Edn, 08/08/2024, pg. 7, accessed on August 12, 2024.

Unfortunately, several snakes are captured and force-fed milk during Nag Panchami. Milk is poisonous for snakes and they die from consuming milk.



— In-focus —

Celebration of Van Mahotsav / Ek Ped Maa Ka Naam – July 06, 2024

CPREEC EIACP PC- RP, Chennai celebrated “Van Mahotsav / Ek Ped Maa Ka Naam” by organizing plantation programme on July 06, 2024 at Dr. M.G.R. Janaki Matriculation School, Virugambakkam, Chennai – 600 093. Dr. P. Sudhakar, Director & EIACP Coordinator, CPREEC, Chennai initiated the plantation programme and explained the importance of trees in the environment. The team distributed 60 numbers of native tree saplings like Spanish cherry, champak, jamun, gooseberry, wild almond, guava, teak, and pungam to the school students and teachers. The students actively participated on the plantation drive and took a pledge to take care of the saplings planted on the campus. A total of 162 students and 26 teachers participated.



International Tiger Day – July 29, 2024

International Tiger Day is celebrated every year on **July 29th** as a way to raise awareness about this big cat. The main aim of the day is to promote a global system for protecting the natural habitats of tigers and support tiger conservation.

CPREEC EIACP PC-RR, Chennai observed “International Tiger Day - 2024” by releasing 6 awareness posters / info-graphics on

1. Ecological Role of Tigers
2. Tiger Population and Distribution
3. Threats to the Tiger
4. Project Tiger
5. Cultural Significance of Tigers
6. Why Save the Tiger?

INTERNATIONAL TIGER DAY
JULY 29, 2024

ECOLOGICAL ROLE OF TIGERS

- ▶ The tiger is a majestic creature, a huge apex predator with distinctive stripes and a solitary nature.
- ▶ Tigers today face incredible challenges as their numbers shrink in the wild due to poaching, encroaching human population, and loss of habitat and therefore traditional prey.
- ▶ Where tigers succeed, food webs remain intact and ecosystems remain stable.
- ▶ Tigers represent a keystone species necessary for their ecosystem to survive.

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Supported by Ministry of Environment Forest & Climate Change, Govt. of India

INTERNATIONAL TIGER DAY
JULY 29, 2024

THREATS TO THE TIGER

- ▶ Poaching for trade
- ▶ Shrinking habitat
- ▶ Depletion of prey base species
- ▶ Growing human population
- ▶ The trade of tiger skins and the use of their bones in traditional medicines, especially in the Asian countries, has the tiger population on the verge of extinction.

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INTERNATIONAL TIGER DAY
JULY 29, 2024

TIGER POPULATION AND DISTRIBUTION

- ▶ Tigers represent the world's largest cat species. Nine subspecies of tiger are known, six of which remain today. The conservation status of the tiger is currently endangered.
- ▶ Tigers used to be widespread in Asia, from the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea to Siberia and Indonesia.
- ▶ In the 19th century, they were wiped out of Western Asia and Eastern Europe.
- ▶ Today, they are found in the Indian Subcontinent, South East Asia and Russian Far East and China.
- ▶ India is home to 80 percent of tigers in the world. In 2006, there were 1,411 tigers which increased to 1,706 in 2010, 2,226 in 2014, 2,947 in 2018 and 3,482 in 2022. Madhya Pradesh has become the Tiger State of India.

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INTERNATIONAL TIGER DAY
JULY 29, 2024

PROJECT TIGER

- ▶ In 1973, Project Tiger was launched to increase the population of the tiger in India.
- ▶ In the initial years, there were only nine tiger reserves in India. At present, there are 55 reserves located in 18 tiger range states of India.
- ▶ Their objectives are as follows:
 - ▶ Protect the endangered species from poaching, hunting and illegal trading.
 - ▶ Save the natural habitats of the tiger so that they can breed naturally and multiply in numbers.
 - ▶ Maintain a survey of the number of existing tigers.

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INTERNATIONAL TIGER DAY
JULY 29, 2024

CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF TIGERS

- ▶ It is the national animal of India, Nepal, Bangladesh (Bengal tiger), Malaysia (Malayan tiger), North Korea and South Korea (Siberian tiger).
- ▶ Tiger is revered as the protector of the forest. It symbolizes power and beauty.
- ▶ Tiger is the sacred animal and it is the vahana of Goddess Durga, Ayyappan, and the planet Rahu.
- ▶ The Warli tribe of Maharashtra worship Warlis or the lord of tigers.
- ▶ In Sunderbans West Bengal, Goddess Bonbibi rides the tiger and is worshipped by Hindu and Muslim.

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INTERNATIONAL TIGER DAY
JULY 29, 2024

WHY SAVE THE TIGER?

- ▶ The balance of nature is severely upset when a species becomes extinct or its population declines, as it severely disturbs the food chain and food web.
- ▶ To sustain the ecological balance save the tiger and its ecosystem.
- ▶ The tiger has a right to live.
- ▶ To ensure a world with healthy populations of wild tigers, we strive to stop the killing and trafficking of tigers. Key strategies:
 - ▶ Protect tigers and their habitat.
 - ▶ Build capacity in range states.
 - ▶ Reduce human-tiger conflict.
 - ▶ Conduct scientific research on tigers to help inform conservation strategies.
 - ▶ Promote tiger-friendly policies.
 - ▶ Monitor tiger numbers, population trends, and threats to tigers and their habitats.

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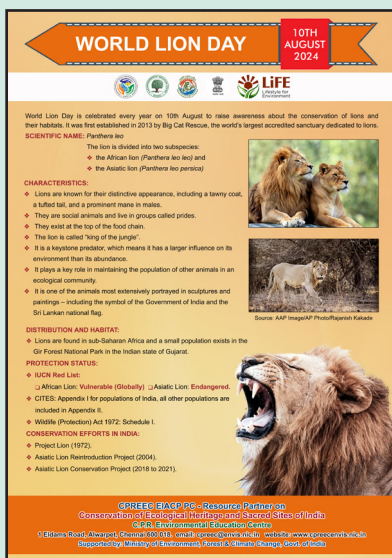
CPREEC EIACP PC-RP, Ooty Field Office organized an awareness campaign at P U Middle School, Thekkambatty, Mettupalayam, Coimbatore District. A total of 32 students and 5 teachers attended the programme and awareness posters were distributed.



WORLD LION DAY – AUGUST 10, 2024

World Lion Day is celebrated every year on 10th August to raise awareness about the conservation of lions and their habitats. It was first established in 2013 by **Big Cat Rescue**, the world’s largest accredited sanctuary dedicated to lions.

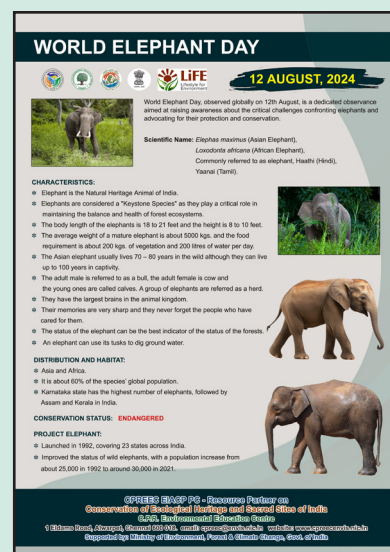
CPREEC EIACP PC-RP, Chennai observed “World Lion Day-2024” by releasing an awareness poster.



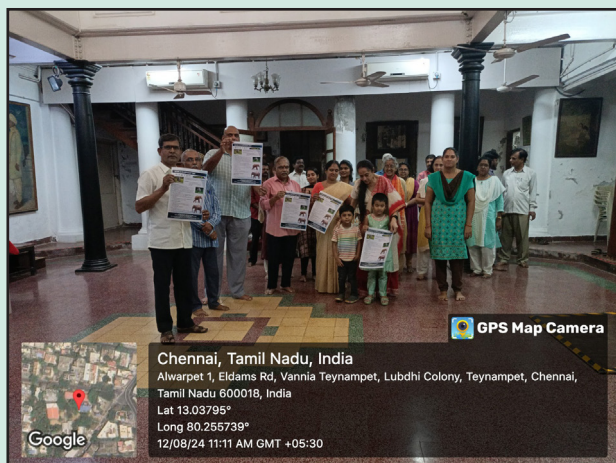
WORLD ELEPHANT DAY – AUGUST 12, 2024

World Elephant Day, observed globally on 12th August, is a dedicated observance aimed at raising awareness about the critical challenges confronting elephants and advocating for their protection and conservation.

CPREEC EIACP PC-RP, Chennai observed “World Elephant Day - 2024” by releasing an awareness poster.



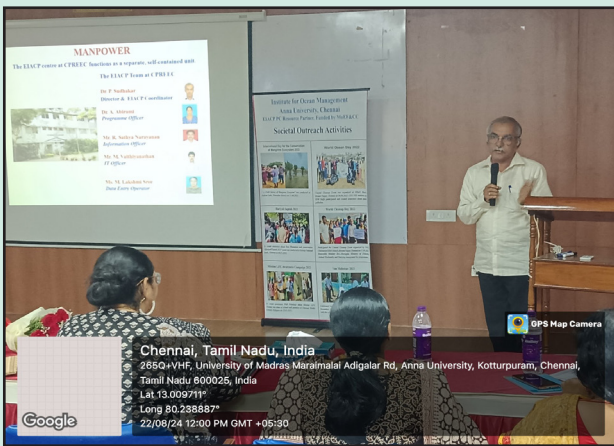
As part of observing World Elephant Day 2024, CPREEC EIACP PC-RP, Chennai has developed and released an awareness poster at Saraswathi Kendra Learning Centre for Children, Alwarpet. A total of 52 staff of CPR Foundation, teachers and students participated.



ASSESSMENT AND MONITORING ACTIVITIES OF EIACP CENTRES FOR CHENNAI REGION

Assessment and Monitoring activities of EIACP Centres for Chennai Region by Ms. Lipika Roy, Deputy Director, EIACP Division was held on 22 August, 2024 at Koodal Hall, Institute for Ocean Management, EIACP PC - RP, Anna University, Chennai.

EIACP Coordinator and EIACP team attended the meeting. Dr. P. Sudhakar, Director and EIACP Coordinator, CPREEC presented the activities carried out by the EIACP for the Financial Years 2022 – 2024.



GSDP products exhibition

CPREEC EIACP PC–RP, Chennai exhibited the GSDP products (Coconut shell handicrafts made by GSDP trainees) in the 2 day Vegan Festival on August 24 and 25, 2024 at The Grove School, 1 Eldams Road, Alwarpet, Chennai. More than 3000 visitors visited the stall.



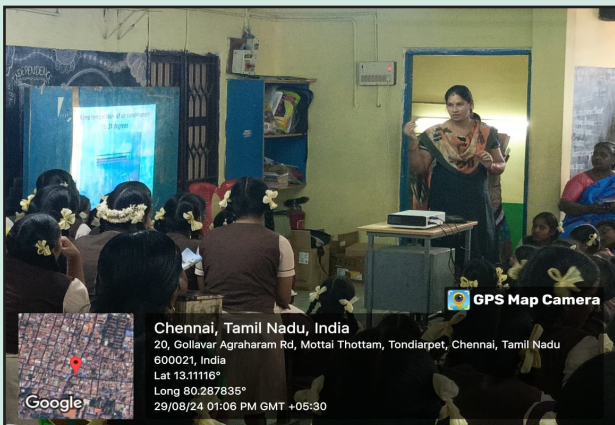
Physical Verification

As part of Assessment and Monitoring activities of EIACP Centres for Chennai Region, physical verification was carried out by Ms. Lipika Roy, Deputy Director, EIACP Division on 24 August, 2024 at C.P.R. Environmental Education Centre, Chennai.



Mission LiFE Awareness Programme – August 29, 2024

CPREEC EIACP PC–RP, Chennai conducted LiFE Mission Awareness Programme under the seven themes at K. Arumuga Nadar Girls Higher Secondary School, Washermanpet, Chennai 600 021 on 29/08/2024. 308 students and 7 teachers participated and took the pledge on Mission LiFE. Awareness posters and a booklet on the theme of “Mission Life” were distributed.





Coordinator Meet on September 07, 2024

Dr. P. Sudhakar, Director and EIACP Coordinator, CPREEC participated in the Coordinator Meet organized by MoEF and CC, New Delhi on 7th September 2024 at Silver Oak, India Habitat Centre Lodhi Road, New Delhi and made a 2 slides’ presentation on (1) Improvements/Changes made in CPREEC EIACP – PC – RP post Regional Evaluation held in October 2023, (2) Unique contributions of the Centre that merit its continuation under EIACP.



Mission LiFE Awareness Programme – September 10, 2024

CPREEC EIACP PC–RP, Chennai conducted LiFE Mission Awareness Programme under the seven themes at Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Vidyalaya Girls’ Higher Secondary School, Usman Road, T. Nagar, Chennai - 600017 on 10/09/2024. 496 students and 7 teachers participated and took the pledge on Mission LiFE.



Mission LiFE Awareness Programme – September 12, 2024

CPREEC EIACP PC–RP, Chennai conducted LiFE Mission Awareness Programme under the seven themes at Gnanodaya High School, Venkatapuram, Singaperumalkoil Kancheepuram – 603 204 on 12/09/2024. 110 students and 13 teachers participated and took the pledge on Mission LiFE.



World Ozone Day – September 16, 2024

As part of observing World Ozone Day 2024, CPREEC EIACP PC - RP, Chennai brought out an awareness poster.

CPREEC EIACP PC –RP, Chennai is observing World Ozone Day 2024 at Saraswathi Kendra Learning Centre for Children, Alwarpet.



Abstracts of Recent Publications

- ❖ **Pandeeswaran, C. (2018).** “Rock Cut Cave temples of Anaimalai and Tirupparankundram: An artistic analysis”, *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, Vol. 8 (3), pp. 571 – 581.

This research paper seeks to explain the artistic analysis of rock cut cave temples of Anaimalai and Tirupparankundram through primary sources such as South Indian Inscription Vol. XIV, Madurai Mavatta Kalvettukkal Vol. I, Avanam and other secondary sources. This paper covers the period from the earliest settlement of Jainism in Anaimalai and Tirupparankundram to 10th century C.E. in these periods the King of officials made grants and gifts to the Vedic and Non Vedic religious monuments for construction, renovation and maintenance in the respective places. We come to know that the Pandyas and officials patronized both religions equally up to middle of the 7th century C.E. when Saivism and Vaishnavism started to reach their zenith after the decline of Jainism.

Keywords: rock cut cave; Anaimalai and Tirupparankundram; art; architecture.

- ❖ **Rajakumara, M. (2021).** “Amrutha Linga Manikeshwara, Temple Features – A Study”, *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*, Vol. 8 (1), pp. 810 – 815.

This paper attempts to provide a historical perspective of Amrutha linga Manikeshwara temple. By the 13th century, they governed most of present-day Karnataka, minor parts of Tamil Nadu and parts of western Andhra Pradesh in Deccan India. the most notable rulers of the dynasty were Vishnuvardhana (1108-1152) and Veera Ballala II (1173 – 1220) in whose rule the kingdom flourished greatly in terms of art. They became part of the Vijayanagara empire after the death of the last king, Veera Ballala III (1292-1343). We know about the dynasty and the administration from many inscriptions that

are there in the temples in this part of Karnataka. The Hoysala era was an important period in the development of art, architecture, and religion in South India. The empire is remembered today primarily for its temple architecture. The area in and around the district of Hassan and Mandya are the only places where you can find this style of temple construction in the state of Karnataka. Study of the Hoysala architectural style has revealed a negligible Indo-Aryan influence while the impact of Southern Indian style is more distinct. The vigorous temple building activity of the Hoysala Empire was due to the social, cultural and political events of the period. The growing military powers of the Hoysala kings made them desire to surpass their Western Chalukya overlords in artistic achievement. Temples built prior to Hoysala independence in the mid-12th century reflect significant Western Chalukya influences, while later temples retain some salient features but have additional inventive decoration and ornamentation, features unique to Hoysala artisans.

Keywords: Amrutha Linga Manikeshwara Temple; Temple Architecture; Hoysala.

- ❖ **Manoranjan, P. (2022).** “Odissi Dance in Temple art of Odisha”, *Indian Journal of Research*, Vol. 11 (10), pp. 48 – 49.

The Odisha temple sculptures are of two broad categories, namely the cult image and the decorative motifs. There are also gods and goddesses, and depiction of religious episodes to create a religious atmosphere. Religious synthesis is reflected through the images of ‘Ardanarisvara’ and ‘Hari-Hara’ such as at Gandharadi. A significant feature of Odishan temple art is the presence of performing art sculpture on the outer walls to signify the fact that religion cannot be separated from real life. The sculptures have preserved thousands of examples, which

are treasure-houses of the techniques of Odissi dance. The temples greatly helped the Gurus and research scholars to reconstruct the present form of Odissi dance form, an almost lost tradition of dance. As we can see, Odissi, thus, recorded in the temples, provides us a world of Odissi postures, gestures, costumes and ornaments.

Keywords: *Odissi Dance; Temple; Sculpture; Art.*

- ❖ **Ushasree, A. (2023). “Select historical, tourist centres in and around Tirupati”, *Indian Journal of Applied Research*, Vol. 13 (5), pp. 6 – 9.** Apart from the Tirumala temple there are many historical places and tourist attractions in and around Tirupati, like Chandragiri, Gudimallam, Srikalahasti, Nagalapuram, Narayanavanam, Surutapalli and Karvetinagaram. These centres have great history, rich culture and heritage,

these ancient centres in modern times emerging as famous tourist attractions. To facilitate visitors, these destinations are upgrading their amenities with the help of state and local governments. This article is intends to study how our ancient heritage will inspire present generations to visit the particular destination. These heritage centres become popular tourist destinations in modern times. Through this research paper, an attempt is made to understand the historical significance of Tirupati region. It is also analysed how historical buildings like forts, temples, palaces are serving as tourism resources. In this article some selected destinations were identified to study how past history can be helpful to attract tourists to these destinations.

Keywords: *Pilgrims; Attraction; Temples; Infrastructure; Accessibility; Amenities.*



Website: www.cpreecenvis.nic.in

The screenshot shows the website interface for CPREEC - EIACP Programme Centre. The header includes the Government of India logo, the CPREEC logo, and the text: "CPREEC - EIACP Programme Centre, Resource Partner on Ecological Heritage and Sacred Sites of India". Below this, it states "Hosted by C.P.R. Environmental Education Centre, Chennai" and "Sponsored by Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change, Govt of India". The navigation menu includes: Contact Us, Experts, About Us, ENVIS Network, Online Query, Feedback, Site Map, Related Links, and Site Search. The main content area is divided into several sections:

- LOGIN**: Username and Password fields, Sign-Up, Help, and Forgot links.
- PUBLICATIONS**: Newsletter, Booklet, and Books links.
- PERFORMANCE REPORT**: Select Year, Parameter, and Periodicity dropdowns, and a Search button.
- EVENTS**: Info-graphic Standee and ba..., International Day for Biolo..., and WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY... links.
- NEWS / MEDIA**: Why painted storks flock, The power of Prahlad's Un, CM inaugurates Keezhadi M, and Assam's moidams fit UNESCO links.
- ABSTRACTS**: Search and See All buttons, and an Advanced Search link.
- GLOSSARY**: Search and See All buttons.
- Video Gallery**: Video icon and Sacred Cities/Sites.. link.
- Social Media**: Instagram and You tube.. links.

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