

## REPORT ON

### OUTREACH PROGRAMME FOR SNAKE CHARMER COMMUNITY OF DELHI

**PROGRAMME :** D.E.S. organized a three day programme to give access of the museum resources to the community that depends on animals for their livelihood and for whom museum resources are otherwise inaccessible.

**Date:** 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> July, 2012 (during Van Mahotsav)

**OBJECTIVE:**The objective is to:

- i. Involve socially marginalized community into the main stream of NMNH activities.
- ii. To observe their socio – economic background.
- iii. Disseminating awareness on various environmental issues among children and their communities.

**PARTICIPANTS:** The children of snake charmers community were invited to attend the programme that included galleries visit, outreach activity at the Sapera Basti and a nature visit to Aravalli Biodiversity Park, Delhi with special emphasis on snakes habit & habitat.

#### ProgrammeSchedule

Date/Time	Activities
<b>First Day at NMNH</b> <b>5<sup>th</sup> July 2012</b> 10:00 am- 10:15 am 10:15 am - 11.00 am 11.00 am - 11:30 Am 11:30 am – 12:30PM	Registration Gallery Interpretation, interaction with sapera community Film show on wildlife Make your own moulds of clay
<b>Second day with sapera community</b> <b>6<sup>th</sup> July,2012</b> 10:30 am- 11:00 am 11:00am -12:00 noon 12:00 noon – 12:30 pm	Talk on Nature, environment and hygiene Art out of waste – activity interview with sapera community
<b>Third day at Aravalli biodiversity park</b> <b>7<sup>th</sup> July,2012</b> 10:00 Am 10: 15 am 11:00am – 12:00 noon 12:00 noon – 12:30 Pm	Report at NMNH Departure from NMNH to Bio Diversity Park Visit at Bio Diversity Park Talk /slide show on Habitats of snakes of India

## **OBSERVATION:**

### **First Day at NMNH (5<sup>th</sup> July 2012):**

- i. Children registered themselves for the programme. Dr. Reena Dey, Scientist C gave an introductory talk on the role of museum in creating environmental awareness. Then a talk was given by Dr. Jaya Prasoon, S.E.A. on environment and nature relating it with their profession. How we are dependent on nature and what should be our contribution to keep our environment in a balanced state. How they can involve themselves in observing the nature and what they can do to protect the environment at their level.
- ii. They were taken into the galleries where they took keen interest in understanding the exhibits displayed there.
- iii. A film on langur walaas and their profession was screened for them which they enjoyed a lot. They were able to relate the cooperation of the langur and the dependency of its owner for his livelihood on this animal.
- iv. They were taught how to make an elephant out of clay and molds of a leaf by Sri Nand Lal, Senior Modeler, Sri Vivek Chug, Modeler & Sri Swarn Singh. They were also provided a chance to make their own molds of animals by giving them the necessary material at their homes as well, where we were supposed to visit the next day.

### **Second day at Sapera Colony, Vill: Garhauilli, Mayur Vihar Phase III(6<sup>th</sup> July,2012)**

- i. Dr. Jaya Prasoon, S.E.A. from Education section of the museum interacted with the children by telling them how to keep their surrounding clean & green. How much valuable can be our resources such as water, electricity and paper and how by doing small efforts they can save these resources. There was a discussion on the role of trees for recharging our ground water level.
- ii. Then a session was taken on general hygiene by our resource person Sri Saket, attached with an N.G.O. "Khushi" for underprivileged children. They were given the tips to remain fit by doing regular exercises, changing their eating habits and avoiding overeating etc. How they can keep the functioning of their heart normal, how they can tone up their muscles and skeletal structure. He also gave them a message to remain cool when they face any sort of conflict.
- iii. Last session was on "Art out of waste" and was taken by our resource person Sri O.P. Sharma, Artist Bal Bhawan, during which children learnt how to make different types of caps utilizing old magazines & newspaper. He also taught them how to make peacock - our national bird and a tortoise out of handmade paper. The last thing was a flower pot & flowers made out of used plastic bottle.

- iv. In the mean time when the activity on “Art out of waste” was going on Sri K.S.Attri , S.E.A. and Dr. Jaya Prasoon , S.E.A. went into the village and interacted with the family members of the snake charmer community and tried to extract their views on their profession & constraints, their traditions their economic status and social behaviour.

### **Third day at Aravalli Biodiversity Park: (7<sup>th</sup> July, 2012)**

- i. On the third day of the programme these children visited Aravalli Biodiversity Park, Vasant Vihar. First of all the Incharge of Aravalli Biodiversity Park Sri M. Shah Husain gave a brief account of the park and their activities.
- ii. Then the children were taken for a visit in the park by Ms. Balvinder. They were shown the droppings of blue bull and interesting information was provided about the butterflies and their host plants, other inhabitants & trees of the park. Children were able to see a monitor lizard, colourful bugs, birds and peacocks besides some trees as keekar that dominated the place. They also collected the quills of porcupine and feathers of birds.
- iii. There was an interesting session on evolution of snakes, snakes of India, types of poisons, poisonous & nonpoisonous snakes and their habits & habitats by the Snake expert Sri Debonik Mukherjee. The snake charmer Sri Karmanath shared his knowledge of the herbs that he uses for treating snake bite victims.
- iv. In the concluding session Sri Karmanath, the snake charmer played a melodious tune on his “Been”( A special instrument to attract snakes) which was made by himself using bamboo, dried gourd fruit, leaves and wax (Produced by honey bee).

### **Interaction with the snake charmers families:**

Approximately 15 people (men / women) were chosen for interaction which was carried out by Sri K.S. Attri, S.E.A. and Dr. Jaya Prasoon, S.E.A. on 7. 7.12. Following observations can be drawn out of this interaction:

- i. Snake charmers are native of Delhi, as their generations i.e. father, grandfather & great grandfather has been dwelling here. They are a marginalized society living at the periphery of Delhi.
- ii. They are provided with the facility of electricity and water connection but are deprived of lavatory facility.
- iii. Their main profession was to perform shows of snakes and treating the snake bite victims with their own traditional method by using special herbs (Jadi – Booty). They believe in their traditional method of Jhar – phoonk after someone is victimized by snake bite. Some of them have acquired license for collecting herbs from U.P., Arunachal Pradesh, Himanchal Pradesh, Uttranchal and Assam for treatment of snake bite.
- iv. After the ban was imposed on them by the Government for not keeping alive snakes at home, it has become difficult for them to afford two square meals a day. Even after giving repeated representations to the officials of the ministry for providing license to restart their profession they are still kept awaited for a favourable decision and are presently facing hardship.
- v. They have tried to take up new professions for eg. some of them have opened local grocery shops, others are working as labourers with builders or with small industries, besides beating drums during marriages or some special occasions or festivals.
- vi. No help from any government agency / NGO to support and fight for their cause.
- vii. Some of them have kept cows or buffalos and are involved in the business of selling milk & its products in their locality. But at times municipal committee people confiscate their animals if found roaming around or in the village.
- viii. Some of them are called to catch snakes from the houses during monsoons. They are also called for treatment of victims of snake bites.
- ix. Children of this community both girls & boys are sent to school. They are not taking this profession in future as there is no hope for lifting up the ban on their profession by the government, but they too had the in-depth of knowledge of this profession, they can very well distinguish between poisonous and non-poisonous snakes, first aid given during snake bites and also the remedial herbs.
- x. Marriages are done within the community and if there is any exception the person is out casted. If the person wants to return to the community he/she has to undergo a “Purification process”.
- xi. Ladies are housewives and they do not go out on work. Most of the households keep firewood for cooking while some of them had gas stove also.
- xii. They perform special pooja on “Shivratri” and “Naagpanchmi” when some old snakes are granted retirement and left free in the wild.

## **Conclusion:**

- i. India was known to the foreign tourists as the “Land of Snake Charmers”. Today also some of them display their skill in the fairs and festivals and also on some special occasions.
- ii. The ban imposed on this community by the government is going to wipe out the treasure of their practical knowledge about snakes and the herbal treatment. This can be seen as a dent on the fame of the Indian tradition.
- iii. If this situation prolongs then it will pose a threat to the traditional knowledge which will not be passed out to the next generations who are not willing to take it as this profession is scope less for their future.
- iv. These children being exposed to the city culture, thus they were spilling with confidence and were able to grasp efficiently.
- v. Being the minors of the ‘Sapera Community’ they had effectively inherited the valuable knowledge about various facts related to their profession from their ancestors, which was truly reflected during the interactive session with them.
- vi. We have been able to sufficiently widen the sphere of their environmental awareness regarding various resources by conducting this outreach programme.