

Nilgiris the focus of two new exhibitions

The four-day event will explore the area's ecology and varied cultures

TINI SARA ANIEN
TEAM METROLIFE

Two exhibitions about the history and ecology of the Nilgiris will be held from February 23 to 26 at Bangalore International Centre. A book discussion will also be held on February 23.

'Remembering and Reimagining: A Photographic Journey through the History of the Nilgiris', a photography exhibition, will comprise 350 works. The exhibition was conceptualised to celebrate 200 years of the founding of Udhagamandalam. It was commissioned by the Ooty Literary Festival in 2023 and produced by TNMAI (the Nilgiris Mountain Arts Initiative).

Jenny Pinto, curator, says: "The show will give a glimpse into how the area is a sensitive zone in the Western Ghats. The Nilgiris have a unique ecology, with around eight indigenous tribes." Works by colonial era photographers and contemporary historians will be featured. It will include photographs by environmental activist and Toda community activist Tarun Chhabra,



A photo depicting the Todas and their cattle is part of 'Remembering and Reimagining' exhibition.

ecologist Vasanth Bosco, author and photographer Ramya Reddy, and Sharada Srinivasan, professor with National Institute of Advanced Studies. Photographs by English photographer Albert TW Penn, who lived in the Nilgiris from 1865 to 1924, will also be showcased.

'Honey Bees of the Nilgiris: Culture, Ecology and Markets', an exhibition curated by Tamil Nadu-based trust, Keystone Foundation, will give a peek into the life of honeybees, beekeeping, and related products.

Anita Varghese, an ecologist and one of the curators of the show, says: "Our trust started with work on honeybees. The event narrates the story of local bees, and goes into detail about the Nilgiris' indigenous communities, who are experts on the topic of bees."

Around six to eight panels bearing posters and texts explaining the different types of honeybees across the world and in the Nilgiris area, along with products made out of honey and beeswax will be sold. Traditional

tools used for beekeeping and honey hunting can also be viewed here, says Anita, director of biodiversity at the Foundation.

The book discussion to be held on Friday, will cover insights from contributors of 'The Nilgiri Hills: A Kaleidoscope of People, Culture and Nature', edited by Paul Hockings and published by Orient Blackswan in 2023.

Sharada Srinivasan will speak about her chapter on ancient Nilgiri metallurgy and material cultures. She will be followed by other speakers like Chhabra, Kurumba community leader and honey gatherer P Chandran, Kurumba traditional healer Janakiamma, researcher and archivist Faisal Rehman, and researcher and archivist Ranjani Prasad.

"Udhagamandalam is popularly thought of as an ahistorical place. However, it is part of a biodiversity hotspot and an important part of a cultural landscape that includes indigenous communities like the Todas, Kotas and Kurumbas, which will be explored in the sessions," she adds.

The exhibitions open on February 23, 5.30 pm, and are on from February 24 to 26, 10 am to 8 pm at Bangalore International Centre, Domlur. The book discussion will be held on February 23, 7 pm.

Entry free. For details, visit bangaloreinternationalcentre.org