

The mythological theme of Sri Venkateswara Zoological Park, Tirupati

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Sri Venkateswara Zoological Park, has been established at Tirupati, the abode of Lord Sri Venkateswara. Considering the background and the attitude of the people visiting this famous temple town, this zoological park has been developed on a spiritual theme. The mission of the zoo is to spread the message of conservation of nature with mythological impetus. It also reminds the modern Indian of the importance given to wildlife and nature by our ancestors.

An inscription at the entrance quotes "*Beejam Maam Sarvabhootanam*" (I am the eternal seed of all creations) which means that God exists in all living beings. This very sentiment led the ancient Indians to pass on a rich heritage, which includes a high degree of respect to animals, plant and nature. This zoo endeavors to revive the long forgotten heritage to achieve the balance and harmony between man and nature.

The unique aspect of this Zoo is that all the animals exhibited herein are those which are mentioned in our ancient Epics and manuscripts such as the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Panchatantra etc. The main areas and enclosures in the Zoo have been named after famous locations and personalities mentioned in Indian mythology and epics like the Ramayana & the Mahabharata, e.g. Kishkintha-Van, Jambavanthavan and Airavata-van.

Lord Ganesha, the elephant-headed god of wisdom and plenty is hailed as the remover of all obstacles. He is invoked at the beginning of all rituals and before any major undertaking and hence the installation of the statue of Lord Ganesha at the entrance of the Zoo. Lord Ganesha has also been incorporated into the logo of our Zoo.



The depiction of *Matsya*, *Kurma*, *Varaha* and *Narasimha Avatharas* which are the incarnations of the Almighty at the entrance, provides an

opening to the new theme of Sri Venkateswara Zoological Park reminding of the evolutionary stages of life on earth. It would also remind the modern man, the place and importance given to Wildlife and Nature by our ancestors. The primary purpose of the zoo has always been to emphasize the importance of co-existence of Man with Wildlife and Nature.

Animals on display. The various animal enclosures and their corresponding Puranic reflections are indicated as follows:

KISHKINDHA

In the epic Ramayana, Kishkindha was the abode of the Vanaras, originally ruled by Vali. Vali's brother Sugreeva, who is banished from the kingdom, enters into an agreement with Sri Rama whereby Rama kills Vali and restores Kishkindha to Sugreeva, and in turn Sugreeva helps Rama in searching for Sita. Later Sugreeva with the help of his valiant army and personnel like Hanuman, Angadha, Jambavanth, Nal, Neel, etc., locates Sita in the custody of Ravana, the demon king of Lanka. They make way through the sea by



constructing a bridge with the help of Nal and Neel and later Rama kills Ravana in the big battle and gets back Sita. All the primate enclosures, where the rhesus macaque, bonnet macaque, stump-tailed macaque are displayed are grouped aptly together under the name Kishkindha.

KARTHIKEYA VANAM

The myth is that the peacock "has angels' feathers, a devil's voice, and the walk of a thief." It is the mount of Saraswati, goddess of wisdom

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and learning. It is also, sometimes, a vehicle of Lakshmi and of Brahma. When it is mounted by *Kama*, god of love, it represents desire. Myth has it representing fidelity, as it dies of grief, or remains single, if it loses its mate. Legend says it hates gold and will not go near it. It also is said to be able to foretell rain, and dances when it rains. The Peacock is generally related to Lord Murugan also called Lord Karthikeya based on which the Peacock enclosure is called the *Karthikeya vanam*.



MAKARA VANAM

The crocodile is given prime place in Hindu religion. It is believed that the river Ganga depends on a crocodile for her very frequent visits to Bay of Bengal from the Himalaya mountains. The rain-god Varuna also rides on *Makara*. Kamadeva's emblem is *Makara* and hence his wife carries it whenever she goes. At times the couple takes a joy ride on this animal. In one of the expeditions of Himalayas, Hanuman was bathing in lake when all of a sudden a huge crocodile clasps his legs. With great difficulty he drags the animal out of water. The animal turns itself into a beautiful damsel and proclaims that because of Daksha's curse she became a crocodile and it is Hanuman's contact that revoked the curse. Similarly, when Hanuman was returning from Lanka his perspiration fell in the mouth of a *Nakshtra* and she gave birth to *Makara Dhwaja*.

The story of *Gajendra Moksha* is well known. When the elephant *Gajendra* tries to quench its thirst in a pool of water, a *rakshasa* in the guise of a crocodile sinks its sharp teeth into one of its legs. After all his attempts to get released fail, *Gajendra* seeks Lord Vishnu's intervention, the lord kills the crocodile and sets the elephant free.



KOORMA-NIVAS

The tortoise enclosure in the zoo is named *Koormanivas* after an *avata* of Vishnu, the *Koormavata*.

The *Devas* and the *Rakshasas* decide to churn the *ksheerasagar* (the sea of milk) to extract Amritha - the elixir of life. They use the mountain Mandarachala as the churn, the divine snake Vasuki as the rope. But the enormous mountain starts to sink into the *ksheerasagar*. Lord Vishnu takes the form of a tortoise and acts as the pivot to support the mountain.



JAMBAVANTHA VANAM

Jambavantha was a mighty warrior in the army of Sugreeva. *Jambavantha* resembles the animal bear. In Ramayana he plays a vital role in securing Sita. He along with Hanuman and Angadha proceeds towards south in search of Sita and gets a hint about Sita, through Jatayu, an eagle which gets injured in a fight with Ravana while he was kidnapping Sita. Their journey is stopped at a point when they come across the sea. It is here that Jambavantha plays

a very important role of inspiring Hanuman and reminding him of his strength to cross the sea to Lanka. This paves the way in location of Sita in the Ashoka-van of Lanka. In Mahabharata also Jambavantha fights with Lord Krishna who comes in search of a diamond called *Samantaka*, in his possession. *Jambavantha* loses the battle to Krishna and gives him the diamond and also his daughter *Jambavathi* in marriage to him.

Here in the zoo there already exists an enclosure for sloth bear and it is proposed to develop another two or three enclosures and all of them put together will be called Jambavantha vanam.



SHAKTI VANAM

Goddess Durga the destroyer of evil, fights and kills the demon 'Mahishasura' and in doing so her mount also assists her in the act. Her mount is depicted as a tiger. Known for its ferocity and physical power this animal is chosen to perform such acts and this is precisely why the tigers enclosure is named Shakti vanam.

AIRAVATHA VANAM

Airavata is the name of the eight-trunked white elephant of Lord Indra. It is said that this rare elephant was one among the many holy things that emerged during the churning out of the holy seas by both deities and demons.

Ganesha the elephant-headed god of wisdom, prosperity and successful endeavor, also appeared at the beginning of every ritual and *pooja* in Hinduism is strongly linked to the elephant. The story has it that the idol made and put to life by Parvathi, was beheaded by her husband Shiva when his entry was obstructed. Parvathi the consort of Shiva comes to know about this and asks Shiva to revive the boy. The first being which is found sleeping with its head facing north is sought. They come across an elephant in this posture and it is beheaded. The same is replaced to revive Lord Ganesha. The

elephant is thus revered and hence the name Airavath-van for the enclosure of the elephants.

MAREECHA VANAM

Ramayana starts to take off into a high drama after the kidnap of Sita the consort of Lord Rama. Rama and Sita are sent to exile for fourteen years as per the wish of Kaikeyi, one of the wives of Dasaratha, the father of Rama. Lakshman follows suit. Sita is attracted to the beauty of a deer in the forest during that exile and asks Rama to get it for her to tame. The demon in the guise of that deer draws Rama deep into the jungle. The distress call to Lakshman, who is left to guard Sita, is given by the same deer.

Lakshmana is forced by Sita to attend to that call and paves way for the kidnap of Sita around which the epic revolves.

The Deer is associated with innumerable stories. Maricha assumes the form of a golden deer in

order to attract Sitadevi. Lord Shiva uses a loincloth made with deer skin. Vayu's chariot is pulled



by a pair of deer. Musk-deer, kasturimriga, is a near relative of deer. The zoo with its abundant population of these deer and antelopes names this enclosure the Swarna-harinivan after the mythical golden deer.



GARUDA NIVAS

The bird enclosures in the zoo are collectively named as Garuda-nivas. Lord Vishnu soars above the earth on Garuda, the golden eagle-hawk, the noblest among birds, who is swifter than the wind and the sworn enemy of snakes. He has the head, wings and talons of a bird but the body of a man. The Eagle has been depicted as the Lord's mount because of its unique ability to reach the heights that no other bird can reach. A sense of power and strength is always evident in depictions of Garuda.

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Puranic Name of the enclosures & Species displayed:

Sl. No.	Puranic Name of the Enclosure	Name of the Species associated with the enclosure
(1)	(2)	(3)
1.	Kishkindha Vanam	
	(a) Angada dweepam	Stump tailed monkey
	(b) Vali dweep	Rhesus monkey
	(c) Sugreeva dweep	Bonnet monkey
2.	Mayur Vanam	Peacocks
3.	Mareecha Vanam	Spotted Deer
4.	Chitra Koota Vanam	Pheasants
5.	Kanithi Vanam	Sambar
6.	Gokul Vanam	Neelgai
7.	Mruga Vanam	Chowsingha
8.	Krishna Mruga Vanam	Black Buck
9.	Vruka Vanam	Wolf
10.	Baghela Vanam	Leopard
11.	Sakthi vanam	Tiger
12.	Bharatha vanam	Lions
13.	Dandakaranya	Hyena
14.	Karataka vanam	Porcupine, Jackal
15.	Damanka Vanam	Fox
16.	Bhairava Vanam	Wild Dog
17.	Jambavantha Vanam	Bear
18.	Shuka Nivas	Parakeet World
19.	Nala Neela Dweep	Baboon
20.	Aira Vatha Vanam	Elephants
21.	Makara Nivas	Crocodiles
22.	Manasa Sarovar	Water Birds
23.	Koorma Nivas	Star tortoise