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ENVIS Newsletter



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

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Photo credit: <http://divyadarisanams.blogspot.com/2011/12/margazhi-masam-month-of-bhakti-and.html>

In this issue

❖ From the ENVIS Desk	02
❖ Traditional Significance of Margazhi Month	03
❖ News - Kanchipuram: The City of a Thousand Temples	10
❖ In-focus	15
❖ Abstracts of Recent Publications	18

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From the ENVIS Desk...

The ENVIS Centre at CPREEC was established in April 2002 by the **Environmental Information System (ENVIS) of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC)**, Government of India and assigned the responsibility for being the focal point 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 “**Traditional Significance of Margazhi Month**”. The Tamil month of Margazhi (starts from mid-December to mid-January) is a very auspicious month for the people of India, especially South India. Several important Hindu festivals occur during this period, which are observed with great fervor by devotees. The month is considered sacred, not only by Humans, but also by the Devas (celestial beings). The significance of Margazhi month is elaborated in great detail by Lord Krishna in what is regarded as the holiest Indian text, “The Bhagavad Gita”. The month is equated to Lord Krishna himself and the relevance this has on the Indian way of life is unique. Human beings are

believed to be endowed with special powers during the course of this month; this presents a great opportunity to perform religious rituals and other ceremonies. Kacheris (Classical Music Concerts) and music festivals take place all over South India and people take part in these festivities with great gusto and enthusiasm. There are several environmental significances throughout this month – formation of rain clouds for the next year, calculation of windy and rainy days by farmers for sowing their crops and cool climate throughout the country. The people of North India welcome the spring season with the ‘Pausha’ month.

CPREEC ENVIS Centre has already published books about the “Ecological Traditions” of fifteen (15) states of India, viz., Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, 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 Tamilnadu.

The Centre has also documented sacred groves/forests (10,377), sacred gardens (60), sacred plants (90), sacred animals (57), sacred rivers (25), sacred water bodies (365), sacred mountains (176), sacred cities/sites (219), sacred seeds (10), sacred caves (209) and sacred pilgrimages (37), traditional ecological knowledge (44) and UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India (34) 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.cpreecenvis.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

TRADITIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF MARGAZHI MONTH

by Dr. G. Srinivasan *

There are twelve months in the Tamil Calendar, followed by people of Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry and in parts of Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore and Mauritius. The calendar follows a 60-year cycle, in which each year has an individual name. The Tamil calendar also follows the Hindu solar calendar, which is followed in many states of India.

One of the twelve months is Margazhi or Agrahayana, the ninth month of the Tamil calendar. Like the month of Bhadra or Purattasi, Margazhi is also auspicious for Hindus. This is equivalent to the 'Dhanu' month of Malayalam, 'Margasira' in Sanskrit, 'Phussa' in Pali, 'Pyatho' in Burmese, 'Bos' in Khmer, 'Dhuruthu' in Sinhalese and 'Putsa' in Thai. In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna says that of the months he is Margazhi. In Tamil Nadu and other south Indian states, apart from the month of Aadi, in Margazhi also, house-warming ceremonies, marriage betrothals or marriage functions are avoided because, the month of 'Aadi' belongs to Amman / Devi / Shakti and the month of 'Margazhi' belongs to Lord Vishnu and it is believed that worshipping the deity is the most important duty. On the contrary, most of the marriages and other important functions are held in Gujarat, in the Pausha month (that starts on December 22). This is because the Hindu calendar begins on March 21 or 22 and ends on February 20 as Chaitra month and Phalgun month respectively (religionworld.

in). There is a story about Ratri Devi and Lord Vishnu that goes like this: Once, on the eve of Dakshinayana, the celestials assembled on Mountain Meru and prayed for His permission to go to their respective abodes as 'night' was approaching. At that time, Ratri Devi / the patron deity of night pleaded with the Lord that everyone considered Dhakshinayana as a bad / inauspicious time and they avoided doing good things during this time and this act made her despised. Ratri Devi was ready for a penance to obtain his grace. Lord Vishnu blessed her with the four months – Kartika (Karthigai), Ashwini (Aippasi), Bhadrapada (Purattasi) and Shravana (Aavani) – being the dearest to him. All the activities that are performed with utmost piety will yield rich benefits. By this, Lord Vishnu blessed Ratri Devi.

Since worshipping the Lord is considered most important, any other functions are seldom undertaken in this month. There is a general belief that during this month, it is good being outdoors as much and as early as possible as the ozone layer is at its height (although the scientific fact is that the ozone layer does not vary with altitude and not by any specific month). Also all these activities at the dawn may rouse the spiritual power of an individual. Some of the significances of Margazhi include early morning wake-up, circumambulating around the temples, procession of temple chariots and palanquin through the 'Maada Veethi' (streets)

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by chanting the shlokas of Lord Vishnu, singing the hymns as *Bajanai* accompanied by harmonium, *jalra*, *chapplakattai* and mridangam. The 48-days fasting and pilgrimage to Sabarimala is undertaken during the 'Karthikai-Margazhi' months. Women used to draw beautiful and colorful 'kolams' at their doorsteps in which, ashgourd / pumpkin flower is kept over the balls of cow dung in the middle of those kolams; and the annual music season all over Tamil Nadu, especially in Chennai. On the other hand, during a forty days period starting from December 21 to January 29 called 'Chillai Kalan', Kashmiri people do not venture out due to sub zero temperature and people resort to use of their traditional dress – 'pheran' and traditional firing pot – 'kanger'.

Paush Month in North India

Pausha month is the Brahma Muhurta of the celestials. It comes before dawn and when the Devas wake up and begin their day. Any pujas and rituals during this period provide quick benefits (jothishi.com). Lord Krishna is considered as 'Margashirsha' month because of its cool weather. The New Moon day of Pausha month is ideal for performing Shraddha for ancestors. Performing shradh and tarpan and offering til and pinda is considered very beneficial. This month is also called 'Sowbhagya Lakshmi Masa'. Pausha Navratri or Shakambari Navratri begins on 'Banada Ashtami' day, the eighth day of the Shukla paksha. Paush Purnima or the full moon day marks the beginning of 'Magha' month; also there is a belief that a bath at the 'Triveni Sangam' or 'Dashashwamedha Ghat' on this day assures Moksha. 'Monjaher' in Kashmiri means the month of Margashirsha; 'Taeher' means yellow cooked rice mixed with mustard. It is customary for Kashmiris to cook such rice on all auspicious days and offer it to their deity and distribute it among neighbors, friends and relatives. In the beginning of the

Pausha month, such rice is first offered to the 'Griha Devta' and 'Grama Devta' and then distributed (ikashmir.net).

Most of the activities in Paush month in North India are almost similar, In Assam, the celebrations of 'Magh Bihu' starts on the last day of the month of 'Pooh' in the Assamese calendar and the celebrations continue for a week (indiatoday.in). Every year, 'Raas Mela' is celebrated in honor of Lord Krishna in Manipur and Tripura; a procession called, 'Raas Yatra' that depicts the deeds and various phases of Lord Krishna's life is the main attraction during this festival (dhalai.nic.in). Siang River festival (Yomgo River festival) is one of the main attraction during the December – January in Arunachal Pradesh in which traditional boat races, elephant race, river rafting, food festivals and cultural shows are very common; another one 'Pangsau Pass Winter Festival' (initiated in 2007) in which winter is celebrated in Nampong and people of Arunachal Pradesh perform their folk dances and folk songs. In Meghalaya, 'Wangala Festival' is observed in the months of September and December across Garo Hills. In Nagaland, 'Tsukheneye' festival (harvest festival) is observed in the second week of January and in some cases, in the March. The festival of 'Lossong' is celebrated in December by Lepchas and Bhutias in Sikkim; Tamu Lochar is one of the traditional festivals of Gurung Community of Sikkim, Darjeeling and in parts of Nepal, celebrated on every 15th Poush of the Nepali calendar. 'Bakula Amabasya', 'Dhanu Yatra' and 'Samba Dasami' are some of the unique rituals of Orissa during December – January period. 'Pawl Kut' festival in Mizoram is typically celebrated in December for two days; this is observed to commemorate a famine followed by bumper harvest during the years 1450 – 1700 AD (as a thanksgiving to the Almighty); a ritual 'Chawngnawt' is observed, in which mother and children are made to sit on a

memorial platform and the mother feeds the children in Pawl Kut (Lalthangliana, 2018). Dattatreya Jayanthi / Datta Jayanti is a festival common in Maharashtra in December / January. It is celebrated on the full moon day of Margashirsha; it signifies a combined form of the trinity – Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.

Other festivals include ‘Anvadhan’ and ‘Ishti’, Poush Mela in Shantiniketan, Ganga Gangasagar, Konark Dance festival, Kurukshetra festival (Gita Jayanti, birthday of Srimad Bhagavad Gita), Annapurna Jayanti, Bhairavi Jayanti, ‘Pachmarhi Utsav’, ‘Poush Parban’, ‘Tusu’ or ‘Makar’, ‘Bakula Amabasya’, ‘Dhanu Yatra’, ‘Samba Dasami’, ‘Bhoogay’ (Sankat Chauth), Kalika Fair (Bungkhal Mela), Uttarayani Mela etc.



Dattatreya Jayanthi

(Source: outlookindia.com, culturetrip.com, aninews.com, northeasttoday.in, swadeshi.com and nenow.com, The Hindu)

Margazhi in South India

Pushya masam (Margazhi) is an important lunar month in Kannada and Telugu calendar. Full moon day falling on the Pushya star in this month is an indicator of Pushya yoga. Usually the month falls between Margasira (ruling deity – Keshava) and Magha (ruling deity – Madhava). Bharatha, brother of Rama was born in this period. Karthika Month celebrations end with devotees observing ‘Poli Swargam’ in Andhra Pradesh. There is a belief that taking a dip in River Krishna during the Karthika Masam cleanses one of sins and ends the cycle of reincarnation. Also there is a belief that one who fast on the 12th day of the month and worships Lord Vishnu will be bestowed with the fruits of Vajapeya sacrifice (hindu-blog.com). Women perform special pujas as a part of the annual ‘Margasiramasam’ in many temples in Andhra Pradesh. In Karnataka, a unique folk art called ‘Kamsale’ is performed by devotees of Mahadeshwara of ‘Male Mahadeshwara Betta’ (Hills) in interior areas during Margazhi. This is performed apart from usual festivals of Diwali, Shivaratri and Ugadi. ‘Godachi Fair’ is a festival in the month of Kartik / Margazhi in Belgaum; a feast is organized in the honor of Veerabhadraswamy, the chief god in Veerabhadra temple (tourmyindia.com). Lumbini Festival (three days Buddhist festival) and Visakha Utsav (organized by Government of Andhra Pradesh) also falls in December (traveltriangle.com). An annual event – ‘Dyamavva Durgavva Jatra Mahotsav’ – is organized by devotees in Dharwad in December in which colors are sprayed over each other.

In Kerala, ‘Kuchela Dinam’ is an annual festival celebrated on the first Wednesday of the Dhanu month. Kuchela (also, Sudama), the childhood friend of Lord Krishna offered beaten rice (aval) to Krishna despite his poverty, following which he became wealthy because of the Lord’s blessings. Guruvayur temple observes Kuchela Dinam; Devotees offer ‘aval nivedyam’ prepared by grated coconut, jaggery, ghee, dried ginger

and cumin in addition to the beaten rice. Thiruvathira star in the month of Dhanu is regarded as the birthday of Lord Shiva. A legend says that Goddess Parvathi could not influence the mind of Lord Shiva and took the help of Kamadeva who changed mindset of Lord Shiva; furious Lord Shiva burned down Kamadeva into ashes and then accepted Parvathi as his partner. As a belief, this happened on the Thiruvathira star of Dhanu and hence it is a ritual where women will avoid rice food completely on this day and have only fruits. Thiruvathira is an exclusive women's festival and they spend the whole day by 'Thiruvathira Kali' / 'Thiruvathira Pattu' / 'Kaikottikali' / 'Pathirapoochoodal' – singing and dancing for devotional songs (keralamythology.blogspot.com). In central Kerala, 'Thiruvathira Puzhukku' is prepared and offered for Lord Shiva before breaking the fast. This is almost similar to the Thiruvadhira Kali or porridge prepared in Tamil Nadu.

Environmental impact

During Margazhi (usually from 16th December to 13th January), North East monsoon almost withdraws and there is very little or almost no rain in Tamil Nadu. Temperature is as low as 18° C in the early mornings in some of the coastal districts and almost 15 - 18° C in southern and western districts. There is a belief that the Sun takes nearly 14 days to cross the star 'Purvashadha' during the transit of 'Dhanu' (also called Margazhi month). Usually nimbus or the rain-bringing clouds move towards south. These 14 days are called 'Gerpottam' days in Tamil (we can notice this as '*gerpotta arambam*' and '*gerpota nivarthi*' in Tamil daily-sheet calendars in late December and early January). The day when the rain conceives is compared with a woman's ten months of pregnancy. Based on this '*gerpottam*', farmers sow their seeds in their field (tamil.asianetnews.com). This extends

approximately from December 28 to January 12 the next year. Farmers calculate these days from the new moon day of Margazhi and the next 14 days for observation of very mild to no drizzle in their locality; from this they assume that clouds have formed well in their region and estimate the quantum of rain – be it south west monsoon or north east monsoon – in the next year.

But, if there is heavy to very heavy rainfall or extremely hot days or storms in Margazhi, it can be assumed that the conceived clouds have dissipated and the expected rainfall after nine months would be meager to very low. However, due to anthropogenic environmental degradation there are extreme climatic events in the past decade – either prolonged dry spell in the months 'Vaikasi' to 'Avani' or deluge in the months of Aippasi to Margazhi.

Festivals of Margazhi in Tamil Nadu

As per Vaishnavite sect belief, Lord Vishnu is considered to be the 12 Tamil months and hence the 12 'Thirumann' smears that they apply all over the body during rituals. Hence, the 'Adidevta' for this month is Lord Kesava; color preferred for Margazhi is gold; the direction is east; weapon is four chakra and the 'pundrasthanam' ('Thirumann Kaapu') is on forehead (anudhinam.org). The whole month is considered as 'Brahma Muhurtham' time (04:00 a.m. to 06:00 a.m.). Sacred hymns – Thiruppaavai (written by Andal) and Thiruvembaavai (written by Manikkavasagar) are sung in this month. There are numerous festivals in the month of Margazhi; nights are longer than days. Uttarayana Punya kalam, starts on winter solstice falls in this month (hindusphere.com). Special poojas are performed in all the temples during this month.



<http://divyadarisanams.blogspot.com/2011/12/margazhi-masam-month-of-bhakti-and.html>

i. **Vaikunta Ekadashi:** It is dedicated to Lord Vishnu and many used to fast on this day and perform pujas and other rituals to Lord Vishnu. The 21 days – celebration is divided into two: the first ten days as ‘Pagal Pathu’ and the second ten days is ‘Iraa Pathu’ and the eleventh day is ‘Vaikunta Ekadesi’. From the day of ‘Prathipada’ to ‘Dhashami’, the rituals take place during the day time / Pagal Pathu (also known as ‘Adhyayanotsavam’) and the devotees sing hymns of all the Azhwars. The hymns that are sung during the late evenings are ‘Iraa Pathu’. The Vaikunta Ekadesi event is usually held at early morning 04:00 a.m. when the ‘sorga vasal’ or the gateway of heaven is opened for worship for devotees and is believed to get the entry of heaven at that time. Devotees who fast would stay awake the whole night and listen to certain songs, kathakalatchepam (narrative of stories of Lord Vishnu as stories and songs) and ‘naama smaranam’ (reciting various names of the Lord). Nowadays many tend to watch films (devotional films), programmes to be awake throughout the night.

Devout people who fast on vaikunta ekadashi continue their fast till the next noon – Dwadasi and break their fast by having gooseberries and greens of *Sesbania grandiflora* (Agathi keerai in Tamil). These two have the medicinal property to cool down the high amount of acid and gas secreted due to the previous day’s fast. In Padma Purana, it is mentioned that the Lord descended on earth to save people who were engulfed in the materialistic pleasures. In early days, Ekadashi Vrata is carried out without drinking even a drop of water. This type of vrata is believed to cleanse both the body and mind (prompttravels.com). In general, ‘*langanam – parama aushadham*’.

ii. **Andal’s Thiruppaavai:** Thiruppaavai is a very important set of hymns written by ‘Kodhai’ or ‘Andal’. Periyalvar, who himself is an Alvar is the father of Andal. Andal composed pasurams – 30 songs on the month of Margazhi and Nachiyar Thirumozhi. Andal penance and performed ‘Pavai Nonbu’ to marry Lord Vishnu. There is a general belief that unmarried women

may get a good partner if they take 'pavai nonbu' and chant thiruppaavai. Koodaravalli is another important occasion that is a part of 'pavai nonbu'. In certain schools, Thiruppaavai is also sung during the Morning Prayer in this month to impart the goodness of Hinduism and Indian culture.

iii. **Thiruvembaavai:** This was written by Manikkavasagar as a part of Thiruvasagam and the eighth book of the Thirumurai, equivalent to Thiruppaavai. It is chanted by Saivaites. It consists of twenty stanzas devoted to Lord Shiva. In ancient days, unmarried women light lamps in the early mornings of Margazhi and sing songs in the praise of Lord Shiva. It is believed to bring prosperity and good husband for them. Followed by the 20 stanzas are the 10 songs of *Thiruppalliyezhuchi*.

iv. **Ardhra Dharshan:** It is generally called 'Thiruvadhirai Viratham' and occurs on the day with 'Ardhra' star. Worshipping Lord Nataraja, who is in the dancing posture, is very auspicious. Ardhra Darshan in Chidambaram Nataraja Temple marks the conclusion of Margazhi Brahmotsavam. There is a legend that Lord Shiva performed the cosmic dance for his devotees – Adi Shesha and Vyagraapaadar. The Ananda Thandavam or the cosmic dance is said to symbolize the fine divine acts (Pancha Krityas) of creation, sustenance, dissolution, concealment and bestowment of grace (hindu-blog.com). Recipe made of beaten rice, jaggery, green lentils, ghee along with cardamom is prepared as Thiruvadhirai Kali (balls) and gravy made of seven vegetables and grated coconut is offered for the Lord on this day. In Chidambaram, Margazhi festival is celebrated traditionally with hoisting of temple flag, colorful processions of 'Pancha Murthy' and Lord Natarajar in the grand temple chariot throughout the month.

v. **Hanumath Jayanthi:** In Tamil Nadu, Hanumath Jayanthi is celebrated on the day of 'Moola' star. In Karnataka, Hanumath Jayanthi

is observed on 'Shukla Paksha' 'Trayodashi' day in the Margashirha month. On this day, devotees perform certain poojas and worship Lord Hanuman and even fast on this day. In Northern parts of India, it is observed on the full moon day of the 'Chaitra' month and in southern regions, it is celebrated on the 10th day of Vaisakh month; it is celebrated in commemoration of the day when Lord Hanuman met Lord Ram. In Maharashtra, it is celebrated on Chaitra Purnima (timesofindia.indiatimes.com).

Also, Margazhi is the best month for annual music season, dance and drama. The last day of the month is celebrated as Bhogi, the day home is cleaned, white-washed to welcome Uttarayana and the Tamil month of Thai with Makara Sankranthi / Pongal. This Bhogi is similar to Lohri in North India. In Chennai, apart from all these festivities, Margazhi is dotted with a number of music and dance programmes, which is simply called 'December Margazhi season'. Even though these art programmes are common in other parts of Tamil Nadu, there is exclusive fan-following for Chennai's Margazhi season through a number of 'Sabha' in Chennai. People from all over the world come to Chennai to attend the Music and Dance programmes in various Music Academies/Sabhas.

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— News —

KANCHIPURAM: THE CITY OF A THOUSAND TEMPLES

by Dr. Nanditha Krishna*

Why Kanchipuram deserves World Heritage status



Kailasanatha Temple, Kanchipuram (Photo: Alamy)

NAGARESHU KANCHI is the city of cities, said the greatest of poets, Kalidasa. But long before Kalidasa, Kanchi was known as the greatest city of south India, and is counted as one of the seven sacred cities of Hinduism, which include Ayodhya, Mathura, Gaya, Kasi, Kanchi, Avanti and Dwaraka. Death in any of these cities guarantees instant *moksha*, or liberation of the soul. Kanchi was a Shakti *peetha* and the confluence of every religious movement in India: Shaiva, Vaishnava, Buddhist, Jain, Shakta and Kaumara. Some of the greatest saints lived in or visited Kanchi. It was an ancient ghatika or university where princes and students from all over India came to study. The foundation and development of south Indian art and architecture were laid in Kanchi.

Patanjali refers to the *Kanchipuraka*, or one who is from Kanchi, in 200 BCE. The earliest Tamil reference to Kanchi is in the

Tamil Sangam work *Perumpanarruppada*, which describes it as a beautiful walled city. *Ahananuru* calls it the crown jewel of Tondaimandalam (northern Tamil Nadu), ruled by the Tirayans, an ancient seafaring people. The greatest ruler was IlanTirayan (3rd-4th century CE), and the Tirayaneri, one of the earliest manmade lakes built by him in Kanchi, is still in use. There are several explanations for the name Kanchi, but the most probable is its derivation from the *kanchi* tree, since naming places after plants and animals was very popular in south India. The first time we come across the word *Damila*, from which is derived Tamil, is in '*Avantisundarikatha*' by Dandin, who lived in the court of Simhavishnu Pallava in Kanchi in the 8th century, and in an Ikshvaku inscription at Nagarjunakonda describing Tondaimandalam as *Damila* country. Kanchi was probably the southern end of Ashoka's empire. Ashoka mentions the Cholas, Pandyas and Cheras, but

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none of them ruled Kanchi. The first Tamil Brahmi inscription is found at Mamandur in Kanchi. Parameshvaravarman Pallava refers to an ancient king of Kanchi as Ashokavarman, identified as Ashoka by KA Nilakanta Sastri, while Xuanzang visited the city in the 7th-8th century to see the 100 ft-tall stupa built here by the same king. Several images of the Buddha - one 7 feet high - and Bodhisattvas have been found in and around the temple of Kamakshi, the original 'village' Goddess of Kanchi, now the tutelary deity of the city. Satavahana coins reveal their existence in Kanchi, while the Kadambas of Karnataka ruled the region between 345 and 525 CE. But the stupa is gone and, while traces of Jina Kanchi and Tamil Jains remain, Buddhism has disappeared totally.

Kanchi is a veritable textbook of south Indian art history. The earliest images precede the Pallavas: the reclining Narayana of the Thiruvekka temple, the 30-ft high Trivikrama of the Ulagalanda Perumal temple and the 25-ft tall Pandava Dhootha Perumal temple of Padagam are three enormous images made of stucco. The original image of Varadaraja Perumal was made of wood from the fig tree (*athivaradar*), but was later replaced in the Vijayanagara period by stone. The fig tree image is still preserved in the temple tank and taken out once in 40 years. But it was under the Pallavas that Kanchi reached its artistic zenith. Sixty-eight kilometres from Kanchi is the former port of Mamallapuram, where the first cave temples were carved out of rock and where Chinese and Roman coins of the 4th century were found. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The Kailasanatha temple, along with the shore temples of Mamallapuram, were the first structural temples built in south India by Rajasimha Pallava in the 8th century CE, with exquisite sculptures of Shiva as Dakshina murti, Lingodbhava, Bhikshatanar, Nataraja, Urdhva Tandava, Tripurantaka and Harihara.



Gopurams and vimanas of the Kamakshi Temple

Surrounding the open circumambulatory passage is a wall lined with 58 small shrines of Somaskanda, each shrine capped by an octagonal *vimana*. These shrines are also studded with beautiful sculptures in relief of various forms of Shiva, while shrines for Brahma and Vishnu are placed on either side of the central shrine of Shiva, forming a trinity. Nataraja appears for the first time in Pallava art. We can also see the earliest traces of exquisite Pallava painting in this temple, reminiscent of the Ajanta style, with scenes of Shiva, Parvati and their son, Skanda. It is a temple of several firsts: the first to be constructed as per the *agamas*, with a four-storeyed Dravida *vimana*, the first *gopuram* in a temple complex. Other Pallava temples include the Airavataneshvara with its Nagara *vimana*, Mukteshvara and Matangeshvara with Vesara *vimanas*, and the Piravatana and Valishvara temples with octagonal Dravida *vimanas*. They are all excellent examples of Pallava art and architecture.

The Pallava period was contemporaneous with the Tamil Bhakti movement and several Nayanmaars (Shaiva saints) and Alvars (Vaishnava saints) have sung in praise of these and several other temples of Kanchi. Poygai Alvar was born here and the founder of the Vaishnava movement, Ramanujacharya, was also born here in the 10th century, as was another great Vaishnava scholar, Vedanta Desikar.

The Tirayans and the Pallavas dug over 90 rainwater harvesting structures or enormous artificial lakes called *eris* in and around Kanchi. They were known as *Kaadu Vettiyaar* (tree cutters) who cleared forests to promote agriculture and food production through these artificially constructed lakes. The green revolution was possible in this region only due to the foresight of the Pallavas who made it possible for a rain-dependent district to produce three harvests and beat the famine of the 1960s. They also dug out temple tanks, which stored and maintained ground water levels.



Ekambareshvara Temple

THE CHIEF TEMPLE in Kanchi is that of Kamakshi. Originally one of the 51 Shakti *peethas*, she was known as Adi Pida Parameshvari Kalikambal. The present deity belongs to the 8th century, and the temple to the 12th. In the 8th century, Adi Shankara, one of whose missions was to stop animal sacrifice, visited Kanchi and established the Kama-koti *peetham*. According to his disciple Chidvilasa, Adi Shankara persuaded King Rajasena (probably Rajasimha, as there was never a Rajasena) of Kanchi to build a new Shakti temple for Kamakshi (“eyes of love”): he replaced the Tantric form of worship with the Vedic. He also consecrated a Shri Chakra, which he brought from the Himalayas, in the temple. But the old temple of Adi Pida Parameshvari Kalikambal lingers on, behind the grand new one, which is the pilgrimage centre of the city.

Interestingly, all the other temples in and around Kanchi face Kamakshi, and every temple chariot circumambulates Kamakshi.

An unusual Pallava temple is the Vaikuntha Perumal temple. King Parameshvaravarman II died in 731 CE, killed by the Chalukyas. He had no heir. So, a team of nobles decided to go to Cambodia, where an earlier Pallava king’s brother Bhimavarman had migrated 140 years ago, married a local princess and become the ruler. They offered the crown to the descendants of Bhimavarman. The first three sons were not interested, but the fourth, 13-year-old Parameshvara Pallavamalla, accepted and returned with them and was crowned King Nandivarman II. He defeated the Chalukyas, later married the Rashtrakuta princess, became a great scholar of Tamil and Sanskrit and built the Vaikuntha Perumal and Mukteshvara temples. The Vaikuntha Perumal temple is in Pallava style, with three shrines one above the other dedicated to the seated, reclining and standing forms of Vishnu, while the wall reliefs of Nandivarman’s coronation and several other unknown figures have typical Cambodian faces. Thus, Kanchi was enriched by the art and culture of Cambodia, and also enriched the temples of that Southeast Asian country.



Varadaraja Perumal Temple

The Pallavas were conquered by the Cholas who built the Chokkeshvara, Jvarahareshvara and Kachishvara temples, all exquisite gems. But the period of the grand temples was to come with the Vijayanagara rulers. Ekambareshvara,

the temple of the single mango tree, was built in 1509 by Krishnadevaraya. It has the tallest *gopuram* in Kanchi, nine storeys high, with several water tanks. Another tall temple, the Varadaraja Perumal, was built by several dynasties. Special mention must be made of the Kakatiya king Pratapa Rudra Deva who constructed a 1,000-pillared hall in 1316 CE, with its famous sculpted stone chain. Paintings on the walls and ceilings reverberate with the richness of the Vijayanagara period. At Tirupparuthikunram, there are two Jain temples dedicated to Mahavira and Chandraprabha, built in the 14th century by Irugappa, the famous general of the Vijayanagara king, Bukka II. The Vardhamana temple has beautiful paintings of the lives of several Tirthankaras. There is still an ancient Jain community, going back to the days of Mahavira, in and around Kanchi.

Each temple in Kanchi is exquisite and it is believed that there are more than a thousand temples. Unlike the other temple cities of the south, every dynasty has left its artistic imprint here. In spite of the attacks by the Nawab of Arcot, Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan, Kanchi somehow managed to retain its beautiful structures.

The capital of every dynasty in south India was situated near a textile weaving centre, for that was the biggest item of trade. The Pallava capital was Kanchipuram, the Chola capital was Uraiyur, the Pandya capital was Madurai and the Chera kingdom was situated in the Coimbatore region (Kongu Nadu). All these were traditional cotton-weaving centres, and are still noted for their textiles.

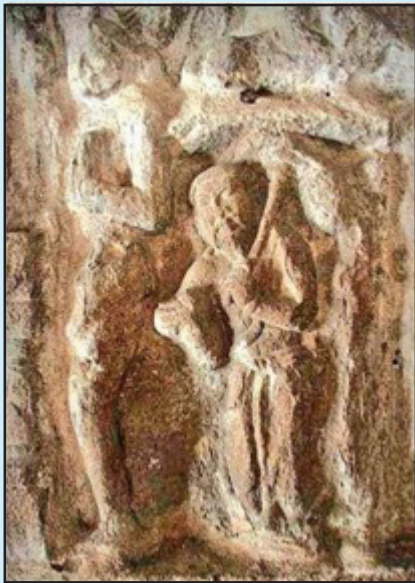
Kanchipuram is a textile paradise. The oldest fabric is cotton, whose origins are as old as Indian civilisation. Greek and Roman traders came to Kanchi to buy cotton fabrics, particularly cotton calicoes. The Roman trade with India was paid for in gold. Roman women were criticised for their love of Indian muslin, which was depleting the coffers of the Roman

Empire. Even the British East India Company chose Madras as its port in order to buy and export the textiles of the region.

There are several references to silk and cotton weaving in Tamil Sangam literature. The Tamil epic *Silappadikaram* describes the cotton and silk weavers of Kaveripattinam, swallowed by the sea, whose fabrics were later stitched by tailors, thereby disproving the theory that tailoring entered India with the Islamic conquest of north India. The flourishing trade between the Indian subcontinent and China brought silk to the region. The old Tamil word for silk was *sinam*, meaning both Chinese and silk. Weavers were an honoured and privileged class, and those in Kanchipuram could even use the *sangu* (conch) to announce their arrival and a palanquin for travel. In the 18th century, Tipu Sultan captured Kanchipuram and brought weavers from Benares to develop the famous Kanchipuram silk sari. The Kanchipuram sari is unique in that the border and *pallu* are woven separately and then attached to the body of the sari. The Kanchipuram saris are famous for their bright colours and contrasting *pallus* and borders. Few people notice the intricate decoration woven in gold or coloured thread. The designs have poetic names: *rudraksha*, *vanki* (armlet), *kuyilkan* (eye of the cuckoo), *mayilkan* (eye of the peacock), *uthiripoo* (loose flowers), *gopuram* (temple doorway), *kamala* (lotus), *hamsa* (mythical swan), *mallimoggu* (jasmine buds), *kodimalar* (flowering creeper), *maanga* (mango), *salangai* (anklet) and *kodivisiri* (fan creeper). In recent times, saris are developed along themes: famous films, the dance of Shiva and so on. A Kanchi sari is an essential part of the girl's trousseau. And the silks are handed down from mother to daughter, so sturdy and tough are they.

Belonging to Kanchipuram, I remember the regular visits to the weaver's loom. My mother, grandmother and great grandmother would spend hours with the weaver,

discussing colour schemes, the details of the design on each border and *pallu* and the weave of the body of the sari. Cotton cholis would be embellished with delicate *zari* buds. A wedding meant several days of designing, several months ahead of the event. Each sari was unique, a creation of love and beauty. The *cholis* were also designed with care, with some more colours—one for the body and another for the sleeves. The sari and choli were never of the same colour—“they aren’t uniforms” was the reasoning. Some saris were made of cotton, most were made of silk. By the second half of the 20th century, many of the earlier weaves were lost. Even Kalakshetra, which did much to revive dying and lost designs and weaves, could not replicate many of them.



Xuanzang's sculpture at the Vaikuntha Perumal Temple

In spite of the fondness for silk, the inherent cruelty in the silk-making process—which involves boiling baby worms in hot water, even as they are snuggled up in their cocoons, to make them release the slender silk threads they hold firmly in their mouths — made many women shun silk in preference for cotton on the advice of the late Paramacharya of Kanchi, Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswathi.

British colonialists set out to destroy India's textile trade. They broke the looms, took the

raw material to England and made Indians buy the imported cloth. Today, cotton and silk have become the clothes of the rich—only they can afford to starch and maintain the former and purchase the latter. But this is not sustainable. Unless the middle class makes it a point to buy handlooms, we are destined to lose them. At one loom, a family had placed an order for several wedding saris. We were told that the retail price of exclusive wedding saris ranges from about Rs. 25,000 to over Rs. 1,00,000 per sari. Ordinary mixed silk saris cost Rs. 5,000 upwards.

In order to preserve the rich heritage of Kanchi, the CP Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation has established the Shakuntala Jagannathan Museum of Kanchi, a collection of saris, dolls, paintings, musical instruments, utensils, looms, furniture and much more, all representing the great heritage of Kanchi.

This most ancient of south Indian cities, this living textbook of south Indian art must be declared a UNESCO Heritage City for preserving its rich art heritage of over 2,000 years. Why not Madurai or Thanjavur or any other city, you may ask. Thanjavur is a restricted Chola citadel; the original Madurai was destroyed by Malik Kafur, Allauddin Khilji's general, and was rebuilt by the Nayakas between the 16th and 18th centuries. Kanchi alone has preserved a continuous 2,000-year-old heritage of art and architecture, with temples representing every dynasty and sculptures and paintings of every creed, which no other Indian city can boast of. It is now a traffic mess, with buses and bullock carts vying for space. Some thought and urban planning must go into the city to showcase its ancient glory when travellers from all over the world visited Kanchipuram. That is why it should be declared a world heritage site.

Courtesy: Open Magazine, 22 October, 2021.

In-focus

ACTIVITIES

CPREEC ENVIS-RP, prepared Awareness Poster to avoid single use plastic under the campaign “Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav” the week of 4th to 10th October 2021 as Iconic Week.

பிளாஸ்டிக் (நெகிழி) கழிவுகளைக் குறைப்போம்

கவனமின்றி தவறாக தூக்கப்பெறியப்டும் பிளாஸ்டிக் குப்பைகளினால்... பல சூழல் கேடுகள் உருவாகின்றன.



கழிவு நீர் அடைப்பு



மண்வளம் பாதிப்பு



விலங்குகள் உட்கொள்ளும் அபாயம்



மனித ஆரோக்கியம் பாதிப்பு

தேவையற்ற பிளாஸ்டிக் உபயோகத்தை தவிர்ப்போம்... திடக்கழிவுகளை தரம் பிரிப்போம்... சூழல் நலம் காப்போம்...



வெளியீடு
சி.பி.ஆர் சுற்றுச்சூழல் கல்வி மையம், சென்னை
சுற்றுச்சூழல் தகவல் அமைப்பின் தேசிய டிஜித் தளங்கள் மற்றும் மாநில சுற்றுச்சூழல் பாதுகாப்பு ஆலோசனை மன்றம்
மத்திய அரசின் சுற்றுச்சூழல், வனம் மற்றும் சுலாசலிமை மற்றும் திட்டமிடல் அமைச்சர், இந்திய அரசு



பிளாஸ்டிக் (நெகிழி) பைகளை தவிர்ப்போம் புவியை காப்போம்



தண்ணீரை உபயோகித்து பிளாஸ்டிக் பைகளை தவிர்க்கவும்.



ஒருமுறை மட்டுமே பயன்படுத்தக் கூடிய நெகிழி பொருளைத் தவிர்க்கவும்.



ஒட்டை, மீன், மொட்டை, உருவாக்கப்பட்ட பிளாஸ்டிக் பைகளைத் தவிர்க்கவும்.



பிளாஸ்டிக் குப்பைகளில் அல்லது உணவு மற்றும் பாட்டில்களில் பயன்படுத்தப்படாத தவிர்க்கவும்.



நுகர்வெழி (Microplastics) களைத் தவிர்த்து உணவு மற்றும் பொருட்களை பயன்படுத்தாத தவிர்க்கவும்.



பிளாஸ்டிக் பைகளை கடைபிடித்து வீசாதீர்கள்! அல்லது நீர் ஆதாரப் பிரச்சனைகள் உருவாகும் சாத்தியம்.



இழைகள் நூலியல்பானவற்றைத் தவிர்ந்து மட்டும் தான் வெள்ளை ஆடைகளைப் பயன்படுத்தவும்.



பிளாஸ்டிக் சாஸ்டிரி நாட்கள்களைத் தவிர்ந்து மட்டும் தான் வெள்ளை மீன் மற்றும் மீன் பிளாஸ்டிக் சாஸ்டிரி நாட்கள்களைப் பயன்படுத்தவும்.



குப்பையை மட்டும் மற்றும் மீன் குப்பையை பிரித்து வெவ்வேறு பெட்டிகளில் போடுங்கள்.

வீணாகும் உணவு, காப்பகரி கழிவுகளை பிளாஸ்டிக் பைகளில் அடைத்து தூக்கப்பெறியப்டுகள். இவற்றை விலங்குகள் உண்டாக்கும் சூழலடைப்பு ஏற்பட்டு உயிரிழக்கலாம்.



வெளியீடு
சி.பி.ஆர் சுற்றுச்சூழல் கல்வி மையம், சென்னை
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மத்திய அரசின் சுற்றுச்சூழல், வனம் மற்றும் சுலாசலிமை மற்றும் திட்டமிடல் அமைச்சர், இந்திய அரசு



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Throwing it away causes environmental problems



Plastics blocks the drainage system



Plastics affect soil fertility



Throw away plastics pose a threat to animal health



Plastics affect human life and health

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Use cloth bags and avoid plastic bags



Ban Single use Plastics



Avoid buying items packaged in plastics



Avoid eating food in plastic containers and buying bottled water



Avoid cosmetics containing microplastics



Do not throw away your plastic bags. This affects water resources.



Wear clothing made from natural materials



Use bio-degradable, compostable, and renewable sanitary pads instead of plastic sanitary pads.



Segregate garbage into biodegradable and non-biodegradable substances and keep them in separate bins

Do not throw your food waste in plastic bags. Animals eat these plastic materials. Their digestive system gets congested, leading to infections and death.



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GREEN SKILL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The inaugural function for the Certificate Course on Waste Management under Green Skill Development Programme (GSDP) was organized by CPREEC ENVIS-RP Centre in collaboration with Botanical Survey of India on November 17th 2021 at Andaman and Nicobar Regional Centre.



GSDP Certificate Course on Waste Management programme was inaugurated by Dr. Lal Ji Singh, Joint Director, BSI, Andaman and Nicobar Regional Centre.

Free certificate course on Waste Management under Green Skill Development Prog. gets underway

<p>Port Blair, Nov.17 CPR Environmental Education Centre (CPREEC), Chennai is organizing a two months Certificate Course on Waste Management (Solid Waste, Biomedical Waste, Plastic Waste, E-Waste, Construction and Demolition Waste) under the Green Skill Development Programme (GSDP), Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India in collaboration with Botanical Survey of India Andaman and</p>	<p>Nicobar Regional Centre. This programme commenced with its inaugural function held today in the hall of Botanical Survey of India. Dr. Lal Ji Singh, Joint Director, BSI, A&N Regional Centre who was the chief guest on the occasion urged the trainees to adopt practical approach during the training. The course aims to provide a comprehensive understanding and impart basic skills to the participants on the</p>	<p>characteristics of waste, waste segregation and collection, storage and disposal, waste processing techniques and integrated waste management, gravity and importance of the waste management sector, knowledge and first-hand experience in collection, segregation, waste disposal and integrated waste management. Earlier, Shri A. Gopal, Project Officer, CPREEC, Port Blair welcomed the gathering, a press release received here said.</p>
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Press Clipping of Inaugural Programme

Certificate course on Value Addition and Marketing of NTFPs (plant origin) Bamboo handicrafts was inaugurated on November 22, 2021 at Nilgiris.



GSDP Certificate Course on Bamboo Craft programme was inaugurated by Mr. Kondu Omkaram, IFS, DFO, Gudalur.

Green skills programme for youth

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, NOV 24

A green skills development programme (GSDP) has been initiated for the youth in Nilgiris to enable them earn a livelihood and revenue by wise use of natural resources. The CPR Environmental Education Centre (CPREEC) here is organising a two-month free certificate course on bamboo handicraft at Gudalur for the youth. The course is being organized under the aegis of GSDP, supported by the Union ministry of environment, forests and climate change.

The programme was inaugurated by Kommu Omkaram, district forest officer. He said this programme is

useful for the poor people. Appealing to the youth to get trained well in green skills to chalk out a livelihood, he asked the authorities concerned to make more opportunities for marketing the finished products helping the poor youth.

M. Kumaravelu, field officer of CPREEC, explained the importance of GSDP which was initiated by the CPREEC under environmental informatics system.

E Robert, Gudalur area coordinator of National Green Corps, appealed to the trainees to make optimum use of training classes and modules to hone their green handicraft-making skills which is a gift for youth in the nature-rich Gudalur area.

Press Clipping of Inaugural Programme

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Abstracts of Recent Publications

❖ Sukumaran, S., Pepsi, A., SivaPradesh, D.S., and Jeeva, S. “Phytosociological studies of the sacred grove of Kanyakumari district, Tamilnadu, India”, *Tropical Plant Research*, Vol.5,(1), pp. 29-40, 2018.

Sacred groves are forest patches conserved by the local people through religious and cultural practices. These groves are important reservoirs of biodiversity, preserving indigenous plant species and serving as asylum of Rare, Endangered and Threatened (RET) species. The present study was carried out in Muppuram coastal sacred grove of Kanyakumari district to reveal the plant diversity, structure and regeneration pattern of trees using quadrat method. About 102 plant species were recorded from the total area (0.2 ha) of the grove studied. The vegetation of the grove clearly indicates tropical dry evergreen forest. *Malvaceae* was the dominant family. Young plant species were dominating than older ones (> 160 cm). To avoid the rapid environmental degradation of the sacred grove, conserving the groves is urgent and it is necessary to conduct more researches on this grove as well as other groves of the district.

Keywords: Floristic diversity; Regeneration; Conservation; Sacred groves; Traditional.

❖ Ajit Kumar., “Icons of Shasta, Bhuddha and Ayyappa: Paradigms of paradoxical identifications and sectarian associations”,

Heritage: Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies in Archaeology, pp. 233-251, 2019.

Icons of Shasta, Ayyappa and Buddha are found from ancient Tamilakam (Kerala and Tamil Nadu) in large numbers. Religious biases, beliefs, and ignorance of iconography have often resulted in the paradoxical identification and divergent sectarian association of these divinities and their icons. This paper attempts a reappraisal of images of Shasta, Buddha and Ayyappa with a view to dissect and present their individualistic iconographic temperaments.

Keywords: Shasta; Ayyappa; Buddha; Icons; Mural Paintings; Sabarimala Temple; Kerala.

❖ Sameeta, R., and Hiteshkumar, S., “Sacred groves as centres of cultural and biodiversity conservation: A case study of Jhabua district of Madhya Pradesh”, *International Journal of Recent Scientific Research*, Vol. 10(5A), pp. 32209-32214, 2019.

Sacred Groves, patches of natural forests, a manifestation of nature worship offer ecological, environmental and socio-cultural functions to the local communities. This paper is based on the study of three sacred groves in Jhabua district in Madhya Pradesh that is demographically dominated by the Bhil tribe and brings out the present status of these groves in terms of ecological and cultural importance. This community has been protecting these groves over decades in the honour of their deities

and ancestral spirits where they perform their religious rituals. The interconnection between the Bhil community and nature since time immemorial is indicated here. There is evidence now that the clans in Bhil tribe have been associated with the worship of specific species sacred to them and these species happen to be of “ecological keystone value”. It also suggests some solutions to biodiversity conservation in regard to the present-day threats and depletive factors affecting the sacred groves.

Keywords: *Sacred groves; Socio-cultural; Bhil; Biodiversity.*

❖ **Dolon, N., and Mukherjee, S.K., “Evaluation of plants in Hindu mythology, festivals and rituals and their conservational aspect”, *International Journal of Pharmaceutical Research and Bio-Science*, Vol. 4 (3), pp. 310-326, 2015.**

Mythology is a part of every religion. It is the science which investigates myths or fables or legends founded from remote events to present day. Plants have played a vital role in development of human civilization since past time. In India, amongst Hindu many plant species are associated with religious functions,

rituals and also in calibration of festivals. The sacred plants of India are actually worshipped throughout the nation owing only to its mythological significance. In this study about 70 plant species have been recorded in different mythological, ritual and festival purposes. The mostly used for these purposes are *Oryzasativa* (L.), *Santalum album* (L.), *Aegle marmelos* (L.) Correa, *Ocimum tenuiflorum* (L.), *Cocos nucifera* (L.), *Musa paradisiaca* (L.), *Cynodon dactylon* Pers., *Areca catechu* (L.). All these plants are belonging to 15 families. The most used families are Graminae, Moraceae, Leguminosae and rarely used families are Sapotaceae, Pedaliaceae, Menispermaceae, Costaceae. 17 plant families have been conservational aspects and 22 plant species have medicinal value. Such type of studies has potential value in our daily life for in-situ conservation of plants in their domain and also employed for recreational and promotional of mental health from our everyday stress condition in competitive modern life in metropolitan, urban and village areas. Plants recorded from this study can also be used for the treatment of some common diseases in particularly in remote areas people.

Keywords: *Mythology; Festivals; Rituals; in-situ conservation.*



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