



Wednesday 6 October 2010

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Western Ghats,the paradise on earth

Ronald Anil Fernandes

Until the Karnataka Power Corporation Limited (KPCL) proposed to set up a 200 MW hydro electric power project, perhaps not many would have even heard of Hongadahalla, Horibetta or Bettakumeri.

The reason is very simple — all these places are not easily accessible as they were quite far from the highways or towns.



Located around 50 kms from Sakleshpur (Hassan district) or 40 kms from Subramanya (Dakshina Kannada district), these bio-diversity hotspots are nothing less than a paradise. In fact, you can hear the birds chirp or even the sound of the breeze. Fortunately or unfortunately, there is no mobile network too.

However, if you are 'lucky,' you may come across wild elephants and snakes (in Horibetta forest) or you can kiss the clouds atop Bettakumeri, the region which is said to be receiving more than 300 inches of rain (more than Agumbe) in a year, according to villagers.

Besides rare species of birds, reptiles, mammals and butterflies, the region has been declared as 'eco-sensitive region' as it is very rich in biodiversity and is a high centre of endemism with 36 per cent of plant species. "Besides elephants, this region also harbours endangered species like Slender Loris, grey headed bulbul and Malabar pied Hornbill. Presence of Lion Tailed Macaque which acts as a flagship species for rainforests also signifies the ecological importance of the region," states a report prepared by IISc scientists.

Nature's bounty

If you prefer to travel to Subramanya from Bachinahalli, the entire 35-kms is full of surprises. Besides umteen number of mini-waterfalls, there are several scenic beauty spots, especially near Bisle ghat (from where you can have a breathtaking view of three mountain ranges. They include Yenikallu Betta (located in Hassan district), Doddabetta and Pushpagiri (both located in Kodagu district) and Kumaraparvatha (located in Dakshina Kannada district). In fact, all the four mountain ranges are a haven for the trekkers. But wait! Not all are lucky always to see the god's creations as most of the time (especially in rainy and winter season), the mountain ranges are covered by mist. However, the journey can be a thrilling experience with umpteen number of water falls, with uninvited guests like peacocks, deers, monkeys and even snakes.

Be ready for worst

If something goes wrong (vehicle gives a slip), the tourist/visitor will be left with only two options — use your knowledge to repair the vehicle or pray to god till a good Samaritan comes this way as there is not even a single shop or house on the route. Of course, no mobile network or no land line connection!

If you are planning to visit the place, be prepared to go wild.

How to reach

If you are going from Sakleshpur, after reaching Munjrabad Fort (5 kms from Sakleshpur on Mangalore Road), take left and travel for about 40 kms from Subramanya Road. Take right at Bachinahalli and travel about 13 kms to Hongadahalla. (There are many cross roads and its better to check with somebody before you move).

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From Hongadaholla, you can travel for about 3 kms in vehicle. From there, one can travel only in jeeps with 4-wheel drive. Its also border for Hassan and Dakshina Kannada. Having read the story, perhaps there is no need to mention that there are no shops in the vicinity!

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