



## **Animal Welfare Board of India**

Ministry of Environment and Forest and Climate Change, Government of India

# **Welfare Status of Temple Elephants Sandhya, Jayanthi and Indumathi**



## **Assessment of Welfare and Management Status of Elephants Sandhya, Jayanthi and Indumathi of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Mutt, Tamil Nadu, Southern India**

*Evaluation Conducted in August 2015 by*

**Suparna Ganguly<sup>1</sup>, Dr.Sundaramoorthy<sup>2</sup>, Dr. R. Sumathy<sup>3</sup>,  
Dr. Manilal Valliyate<sup>4</sup>, Dr. Shiela N. Rao<sup>5</sup> and Dr. Supraja Dharini<sup>6</sup>**

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1: Trustee, CUPA 2: Researcher, CPREEC 3: Veterinarian, AWBI 4: Co-opted member & Veterinarian, AWBI 5: Trustee, WRRC 6: Founder & Chairperson, Tree Foundation

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**Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI)**

13/1, Third Seaward Road, Valmiki Nagar, Thiruvannamiyur,

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[www.awbi.org](http://www.awbi.org)

And

**Compassion Unlimited Plus Action (CUPA)**

Veterinary College Campus,

Hebbal, Bangalore 560 024

[www.cupabangalore.org](http://www.cupabangalore.org)

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Authors: Suparna Ganguly, Dr.Sundaramurthy, Dr. R. Sumathy, Dr.Manilal Valliyate,  
Dr. Shiela N. Rao and Dr.Supraja Dharini

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Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) Publications Officer

Email: [awbi@md3.vsnl.net.in](mailto:awbi@md3.vsnl.net.in)

OR

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Email: [cupabl@gmail.com](mailto:cupabl@gmail.com)

## Contents

Preface.....	4
Acknowledgements.....	4
Executive Summary.....	5
Recommendations.....	6
Introduction.....	9
Objective.....	10
Method.....	10
Origin.....	11
Shelter.....	11
Water and Related Parameters.....	12
Walk and Related Parameters.....	13
Social interaction.....	14
Observed Behaviour.....	14
Free-Ranging Status.....	14
Work Type.....	15
Provision of Food.....	15
Reproductive Status.....	15
Health status and Veterinary Care.....	15
Status of Infrastructure.....	20
Mahout/Cawadi Status.....	20
Legal Violations.....	20
Health and Safety Concerns.....	22
Conclusion.....	22
References.....	23
Appendix I: Authorisation letter (page 1 & 2) given by AWBI for Inspection.....	24
Appendix II: AWBI's Guidelines for Minimum Standards of Care for Elephants at Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Mutt, Tamil Nadu.....	26

## Preface

Temples, traditionally, have kept elephants as a sign of affluence, wealth and an attraction for the devotees. The origin of this practice is unknown. Neither do ancient texts mention any need or use of an elephant for religious ceremonies or functions. It can be deduced that elephants were parked in temples since they had vast wooded grounds, when not in use during wars in ancient India. These same places today have become vastly urbanised, and the open spaces they enjoyed have become concretised and heavily populated.

Elephant are a highly social, intelligent, sensitive, and long living species with a very complex system of communication. Females and their calves form the core unit of elephant families; females of all age class stay in their group throughout their lives, males disperse from the group at the age of sexual maturity, and are said to lead social but solitary lives. Given the complex social system and associated interaction among all individuals in an elephant herd, it is of immense importance to maintain captive animals in a group. As studies have shown elephants that are kept alone are more prone to aggression towards their keepers or the public than those that are kept as a group.

In July 2015, the Animal Welfare Board of India directed their representatives to visit the Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Mutt in Kancheepuram, Tamil Nadu (*see Appendix I*), in order to ascertain the living conditions of the female elephants in their care. This was directed by many complaints to the AWBI pertaining to the upkeep of the elephants in the temple. .

This report attempts to objectively evaluate the physical environment the elephants inhabit and the opportunities that may be present for their wellbeing and health, which are not currently being explored. The same as been accomplished through direct observations, discussions with their mahouts and authorities and study of the elephants' work and daily routine.

## Acknowledgements

AWBI extends their thanks to the Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Mutt authorities for co-operating with the evaluation team to conduct the study and evaluation of elephants Sandhya, Indumathi and Jayanthi. Temple authorities' viz. the Administration In-charge, Sri D.Sharma Gopal Krishna, and the elephant mahouts Shri S.Shekhar, Shri P. Thilai Kumar and Shri A. Natarajan shared important information on the elephants housing, upkeep and maintenance. To all the officials and temple authorities we extend our thanks for their co-operation and support.



## Executive Summary

Elephants Jayanthi from Bokaghat, Assam, was gifted, Indu from Wynad Division, Kerala and Sandhya (Kamatchi) from Hunsur, Karnataka were sold to the Jagadguru Sri Snakaracharya Swamigal, Srimatam Samasthanam, Kancheepuram in Tamil Nadu between 1981 and 2001 in apparent violation of The Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 which prohibits sale or any transfer of commercial nature. These 3 elephants were observed for a day, with detailed notes on their housing, feeding, watering and work routine.

These 3 elephants were acquired from government owned forest camps, which implies separation from a mother and herd at a very young age. Further, they were transported to a new and foreign environment which implies transition to a location not considered ideal for elephant keeping. The elephants' housing shed is a combination of metal, concrete, stone and cement – all material considered totally inappropriate for an elephant shelter.

Water is rationed in buckets with consequent less urination and defecation by the elephants. They are bathed and watered in the same place, with the same vessel. Though there is a temple tank, they are not taken there for any activity. The water is stagnant and ridden with algae, unfit for any use.



The elephant Jayanthi is taken for a walk around the temple at 5 am to perform the morning pooja. She is taken to the Sri Adhi Sankara Mutt half a km away for a pooja at 8.a.m whenever the Acharyas are there. She is also taken once again in the evening at 4p.m. for a pooja at the Mutt. The other 2 elephants are reportedly taken for walk around the temple within the compound twice daily which is about one km per day on the temple granite flooring around the temple. This is in direct contravention of their need to walk at least 5-6 kms per day.

Elephants were kept in visual and vocalisation contact but not within tactile distance of each other. Touch being an important part of an elephant's need for tactile communication, the isolation and restlessness is perceptible in the elephants.

The elephants showed signs of severe stereotypic behaviour such as head-bobbing, swaying and weaving while they were chained in the shelter. This behaviour is considered as an indication of severe psychological illness, a condition in captive elephants due to forcing them to live unnatural lives without regular, normal, uncontrolled interaction with other elephants, lack of activities that keep them engrossed, mental distress and severe frustration due to constant and continuous chaining, inadequate exercise and lack of ability to display natural behaviour.

Only elephant Jayanthi is used for temple rituals for approximately two hours daily. The other two elephants are not physically fit for display to public or perform temple duties. The three elephants are provided 19 kg of cooked feed of wheat with salt every day. They are provided ragi, rice, jaggery, and fenugreek only once a month. Each elephant is provided 50 kg of KO1 variety of fodder grass (a high-yielding, hybrid variety) on a daily basis.

Veterinarian reportedly visited the elephants once in a week. He was unavailable during time of inspection. Senior veterinarians have periodically visited to advise on the course of treatment for chronic foot and abscess problems but treatment has been neglected since 2007, leading to great pain and discomfort for the elephants. Repeated advice to alter the flooring and walking surface has gone unheeded.

All the observed parameters revealed deviation of almost 90-100 % from what is considered acceptable for elephants in captivity and also from the Guidelines for care and management of captive elephants issued by Project Elephant, Ministry of Environment & Forests and Central Zoo Authority (CZA) norms on space and housing of zoo elephants.

## **Recommendations**

As per norms, the temple shed is at variation with the prescribed sheds and night cubicles. These sheds should act only as their feeding station and to take shelter in inclement weather. The elephants need movement and exploration and therefore food should be placed at different parts of a fenced area. Tethering areas should be identified in different spots, with earth and mud floors, keeping in mind the nature of foot pad of the elephant which is damaged on cement, concrete or tarred surfaces.

A cemented water tank, 5ft x 5ft x 4ft should be filled with clean potable drinking water at all times, available at will to the elephants. The bucket system needs to be discontinued since it is inconvenient and restrictive for the animal. Water testing to detect contaminants should be done periodically.

The elephants need to be bathed in the river. The habit of bathing in the shed needs to be discontinued with immediate effect. For ideal bathing, the elephant has to be immersed in the water and scrubbed with brush or local materials for flaking off dead skin, parasites and other irritants. This is also a time of bonding between the elephant and mahout and at least two hours of the day should be reserved for this activity.

The elephant's daily walk should be a minimum of two hours in the morning and two hours in the evening on earth and mud roads. Tared areas and concrete pathways should be strictly avoided. This is the foremost reason for all foot related veterinary problems that occur in captive elephants. The coolest hours of the day are the recommended time for walking - sunrise and sunset - to avoid the hottest parts of the day since elephants are susceptible to the effects of direct rays and glare of the sun.

Elephant Jayanthi's work routine needs immediate and urgent reform. Under no circumstance should the elephant be made to perform "Gajapuja" that is often the reason for arthritis and deformity in later years, since it entails bending knees and kneeling in front of the deity.

All the activities of the temple like ringing bells, bowing, kneeling etc are performance based and hence not in line with the housing of a wild animal like the elephant. It is recommended to discontinue the use of the elephant for all these purposes and for exhibition to the public and devotees.

Public should not be allowed to feed the elephant with random foods like sweets, fruits and rice. Its only feeding has to be in its enclosure, supervised by the mahout and rations specially weighed and given.

Cooked food – should be gradually decreased and replaced with fruits and vegetables. Cooked rations are not recommended unless the elephant needs extra nutrition due to work or pregnancy. The oldest elephant, Sandhya, has an inclination to obesity and this will lead to other diet related health problems. The recommendation is to substitute and wean them away gradually towards green grass, hay for roughage and fodder, seasonal fruits and vegetables in small quantities and raw rice in either grass or hay. An adult elephant eats approximately 250 kgs of food per day. A professional diet chart should be made by an elephant-knowledgeable veterinarian and the same should be adhered to strictly without any other food ingested by way of begging in shops or hand out by devotees in the temple premises.

Veterinarian's advice needs to be taken seriously. Instructions by senior veterinarians have gone unheeded from 2007, the only year for which records were available at the main office. All other medical records were missing at the time of inspection. Veterinarian's knowledge of elephant welfare would be an added advantage in order to guide the temple authorities towards improving management and dietary requirements.

The mahout's salary is satisfactory and may be increased along with the responsibility of following directives issued from time to time by the committee members.

Mahouts are currently on daily wage, earning Rs. 400 per day, with the senior mahout earning Rs. 500 per day.

It is recommended that a committee be formed comprising of representatives from the AWBI, Temple management, Forest Department and the local SPCA to formulate and monitor the activities and living conditions of the elephants. This would help the management to improve the welfare status of the three elephants.

In each of the parameters observed for the elephant at least one feature showed 90 -100 % deviation from satisfactory standards. Following features need to be provided as a minimum:

- a. A shelter with natural flooring
- b. Opportunity to forage in forest conditions
- c. Access by elephant to free-flowing water to drink/bathe/wallow
- d. Limited duration of work, elephant should not be made to bless or beg from devotees
- e. Opportunity to interact with other elephants
- f. Detailed maintenance of Medical Records of each elephant
- g. Detailed maintenance of Food and Work register for each elephant

For mahout:

- a. Increase in salary may be provided
- b. Provision of insurance cover by employer (temple) – currently not provided
- c. Greater interaction between management and mahout regarding not only mahout's economic standing but elephant husbandry and handling.

The AWBI would be willing to share designs and construction details of elephant keeping facilities including construction of fencing, shed, mahout quarters, fodder and medicine room for the three elephants for the 5 acre land owned by the temple authorities, located 6 kms from the main temple. This is an agricultural land with water facility and as such would be deemed ideal for the keeping of all the three elephants unrestrained who have developed a strong bond and attachment with each other. This option, also keeping in mind that the temple has no lack of funds and resources, would be the best for the keeping of these elephants who are currently housed in extremely harsh, isolated and restricted surroundings, leading to multiple health and veterinary issues.



## Introduction

Elephant Sandhya alias Kamatchi was the oldest elephant to come to the Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Mutt in Kanchipuram. She was sold by the Hunsur Forest Division of Karnataka in 1981 at the age of seven and a half years for a sum of Rs. 20,000. Her present age is 42 years. It was informed that she was bought when the temple's elephant by the name Kamatchi had outgrown the size of the doorway and was gifted away to a temple in Sathara, Maharashtra. She died soon after reaching that temple. So young Sandhya, on arrival, was renamed Kamatchi.

Elephant Indu was sold in 1987 by the Kerala Forest Department, at the request of the Jagatguru, to the Kanchi Kamakoti Mutt. She was 6 years old and was bought by the Mutt for pooja purposes at the concessional rate of Rs. 20,000 from the Wynad Forest Division. Her present age is 34 years.

Elephant calf Jayanthi was the third elephant to be gifted by the Kaziranga National Park, Forest Department of Assam in 2001. She was 3 years and 10 months at the time. Her current age is 18 years. The "Purpose" in her Ownership Certificate is stated as "gifts" for the Srimatam Samasthanam (Tamil Nadu) by the Govt. of Assam.



*Elephant Indu from Kerala*

Sandhya from Karnataka, though sold in 1981, had her Ownership Certificate issued only in 1999. For 18 years she had no paperwork to prove her transfer from Karnataka and she remained as illegally owned captive wildlife. Similarly, Indu from Kerala was sold to the Mutt in 1987. Her Ownership papers were, however, issued only in 2001, after 14 years. She too remained without any legal status as illegally owned wildlife.

Jayanthi from Assam has an Ownership Certificate from Assam dated 2001. She has none from Tamil Nadu, thereby again shrouding her legal status in ambiguity. The temple has no Ownership Certificate, though her donor was granted Transport Permit to have her trucked from Assam to Tamil Nadu, a distance of approximately 2,500 km.

There were no inquiries made as to the expertise of the temple in keeping elephants nor was the status of their previous elephant enquired into. In 2003, the WLPA passed the Wildlife Stock Rules wherein no new Ownership Certificates could be issued without taking into account Section 42 which mandates that an elephant in captivity must receive ".....adequate facilities for housing, maintenance and upkeep....". An All India survey of captive elephants

conducted by CUPA-ANCF (Varma, et al., 2009) showed overall welfare rating for elephants in temples in Tamil Nadu as 3.2. This specific rating was relatively low in comparison with other management regimes such as forest camps.

From time to time, public complaints bring focus on the management and work conditions of the temple elephants. This investigation has been in response to such a matter pertaining to these 3 elephants, by the Animal Welfare Board of India, MoEF, Govt. of India which requested the temple authorities to permit AWBI authorised representatives to visit and submit detailed evaluation of the conditions prevailing at the temple. This investigation documents the initial procurement of the captive elephants, itself an aberration of welfare, to the many unnatural and abnormal conditions that it is subject to for a lifetime.

## **Objective**

The captive conditions experienced by the female elephants Sandhya, Indu and Jayanthi were observed and relevant data collected to assess the welfare status of the elephants in terms of prevailing physical, mental, biological and psychological parameters.

The objective of the report is to demonstrate to the government authorities, temple management and policy makers the reality of the negative conditions that most of these elephants are subject to. Refusal to engage themselves with the situation will only worsen the conditions of these most iconic of India's mega species leading to unnecessary suffering and their untimely demise. We sincerely hope that this evaluation and documentation of temple elephants will prompt stakeholders to play an important role in redefining the role of elephants in religious institutions.

The role has to be additionally studied in view of the commercial usage that the elephants are routinely used for – as an instrument for attracting devotees, donations to temple and mahouts subsequently, begging from shops and public and other such related activities. Against the framework of law, commerce and the ethics of using a wild animal as a source of display and exhibition during poojas needs to be re-assessed.

## **Method**

Welfare in captivity can be assessed in different ways. Even though maintained in captivity, elephants cannot be considered domesticated (Lair, 1997). Thus, maintaining a species by imposing alien captive conditions would impose changes in the physical and biological environment of the animal. It is this difference between conditions in captivity, evaluated as separate parameters, and those experienced by its wild counterparts that is considered to lead to poor welfare conditions for the captive elephant. Captive conditions were subjected to a rating scale developed by a team of experts, from wildlife biologists to welfare activists, (Varma, 2008; Varma, et al., 2008; Varma and Prasad, 2008). The rating was then used to assess the welfare status of elephants and mahouts/ cawadis by comparing Expert Rating- ER

(considered satisfactory for captive conditions) with Mean Rating- MR (rating of actual conditions). The premise is greater the difference between ER and MR, poorer the welfare status of the animal.

## Origin

All the three elephants were taken away from natural surroundings and forest environment to a life of close confinement in the urban setting of Kancheepuram in Tamil Nadu. Rating for this parameter was 0, indicating a deviation of 100% from standards considered satisfactory in captivity.

## Shelter

- The three elephants are tethered to individual granite posts of 3 feet height under a RCC roofed hall approximately measuring 38 feet x 81 feet x 15 feet height with temple granite flooring.
- Flooring was made of stones and cement. There was no natural earth flooring for the elephants to sleep or stand on.
- It was noted that the elephants adjust their sleeping positions based on their injuries, so as to not cause pain by resting on affected/ injured areas.

This parameter was evaluated across three sub-parameters— shelter type, floor type and shade type. It can be observed that deviation was more than 90% from acceptable conditions of captivity for elephants.



*Chained all day on unnatural flooring*

## Water and Related Parameters

- The elephants are provided water through a bucket regularly. Three pipe connections have been provided on the wall for facilitating bathing, washing the floor and cleaning purpose.
- The elephants are bathed twice a day. They have no access to water whenever they want to drink or spray themselves.
- A drain with gutter facility has been provided along the back side full length of the shed. The dung and urine are swept and washed into the gutter.
- Water was provided in a metal buckets and hose pipes to drink and the same water was used to wash the elephant.
- The elephant was given water six times a day and one metal vessel full every time.
- There are no natural sources for bathing or drinking.

This parameter was rated across three sub-parameters— source of water, number of times the elephant consumed water (or was provided water to drink) and bathing place. The deviation from acceptable conditions was more than 74%.



*Forced to wait until drinking water is given in a bucket. Elephants drink a minimum of 200 litres of water per day*

## Walk and Related Parameters

- The elephants walked on the temple granite pathway near and within the temple premises.
- Jayanthi is taken for a walk around the temple at 5 am to perform the morning pooja. Thereafter at 8.00am and 4.00pm she is once again taken for the morning and evening pooja to the Sri Adhi Sankara Mutt half a km away. The other 2 elephants are taken for walk around the temple within the compound twice daily which is about two km per day. The surface of the walkway is temple granite. There is no soft substrate on the floor area anywhere for the elephants. They are tied and kept with two chains for 22-23 hours in a day.
- Only Jayanthi is displayed at the temple and therefore is walked about 2-3 km. per day, around the temple and outside. The other two, Sandhya and Indumathi, are reportedly walked only around the temple premises which would be approximately less than two kilometres per day. It was reported that they attract negative public attention due to the wounds and abscesses and poor physical condition.
- Current walking route consisted of tar roads and confined walking spaces for the elephants.

This parameter was evaluated across three sub-parameters— opportunity to walk, nature of terrain and distance walked. Overall the evaluation for walking is showing a deviation of 86% from ideal captive conditions.



*Temple compound where Sandhya and Indumathi are walked for 2 kms everyday*

## Social interaction

Elephants were kept in separate areas, chained at a distance of 10-15 ft from each other. This is a deviation from their behaviour pattern, whereby female elephants are always in touching and feeling each other.



*Just like in humans, lack of social interaction leads to boredom and depression*

## Observed Behaviour

- The elephants showed signs of severe stereotypic behaviour while they were chained in the shelter.
- It is possible that the elephants, from a very young age, have been chained in a confined place for a long time and had no scope of activities. These animals subsequently developed stereotypic behaviours.

The display of stereotypic behaviours reveals long periods of absolute boredom, lack of movement and even depression. This is in violation of prescribed standards of elephant keeping.

## Free-Ranging Status

The elephants are not left for free-ranging. Elephants are mega herbivores and grazing is an essential activity for them. Deprivation leads to many other resultant health and behaviour issues.



*Constantly shackled – fed and cleaned in the same spot*

## **Work Type**

Elephant Jayanthi is used for temple rituals twice daily – morning and evening.

This parameter was rated across four sub-parameters— work type, duration, time of work and food availability while working. It shows significant deviation from what is considered normal work for an elephant, suited to their behaviour and ecology.

## **Provision of Food**

- All the elephants are fed with 19 kgs of wheat with salt and 50 kgs of green grass each.
- During her walk to the temple, elephant Jayanthi is fed with Marie biscuits, fruits and chapatti (cooked wheat) given to the mahouts from shops and the public.

The elephants are not allowed to graze or forage anywhere. The variety of food provisions is severely restricted. Hence, their scope for grazing and feeding on additional plants and grasses, the type and number of items given and the absence of vegetables, fruits and natural products is a deviation from standards of good captive conditions. The temple authorities and mahouts were not aware of the exact weight of grass that was fed to these three elephants.

## **Reproductive Status**

No elephants were reported to cycle and their reproductive status was negative. This implies that the elephants are in constant and chronic stress conditions. Reproductive systems of female elephants is the first to be affected under negative living conditions.

## **Health status and Veterinary Care**

Dr. Deenadhayalan is the veterinarian who visits once a week for check-up of the elephants. However, he was unavailable during time of inspection.

The Tamil Nadu Veterinary University for Animal Sciences deputed Dr. Jayaprakash and Dr. Jayathangarajan to inspect the elephants on 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2015. There was no Health Register kept in the office.

Dr. Panicker visited the elephants in the month of June and subsequently Dr. Giridas was sent with the required medicine to treat the abscess on Kamatchi. Most of the medical records were missing.

The frequency of veterinary visit was comparatively high but the level of veterinary care to be followed by the field staff was very low.

- **Elephant Kamatchi** (Sandhya) from Karnataka is blind in the left eye and is suffering from Cataract which was detected prior to 2007. In 2007, she was confirmed to be suffering from a “non-healing ulcer present in the right thigh region.” It was clearly mentioned that the “wounds gets degenerated due to pressure during lying down.” It was instructed that there should be made a provision of “sand bedding to avoid pressure sores during lying on the floor especially at night times.” The temple authorities neglected to do the needful resulting in chronic abscesses with fistulous tracts in the right and left hip region, and lesion in damaged nail and abscess in left hind foot.

Localised skin lesions, possibly fungal infection was noticed on the head and forehead region. The tail vertebrae have multiple dislocations/ fracture and is disfigured. It was reported by the mahout that, the overgrown nails were recently trimmed, however some of the nails in the forelegs were still found to be overgrown.

Thinning of foot pad was also observed due to continuously standing and walking on hard surface. The gait of Kamatchi is abnormal due to deviation and ankylosis (fusion) of the left foreleg fetlock joint.

The animal can't flex her affected joint since the bones in the joints are fused. This condition is a sequel to arthritis, potentially caused by being forced to stand and walk on hard concrete floor and being forced to sit down frequently for ceremonial purposes in the temple.



*Elephant Kamatchi*





*Kamatchi's mutilated tail with hair loss and indicating fractures*



*Elephant Kamatchi's non-healing ulcer in the right thigh region*



*Cataract formation in Kamatchi's left eye*



*Close-up of Kamatchi's injuries and open wounds in and around hind limbs*

- Elephant Indu from Kerala is suffering from a severe split/crack nail condition, overgrown nails and nail damage and a hang nail or cuticular overgrowth condition over and in between the nails of all forelegs and hind legs. Indu is also suffering from large, chronic ulcerative (non-healing) wounds on the both elbow joints on forelegs. Thinning of foot pad was also observed due to continuously standing and walking on hard surface. There was generalised skin lesions all over the body, particularly on the back and head region, and it could be potentially an untreated fungal infection. Overall she looked dull and restless.

*Severely overgrown and cracked nails*



*Above: Lesions present all over the body*

*Left: Non-healing wounds in elbow joints of forelimbs*

- Elephant Jayanthi from Assam is the youngest of the three. The effects of lying and standing on stone floor for a decade has already resulted in callouses and wounds which will gradually progress into chronic conditions leading to a life of pain and ill-health. There is a healed lesion on the right hip region, indicating a past wound or an abscess. It was reported that her overgrown nails were recently trimmed. Thinning of foot pad was also observed due to continuously standing and walking on hard surface. The gait of Jayanthi was abnormal as evident by dropping of the left hip.



*Tethered by two limbs throughout the day and not walked on natural ground is already taking its toll on young Jayanthi*



*Thinning or smoothing of the footpads*

## **Status of Infrastructure**

The 3 mahouts are given a room that is adjacent to elephant shed. Food for the elephants is cooked in the same place where the mahout stayed and it also doubles as a medicine room. The mahouts take turns to stay with the elephants at night.

## **Mahout/Cawadi Status**

There are 3 mahouts employed for the 3 elephants. Due to the untimely demise of the senior mahout of 35 years, his daughter, Ms. Annapoorani is appointed as the 4<sup>th</sup> handler. However, she only visits and is in the position of a supervisor and reportedly keeps all the records with her at her residence, instead of in the office.

- Shri P. Thilai Kumar has been with the elephants for the past 2 years.
- Shri A. Natarajan has been with the elephants for 1 year and
- Shri S. Shekar was earlier with the elephants for 10 years but joined back to work since June.

## **Legal Violations**

Several serious apparent violations of relevant acts, rules, notifications and guidelines were observed.

- 1. Illegal Possession of Elephants:** Out of the three elephants, two were bought by Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Mutt authority. It is an apparent violation of the section 43 (1) The Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 to 'buy' an elephant and the ownership of two elephants by the Mutt are illegitimate. The law states that "No person having in his possession captive animal, animal article, trophy or uncured trophy in respect of which he has a certificate of ownership shall transfer by way of sale or offer for sale or by any other mode of consideration of commercial nature, such animal or article or trophy or uncured trophy".
- 2. Outdated and Invalid Ownership Certificates:** As per point 1 of the Guidelines for Care and Management of Captive Elephants issued by Project Elephant Division of Ministry of Environment and Forests and Climate Change, a "fresh ownership certificate should be issued in the form annexed for a period of five years and should be renewed every five years in case there is no violation of the norms to be followed".
- 3. Forcing Injured or Unfit Elephants to Work:** As per Section 11 of The PCA Act, 1960, if any person or owner "(employs in any work or labour or for any purpose any animal which, by reason of its age or any disease) infirmity; wound, sore or other cause, is unfit to be so employed or, being the owner, permits any such unfit animal to be employed", it amounts to cruelty to animals. Inspectors found unfit elephants with overgrown nails; cracked nails; worn out and thinning footpads; overgrown cuticles; serious eye conditions such as blindness, cataracts; painful abscesses; fungal lesions; arthritis etc; and one of them being forced to work.

**4. Lack of Records and Registers required as per the Guidelines for Care and Management of Captive Elephants:** None of the necessary records listed in the Guidelines for Care and Management of Captive Elephants could be produced for scrutiny at the time of inspection. The five mandatory records and registers – including the vaccination register, the disease and treatment register, the movement register, the feeding register and the work register – were not being maintained for any of the elephants. The lack of vaccination records and the disease and treatment register made determining the medical history of the elephants impossible for the inspecting veterinarians.

**5. Violation of High Court Order by Using Iron Ankushes:** The inspectors found sharp iron ankushes in the store room. The use of iron ankushes is not permitted as per the Rajasthan High Court's order, which excludes only extreme or dangerous situations that might result in danger to the public. Point 8 under "Care of Elephants" in the aforementioned order reads, "Ankushes must be made from wood or bamboo or cane and used in all elephant occasions. Blunt metal ankushes can be carried non-visibly and only used to control the elephant in extreme or dangerous situations which might result in danger to the public".



**6. Lack of Medical Care for Ailing Elephants:** Ailing elephants suffering from blindness, probably from cataract; eroded footpads; cracked nails; abscesses; severe wounds; etc; were not provided with adequate and continuous veterinary treatment and care, and is an apparent violation of Section 3 of The PCA Act, 1960, which states that "It shall be the duty of every person having the care or charge of any animal to take all reasonable measures to ensure the well-being of such animal and to prevent the infliction upon such animal of unnecessary pain or suffering".

**7. Continuous Tethering and Chaining by More Than One Foot:** Tethering of animals for long periods of time with short chains, by more than one foot appears to violate Section 11(1)(f) of The PCA Act, 1960, which states that it is cruelty to animals if any person "keeps for an unreasonable time any animal chained or tethered upon an unreasonably short or unreasonably heavy chain or cord".



**8. Lack of Free Access to Drinking Water:** The elephants didn't have access to free drinking water. Section 11(1) (h) of The PCA Act, 1960, states that failing to provide animals with sufficient food, drink or shelter is an act of cruelty. It also apparently violates the Rajasthan High Court's order, which states, "The owner of an elephant or contractor or hirer of the elephant shall provide sufficient potable water to the elephant preferably from a source of running water".

- 9. Mutilation of Tail:** Majority of the hairs on tail were missing and one of the elephant was suffering from fracture and dislocation of tail vertebra at multiple locations. Such mutilations apparently violate Section 11(1) of The PCA Act, 1960.
- 10. Poor Housing Conditions:** The housing condition is poor as the elephants are continuously chained, preventing them from display of any natural behaviour. The animals are forced to stand on hard floor for most of the time in one position – unlike what nature intended – that has lead to painful and crippling foot ailments affecting foot pads and toe nails. All these are apparent violation of Section 42, of the Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 which mandates that so as to possess or retain an ownership certificate, the elephant in captivity must receive “.....adequate facilities for housing, maintenance and upkeep....” Subsequent to the ban on keeping elephants in zoos in 2009, the Stakeholders Consultative Meeting of Central Zoo Authority on ‘Elephant Upkeep in Zoos’ held on 18 March 2013 permitted few zoos to keep elephants provided certain strict norms are followed such as providing each elephant with not less than 1.2 acre of area. On a comparative scale, the space allotted for these elephants are approximately 10 x 15 x 15 feet which is much less than 1.2 acre and they cannot express any natural behaviour.

## **Health and Safety Concerns**

With no screening of three elephants being done for infectious and zoonotic diseases through serological studies, they may not be free of contagious diseases such as tuberculosis, which is common in elephants. With devotees and mahouts interacting with elephants every day, the health and safety of people, including mahouts are at grave risk. Scientific references also cite that tuberculosis is transmitted more commonly from humans to elephants than elephants to animals and because of the same, these three elephants are also prone to tuberculosis infection.

## **Conclusion**

This report is an attempt to scientifically evaluate and analyse the current housing, living and work conditions of the 3 elephants at Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Mutt in Kancheepuram, Tamil Nadu. It is also meant to explore possibilities of immediate and long term improvement in the quality of their lives. Recommendations of purely practical nature have been given, which, if implemented, may improve health and mental wellbeing of the elephants. The recommendations have been designed to integrate as much of natural life as is possible in captivity, without totally compromising all their natural instincts and behaviour, which is the case with most religious institutions.

Confiscating the elephants and moving them to an alien environment like the forest camps may disturb the elephants and many earlier instances have shown that elephants rescued from temples do not do well in forest camps. During the meeting with the Sri Kariam of the Sri

Kanchi Kamakoti Mutt we understood that he was positive to the idea of designing an ideal elephant shelter in the 5 acres of land belonging to the Mutt if support for design and expert advice was given to them. He also mentioned that funds for the new shelter would also not be a problem. So it can be recommended that they come forward with the new shelter within 3 months time.


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2. Varma, S. and Prasad, D. (2008) Welfare and management of elephants in captivity—insights and recommendations, In: Welfare and management of elephants in Captivity: Proceedings of a Workshop on Welfare Parameters and their Significance for Captive Elephants and their Mahouts in India. (S. Varma and D. Prasad, eds.), pp. 54-64. Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), Government of India, Compassion Unlimited Plus Action (CUPA) and Asian Nature Conservation Foundation (ANCF), Bangalore, India.
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**Appendix I: Authorisation letter (page 1 & 2) given by AWBI for Inspection**

GRAM: JWMANDHU

Phone : 04424571026  
04424571024  
Fax : 04424571019

**ANIMAL WELFARE BOARD OF INDIA**  
(Ministry of Environment and Forests, Govt. of India)  
Post Box No. 6672  
13/1, Third Seaward Road, Valmiki Nagar, Thiruvananthapuram, Chennai - 600 041  
Email : awbi@md3.vsnl.net.in Website: www.awbi.org

No.9-1/2015-16/PCA/IR  
20-07-2015

To

1. Ms. Supama Ganguly,  
CUPA, Bengaluru  
E-mail: [suparnaganguly@gmail.com](mailto:suparnaganguly@gmail.com)
2. Dr. Sundaramurthy,  
CPREEC, Chennai
3. Dr. R. Sumathy,  
Veterinary Surgeon, AWBI  
E-mail: [rsumathykumar@gmail.com](mailto:rsumathykumar@gmail.com)
4. Dr. Manilal Vallyate,  
Co-opted Member, AWBI  
E-mail: [Manilalv@peta.org](mailto:Manilalv@peta.org)

Sir,


**Sub: Authorisation to inspect three Elephants at Shri Kanchi Kamatchi Amman Temple, Kancheepuram, Tamil Nadu – Reg.**

The Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) has received information that the three Elephants of Shri Kanchi Kamatchi Amman Temple, Kancheepuram is subjected to cruelty and the Board has decided to carry out an inspection of the elephant.

In this connection, I am directed to request you to kindly inspect and assess the Elephants mental and physical welfare, their upkeep, housing and maintenance, to check any incidences of cruelty, violation of Central and State animal protection laws in respect of the elephants used/kept in of Shri Kanchi Kamatchi Amman Temple, Kancheepuram and to scrutinize relevant documents that are issued and held by the Elephant owner and authorities of various departments and submit a report to the Board at the earliest. A letter of authorization of AWBI to inspect these elephants is attached for further necessary action.

Ms. Supama Ganguly, CUPA, Bengaluru, Mr. Dr. Sundaramurthy, CPREEC, Dr. R. Sumathy, Veterinary Surgeon, AWBI and Dr. Manilal Vallyate, Co-opted Member, AWBI are hereby requested to carry out a joint inspection of the Elephants at Shri Kanchi Kamatchi Amman Temple and submit a report to the Board at the earliest.

Kindly acknowledge the receipt.

Yours faithfully,  
  
(S. VINOD KUMAR)  
Assistant Secretary

Encl. as above.



GRAM: JIVABANDHU



No.9-1/2015-16/PCA/IR

Phone :04424571025

04424571024

Fax : 04424571018

## ANIMAL WELFARE BOARD OF INDIA

(Ministry of Environment and Forests, Govt. of India)

Post Box No. 8672

13/1, Third Seaward Road, Velmiki Nagar, Thiruvanniyur, Chennai - 600 041


Email : awbi@md3.vsnl.net.in Website: www.awbi.org

20-07-2015

### TO WHOMSOEVER IT MAY CONCERN

Ms. Suparna Ganguly, CUPA, Bengaluru, Mr. Dr. Sundaramurthy, CPREEC, Dr. R. Sumathy, Veterinary Surgeon, AWBI and Dr. Manilal Valliyate, Co-opted Member, AWBI are hereby authorized by the Animal Welfare Board of India to inspect and assess the three Elephants kept in Shri Kanchi Kamatchi Amman Temple, Kancheepuram, Tamil Nadu regarding their mental and physical welfare, their upkeep, housing and maintenance, to check any incidences of cruelty, violation of Central and State animal protection laws and to scrutinize relevant documents that are issued and held by the Elephant owner, and authorities of various departments and submit a report to the Board at the earliest. A detailed inspection report along with the photographs, videos and other information shall be submitted to the Board.

The officials of the Forest Department, District Administration of Kancheepuram, Police Department, Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment Department, Govt. of Tamil Nadu and Animal Husbandry Department & the Elephant Owner are requested to extend full co-operation to the inspection team to enable them to discharge their duties during assessment of the Elephants at of Shri Kanchi Kamatchi Amman Temple, Kancheepuram, Tamil Nadu.

  
(S. VINOD KUMAR)  
Assistant Secretary

Copy to: for information and further necessary action please

- 1) The Chief Secretary, Govt. of Tamil Nadu, Fort. St. George, Chennai.
- 2) The Director General of Police, Govt. of Tamil Nadu, Fort. St. George, Chennai.
- 3) The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (WL), Govt. of Tamil Nadu, Fort. St. George, Chennai.
- 4) The Director, Animal Husbandry, Govt. of Tamil Nadu, Fort. St. George, Chennai.
- 5) The District Collector, Collectorate Office, Kancheepuram, Tamil Nadu.
- 6) The Superintendent of Police, Kancheepuram, Tamil Nadu.
- 7) The District Forest Officer, Kancheepuram, Tamil Nadu.
- 8) The Commissioner, HRCE, Govt. of Tamil Nadu, Chennai.
- 9) Chairman, AWBI and Vice-Chairman, AWBI.
- 10) Ms. Suparna Ganguly, CUPA, Bengaluru E-mail: [suparnaganguly@gmail.com](mailto:suparnaganguly@gmail.com)
- 11) Dr. Sundaramurthy, CPREEC, Chennai.
- 12) Dr. R. Sumathy, Veterinary Surgeon, AWBI E-mail: [rsumathykumar@gmail.com](mailto:rsumathykumar@gmail.com)
- 13) Dr. Manilal Valliyate, Co-opted Member, AWBI E-mail: [Manilalv@peta.org](mailto:Manilalv@peta.org)

## **Appendix II: AWBI's Guidelines for Minimum Standards of Care for Elephants at Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Mutt, Tamil Nadu**

### **A. Shelters:**

1. No electrical or plumbing fixtures may be within the immediate elephant area or an elephant's reach.
2. No electrical or plumbing shall be routed through an elephant's area or through an area within an elephant's reach.
3. Chains should never be used to restrain the elephant.
4. Enclosures must be maintained free of faeces and waste, washed daily, and disinfected, then carefully rinsed, weekly. The elephant must have ample space to ensure that he does not stand or sleep in his own waste

### **B. Nutrition:**

1. Elephants are constant eaters and hence must have free choice access to clean, nutritious hay or live vegetation (adult = 68 Kg per day). Protein level of hay should range from 12% to 17%.
2. Whole grains, vitamins, minerals, salt, and pro-biotics should be supplemented on a daily basis. The amount depends on the body condition of elephants.
3. The elephants should receive 4-9 kg of fresh fruits and vegetables per day.
4. Trace mineral salt should be offered free choice.
5. Elephants should be tested for vitamin E levels. If levels are low they must be supplemented on a daily basis with a liquid form of Vitamin E.
6. Fresh browse should be made available every day.

### **C. Water:**

#### **1. For drinking:**

- a. Automatic watering devices should be available for the elephant's free choice access to drinking water
- b. A separate dedicated water supply has to be part of the establishment

#### **2. For bathing**

- c. Elephant should be bathed at least once a day for a minimum duration of 30 minutes during normal weather.

### **D. Enrichment:**

1. Every effort should be made so that Elephants have opportunity to socialize with other elephants.
2. Any object that is elephant-proof can and should be considered for enrichment.
3. Nothing takes the place of freedom to roam and live vegetation to eat, but enrichment can alleviate boredom and neurotic behavior.
4. The key to successful enrichment is to change the enrichment objects regularly.
5. Logs, boulders, piles of sand, gravel, clay and substrate are enriching.
6. New sights, sounds, and smells are enriching.

7. Keeper-directed activities and public exhibition are not considered enrichment.

**E. Veterinary Care:**

1. A veterinarian having good experience and expertise in elephants must be accessible. The more often a veterinarian visits, the more comfortable he/she will become with elephants. Even if the facility is protected contact, it still is important that the veterinarian and elephants are comfortable with each other.
2. Elephants should be vaccinated annually against rabies and tetanus.
3. Foot trimming should be done as needed.
4. Faecal examinations should be done twice a year and de-worming should be done as required with appropriate medicine.
5. Screening for Tuberculosis, Trypanosomiasis and general blood tests should be done once a year

**F. Management:**

1. Free contact, non-dominance and protected contact are considered viable forms of elephant management. Elephants should be managed only under these principles.
2. Any form of punishment is unacceptable.
3. Elephants should never be struck, poked, prodded or hooked with any object or weapon.
4. Electricity does not prevent aggression in elephants and cannot be used against him for any reason.
5. Chaining is an unacceptable husbandry and management tool.
6. Food, water and companionship deprivation is unacceptable.
7. If an elephant displays aggressive behavior, alternative positive management protocols must be explored.
8. Musth in bulls is a natural phenomenon and has many age- related variations. Duration and frequency of musth that a bull goes into should be regularly monitored and recorded. Chaining/ isolation/ starvation/ physical abuse to control elephants in musth is unacceptable. Visible/ olfactory/ audible communication with females may be allowed.
9. Species must be conspecific.
10. Breeding is unacceptable.
11. Elephant rides and use in performances on or off premises are unacceptable.
12. Allowing visitors to touch or get too close to the elephant may put them in danger, and is thus unacceptable.
13. At a time two trained keepers must be available.
14. In case there is a necessity to cut the tusk of elephants, required permission from the Chief Wildlife Warden must be taken and the procedure must be done under chemical restraining.
15. Detailed record keeping is required. In addition to maintaining the basic record of ownership details and transit permit, records must be maintained on vaccination, disease and treatment, movement, feeding and trained care taker at service.

**Monthly reporting must include a welfare assessment of elephants with information on his physical and mental health status and necessary treatment or management practices being followed.**

