



[This invitation is being forwarded on the request of Amrit Mahal Kaval Hitarakshana Haagu Horata Samithi and in the wider public interest. Please direct all enquiries to the undersigned and amkhs2013@gmail.com]

Amrith Mahal Kaval Hitarakshana Horata Samithi

Dodda Ullarathi, Challakere, Chitradurga District, Karnataka

invites you to a workshop

ON

Ecological importance of Amrit Mahal Kaval Grassland ecosystems and their critical role in Water Conservation and Sustaining Livelihoods to celebrate the International Day of Action for Rivers, Water and Life.

Saturday, March 14, 11am – 4pm Doddauillarathi, Challakere, Chitradurga, Karnataka

March 14 is celebrated world wide as the *International Day of Action for Rivers, Water and Life*. It is a day to celebrate victories of river restoration, take to the streets and demonstrate against destructive development and demand policies and practices that advance life and livelihoods. It is a day to educate one another about the threats facing our rivers, our watersheds and learn how we can build our lives and livelihoods conserving scarce water and promote appropriate energy. Above all, it is a day to unite - by working together - demonstrate that issues are not merely local, but global in scope.

A Day to Unite and Save Grassland Ecosystems – critical watersheds that are rapidly disappearing



Grasslands are found where there is not enough regular rainfall to support the growth of a forest, but not so little as to form a desert. Amrit Mahal Kavals are grassland ecosystems that have been protected for centuries by a management system intricately related to traditional knowledge and wisdom of local pastoral and agrarian communities. Karnataka had over 400,000 acres of such Kavals at the time of independence, and is now left with a little over 30,000 acres of this

unique ecosystem. Reckless diversion to industrial and urban projects has been a chief threat to these unique ecosystems, quite often on the shocking premise that they are “drylands”. With weak or no legal protection, Kaval grasslands are amongst the most threatened ecosystems in the world.

The Kaval grasslands support highly threatened and critically endangered species such as the Black Buck, Lesser Florican, Great Indian Bustard (less than 200 individuals found in all of South Asia, making it the most likely faunal species to become extinct in a decade or two if we don't act now), and of course, the last remaining numbers of Amrit Mahal cattle, the fiesty breed that supported massive armies of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan in their battles against the British empire. They are store houses of

various wild varieties of grasses that have enormous potential in building resilience into our food crops, whose productivity is increasingly challenged by the vagaries of climate change. The gently undulating terrain help hold and harvest precious rain water, supports a wide variety of medicinal plants, and play a major role in carbon sequestration. Thousands of pastoral communities still survive on these grasslands with dignity and supply us with wool, meat and milk. World over, when governments and communities are working to protect grasslands, Karnataka has taken the most retrograde step of diverting these last remaining large and contiguous Kavals to establish a massive military-industrial complex to build weaponised drones for the world, advance nuclear enrichment, a massive “science city”, etc.

Chitradurga has no major water source except for the Vedavathi River which flows dry most of the year. Accessing ground water is expensive as its levels are rapidly falling and also resulting in public health problems as the water has high fluorine content. The district survives largely on harvesting rain through traditional water harvesting mechanisms, such lakes and ponds, which are supported, in turn, by Kavals that act as watersheds. Now with the diversion of these Kaval grasslands to a massive military-industrial complex, not only is water security of the entire district threatened, but these amazingly diverse and beautiful grasslands are likely to be turned into toxic silos posing grave risk to human health and the environment and displacing over 300,000 people in over 60 villages, besides threatening the existence of critically endangered species, such as the Great Indian Bustard.

In its 27th August 2014 decision in response to public interest litigations that challenged the diversion of the Challakere Amrit Mahal Kavals, the National Green Tribunal (Southern Bench) has directed State and Central agencies to not proceed with the projects unless the environmental and social impacts are fully comprehended, appropriate clearances obtained and democratic process respected. Unmindful of these directions, various construction activities continue illegally. (Details at: <http://tinyurl.com/lk9ofyc>).

Make that trip Doddauarthi on the International Day of Action for Rivers, Water and Life!

We invite you to come to Doddauarthi to join us in sharing our concerns about protecting the unique Amrit Mahal Kavals – the pride of Karnataka’s conservation heritage, learn from elders about the unique biodiversity and associated traditional knowledge, sing folk songs celebrating the Kaval and its richness, and join hands to ensure the Kavals remain for posterity to support the survival of critically endangered species, such as the Great Indian Bustard, which has as much, if not a greater, Right to Exist as we do.

Time: 11 am - 4.00 pm Venue: Dodda Ullarthi, Challakere Taluk, Chitradurga

Focus Topics

Grasslands as ecosystems – Culture and tradition of Grasslands – Pastoral economy :
Policies & programmes – Government orders and Judicial interventions supporting
Pastoral livelihoods – Songs of the pastoralists

**Please confirm your participation by calling Karianna (Cell: 9900954664),
Hanumantharayyanna (9901084588) or email shashi@esgindia.org**

How to reach Doddauarthi:

By Train : Catch the Hospet Passenger , Train No. 56909 leaving from Yeshwantpur Railway station at 10.30pm on Friday night . The train will reach Challakere station at 6.20am and you can then go to the bus-stand and take a bus to Dodda Ullarthi.

By Bus : Take any KSRTC buses going towards Chitradurga/ Ballary/ shimoga (there are quite a few buses between 6.00am and 7.30am) and ask for the bus to stop at Hiriyyur and get off there. From Hiriyyur you need to take another bus to Challkere. In Challakere, you can go to the bus-stand and take a bus to Dodda Ullarthi. Direct buses to Challakere are available only post afternoon , so it is best to use th above mentioned routing and arrive.

If you car pool: Drive on NH-4 (Bangalore-Mumbai Highway) about 150 kms north from Bangalore, and as you approach Hiriyyur, take a right under the second bridge towards Bellary. About 40 kms later, you will come to Challakere town. Go straight through Nehru Circle towards Bellary. About a kilometre later, take a right at the petrol bunk (on the right) and head to Doddauarthi, which is about 15 kms from that point.