

**WORKSHOP CUM SEMINAR ON
CONSERVATION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF
TRADITIONAL RICE VARIETIES IN KERALA**

ABHAYAM, Koppam, Pattambi, Palakkad, Kerala

5th September 2016

**Inauguration : Shri. V. S. Sunil Kumar,
Hon'ble Minister of Agriculture,
Govt. of Kerala**

Presidential Talk : Shri. Mohammed Mohsin, MLA

Introductory Talk : Dr. K. Sankar, Director, SACON

**Followed by Experience sharing, Panel Discussions,
and Valedictory Function**



Organized by

**Sálim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History
Anaikatty Post, Coimbatore – 641108, Tamil Nadu
&**



ABHAYAM

Koppam, Pattambi, Palakkad – 679307, Kerala

Rice biodiversity in Kerala

Rice is the staple food of Kerala since time immemorial.

Even a few decades back a large number of traditional varieties possessing special traits such as drought and flood



resistance, medicinal and nutraceutical properties, short / long duration characteristics, height variations, variation in grains such as, grain color, shape, size, kernel color, puffing, popping, flattening, cooking and eating qualities were cultivated in Kerala. Varieties such as Navara and Palakkadan Matta have acquired Geographical Indicator status and international acclaim. British Gazettes states that once 2000 to 3000 varieties of rice were cultivated in Kerala.

Rice has acquired an aura of sanctity as an ingredient in the various rituals associated with weddings, birth and death, inaugurations, house-warming celebrations, social and religious ceremonies. Folk songs known as ‘Koythu pattu’ (harvest songs) and seed songs (Vithu pattu), depicting names, characteristics and agronomic practices of hundreds of paddy seeds were prevalent. Many of the folk songs such as ‘Pulluvan pattu’ sung by the ‘Pulluvan’ community of Malabar and the folk songs in ‘Theyyam’, a renowned folk art of northern Kerala, are based on rice culture.

Decline of traditional rice varieties

After the advent of the ‘Green Revolution’ there has been concerted institutional efforts to popularise the ‘high yielding’ hybrid rice varieties coupled with the deliberate measures to vanquish the traditional varieties resulted in the disappearance of most of the land races. A survey conducted by SACON indicates that less than hundred varieties of

traditional varieties are cultivated occupying a few hundred of hectares in the state.

Why to conserve and popularise traditional rice varieties?

The traditional varieties are cultivated in most of the places at the initiative and efforts of few committed individuals. Our survey indicate that



many varieties yield more than 3.5 M.T./ha with minimum organic inputs whereas the average rice production in Kerala is about 2.7 M.T./ha with heavy inputs of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Many a times hybrid varieties are not able to withstand the vagaries of climate and pest attacks whereas there exist several land races which can withstand the same. Moreover alongwith the disappearance of the land races our valuable cultural traditions are also lost.

Objectives of the workshop

- Bring the people and institutions involved in the conservation of traditional rice varieties on a single platform
- Deliberate upon the problems faced by the farmers cultivating traditional varieties
- Formulate strategies to conserve and popularize the traditional varieties
- Develop a network of people and institutions interested in the conservation of traditional rice varieties

Organisation

Patrons : Shri. Mohammed Mohsin, MLA, Pattambi
Dr. K. Sankar, Director, SACON

Organising Committee

Chairman : Panchayat President, Koppam
Conveners : Dr. Mathew K Sebastian, Principal
Scientist, SACON
Shri. P. Krishnan, Director, Abhayam
Members :Members, Koppam Panchayat
Dr. P. R. Arun, Principal Scientist, SACON
Dr. R. Jayapal, Principal Scientist, SACON
Dr. P. V. Karunakaran, Principal Scientist,
SACON

About SACON

Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology & Natural History (SACON) is a Centre of Excellence under the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Govt. of India established in 1991 with a mission to help conserve India's biodiversity and its sustainable use through research, education and people's participation, with birds at the centre stage. SACON is situated at Anaikkatty, Coimbatore in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve.

Abhayam

Abhayam is a Voluntary Organization established in 1988; registered under Charitable Societies registration Act, 1860. One of the focal areas of Abhayam is organic farming and cultivation and conservation of traditional rice varieties. Abhayam holds 30 acres of land, donated by philanthropists. Abhayam is also actively engaged in rural development, environmental protection, Panchayat Raj, health, education and running care centers for destitute men and women.

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