Tribals discuss issues confronting them

Tendency to treat them as showpieces on special occasions decried

HAVING A NICE TIME: Todas making merry at the World Indigenous People Day celebrations in Kotagiri on Saturday.
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UDHAGAMANDALAM: Clad in their traditional dress hundreds of tribals from various parts of the Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve gathered at Kotagiri on Saturday to participate in the celebrations organised by non-governmental organisation Keystone Foundation to mark the observance of the International Day of the World’s Indigenous People.

Communities

In the day-long merrymaking that followed, tribals representing communities like the Todas, Kotas, Kurumbas, Irulas, Paniyas, Katunaiakens, Cholanaikens and Bettu Kurumbas, not only sang and danced but also strengthened inter-community bonds.

Speaking to The Hindu, the Additional Coordinator, Keystone Foundation, Selvi, pointed out that in keeping with the objectives of the occasion, they discussed issues confronting them and fellow tribals in different parts of the world, like land alienation, low and dwindling population, loss of ancestral forest areas, poor health and inadequate education.

She added that the invitation extended for the celebrations had evoked good response.

Addressing the gathering, Robert Leo of the Foundation said that the observance of the day made it easier for the indigenous people to retain their distinct identity.

Adverting to the vast changes that had taken place at the global level, he decried the tendency to merely treat tribals as showpieces on occasions like Independence Day celebration.

A rally brought the curtains down on the day-long celebrations.