

Reviving sacred blooms

It's Time To Preserve And Protect Indigenous Flowers



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India's rich culture is deeply intertwined with its flora and fauna. The temples, especially, are sacred places where people offer flowers to deities as symbols of devotion and love. To preserve these traditions and also protect biodiversity, the CSIR-National Botanical Research Institute (NBRI), Lucknow, has launched an initiative to revive indigenous flowers by positioning several operatives across different states who identify, procure, and preserve them.

Floriculture mission

"Globally, India ranks 14th in floriculture, but with only 0.6% of total exports," says Dr Ajit Kumar Shasany, director, NBRI, while sharing details about CSIR-NBRI's 'Floriculture Mission'. Launched in 2021, the mission aims to increase farmers' income and encourage entrepreneurship by leveraging scientific advancements in the floriculture sector. While the sector has both



organised and unorganised production channels, NBRI focuses on streamlining the unorganised sector for maximum impact. Through 'Participative Rural Appraisal', NBRI identifies and trains rural farmers to take part in this mission.

Temple economies

"During ceremonial functions - whether formal events, weddings, or religious ceremonies - there's always a huge demand for flowers," shares Dr Shasany. NBRI has, therefore, established farmer clusters around major Hindu temples, providing training in

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gardening and nursery management. They cultivate flowers for temple use, creating a sustainable temple economy. The Jagannath Temple in Puri, Odisha is a successful example, with local farmers cultivating 13 acres of land for temple flowers. NBRI provides a variety of flowers, including lotus, murraya, jasmine, rajnigandha, chrysanthemum, sugandharaj, davana, and marjoram.

Namoh 108

The Namoh 108 Lotus holds great cultural and scientific significance. As the first lotus species to have its genome fully sequenced,

it is considered a miracle flower in Hindu culture, symbolising the universe. It is offered during worship at the Jagannath Temple. The Namoh 108 Lotus has various uses beyond worship - roots have nutritional benefits, petals can be used to make tea and fibres are suitable for clothing. NBRI strives to commercialise agrotechnology used to create these unique products.

Future plans

NBRI aims to build a thriving 'Temple Economy' by utilising local flora for commercial products like liquid sindoor, gulal, natural dyes, and biofertilisers. As per Dr Shasany, a portion of the revenue from product sales is proposed to be reinvested in the temple's upkeep. The Jagannath Temple and Shirdi's Shri Sai Baba Temple are examples of successful collaborations with NBRI, demonstrating the potential of this initiative. "Our primary goal as a government organisation is to improve quality of life for people while preserving our cultural heritage," Dr Shasany signs off.

Through its dedication to preserving biodiversity and fostering economic growth, NBRI is ensuring that India's sacred blooms continue to flourish. 🌸

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