

Worksheets based on the storybook

“Where have all our *gunda thopes* gone?”



Read the story here :

<https://azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/SitePages/pdf/Where-have-all-our-Gunda-Thopes-gone.pdf>

Content:

Sahana Subramanian, Harini Nagendra, Seema Mundoli

Illustrations:

Sahana Subramanian, Neeharika Verma

Layout Design:

Kshiraja Krishnan

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Worksheet 1:

What are commons?

Based on the storybook “Where have all our *gunda thopes* gone?”

Objectives:

- Learn what are commons
- Understand the different uses of commons
- Know what is happening to commons

What are commons or common pool resources?

Commons are resources that are used and collectively managed by a community. In the villages, forests, rivers, lakes, *gunda thopes* (wooded grove), *gaumala* (grazing land), and ponds are all commons. These are natural resources from which communities get some benefits such as food, water, medicine, fuelwood and timber, and many other raw materials for household usage and also for selling it to other people. Local communities also care for these natural resources by laying down rules on how these commons can be used. In cities, one can say that lakes and parks are instances of commons.

Gunda thopes are also commons because ...

Gunda thopes are commons as the local community is involved in planting, harvesting, and caring for the *thopes*. The trees in the *thopes* such as mango, jamun, tamarind, jackfruit, banyan, atti and peepul are planted by the local residents. The fruit, medicines, fuel, and wood from these trees are used by residents. The *thope* is used for grazing and collecting fodder for livestock. Children from the village come to eat fruits and play among the trees. *Thopes* are a community space for holding village meetings, organising community feasts and celebrating festivals. Sometimes there are small temples in the *thopes* and people also worship the trees. In the past, the panchayat and the village residents, not only planted trees, but ensured that the *thopes* were protected. For example, anyone who cut wood without permission was punished. At the same time those who did not have personal access to trees were allowed to cut branches for personal use.



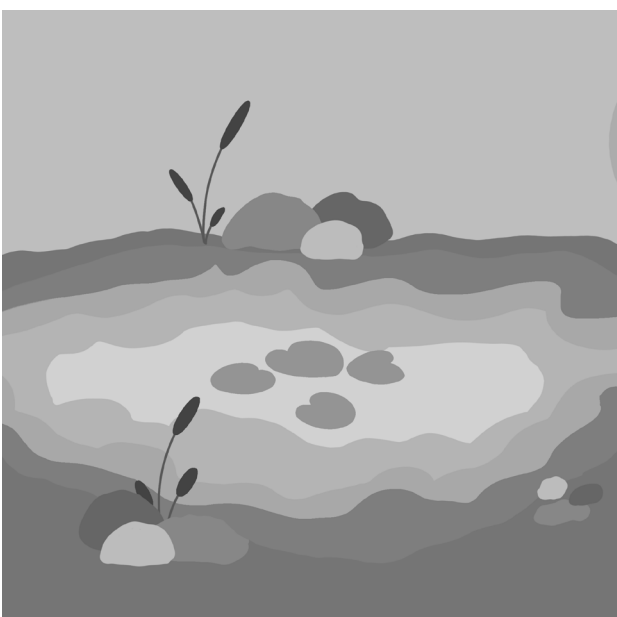
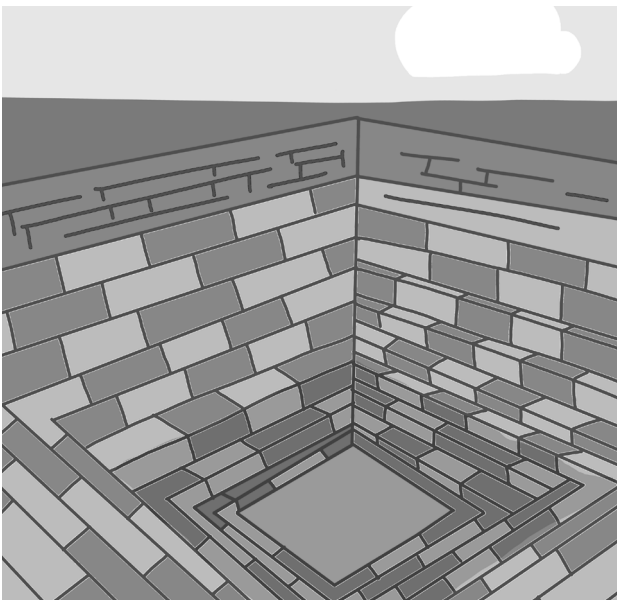
Things to do

Activity 1: Mapping the village/neighbourhood and its commons

The students along with the teacher go for a walk around the village/neighbourhood to identify:

1. The boundary of the village/neighbourhood
2. The location of the different commons (lakes, ponds, wells, parks, *kattes* (raised platform with trees and a shrine), *thopes*, *gaumala* and any other spaces considered as commons) within the boundary of the village/neighbourhood
3. Other natural and man-made features of significance such as village/neighbourhood centre, hillocks/hills, streams, roads with trees on either side, bus stop, schools, government offices such as ward/panchayat office, Public Health Centres, veterinary centre, large dwellings, and main roads

Students should be split into groups and in class they are required to draw a map of the village with the features that they have identified during their walk in 1, 2 and 3 above.



Activity 2: Noting the different uses of commons, and people who access them

Identify a commons in your village, it can be a *gunda thope*, a lake, a pond or a *gaumala*. If you live in a city, take an urban commons like a park or a lake. Observe the commons for a couple of hours in the morning (Anytime between 7 am and 11 am) and evening (anytime between 3 pm and 7 pm). Enter your observations in the table below:

Type of commons

Any specific name given to commons

No.	Question	Morning	Evening
1	Who visited the commons?	(Eg. Fishermen, village-women, grazers)	
2	What are the activities done by visitors at the commons and where were these done?	(Eg. Fishermen-fishing, women-washing clothes, grazers-grazing cows, washing cows)	
3	What is being collected from the commons and from where?	(Eg. Fish from lake, fodder grass, water from lake)	

Activity 3: Changes to commons and drawing a timeline

Speak to the elders in your village. If you live in a big city, find someone who has lived in the locality in your city for a long time. Ask them the following questions and write down their answers. If they agree, you can even record them speaking on a video with a mobile phone or a camera.

For the commons in Activity 1 collect information on:

1. If the commons has a name why was it named so?
2. What were the commons used for in the past?
3. If it is not used or the usage has changed why did this happen?
4. How were the commons managed in the past?
5. How are they managed today?

Other questions to ask:

What were the different commons in the village/neighbourhood in the city?

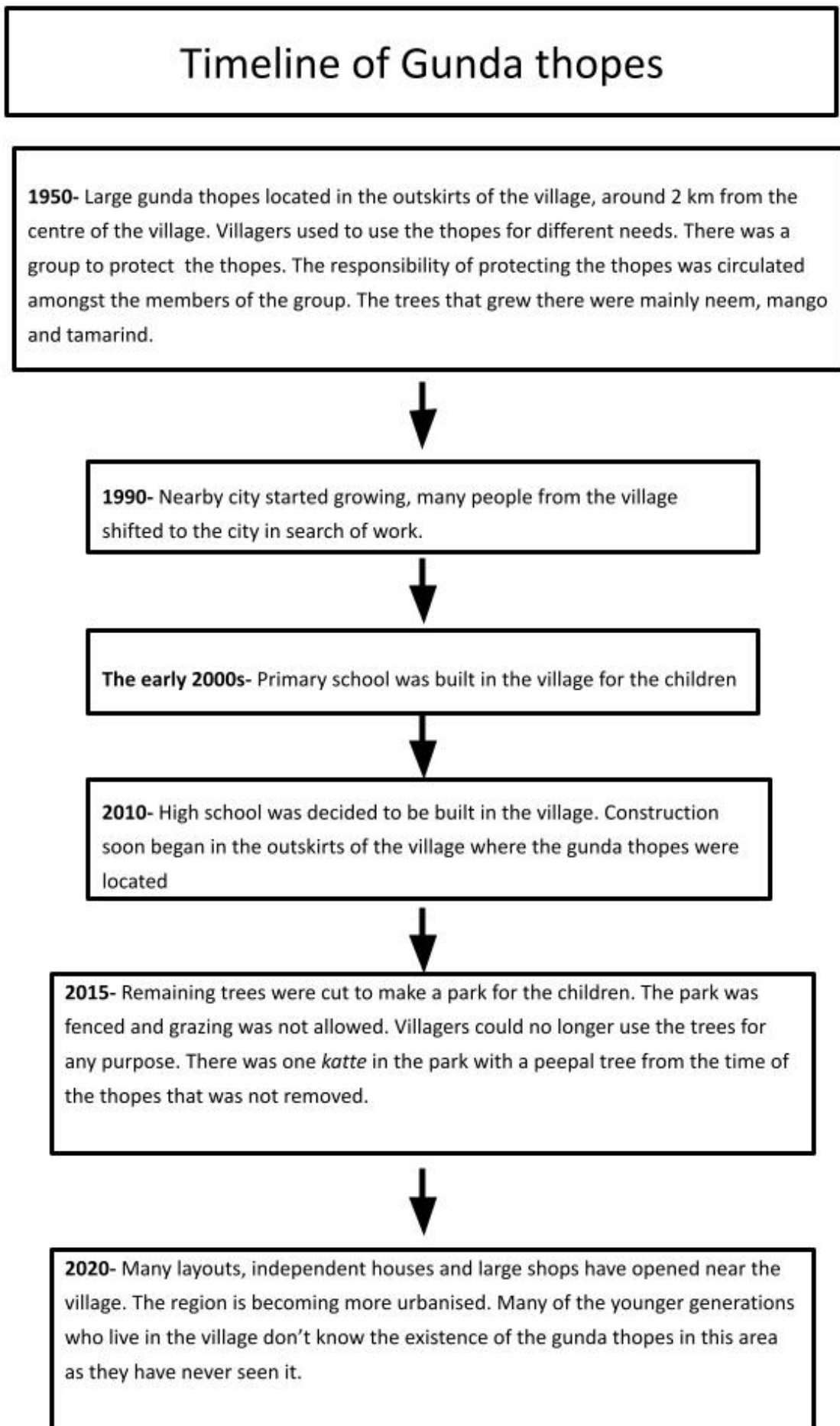
Do these commons still exist?

If they do not exist,

1. What happened to the commons?
2. How did the commons change?
3. Since the commons no longer exists what do people do? (For example, if the commons was a well that no longer exists, where do they get water from now?)
4. Why do they think the commons no longer exist?

After the interview above, make a rough timeline of the commons with the information you have. This will help in learning the historical story of the commons and how it has changed over the years. Through this, you can also learn about how people's relationships with the commons have changed.

Example of a timeline of *gunda thopes*:



Worksheet 2:

MGNREGA for commons

Based on the storybook “Where have all our *gunda thopes* gone?”

Objectives:

- Learn about MGNREGA
- Understand how MGNREGA can help in protecting commons

What is MGNREGA?

MGNREGA or the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is an Indian labour law that guarantees the “Right to Work” for residents in villages across India. Under the MGNREGA scheme, a 100 days of employment every year is guaranteed to all households in the village whose adult members volunteer to work as unskilled manual labour. The aim of the MGNREGA is to improve financial and social security in rural areas. If a person is not employed within 15 days, they are eligible for an unemployment allowance.

MGNREGA can help protect commons because...

Through MGNREGA, there is the possibility of protecting commons. The “Right to Work”, which is the cornerstone of MGNREGA and the “Right to Resources” can both be channeled through MGNREGA. Along with labour, MGNREGA can provide the much needed funds to protect commons. Activities that can be done under MGNREGA are water harvesting, construction of wells, forest protection, raising nurseries, building cattle sheds, afforestation and more. Not only would this help to provide individuals to improve financial and social security but also improve quality of life through the abundance of and access to natural resources in the commons.

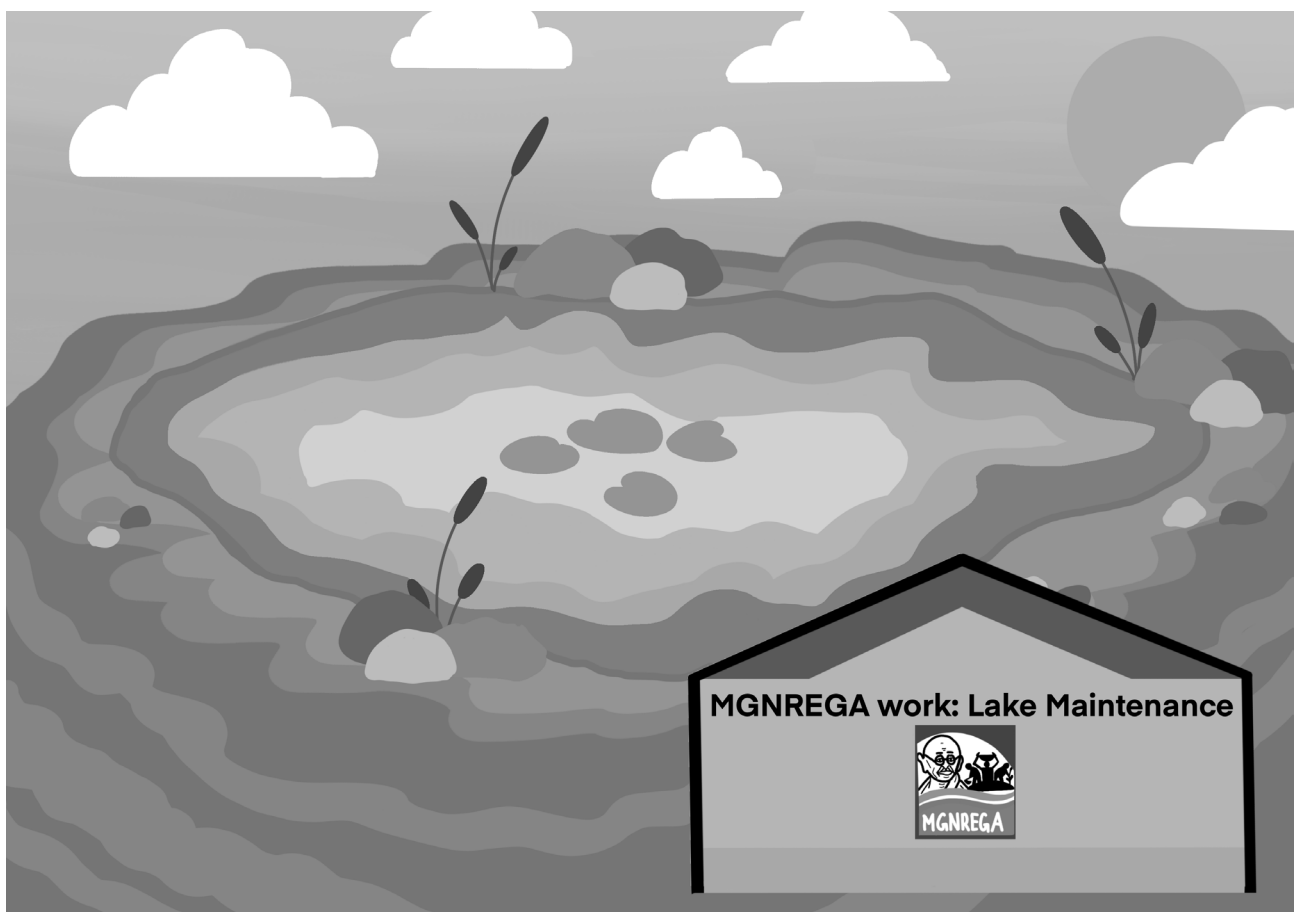


Things to do

Activity 1: Understanding how MGNREGA can help protect commons

This activity can be done as a class visit to the panchayat office to know more about the MGNREGA work in the village. The students can ask the following questions to the panchayat members:

1. Is MGNREGA implemented in the village?
2. What are the total number of households in the village, and how many of them have MGNREGA cards?
3. List the different works done under MGNREGA in the village in the last one year, and how many people from the village were employed for each activity?
4. What are the different kinds of commons in the village?
5. Describe the kind of work done under MGNREGA in these commons (lakes, *gaumalas*, *thopes*, ponds, wells, etc) in the village.
6. What were the benefits of the MGNREGA works on the commons either to individuals or to the village?



Activity 2: Mapping the commons in the village

From the list of commons mentioned in Activity 1, divide the class into groups asking them to do the below:

1. Visit the commons in the village and observe in detail the state of the commons and activities around it.
2. Write a note to describe the commons from their field visit. The note should feature what was surrounding the commons, the state of the commons itself, any activities seen during the time of their visit, any structures or trees on the commons and so on.
3. List out the kind of works that can be done around these commons to improve them and for their yearly maintenance?

For fun!

In the groups that the students visited, ask them to create miniature models of the commons using natural materials (stone, mud, sticks, seeds etc).



Worksheet 3:

Trees in our lives—and their many uses

Based on the storybook “Where have all our *gunda thopes* gone?”

Objectives:

- Learn about the uses of trees on our commons
- Understand why it is important to protect trees in the commons

What are the use of trees in the commons?

Trees are beneficial to us in many ways and provide sustenance to a vast multitude of species, other than humans. If you have stood under a tree during the afternoon, you will notice how much cooler it is under the tree—several degrees even from an unshaded part. Trees thus provide us with shade protecting us from the sun in summers, and keep the air around us cool. Trees are also important in controlling pollution, as leaves have the capacity to absorb toxic gases. Leaves of trees also settle dust which otherwise we would end up inhaling. Trees are a source of fruits we love to eat and flowers we use in worship. Leaves and seeds too have several uses. For example jackfruit leaves are used as fodder for livestock while oil is extracted from the seeds of honge. Wood from trees is used as fuel, and for making furniture, tools, and even musical instruments like the veena. Most parts of many trees also have medicinal properties—for example all parts of the neem tree have some medicinal value. The ecological uses of trees are many. Trees are home to rich biodiversity such as birds, insects and mammals. Trees act as wind breakers, while the roots bind the soil together preventing erosion.

We should protect trees because...

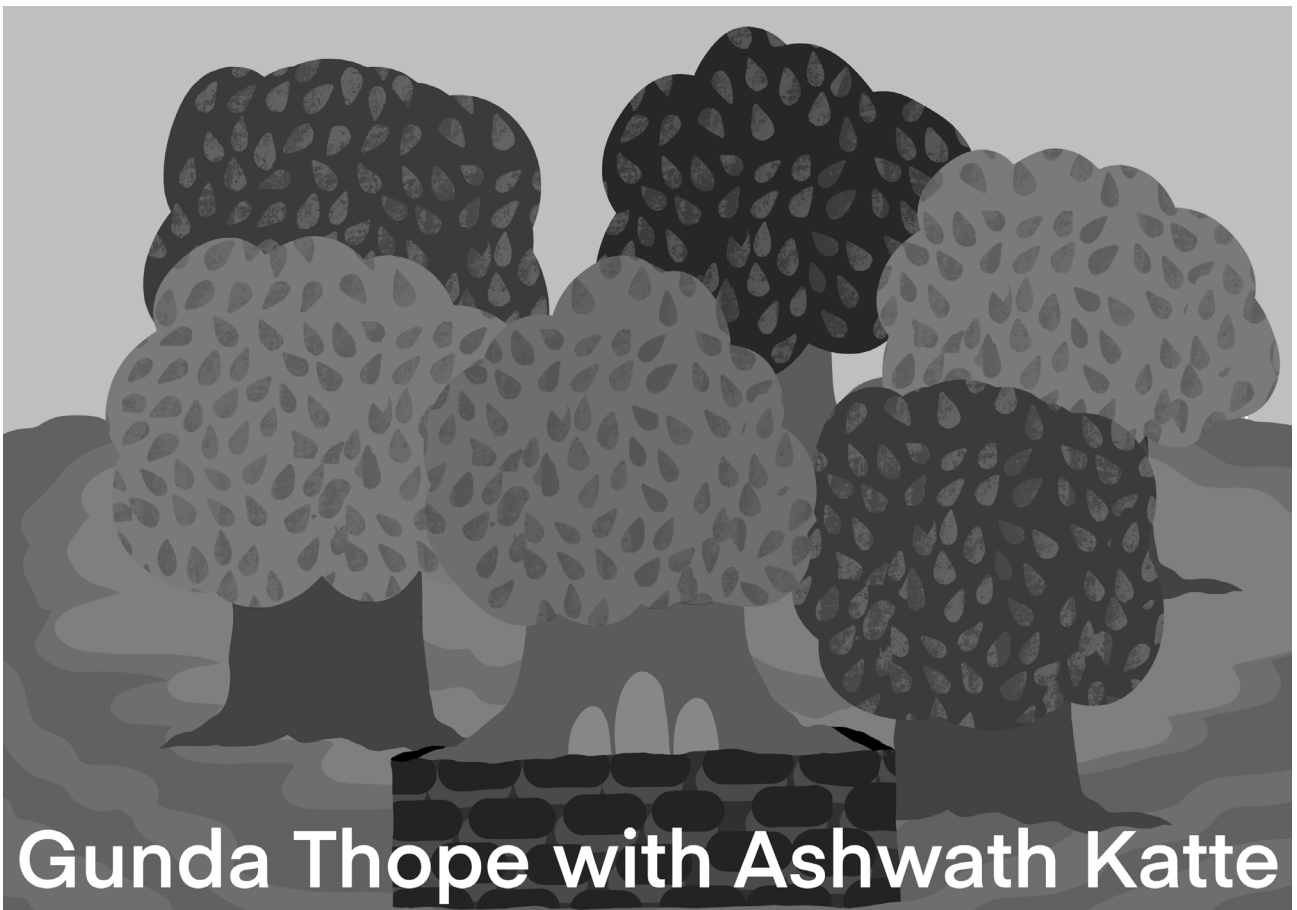
Trees are useful to us in so many ways. Since trees also help to cool the temperature and in controlling air pollution, it is important to protect trees to reduce impact of climate change and global warming. Trees must be protected to prevent the topsoil, important for agriculture, from being washed or blown away. Many trees are sacred and have cultural and religious importance. Some trees are also important because they are heritage trees—especially large and old trees that are a witness to the history of the village or neighborhood. Trees also make us happy—the green of the leaves, the fruits we like to pluck and the games we play around trees all contribute to our health and well-being. So, shouldn't we protect trees then?



Things to do

Activity 1: Describe a tree

Choose a tree and observe it. Describe the branches, leaves, bark, flowers, fruit and roots of the tree in your own words. You can even describe it by drawing a picture.



Activity 2: Identify trees and their uses

Identify the trees in a commons for example around a lake, a *gunda thope* or a park. Collect the information in the table below taking the help of an elder in your village /neighbourhood.

No.	Name of the tree in English	The local name of the tree	What parts of the tree are useful? (eg: the bark, the leaves, the fruit, the flower, the roots)	What is it used for? (economic, social, religious/ cultural uses)
Eg. 1	Mango	Mavu	Fruit, leaves, branches	Fruit- for eating (can be eaten raw or ripe), making pickles and other dishes Leaves- for decorations outside the house door Branches- for construction
1				
2				
3				

Activity 3: Observe biodiversity around a tree

Look at the trees in your commons. What are the different kinds of biodiversity that interact with the trees? Can you observe birds, insects, or animals? Draw and write about your observations. You can use the table below to help you.

No.	Name of the tree	Biodiversity	Interaction
Eg. 1	Mango	Birds	Build nests on the trees
Eg. 2	Mango	Cows	Rest under the tree for shade, scratch against the bark

For fun!

1. Take a sheet of paper and some colour pencils or crayons. If you do not have these, a pencil will work too. Go to a large tree in the commons. Place the sheet of paper over the bark and colour over it. You will be able to notice the pattern of the bark appearing on the paper. Do this for 3-4 trees in and around the commons. Do you notice a difference in the patterns of the bark?

2. Observe the leaves and flowers that grow on the branches of the trees. Are there some that have fallen on the ground? Collect these leaves and flowers to try and make a garland. You can also try and make a crown, bracelet, necklace or other jewellery. Do others in your village make garlands out of the flowers? If yes, what do they use them for?

3. Take a couple of big leaves from a peepul tree. Cover these leaves with water for 2 weeks. Ensure the water is just enough to cover the leaves completely. After 2 weeks, you will notice that the green parts of the leaves have fallen off and the veins of the leaves remain. Dry the leaves in the sun for a few minutes until they harden. You can now paint over the leaf—colourful geometric designs or more intricate drawings.

4. Do you have tamarind trees near you in the commons? Collect the ripe fruits of these trees and enjoy their sweet-sour taste! But save the seeds to play games like hop scotch, *pallanguzhi* or *alaguli mane*, snakes and ladders/*paramapadam*, ludo/*gatta bara* and more.



Azim Premji University

Buragunte Village, Sarjapura Hobli, Anekal Taluk,
Billapura Gram Panchayat, Bengaluru – 562125

080-66145136

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