

Traditional music, dance add fervour to Indigenous People Day celebration

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Rhythmic beats of *parai*, *thavil*, *dhalam* along with modulating notes of *kogal* gave a start to the celebration of International Day of Indigenous People on the banks of Pilloor reservoir at Baralikaadu near Karamadai on Monday.

Residents stepped to the tunes of these traditional musical instruments which are made by themselves from raw materials available in the forest.

“It takes three days to make a *kogal* (an instrument similar to flute). A mouth-piece made of a type of bamboo is the main part of *Kogal* which alone is sourced from forests in nearby Kerala,” said K. Bharathi from Baralikaadu Irula settlement.

Mr. Bharathi is one of the youths from the 21 tribal settlements around Pilloor reservoir coming under Karamadai forest range who are constantly trying to improve their skills in using the traditional instrument.

“These traditional instruments and dance are part of all our celebrations. They are also essential when someone dies in a settlement. These beats and songs are part of our lives,” said Kadukkan from Thonda settlement. The songs on such occasions tell the tales of their strong bond with nature, the wonders of the forests, their co-existence with wild animals and the fury of rain, etc.



Tribals performing traditional music on the banks of Pilloor reservoir at Baralikaadu near Coimbatore on Monday. (right) Adivasi residents of Semmanarai near Kotagiri playing their traditional instruments.



“Tribals are regarded as the guardians of forests. At the same time, they are also guardians of their strong tradition and culture. They coexist with everything in the wild. International Day of Indigenous People is a day to acknowledge them, to celebrate their lives and to thank their contributions to conservation”, said Karamadai forest range officer E.N. Manoharan.

The eco-tourism centre of the Forest Department at Baralikaadu is run with the participation of the tribals from the 21 settlements in the area.

Conceived by the then District Forest Officer I. Anwardeen, the eco tourism centre has generated around ₹4.25 crore so far. Coracle ride through the reservoir, jungle trail and sumptuous traditional lunch are main attractions at Baralikaadu. Of the total revenue generated, 75 % of money has been given back to the tribals as co-

racle ride charge, lunch and wages to eco watchers. Works such as community development activities are done using the remaining 25 % of the revenue with the approval of the Eco Development Committee.

Volunteers from the Nilgiris Adivasi Welfare Association coordinated the celebrations at Baralikaadu.

Helpline launched

As part of celebrating the International Day of Indigenous People, Minister for Adi Dravidar Welfare N. Kayalvizhi Selvaraj launched a helpline, 1800 4251 576, for the welfare of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe people.

Udhagamandalam Staff Reporter adds;

In Udhagamandalam, the celebration was held at the Semmanarai village near Kotagiri.

The village, home to more than 100 members of the Irula and Kurumba adivasi communities in the Nilgiris,

performed traditional dances, told stories rooted in their culture and also sang songs in their own traditional language for which no written script exists.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, N. Thirumoorthy, an adivasi activist, working in the region to preserve the language and identity of adivasi tribes in the Nilgiris, said that during the first and second waves of the COVID-19 pandemic, children from the communities were losing out on education and were also being subject to lot of issues at home.

“We began the tribal learning and teaching centre, where children from the communities were taught their own history in their unique language,” said Mr. Thirumoorthy.

The members of the communities brought their own instruments and played music while children from the communities performed at the village.

More than 30 children as well as adults took part in the celebrations.

Mr. Thirumoorthy said that community schooling was helping children from vulnerable adivasi communities gain access to education.

Odiyen Lakshmanan, who has been working on reviving tribal languages across parts of Tamil Nadu, was a special guest at the event. Mr. Lakshmanan opened a recently built community library at the village as part of the celebrations.