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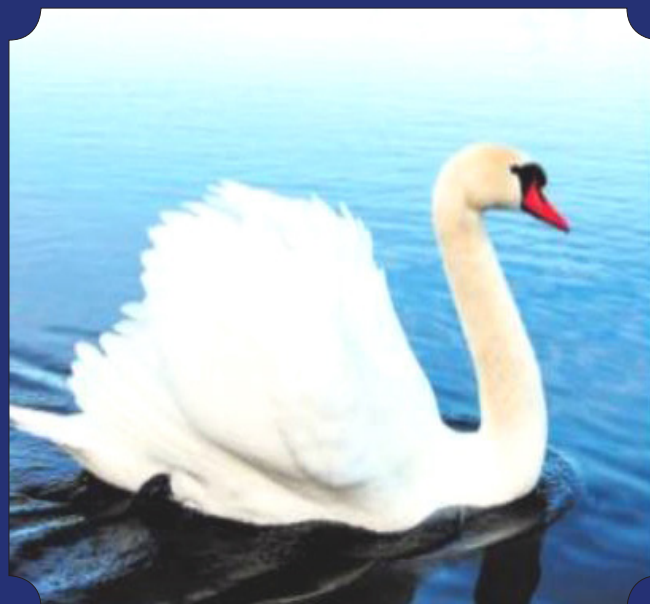
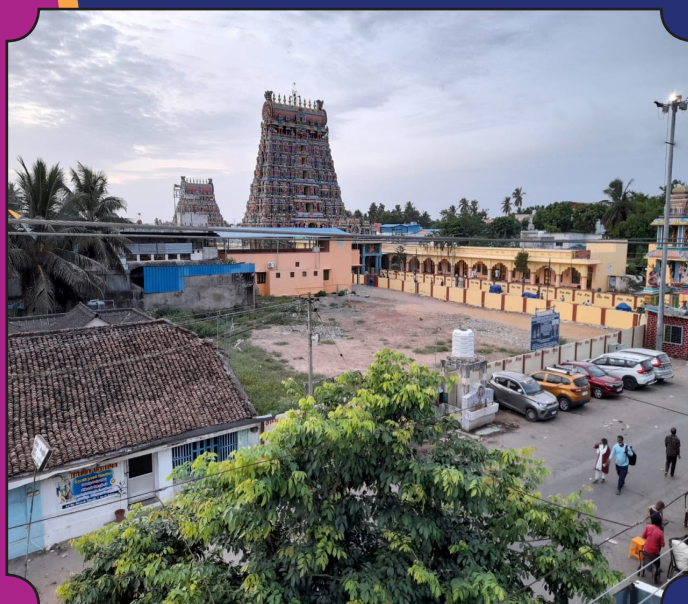
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EIACP Newsletter



Thematic Area: Conservation of Ecological Heritage and Sacred Sites of India

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LIFE
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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 covers an article on **“TEMPLE TALK – ABIRAMI SAMETHA AMIRTHAKADESWARAR TEMPLE, THIRUKKADAIYUR, MAYILADUTURAI DISTRICT”**. Sri Abirami Sametha Sri Amrithakadeswarar temple is a world-famous shrine in Thirukkadaiyur, Mayiladuturai which is known for the Tamil catch-phrase ‘Endrum 16’ (Eternally 16). In this temple, Lord Shiva, in the form of Amirthakadeswarar / Kaalamaharajam blessed his devotee Markandeya to be eternally sixteen in age as a Chiranjeevi. Goddess Abirami protected Her devotee Abirami Battar alias Subramaniam from the wrath of Tanjore King Serfoji II. This temple is one among the eight Veeraattanam of Lord Shiva where He killed eight demons (one in each temple). The temple is famous for the 1st, 59th, 61st, 71st, 81st, 91st and 100th

birthdays and so on. Every occasion has a specific name and sect-specific rituals that are carried out with the families and occasionally in the presence of relatives, colleagues and friends. There are a number of festivals such as Andhadhi Parayanam, Yama Samharam, Thiruvaadipooram, Vishi Padham, Brahmotsavam, etc. Apart from birthday ceremonies, devotees throng this temple for good health, long-life, prosperity and carry out Mrityunjaya Homam, Rudhrabishekam, Sangabishekam, etc. Women devotees offer sarees, bangles, honey, rice flour, milk, oil, etc. to Goddess Abirami and pray for the well-being of their family; they even change their Mangalsutra on an auspicious day with the new one at the feet of Goddess Abirami.

CPREEC EIACP – RP has already published books on the “Ecological Traditions” of the sixteen (16) states of India, viz., Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal. 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 (10,377), 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 sacred 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 www.cpreecenviis.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 in our website.

Cover Story

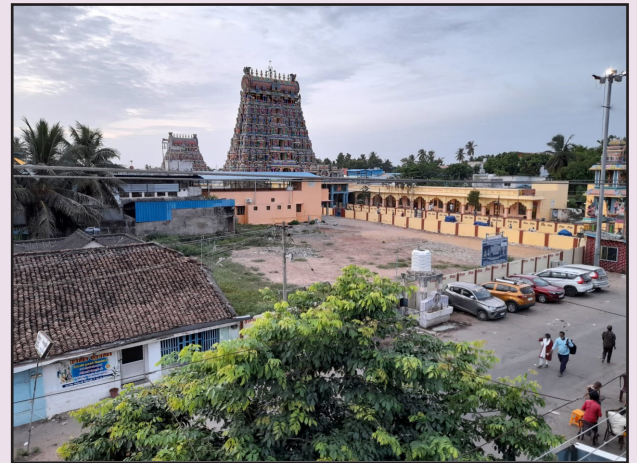
TEMPLE TALK – ABIRAMI SAMETHA AMIRTHAKADESWARAR TEMPLE, THIRUKKADAIYUR, MAYILADUTURAI DISTRICT

by Dr. G Srinivasan, Ph.D.*

Introduction

Sri Abirami Sametha Sri Amrithakateswarar Temple is located in Thirukkadavoor, 21 kms from Mayiladuturai. This temple is administered and maintained by Dharmapuram Adheenam, Mayiladuturai. Lord Shiva is also called *Amirthalingeswarar / Amirthakadeswarar (moolavar)*; *urchavar* is called *Kaalasamhaaramoorthy*. *Ambal* is *Abirami*. The sacred tree / *sthalavriksham* is Indian bael / *vilva*. This is 164th *Devara Paadal Petra Shiva Sthalam* and the 47th *Sthalam* on the south side of River Cauvery. This is also one of the *moovar paadal Petra sthalam*. In *Periyapuram* Sekkizhar records that Thirugnanasambandar came to this temple after worshipping Lord Shiva of Thiru kottaru. Thirunavukkarasu Swamigal came to this temple after worshipping Lord Shiva of Thiru Ambar (wandering heritage.com). The six *theertham* in the temple pond are *Amirtha theertham, Sivagangai, Kaala Theertham, Markandeya theertham, Cauvery, Ammanaaruru* (shaivam.org). Among those who worshipped in this temple included *Appar, Sambandar, Sundarar, Thirumoola Nayanar, Seramaan Perumal, Nakkeerar, Parananar, Sekkizhar, Brahma, Vishnu, Markandeya, Yama, Sapta Kannis, Agastiya Muni, Pulasthiyar, Vasuki, Durga, Boomadevi, Sibi* – to name a few. *Kungiliya Kalaya Nayanar* and *Kari Nayanar* worshipped and attained liberation from the cycle of birth and death here. It is one of the 276 temples classified as

'Paadal Petra Sthalam'. In Shaivism, five Shiva temples are regarded as *'Mayanam'*: *Kaasi Mayanam, Kachchi Mayanam* (Kanchipuram), *Kaazhi Mayanam* (Sirkali), *Naalur Mayanam* and *Kadavur Mayanam* (Mayiladuturai). Here, *Mayanam* means, the place where Lord Shiva burnt Brahma and turned into water that is Thirukkadaiyur. The present structure was built during the Chola period in the 9th century and later expansions by Tanjore Nayaks. There are records of inscriptions citing Chola Kings – Rajaraja I, Rajendra Chola, Rajadhiraja, Kulothunga, Rajaraja II gift of paddy to the temple, gift of land by devotee to the temple and selling of land to the temple, donation for performing art, drama, dance and music (Balasubramayam, 1975).



**Sri Abirami Sametha
Amirthakadeswarar Temple, Thirukkadaiyur**

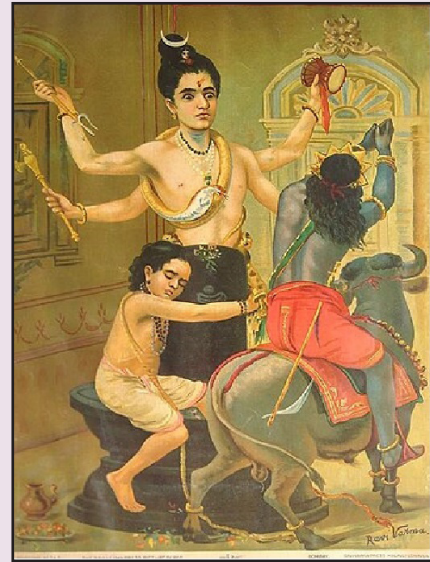
Image Courtesy: Y Venkatesh, CPREEC, Chennai

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Amirthakadeswarar Temple Legend

Sage Mrigandu, along with his wife Maruthuvathi worshipped Lord Shiva for a son. Lord Shiva, pleased by their devotion, appeared before them and offered to bless, but with a choice: a son who live for thousand years with evil deeds or a son who lives for sixteen years with good character. Sage Mrigandu opted for the son who lives for sixteen years. Lord Shiva blessed them with Markandeya. The child grew up as a pious Shiva devotee. His parents informed Markandeya that according to Lord Shiva's offer, his life is for sixteen years. Undeterred Markandeya believed that Lord Shiva could save him and worshipped at all the Shiva temples. On the day of completion of sixteen years, Markandeya arrived at Thirukkadayur. Duty-bound Lord Yama appeared before him and threw the noose / rope over Markandeya, who started to embrace the Shivalingam. Yama expanded the noose over Shivalingam, which enraged Lord Shiva and appeared before him and killed Yama for protecting his devotee. This incident resulted in the God being called as '*Kaalasamhaaramoorthy*'. After that Lord Shiva gave Markandeyan the boon of being sixteen (eternal) and Chiranjeevi. Later, Lord Vishnu, Bhudevi and Brahma pleaded with Lord Shiva to revive Yama and He did so. This is one of the eight '*Ashta Veerata Sthala*' of Lord Shiva. Others are *Veerateeswarar* Temples at Thirukkivilur, Thiruvathigai, Thirupariyalur, Vazhuvur, Thiruvirkudi and Korukkai and *Kandeeswarar* Temple in Tanjore. In each of these eight temples, Lord Shiva is believed to have destroyed eight different demons – *Andhakasura*, *Gajasura*, *Jalandhara*, *Thirupradhi*, *Kama*, *Arjunan*, *Dakshan* and *Tarakasuran*.

After burning Brahma, Devas converged at Thirukkadayur and underwent severe penance



Lord Shiva subduing Yama

Source: Raja Ravi Varma Painting

to Lord Shiva for reviving Brahma. Accordingly, He revived Lord Brahma who worshipped for acquiring '*Gnanopadesha*'. Lord Shiva gave Brahma a seed of *vilva* and asked to worship him at the place where it germinates within the next *muhurat*. Brahma tried it at various places and finally observed it germinating at Thirukkadayur. Since then, the place came to be known as '*Vilvavanam*' / '*Thirumeignanam*'. When the Devas obtained the nectar after churning the '*Kshira Sagara*', they placed the nectar pot at a river bank for bathing. After bath, when they tried to pick up the pot, it got rooted at that very place and hence the place was called '*Thirukkadavoor*'. Since the nectar pot ('*kudam*' or '*gatam*' in Tamil) was in the shape of a Linga, the Lingeswarar is known as '*Amirthakadeswarar*'. There is another story connected with this incident: Devas, after obtaining the nectar pot, failed to worship the first and foremost deity – Lord Vinayaga and hence the angered Vinayaga hid the nectar pot in a place, which transformed into a Shivalinga and hence, it is '*Amirthakadeswarar*'. Lord Vinayaga in this temple is called '*Kalla Vinayaga*'. Since it is believed that Lord Shiva subdued Yama in Thirukkadayur, the Lord is also called *Mrutyunjaya*.



**Sri Kalasamharamurthy, Sri Balambal and
Sri Amirthakadeswarar**
Source: malaimalar.com

The seven-tier Rajagopuram at the western side is the main entrance. The 'Suyambu' lingam at the *sanctum sanctorum* is facing the west. There is no *Navagraha* shrine. *Abhishekam* is performed only with the water from *Brahmatheertham*. There is a copper shrine of *Kaalasamharamoorthy* at the mandap before the *sanctum sanctorum*, which should be worshipped before proceeding to the main deity. *Paapakareswarar* (Sage Agastya worshipped) and *Punniyakareswarar* (Pulasthiyar worshipped) are other two important *moorthis* to be worshipped before proceeding to the main deity. If observed closely, there would a small split on the head and a scar on the body of the main deity due to the noose of Lord Yama. This can be viewed only when '*Paalabishekam*' is performed. Another story says that when a local king tried to perform *Abhisheka* using Ganges River water, a small split occurred at the head of the Shivalinga. There is a well inside the temple which is believed to have water from Ganges. There is another belief that *Markandeya* brought the Ganges water to this well through an underground passage to perform *abishekam* on Lord Shiva. There are three temple tanks: *Amrita Pushkarini*, *Kaala Theertham* and *Markandeya Theertham*. Along with this Ganges water, jasmine flower belonging to

Pinjilam variety came to Thirukkadaiyur and it is used only for the *archanai* of the Lord. The 'Yantra' embedded in the right wall of *Kaalasamharamoorthy* is called '*Thirukkadaiyur Rahasiyam*' (similar to '*Chidambara Rahasiyam*') (thirukkadaiyurpooja.com). Though Thirukkadaiyur temple is a Shaiva temple, it contains an old Vaishnava temple – Amrita Narayana and Amrita Valli. In one of the shrines, Goddess Parvathi is seen as '*Gughaambikai*' with Lord Muruga sitting on Her lap.

Abirami Temple

The Shrine of Abirami is east facing and close to the entrance *Gopuram* but within the precincts of the temple. Goddess Abirami is known to have blessed Saraswathi and a sage, *Abirami Battar*. It is believed that Abirami was incarnated here by the power of Lord Vishnu. Once there lived a *Battar* (alias Subramanyam) in Mayiladuturai who was very much devoted to Abirami. The Tanjore King Serfoji II visited the temple and enquired about the *Battar* since he did not bow before the king. Some said that *Battar* was a mad man seeing Goddess Abirami in all women and worshipping and offering them flowers. Some said that he is a true Saint. The height of the *Battar's* devotion is that when the king asked the *Battar* about the day's *thithi*, he answered '*Pournami*' (full-moon day) instead of *Amaavasai* (new-moon day). Enraged, the King, warned the *Battar* that he would be punished if he do not see the moon that evening. Fearing the punishment, he started reciting the hundred hymns of *Abirami Andhadhi*. The king almost punished the *Battar*, when reciting the 79th hymn, when Goddess Abirami removed her earring and threw it towards the sky which appeared as full-moon, by the way blessing *Abirami Battar*. Even today, on the new moon day of the month of '*Thai*', the *Archakas* of Abirami Temple recite *Abirami Andhadhi* and while reciting the 79th hymn, they switch on a light / tubelight at the top of the *Gopuram*

which is witnessed by a lot of devotees. At times, the *Archakas* place a mirror before the light and the reflection looks like a moon and the devotees witness it. There is a belief that children who are speech-impaired or mentally disabled or academically poor can circumambulate the *vilva* tree to recover from these ailments.

Of the many other shrines that relieve us from the fear of death / Yama, Thirukkadaiyur is the most famous one. There are sixty 'Tamil Years' with names. Devotees from all over the country come to celebrate their 60th birthday on the Tamil month of their birth date / *Nakshatra*. The person born on a specific Tamil year will again see the same Tamil year after completing sixty years of age. There is a general belief that performing the ceremonies such as 'Poornaabishekam' (centenary birthday), 'Kanakaabishekam' (90th birthday), 'Sathaabishekam' (80th birthday), 'Bheemarathasanthi' (70th birthday), 'Sashtiabdhapoorthi' (60th birthday), 'Ugra radhasanthi' (59th birthday) and even 'Ayushomam' (first birthday) will lead to a long and peaceful life. Since there is no separate *Navagraha* shrine, during the ritual, the *Navagraha* is invoked in the form of *Navadhaniya* (nine grains) and the *Homam* is performed. The holy water is then poured on the couple by the relatives especially by the children, grandchildren and at some instances great-grandchildren through a sieve which, after flooding the couple the water is sprinkled over those kids. This washes away the sins attached to the aged couple. This is exclusively for the sixtieth birthday. For others, holy water is to be poured only by elders (aanmeegam.co.in). Every sect has its own customs and the ceremonies are performed according to those prescriptions. Since this is a daily routine function, there is no specific date, day and auspicious time as it takes place in the presence of the Lord in the temple (thirucadaiyur temple.org).

There is a myth that a person, after completing 59 years and while entering the 60th age, there are chances of mishaps in his / her life and career. Many used to postpone some major decisions such as signing contracts, construction, acquiring properties, transfer of will, and even major surgeries. So, elders at home advise a temple visit, worship of *Kuladeivam* (garden deity) and have *aval payasam* with the family on the 60th birthday. This is done in order to alleviate the negative aspects of *Navagraha* and to move through the whole year without any hurdles. The 'Sashtiabthapoorthy' ritual has to be performed after completing sixty years and entering the 61st year. There are many theories regarding this: Some may perform on the birth star on any year around 59th – 61st year of birthday; some may perform exactly on the 60th birthday; some on the date of birth after the completion of 60 Tamil years and some on the 61st birthday. These rituals are performed to get relief from adverse aspects of planets.

Goddess Abirami is considered merciful and powerful. There is a general belief that if Goddess Abirami is worshipped, there are chances of distinction in life, job opportunities, prosperity, wedding, begetting children, mental peace, profits in trade, relief from confusions, ailments and other consequences out of fear. Even heart patients perform 'Mrutyunjaya Homam' for remedy. Those seeking to get married, offer garlands and some offer a cradle for children; also *Rudrabishekam* is performed for mothers expecting a child or for child adoption. At times, patients conduct *Sangabishekam* for cure. Women used to place a new *Mangalsutra* at the feet of Abirami and wear it and leave the old one at Her feet. They offer milk, oil, saree, curd, rice flour, *panchamirtham*, lime juice, honey, sandal etc. as *abishekam*.

Important days

In the month of *Thai*, the new moon day is auspicious as *Abirami Andhadhi* is recited and devotees witness the light. In the month of *Chithirai*, *Yama Samharam* with Lord's procession, *Kaalasamharamoorthy* darshan. In the month of *Karthigai*, on all Mondays *Sangaabishekam* with 1008 conches will be held. In the month of *Maasi – Panguni*, *Mahashivarathri* is observed. The *Thiruvaadipooram*, in the month of *Aadi*, *Navaratri* in *Purattasi* and the annual *Brahmotsavam* in *Chithirai* are among the important festivals. In the month of *Panguni*, on *Ashwini* star it is said that Lord Shiva brought River Ganges to the well through the underground passage. So, devotees are allowed to bath in the *Brahma Theertha Mayanam* well only once in a year on that day. *Ekadhina Urchavam* is held on *Vishi padham* day of *Margazhi* month. In the month of *Aippasi*, Skanda Shashti is famous in this temple. Other temples near Thirukadaiyur are Rajagopala Perumal Temple at Ananthamangalam, Thillaiyadi Temple at Thillaiyadi, Thirukameswarar Temple at Thiruvidaikali (famous for *Surasamharam* on the day of *Kandha Sashti*), Visalatchi Sametha Viswanatha Swamy Temple at Devanur and Masilanathar Temple at Tharangambadi (formerly known as Tranqubar).

Conclusion

These rituals which are unanimously accepted and followed by all devotees, are at times performed by *Vaishnavites* at Vishnu Temples. In particular, staunch *Vaishnavites* who claim to have undertaken the 'oath' of '*Panchasamskaram*' and '*Bharanyasam*' will always hesitate to carry out such family ceremonies in a Shiva temple. Whichever is true, completing 60, 70, 80 years of age without any hiccups in life and career is an achievement. The environment was less polluted due to the absence of plastics and luxuries in the ceremonies. But it is still an enormous task in congregating all family members to participate in the function.

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Source: *Journal of Indian History and Culture*, 31st Issue, June 2023, C.P.R. Publications, Chennai, India.

— News —

THE PLANET BELONGS TO ANIMALS TOO

Dr. Nanditha Krishna, Ph.D.

When a VIP visits a street, local officials rush to remove the dogs living there. When a minister's relative's plantation is visited by an elephant or used for a nap by a tiger, the politician demands the immediate destruction of the animal. Every day we read of people and politicians abusing animals. In Kerala, they want to empower farmers to kill wildlife for 'intruding' into agricultural fields, forgetting that the fields were the homes of the animals. In cities, people want to kill dogs who have always lived there.

Fortunately, the Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules prevent what was once a savage massacre. The unrequited responsibility of carrying out ABC programmes lies with local bodies, municipal corporations and panchayats. The cow, being sacred, cannot be destroyed easily, but every corporation is trying to get rid of her. Animals share the earth with humans, but, in a mad desire to acquire more land for agriculture, industry and urbanization, people want to kill off other inhabitants of our planet. As a result, animals, who are an essential part of our world and could bring great happiness, suffer immensely.

Towards the end of the last Ice Age, humans allied with wolves. Maybe the humans fed some wolves scraps of food, and the wolves protected their humans from predators and other humans. The two species collaborated and even hunted together. Since then, a lot has happened. People deliberately bred dogs as pets and later abandoned them, making them dispensable.

Ancient civilizations revered nature. All life forms contribute equally to the balance of the five elements or Pancha Bhuta. In many ancient civilizations such as India, animals are even worshipped. The Lepcha hunter-gatherers of Sikkim believe that the blood pheasant is sacred, for it saved the Lepcha ancestors from the great flood and guided them to safety. In Indian traditions animals are recognized as sentient beings who feel pain and pleasure. It has now been proved that several species feel pain, happiness and sorrow, among other emotions. Some 276 different expressions have been observed in cats and 17 in horses. Dogs produce more facial movements before a human, including raising their eyebrows and making their eyes appear bigger. Canine siblings can recognize each other even after a gap of several years.

Animals such as the elephant, monkey and tiger were worshipped as deities in India. Some became vehicles of gods. Many were the deities of tribes who were gradually absorbed into the wider Hindu pantheon. Animals like dogs and primates were friends and companions of humans.

Animals interact with the human world through myths. All ancient civilizations had myths which brought together gods, people, animals and nature. Among the nine gems that appeared when the ocean was churned (*samudra manthan*) were the elephant, cow and horse.

We worship elephants as Ganesha, but we keep them chained in temples, or make them carry tourists up the hill in Jaipur, causing terrible foot problems, or log wood in Assam. Bombs are placed inside pineapples, which burst when the elephant chews the fruit, thus maiming it beyond repair. The cow now belongs to the dairy industry, where she is kept permanently pregnant, deprived of her calves and milked till she can no longer produce any more. Horses are ridden till they drop dead. The chimpanzee shares 99% of human genes, but is still abused in laboratories. Pilgrims who go to see Lord Aiyappa in Sabarimala forget that Aiyappa was protected by tigers. The temple is situated inside the Periyar Tiger Reserve, where there are hardly 40 tigers left, and even they cannot be seen. Those animals with no perceived value or legal protection have been regarded as expendable.

The concept of ahimsa or non-violence in thought and deed is India's unique contribution to world culture. The rishis of the Upanishads were the first to speak of kindness and ahimsa. Mahavira based his teachings on the concept of 'live and let live'. The Buddha spoke about compassion and Emperor Ashoka banned hunting and slaughter in his kingdom. The epics and puranas narrate stories of animals who helped people. The great Tamil philosopher

Tiruvalluvar believed "those who have realised what is suffering must refrain from inflicting it on others." Animals are equally subject to the law of karma and a human could be reborn as a biped or quadruped.

Islam promises paradise for animals. According to the *Quran* (6:38), "...There is no animal that crawls on the earth, no bird that flies with its two wings, but are communities like you. We have neglected nothing in the Book. Then to their Lord will they all be mustered (collected)." *Proverb* 12:10 of the Bible says that "the righteous care for the needs of their animals."

Politicians and people want to destroy forests to enable industries and agriculture to thrive. Ancient India used religious sentiments to protect animals. Modern India enacted laws to protect animals, but this has not reduced cruelty or destruction. Human apathy and the belief that the world was made for humans has resulted in the large-scale decimation of animals and their habitats, yet we still turn a blind eye. This earth belongs to every species and everyone has a right to live on this planet. We cannot allow human greed to harm other species.

Source: *The New Indian Express*, 12/11/2023, Chennai Edn., pg.8.



— News —

SIGNIFICANCE OF KARTIK PURNIMA

India is a country known for its diversity in terms of people and culture and there are different kinds of festivals and rituals. Kartik Purnima is one of the auspicious festivals for three prominent communities – Sanatan Dharma, Sikh and Jain together. It is celebrated with great enthusiasm all over the country and abroad on Shukla Paksha Purnima Tithi of Kartik month and falls 15 days after Deepawali.

Kartik Purnima also known as “Tripurai Purnima” or “Tripuri Purnima” is celebrated as the victory of Bhagwan Shiva over the demons Tarakaksha, Viryavana and Kamalaksha (together called “Tripurasur”). All the Devs rejoiced at their killings and celebrated “Dev Deepawali” by lighting Diyas in the heaven. On this day, Dev and Devis descended from the heavens on the earth to take a bath in the Holy rivers.

So, by lighting Deeyas, taking a holy dip in rivers and other water sources (called *Kartik Snan*) and worshipping deities, devotees wish for divine blessings and attract prosperity. Devotees offer “*Deep Daan*” (floating of lamps) on the rivers. *Deepmalas* or towers of lights are illuminated throughout the night in the *Mandirs* on this occasion.

This day marks the emergence of Matasya, the Matasyavatar (Fish incarnation) of Bhagwan Vishnu to rescue living beings save life on the earth. It is also believed that on this day Bhagwan Krishna and Radha performed Rasleela with the Gopis in Brajbhumi. In Dakshin Bharat, this day is celebrated as the birthday of Kartikeya, the lord of war and son of Shiva-Parvati.

Kartik Purnamashi is the most auspicious day for Sikhs. On this day, Guru Nanak Dev ji Jayanti is celebrated worldwide as “Guru Parab” or “Prakash Parva”. Various programmes along with Kirtan, Gurubani and Akhand Pathare are organized in the Gurudwaras in every corner of the country, although his birthplace Rai-Bhoi-Di-Talwandi (now Nankana Sahib) presently falls in Pakistan.

Jains believe that Rishabh (also popular as Adinath), the first Tirthankar, has sanctified the Shatrunjay hills at Palitana on Kartik Purnima by visiting it and delivering his first sermon. So, Jain pilgrims flock to the foothills of the Shatrunjay hills to undertake the auspicious *Yatra*. Shri Shatrunjay Tirth Yatra is an important religious event for Jain devotees, who circumambulate the rough mountainous terrain covering a distance of 216 km on foot to worship at the Adinath Mandir atop the hills.

On Kartik Purnima, many world famous fairs such as ‘Harihar Kshetra Sonpur Pashu Mela’ in Bihar, Pushkar camel fair in Rajasthan and ‘Lugu Pahar Mela’ in Bokaro (Jharkhand) are organized.

Whatever be the belief and happenings behind the festival of Kartik Purnima, this day marks harmony, joy, celebrations, devotion, spiritual bhajan-kirtans in Mandirs, Gurudwaras and everywhere. It illuminates the houses, hearts and heaven and spreads the message of friendship and togetherness.

Source: State Times Jammu, 27/11/2023, pg.6.

— News —

BIRDS OF DIVINE FEATHER

Of all the birds that are considered divine, the *hamsa* or *hansa* has the most exalted position as it is identified with Brahman – the Supreme Spirit. It has also been used as a representation of the individual soul; its pure white complexion denoting the pristine soul, before it is tarnished by worldly things. It is the vehicle of Brahma and Saraswati. The epics claim that *hamsa* eats pearls, and is able to separate milk from water. Saints are sometimes referred to as *paramhamsa* (supreme *hamsa*), implying that they have the ability to separate the good from the bad. The *hamsa* is also revered in Buddhism as a symbol of wisdom. There is a controversy over which bird is referred to as ‘*hamsa*’ in the epics. Most scholars believe it to be a swan as it flies high, remains alone, is graceful and pure white-coloured, just like its description in the books. Some scholars, however, believe that since the swan is rarely found in India, *hamsa* must refer to the goose which is quite common.



The Garuda – kite or eagle – has been called the ‘chief of feathered creatures’. It is the vehicle of Vishnu. Garuda’s mother Vinata is considered the mother of all birds. She was tricked into becoming the slave of Kadru, the mother of the *nagas*. Due to this, birds and serpents have an everlasting enmity. The *nagas* promised to release Vinata in exchange for *amrita*

(nectar of immortality). Garuda stole it from Indra, but later helped Indra get the *amrita* back after he had delivered it to the serpents and freed his mother. Finding the *amrita* gone, the serpents licked the *darbha* grass on which it had been kept. Their tongues got forked due to the sharp edges of the grass. The Garuda is a giant bird. Its name means ‘devourer’ and it scares all beings as it falls out of the sky with its claws extended. The flapping of its huge wings stirs even the seas.

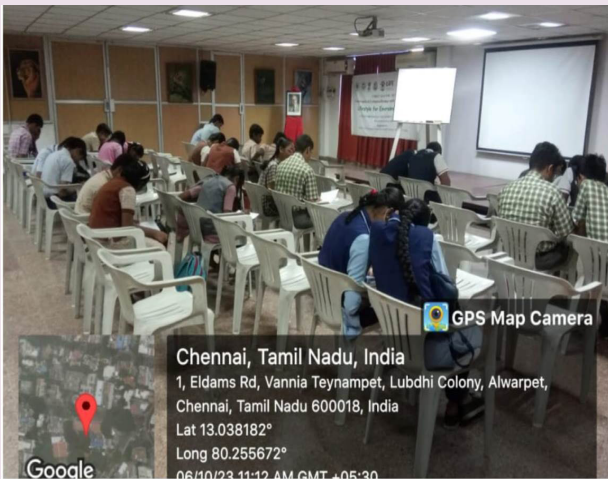
Mayura or peacock is believed to have been created from the feathers of Garuda. It is the vehicle of Kartikeya. It is considered a symbol of purity and beauty. Sri Krishna used to adorn his headband with peacock feathers. Peacock feathers are considered to have a purifying influence, and are used to dust idols or kept in homes. It is believed that the peacock did not have beautiful feathers at first. During a war between Indra and Ravana, the bird helped Indra by allowing him to fight from behind its feathers. Thus, a grateful Indra gave beautiful colours to the peacock feathers. Peacocks have been associated with royalty. Mughal emperor Shah Jahan got a peacock throne made for himself. Peacocks originated in India, and are now the country’s national bird.

Source: The New Indian Express Chennai, 17/12/2023, Supplement – pg.9.

In-focus

WILDLIFE WEEK CELEBRATIONS

CPREEC EIACP PC – RP, Chennai celebrated Wildlife Week on October 6, 2023 by conducting an Inter School Quiz Competition for city school students. A total of 28 students and 15 teachers from 14 schools participated in the quiz competition.



CPREEC EIACP PC – RP, Chennai celebrated Wildlife Week on October 7, 2023 by conducting a drawing competition and wildlife photography exhibition for school students at Gudalur. A total of 49 students from 15 schools participated in the drawing competition; more than 2000 students witnessed the photography exhibition.

வன உயிரின வாரத்தையொட்டி பள்ளி மாணவர்களுக்கு ஓவியப்போட்டி



வன உயிரின வாரத்தையொட்டி கூடலூர் அரசு மேல்நிலைப் பள்ளியில் மாணவர்களுக்கு ஓவியப்போட்டி நடைபெற்றது.

கூடலூர், அக்.8: உலக வன உயிரின வாரத்தையொட்டி சிபிஆர் சுற்றுச்சூழல் கல்வி மையம், கூடலூர் கல்வி மாவட்ட தேசிய பசுமை படை மற்றும் மாவட்ட சுற்றுச்சூழல் மன்றங்கள் ஒருங்கிணைந்து கூடலூர் அரசு மேல்நிலைப் பள்ளியில் 6 மூலக் கல்வி மாணவ மாணவிகளுக்கு காண ஒவியப் போட்டியை நடத்தியது.



கூடலூர் பாத்திமா பெண்கள் மேல்நிலைப் பள்ளியில் நடைபெற்ற புகைப்பட கண்காட்சியை காண வந்த பள்ளி மாணவிகளிடம் விளக்கம் அளிக்கப்பட்டது.

இதில் கூடலூர் கல்வி மாவட்டத்திற்கு உட்பட்ட 15 பள்ளிகளை சேர்ந்த 49 மாணவ மாணவியர் கலந்து கொண்டனர். விலங்குகளை பாதுகாப்போம், விலங்குகளுக்கு எவ்வாறு பாதிப்புகள் ஏற்படுகிறது என்ற தலைப்பில் ஓவிய போட்டிகள் நடந்தது. மாணவர்கள் வரைந்த ஓவியங்கள் தேர்வு செய்யப்பட்டு சிறந்த ஓவியங்களுக்கான பரிசுகள் வழங்கப்பட்ட உள்ளது. இதே போல் கூடலூர்

பாத்திமா பெண்கள் மேல்நிலைப் பள்ளியில் புகைப்பட கண்காட்சியும் நடத்தப்பட்டது. புகைப்படக் கலைஞர்கள் மதிமாறன் மற்றும் அருந்தவ செல்வன் ஆகியோரின் இயற்கை காட்சிகள், பறவைகள், பழங்குடியின மக்களின் கலாசாரங்கள் அடங்கிய புகைப்படங்கள் காட்சிக்கு வைக்கப்பட்டிருந்தது. இந்த புகைப்படக் கண்காட்சியை ஏராள்

மாண பள்ளி மாணவ மாணவியர்கள் கண்டு ரசித்தனர். ஓவியப்போட்டிகள் மற்றும் புகைப்பட கண்காட்சியை கூடலூர் வேலி ரோட்டரி சங்க தலைவர் ஜான் சன் துவக்கி வைத்தார். பசுமைப்படை ஒருங்கிணைப்பாளர் ராபர்ட் முன்னிலை வகித்தார். சிபிஆர் சுற்றுச்சூழல் கல்விமைய கள அலுவலர் குமாரசுவாமி நிகழ்ச்சிக்கான ஏற்பாடுகளை செய்திருந்தார்.

Press clipping on drawing competition and wildlife photography exhibition held at Gudalur, Ooty, Dinakaran Tamil Newspaper, Coimbatore Edition October 08, 2023

Mission LiFE Awareness Programme – October 13, 2023

CPREEC EIACP PC–RP, Chennai conducted LiFE Mission Awareness Programme on the theme Save Energy, Save Water & Avoid Single Use Plastics at Government Adi Dravidar Welfare High School, Pulianthope, Chennai on 13/10/2023. A total of 112 students and 5 teachers participated and took the pledge on Mission LiFE.



Mission LiFE Awareness Programme – October 18, 2023

CPREEC EIACP PC–RP, Chennai conducted LiFE Mission Awareness Programme on the theme Save Energy, Save Water & Avoid Single Use Plastics at Dr. MGR Home & Higher Secondary School for the Speech and Hearing Impaired, Ramapuram, Chennai on 18/10/2023. 75 students and 6 teachers participated and took the pledge on Mission LiFE.



Mission LiFE Awareness Programme – November 14, 2023

CPREEC EIACP PC–RP, Chennai conducted LiFE Mission Awareness Programme on the theme Save Energy, Save Water & Avoid Single Use Plastics at Rani Meyyammai Girls Higher Secondary School, Raja Annamalai Puram, Chennai – 600028 on 14/11/2023. 83 students and 3 teachers participated and took the pledge on Mission LiFE.



Mission LiFE Awareness Programme – November 17, 2023

CPREEC EIACP PC–RP, Chennai conducted LiFE Mission Awareness Programme on the theme Save Energy, Save Water & Avoid Single Use Plastics at Lady Sivaswamy Ayyar Girls’ Higher Secondary School, Mylapore, Chennai – 600004 on 17/11/2023. 128 students and 4 teachers participated and took the pledge on Mission LiFE.



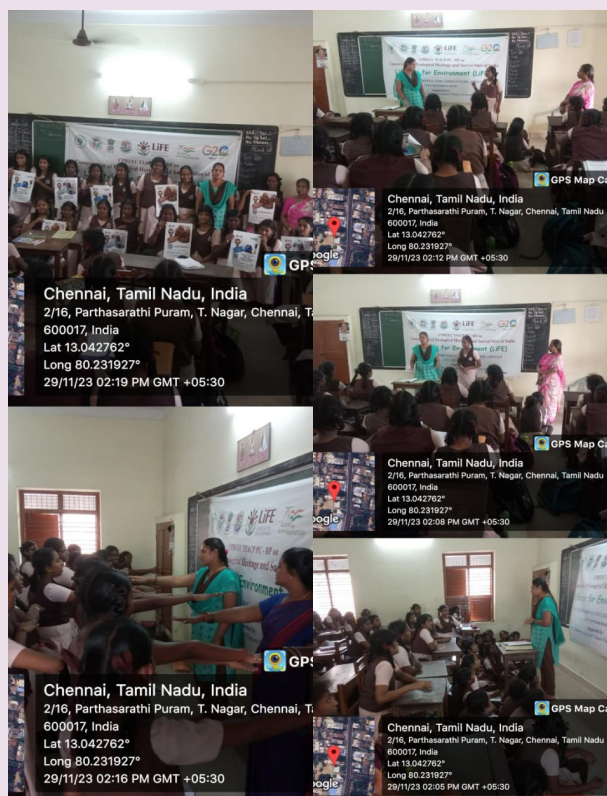
Mission LiFE Awareness Programme – November 18, 2023

CPREEC EIACP PC–RP, Chennai conducted LiFE Mission Awareness Programme on the theme Save Energy, Save Water & Avoid Single Use Plastics at Jaigopal Garodia Government Higher Secondary School, Tiruvottiyur, Chennai – 600019 on 18/11/2023. 243 students and 8 teachers participated and took the pledge on Mission LiFE.



Mission LiFE Awareness Programme – November 29, 2023

CPREEC EIACP PC–RP, Chennai conducted LiFE Mission Awareness Programme on the theme Save Energy & Save Water at Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Vidyalaya Girls' Higher Secondary School, Usman Road, T Nagar, Chennai - 600017 on 29/11/2023. 142 students and 4 teachers participated and took the pledge on Mission LiFE.



**CPREEC – EIACP PC Resource Partner on
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a
Happy New Year
2024**



Photo credit: M. Kumaravelu, CPREEC, Ooty Field Office



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Abstracts of Recent Publications

❖ **Rajangam, K., and Rajani, M.B. (2017).** “Applications of geospatial technology in the management of cultural heritage sites – potentials and challenges for the Indian region”, *Current Science*, Vol. 113 (10), pp. 1948-1960.

Cultural heritage management can be defined as all the processes in understanding (through knowing and identifying), conserving and managing various expressions of cultural heritage. These expressions could be intangible like traditional skills, crafts, folklore, rituals, etc. or tangible like objects or places. Objects including artefacts, murals and sculptures are defined as movable cultural property, while structures, monuments, precincts, waterbodies and canals are called sites and also termed as immovable cultural property. Emerging technologies and scientific developments are increasingly being used in the management of these different expressions of cultural heritage. For example, heritage object databases that link source, provenance and current location are proving useful in museum contexts, predictive technologies are being used to fill in partially missing sections of murals / inscriptions or aid virtual reconstruction of object remains or even something as basic as mapping indigenous processional routes. However, the expression of cultural heritage as immovable cultural property or heritage sites appears to render itself most to analysis through various techniques available under the large umbrella of geospatial

technology. This is because of the nature of such heritage – structures are necessarily built in particular geographical and cultural settings, presumably based on appropriate site selection in order to suitably locate them and their components, and initially planned layout and subsequent additions would have a spatial spread – these factors combined with the locational permanence of the structures relative to movable property make built heritage well-disposed for geospatial analysis. This review article therefore explores the use and applicability of geospatial technology for the management of built cultural heritage, including its context and environment.

Keywords: *Cultural heritage management; Geospatial technology; Heritage practice; Potentials and challenges.*

❖ **Mani, N., Rai, R.K., Das, S., Bhatta, L.D., Kotru, R., Khadayat, M.S., Rawal, R.S., and Negi, G.C.S. (2018).** “Valuing cultural services of the Kailash sacred landscape for sustainable management”, *Sustainability*, Vol. 10 (10), pp. 1-19.

Hindu Kush Himalaya is home to many cultural and religious sites. The literature on the valuation of cultural sites in the mountain terrains is thin. Hence, their development and sustainability are often ignored. Using primary survey data from three different sites in the Kailash Sacred Landscape of India and Nepal, the cultural value of religious sites to the

visitors and households living in the surrounding areas was estimated using a modified travel cost method. As visitors travel by foot and offer donations at the religious sites, the estimations account for these aspects in travel cost calculations. For the sample sites, the per year average use value of cultural services was estimated to be USD 2.9 million. Excluding the use value to the outside visitors, the annual estimated use value of cultural services to the approximately 200,000 households of the entire KSL area, which covers 31,252 Km², is over USD 22.6 million, which is over 7% and 15% of the per capita income of Indian and Nepali households, respectively, indicating the importance of the natural-cultural environments in rural livelihoods. The estimated values will help planners manage these cultural sites sustainably for improving the livelihoods of the people living in the area.

Keywords: *Cultural sites; Sustainability; Hindu Kush Himalayas; Religious services, Travel cost method, Valuation of ecosystem services.*

❖ **Mir, A., Vyas, V., Shrivastava, P., Bhawsar, A., and Bhat, M.A. (2018).** “**Ecological and ethnomedicinal values of sacred plants in some major temples of Bhopal, India**”, *International Journal of Current Microbiology and Applied Sciences*, Vol. 7 (01), pp. 1630-1637. The present research paper describes the sacred plants found in the vicinity of five major temples of Bhopal, India. In addition,

the ethnomedicinal and ecological values of these plants were also reported. The information was obtained from priests and knowledgeable local people about the sacred value of plants associated with religious rituals. A total of 13 sacred plants species belonging to 10 families were identified during the survey. The study concludes that propagation of sacred plants contributes to the conservation of floral diversity. Thus, religious activities associated with sacred plants boosts up the protection and maintenance of the biodiversity.

Keywords: *Sacred plants; Ethnomedicinal; Ecological; Conservation.*

❖ **Ballullaya, U.P., Reshmi, K.S., Rajesh, T.P., Manoj, K, Lowman, M., and Sinu, P.A. (2019).** “**Stakeholder motivation for the conservation of sacred groves in south India: An analysis of environmental perceptions of rural and urban neighbourhood communities**”, *Land Use Policy*, Vol. 89. 104213.

Sacred Groves (SGs) of South India are the local communities’ self-enforced spiritual institutions, which contain natural forests and swamps. Thus, the communities’ faith in traditional rituals and local deities are important for their existence. SGs preserve cultural practices of ethnic communities and conserve biodiversity. Although most of these groves can be found in rural areas, rapid urban annexation is changing their landscapes. We hypothesise that the landscape type (rural versus urban) and the deity type of the SGs among other factors might affect the

communities' spiritual and environmental perceptions of SGs. This study was conducted in rural highlands of the Western Ghats in Kodagu and adjoining urban lowlands in Kasaragod. We found that the urban communities valued SGs, not only for their spiritual importance but also for their environmental merits. Both urban and rural communities were cautious enough not to access or abuse the SGs. This behaviour also depended on the deity that was housed in the SG. SGs that housed highly revered deities (eg. *naga*) were seldom abused. The religious adherence was prominent especially in rural communities, so much so that the habitat

quality of the SGs could be predicted based on the deity that was worshipped there. Apart from these spiritual influences, SGs are influenced by economic (coffee industry in Kodagu) and societal pressures. Sanskritization of deities or change in faith, construction of temples, and cultural importance of SGs, the policies governing them is necessary to ensure that SGs stay intact.

Keywords: *Sacred forests; Bio-cultural conservation; Cultural forest; Cultural diversity; Deity; Environmental perception; Environmental policy; Conservation; Community-conserved area; Religion.*



