



Modhweth Festival

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Why in News?

[The Toda tribe](#), one of the **oldest Dravidian ethnic groups** in the [Nilgiris Hills](#) of **Tamil Nadu**, celebrated their traditional '**Modhweth**' festival to mark the New Year.



What is the Modhweth Festival?

▪ About:

- It is celebrated annually on the last Sunday of December or the first Sunday of January.
- It is held at **the Moonpo temple in Muthanadu Mund village**, located in the **Nilgiri district**.
- The Moonpo temple features a **unique vertical spire with a thatched roof and a flat stone on top**, making it one of the last Toda temples of its kind in the Nilgiris.

▪ Rituals and Celebrations:

- Prayers are offered to the deity, **Thenkish Amman**, for good health, rains, and a bountiful harvest in the coming year.
- **Participants perform a dance outside the temple** as part of the celebrations.

▪ Unique Customs:

- Toda youth showcase their **strength and masculinity by lifting a greased boulder** weighing around 80 kg.
- As per traditional customs, **women do not participate in the celebrations**.

What is the Toda Tribe?

▪ About:

- Toda Tribe is a **pastoral tribe** of the **Nilgiri Hills of southern India**.
- The Todas are classified as a **[Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group \(PVTG\)](#)** in **Tamil Nadu**.
- The Toda language is **[Dravidian](#)** but is the **most unusual and different** among the languages belonging to the Dravidian family.

▪ Significance:

- Toda lands are part of the **[Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve](#)**, designated as an **[International Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO](#)**.
- Their territory is recognized as a **[UNESCO World Heritage Site](#)**.

▪ Religion and Beliefs:

- Their religious practices revolve around a **pantheon of gods**, with **Tökisy (goddess) and Ön (god of the underworld)** as the central deities.

Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve

▪ About:

- It was the **first biosphere reserve in India established in 1986**.
- The reserve spans across three Indian states: **Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Kerala**.
- It is **India's first biosphere reserve under [UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme](#)**.
- Home to several tribal groups such as the **Adiyan, Aranadan, Kader, Kurichian, Kuruman, and Kurumbas**.
- It portrays the confluence of **Afro-tropical and Indo-Malayan biotic zones** of the world.

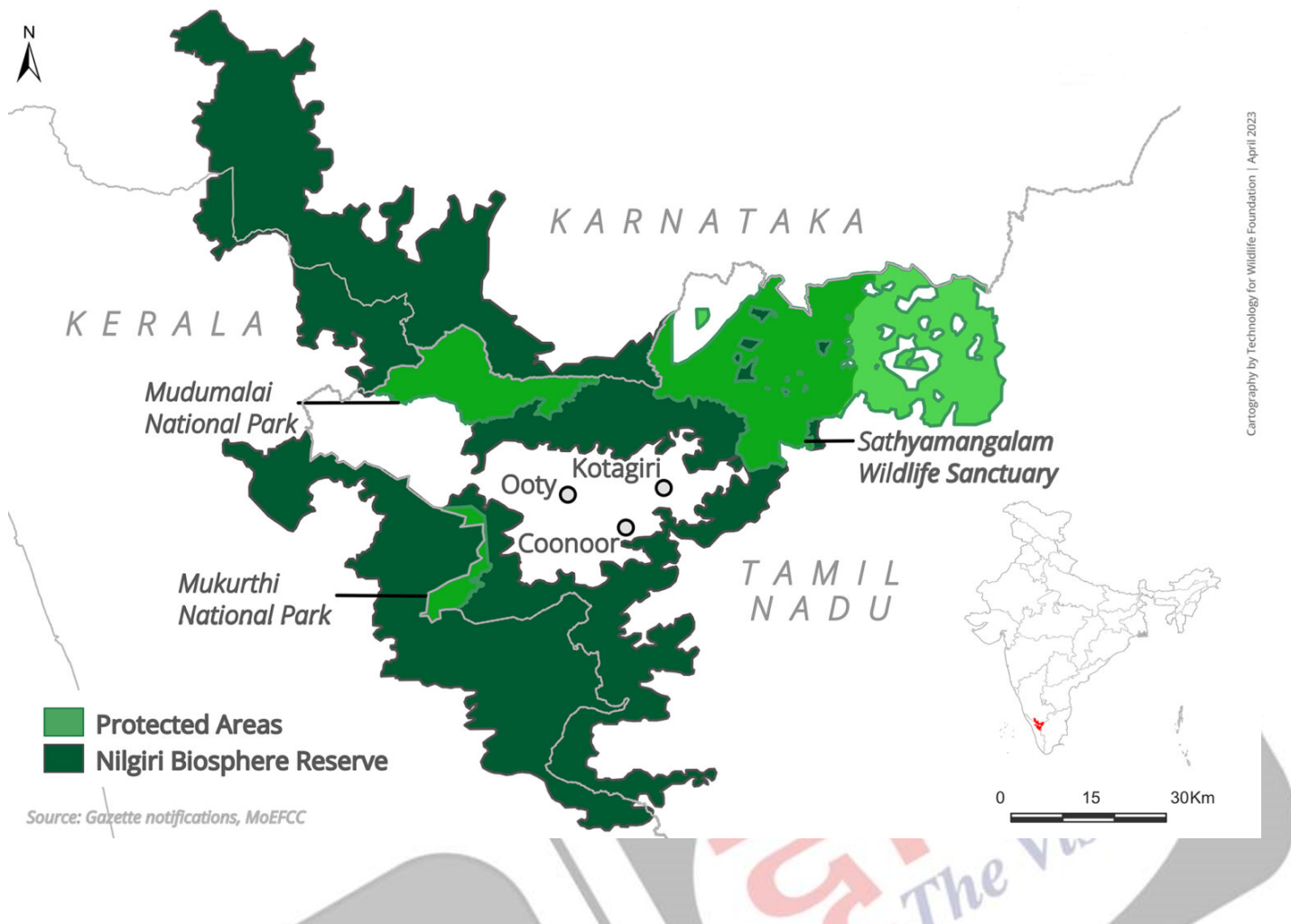
▪ Fauna:

- Animals like **[Nilgiri tahr](#), Nilgiri langur, gaur, [Indian elephant](#)** and freshwater fishes such as **Nilgiri danio (*Devario neilgherriensis*), Nilgiri barb** are found here.

▪ Protected Areas in NBR:

- The **Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary, Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary, Bandipur National Park, Nagarhole National Park, [Mukurthi National Park](#) and [Silent Valley](#)** are the protected areas present within this reserve.





UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Consider the following pairs: (2018)

Craft - Heritage of

1. Puthukkuli shawls — Tamil Nadu
2. Sujni embroidery — Maharashtra
3. Uppada Jamdani — Karnataka saris

Which of the pairs given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 2
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 2 and 3

Ans: (a)

Q. Which of the following hills are found where the Eastern Ghats and the Western Ghats meet? (2008)

- (a) Anaimalai Hills

(b) Cardamom Hills

(c) Nilgiri Hills

(d) Shevoroy Hills

Ans: (c)

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