

A Report on Dabaguli Jatre 2013

Unlike the previous years, the intimation of the Dabaguli Jatre 2013 came very late and we were caught unawares. However, this turned out to be one of the better Jatre I have experienced till date.

I got a call from the DFO on the morning of the Jatre, asking our help in organizing safety measures for the forests. He informed me that he has sought the help of the police and was promised 40 police constables to help out with the arrangements.

It was nearly 5:30 PM before Thillai, Durai, Mahesh, Prashant and I reached Belpatti village. But things seemed to be under control already.

The Urigam Range Officer had already stationed armed guards at the village entrance and people were being searched for alcohol. We pitched in with the search operation stopping vehicles and searching bags. Sure enough we were able to confiscate a few bottles of liquor. Some of the vehicles were impounded by taking away the keys and the people were made to think about what they were doing. Many offered to go right back home and never return this way again, if only they were allowed to.

We spent some time at the forest check post where vehicles were being searched for plastics and helped out a little bit offering tips on how to go about the work.

We moved down to the temple area and the place was much more quiet than the other years without the blaring loud speakers. The pontiffs were already addressing the crowd. Sure enough the loud speakers were there, but the decibel levels were much lower.

There seemed to be policemen all around the area. The Sub Inspector was in charge. Shortly a police vehicle cut through the crowds with blaring sirens. The Deputy Superintendent of Police himself had come to oversee things. We introduced ourselves and thanked him for the help and informed him about the arrangements so far.

He had brought an undertaking with him, for signature by the Jatre organizers. The document explicitly put all the responsibility on the organizers. I thought that was a good move. We split up and moved about among crowd till about 10PM. We could not find any evidence of booze.

The kitchen area was buzzing with activity making fantastic Raagi mudde and kaallu hulli. We met the organisers, wished them well and had our dinner. The organizers were very happy with the drastic drop in booze.

The police had now sealed the road, prohibiting any more entry of vehicles. We returned via Uganiyam. Along the way we apprehended two fellows who were carrying food for donation and a couple of bottles for the after party. We seized the booze and let them off telling keep a look out for elephants along the way.

All in all, I felt the Jatre was improving from a conservation point of view. The crowd was barely half of what it was in the earlier years. Booze had declined drastically and the police was heavily involved in keep order. Only the next year will tell us if the trend continues.

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