2 DECCAN HERALD

Spectrum statescan



SPLASH OF DUNG

'Gore habba' is an annual dung-slinging festivity that the villagers of Gummatapura revel in after Diwali.

Grand vista of nature's largesse

PANORAMIC With a picturesque view of nature, Anjanadri Hills will capture your heart and soul in a single glance, writes Hema Narayanan

ver journeyed into a place that overwhelms you beyond what you can possibly absorb and an attempt to describe its character is a herculean challenge? I went on one such sojourn and was overpowered by what I experiencedit was at the Anjanadri Hills of Anegundi, in Hampi. Every traveller knows Hampiperhaps due to it's rare ability to capture the romance and magnificence of an era gone by. Hampi has a perception-altering effect on you, both literally and metaphorically. It is truly a doorway into another world, putting you in touch with yesteryears and the rich past of the Vijayanagara Empire, a ruling dynasty in Karnataka. Walking around in Hampi is more than a sightseeing expedition. Its monuments and ruins present contrasting imagery. On one hand, it portrays the mastery and skill that existed in the ancient times, while on the other, it is a reminder of the destruction meted out to it by the attacking enemies.

Anegundi and its surroundings is said to have one of the oldest plateaus estimated to be 3,000 million years old! Hence it is not surprising to find that the local taletellers call Anegundi as the maternal home of Mother Earth.

Anegundi is much more than the Vijayanagara Empire. It is treasure trove of extraordinary facts and beliefs around the great Indian epic of Ramayana. Every other child in India grows up reading about Lord Rama and his adventures in Ramavana. So had I; and had created a little illusionary world where Lord Rama, Sita, Lakshman and Hanuman lived.

Legend says..

So, to stand in Anegundi, where my illusionary world started to seem relatable was an inconceivable feeling. Because, here is where people believe that the legendary kingdom of Kishkindha existed and Prince Sugriva lived. Kishkindha (or Kishkinta) means a forest where the monkeys lived; perhaps why it is referred to as the Monkey Kingdom in Ramayana.

Given this as the backdrop, I visited the Anjanadri Hills (a few kilometres from Hampi) near Anegundi, a picturesque village on the northern side bank of Tungabhadra. Crossing the river in a coracle to reach this village allowed me to

experience another facet of Hampi. But, what astonished me more was its unending set of historical attributes!

Anjanadri Hills are believed to be the birthplace of Lord Hanuman, the Hindu monkey god, who was Rama's ardent devotee and helped him in his mission

climb it. The hike in the boulder-packed hills was wondrous and involved a climb of 570 steps. As we gained altitude, the rugged terrain started to get wider – soon the spectacular rocks surrounding the city gradually made their appearance, accentuating the beauty of the scenery of this lost city. Impish monkeys courted us, as we passed through what seemed like caves. The simple beautiful whitewashed Hanuman Temple, at the top, built as a tribute to the monkey God, humbled me. I paid my respect to the reddish-orange stone sculpted Hanuman and then walked to the other side of the hill, in the quest for great photographs. And the view I got from here was worth dying for.

life of Lakshman.

all in. The raw beauty of nature had spread

farmers in 489

villages have

implemented

farming system

in 8,860

land...

hectares of

against Ravana. I have always had a regard

for the power of Lord Hanuman - he had

carried an entire mountain in search of a

little medicinal plant that could save the

The rocky hills of Anjanadri lured us to

out in all directions, with rocks and stones in different shades of brown, some withered, some glistening, and in interesting shapes. As the dusty pinkish orange hues appeared at sunrise, the countryside unfurled in front of me, even as the sparkling and curvaceous Tungabhadra flowed down gently. I could see spires of the temples of Virupaksha and Vitthala

and got reminded of gilded tapestries. The Union Government had initiated an endogenous tourism project and formed a trust named Kishkindha, in an attempt to appreciate and involve local people in conserving ancient lineage and nistoric surroundings. It was also to help build capacity in the villagers to maintain business incubators. And today, the community continues to be involved in the rural tourism. Not only has it benefitted them financially (reasonable economic support), but also it has become the pride of the village amongst the local I had to sit down for a moment to take it communities, with the village looking





LIFE-LIKE Statues at display at Muruga Vana, Chitradurga. PHOTOS BY ANITHA PAILOOR

A garden with a sublime theme

djoining the Sri Jagadguru Murugharajendra Brihan Mutt in Chitradurga is a beautiful botanical-cumtheme garden known as Muruga Vana. Covered with trees, natural rocks and man-made attractions like various statues and tableaus, this garden is spread over 25 acres and has an attractive entrance with a huge ship anchor with two tall stone pillars. Visitors can enter the garden through a stone gateway embellished with statues of elephant and ethnically-dressed guards with tall spears, on either side. Over the gate is a decorative wheel and the boundary wall of the garden has a number of big attractive wheels.

For children the garden is a treasure house of education and entertainment. Life-sized statues of animals and people attract many little ones. Huge mouths of whale and gorilla are installed in the garden and the kids enjoy walking through them. The tabloid depicting the evolution of human beings is pretty impressive. Wouldn't you like to look at life-sized statues of giraffe feeding on the branches of tall trees? Rows of elephant statues, varying in size from small to mammoth bring out smiles on every visitor's face. The depiction of a herd of deer standing in various poses is very realistic.

You can also get a first-hand experience of villagers and their daily life through statues depicting them. Every aspect of their lifestyle - from their attire to hunting

expeditions to their daily life is represented in great detail here. The tableau of tribals with their dwelling and distinct dress and activities is imaginative and catches your eye.

In one particular depiction, you can see a person curing animal skin by cleaning and polishing it. Another scene depicts the a typical village katte under a tree with a holy person giving sermons. In another scene, a girl is enjoying a swing ride. The tableau of a village woman, standing in front of the girl with a smile is so realistic that you could mistake it for a real person. You can also expect to find statues of animals like cows, deer and dinosaurs. For a natural touch, you can head to the giant lotus plants and mushrooms. What more, the garden also has natural rocks that have been carved into cave-like structures and this excites the little kids. If you are tires by all the walking around, take a breather and sit down on any of the numerous benches installed all across the premises.

For those with a philosophical bent of mind, there are tabloids that depict the preachings of few sharanas (seeker). These statues also showcase the lifestyle of the sharanas, reflecting their principle of 'simple living and high thinking' perfectly. A tableau in the garden depicts a sharana giving discourse to disciples who are listening in rapt attention. To get around to all the statues and tabloids in this garden, you would need to spare at least two hours. So, head to Muruga Vana and enjoy the life-like statues reflecting the world around

D B N Murthy



Planting seeds of prosperity

FOR GREATER BENEFITS It paves the way for greater economic returns, eliminates the need for chemical fertilisers and reduces the dependency on forests. Tree-based farming system is here to stay, writes M N Kulkarni



PROFITABLE Demonstration of aftercare activities in Shiggaon; a farmer with his produce. PHOTOS BY GANGA ANKAD

happening in around 17 villages of Shiggaon taluk of Haveri district. Conceived as a project to increase sustainability of the existing farming system with the introduction of tree component- fruit trees, forestry trees, fodder species and biomass yielding species, tree-based farming system (TBF) has changed many a lives in the district. Introducing trees into the exisiting farming system proves to be a source of extra income and also bodes well for the soil health. Through this initiative, farmers are being motivated to plant at least 40 different fruit species and 400-500 forestry plants of diverse species per acre in their own farms.

The initiative, a brainchild of the BAIF Institute for Rural Development-Karnataka (BIRD-K) contributes to overall agro-biodiversiy and also enhances the local ecosystem. Horticultural trees start bearing fruits in great numbers from the fifth year of plantation and farmers start earning additional income of anywhere between Rs 8,000-10,000 per acre from the sixth year onwards. These plants are usually planted all along the field bunds and in even in fallow lands.

What more, you can also expect to get biomass and fuelwood after the fourth year of plantation. This biomass in turn, is used to prepare compost, reducing the dependency on chemical fertilisers. It has been found that a family can achieve selfsufficiency in fuelwood within 5-6 years, which reduces the pressure on the forest

green revolution of sorts is and mitigates the effects of global warming

and climate change. As a part of the project, grading of TBF plots is also carried out. The grading is based on the number of plants surviving, plant protection, soil and water conservation, fodder cultivation. In the last grading drive, 72 per cent of the plots were graded as A and remaining in the B and C category. A grade TBF plot is the one with 80 per cent survival of tree-based horticulture and forestry, fencing, fodder on the bunds soil and water conservation measures. So far, 19,889 farmers in 489 villages have implemented this concept in 8860 hectares of land.

Reaping benefits

The activities of the project officially began in 2008 and farmers were provided with inputs like horticultural and forestry seedlings and fodder seeds. Training programmes were conducted for the participants and they were also given exposure visits. Initially, farmers were reluctant to plant trees amidst their cropping lands. But after some awareness programmes, they all warmed up to the idea and in the first year, 32 farmers adopted TBF in their

fruits borne out of this project. Irfan



bevu) seedlings on his own and self-graded the mango produce of his farm in 2014. Growing maize as an intercrop in his TBF plot, he hopes to get a good harvest and a good income in the future.

Shivanand Hosamani from the same village planted mango saplings in three acres of his farm in 2011 and his efforts have already started to bear fruits, literally. Currently, you can find on an average, 90-100 fruits per tree in his farm. If these success stories don't convince you, then visit the farm of Gudlishettar in the vicinity. His farm is teeming with 315 trees of mango, lemon, curry leaf, chickoo, guava and various other forestry plants.

Shankar, a medium-scale farmer from Kadalli village has adopted TBF in three acres and around 124 plants have survived. The intercrop plants in his farm include watermelon, ridge gourd and horse gram and his forestry plants include teak, silver oak, casurina melia dubia and glyricidia. He was even awarded as the best farmer during a Krishi Sinchana programme organised in February 2015.

Encouraged by the results and impacts, Deshpande Foundation, a funding organisation in Hubballi has extended financial support to additional 500 acres in the adjacent villages. "TBF is a proven model and farmers should line up to get the technical know-how," says Dr Neelam Maheshwari, director, grants making, Deshpande Foundation.

This ingenious initiative has certainly brought cheers amongst the farming community and created opportunities for greater avenues. Here's hoping the system grows by leaps and bounds and ushers in a new beginning in the farming sector.

