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Sacred places to be mapped using GPS

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Kochi: Indigenous people always regard trees, rocks, mountains, certain places and other forces in Mother Nature as sacred and they worship it with deep respect tinged with awe. However, these places and art forms associated with it have so far not been recorded or documented with due diligence in Kerala.

Now, a group of young tribespeople along with the World Wide Fund for Nature-India (WWF-India) are going to document all the sacred places, situated within the 400 sq km radius of Vazhachal, where the Forest Rights Act (FRA) was implemented.

They will map the sacred places, rocks and trees of worship using a global positioning system (GPS).

As a first step of mapping these sacred places, collection of primary details, including speciality of each place, practice and custom associated with it, deity if it is there, history and other factors have been started.

“The purpose of mapping is to preserve the history of sacred places of the tribal community in the area for the next generation. We have started collecting primary details from senior citizens in the hamlets at Malakkapara on Tuesday. Once the primary detail collections are completed, GPS mapping will be started based on the information provided by the elderly people. In some places, there may not be any deity or tree or rock or any tangible object. But tribespeople worship such places believing there is power of Mother Nature. We will also record such intangible facts with details in the document,” said WWF-India associate coordinator Tiju C Thomas.

The mapping is part of preparing management plan in the area where Forest Rights Act has been implemented at Vazhachal.

“When we enter a forest area or while doing fire line works, we perform pujas seeking blessings of our ancestors, deities and other powers in Mother Nature. As per the Forests Rights Act, identification of worship places in the area should be included,” said Geetha chieftain of Kadar tribes in Vazhachal-Athirappilly area.

The same mapping procedure will also be implemented at the 108 sq,km area in Parambikulam where FRA has been implemented.