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INSIDE

VINTAGE VIEW



Embark on a journey through the Nilgiris' rich history and stunning landscapes at Bangalore International Centre's enlightening exhibitions this weekend. **PAGE 5**

PICK YOUR BRAIN!

A fan of puzzles and crosswords? Hop on the train and treat yourself to some brainstorming. **PAGE 13**



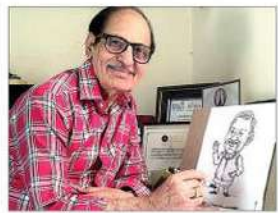
FROM PANIC TO PEACE

As exams draw near, stress tightens its grip. Amidst anticipation, readiness tends to fluctuate. Explore expert tips for a serene exam experience



FULL STORY | **PAGE 9**

SCORING HONOURS WITH CARTOONS & CRICKET



Exploring the world of cartoonist BV Panduranga Rao, who recently got inducted into the prestigious India Book of Records 2024 for the 13th time

PAGE 8



IN FOCUS, WOMEN EMPOWERMENT
CM Siddaramaiah's 2024-25 budget dishes out a banquet of initiatives for women, setting the stage for their empowerment. Dive in to uncover the nuances

PAGE 3

DARK SIDE OF WILDLIFE SELFIES



Despite their allure, wildlife selfies carry a dark reality that threatens the very animals they seek to capture, researchers weigh in. **PAGE 11**

Embark on a journey through the Nilgiris' rich history and stunning landscapes at Bangalore International Centre's enlightening exhibitions this weekend

VINTAGE VIEW

Bindu Gopal Rao

If history is your jam and imaginative slide-shows of the bygone era often crosses your mind when reading about one, "Remembering and Reimagining - A Photographic Journey through the History of the Nilgiris" and "Honey Bees of the Nilgiris - Culture, Ecology and Markets" are events that you need to bookmark.

Bringing forth the ecology - shola grasslands, and bees - of the Nilgiris biosphere and the communities (Todas, Badagas, Kotas, Irulas, and Kurumbas) who inhabited them for centuries, these exhibitions are created to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Ooty's founding (which was last year).

The Nilgiri mountains form part of the Western Ghats in south Karnataka and north west Tamil Nadu, joining the Western Ghats to the Eastern Ghats.

The exhibition covers a lot of ground, recounting the histories of the shola ecology, its indigenous population, how it was colonised and developed into a tea and coffee-growing economy, and how it became such a multicultural place.

Photo call

Curator Jenny Pinto has methodically curated various images for the exhibition. "The British extensively documented the Nilgiris, so the colonial pictures are from European archives and a few from the Sarmaya Arts Foundation in Mumbai," she says. Additionally, the work of post-colonial photographers, researchers, and Adivasis proved useful as she sourced a wealth of photographs on the shola landscape from them.

"So, I obtained some great photos from Ramya Reddy, Vasanth Bosco, and Dr Tarun Chhabra. For the story of the multiculturalism of the Nilgiris, I raided family albums," says Pinto.

Several images are dedicated to Albert Penn, who arrived in the Nilgiris in 1865 as a 15-year-old boy from London. "He earned his living as a photographer, working all over South India, documenting tribal, social, and official life

in the Madras Presidency. He lived in Ooty all his working life before returning to England in 1911, but he later came back to Ooty and died. He was buried in Coonoor. He has an amazing body of work that is now archived by his great grandson Christopher Penn," she says.

Winds of change

These exhibitions focus on the history, communities, and environment of the Nilgiris. "The entire history is told as one single seamless story. It is important to understand all aspects of a region's history if we want to preserve its cultural and natural heritage," says Pinto. Pinto adds that the event is a sort of microcosm of how many parts of the world changed with colonisation. "The important message, of course, is how the ecology changed and is still changing and the lessons we should learn from that. It is important to understand all aspects of a region's history if we want to preserve its cultural and natural heritage," she adds.

She feels that rise of an affluent, educated middle class in tandem with the tourism, connectivity, and a work-from-home culture, have enabled Indians to make a getaway - some away from the Nilgiris for better work prospects and others to the Nilgiris for a cleaner, greener environment and more space.

"Ancient, amazingly fertile, incredibly beautiful, and bio-diverse, the upper plateau of the Nilgiris have been witness to the movement and migration of people and animals over time, forging unique connections and enduring great change, the process of which has caused its landscape to be continuously transformed and reimagined, even to this day," says Pinto, a

filmmaker, lighting designer, papermaker.

She, however, believes that this ongoing wave is dramatically altering the demographics, culture, land-use of the Nilgiris - an ecology already shifting due to climate change.

"The stories that unfold in this photo exhibitions, are a remembering of the shared history of the

Ancient, amazingly fertile, incredibly beautiful, and bio-diverse, the upper plateau of the Nilgiris have been witness to the movement and migration of people and animals over time, forging unique connections and enduring great change, the process of which has caused its landscape to be continuously transformed and reimagined, even to this day

Jenny Pinto, curator

TERRACOTTA BULL; NILGIRIS

TODA GROUP

KOTAGIRI TOWN

ON THE NILGIRI HILLS

ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH FROM THE WEST

Dates: February 23-26, 11: 00 am to 8:00 pm.

Address: 7, 4th Main Road, Domlur II Stage, Bengaluru 560 071

Guided walks: February 23 at 5.30 pm; February 24 and 25 at 11.30 am & 6.00 pm; February 26 at 6.00 pm. Entry: Free

Nilgiris showcasing its remarkable multiculturalism amidst the unsettling changes we witness today. Through these images, I aspire for viewers to discover universal significance and to envision a future where we coexist harmoniously with nature and one another," says Pinto.

'Pictorial buzz'

The other event currently underway is titled "Honey Bees of the Nilgiris - Culture, Ecology, and Markets". Honey bees hold significant importance in indigenous lifeways globally, including the Nilgiris. The region is home to communities engaged in traditional honey hunting and beekeeping, utilising honey for ritual, medicinal, and economic purposes for centuries.

"Through this exhibition, we attempt to highlight the link between local bee species, forest health and community cultures. The exhibition is particularly relevant in the context of the native bee species found in Nilgiris - especially, Apis dorsata, the Giant Rock Bee, and the myriad ways in which they ensure species diversity of the flora in Nilgiris. The linkage with communities has also been sustained over centu-

ries in different forms - from honey hunting to forest beekeeping," says Ranjani Prasad, Researcher & Archivist, Programme Coordinator, Keystone Foundation.

Bee focus

The exhibition offers visitors insight into native bees, highlighting their significance in culture, ecology, and livelihoods of the region.

"One can expect to see posters on bee diversity, indigenous practices of bee keeping and information on how pollination occurs. We will also be showcasing products for sale from an indigenous Farmer Producer Organisation (APPCL) that includes honey and beeswax products. The exhibition walkthroughs will be conducted by two indigenous members from the Alu Kurumba community. One of them has been a traditional honey hunter, while the other is a traditional healer and one of the Directors of APPCL. Both individuals will speak to the exhibition theme through their own lived experiences and ecological wisdom," says Shiny Mariam Rehel, Ecologist & Curator, Senior Programme Coordinator, Keystone Foundation.