

2024

Women Pioneering Change in Green Teej



SathSathai
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Introduction

The Teej festival stands as one of the most significant and vibrant Hindu celebrations in Nepal. This time-honored cultural event is dedicated to the worship of Lord Shiva. Traditionally, it is a women's festival where married women pray for the well-being and success of their husbands, while unmarried women seek blessings for a future spouse. Teej is deeply rooted in Nepalese culture and religious practices, embodying themes of devotion, love, and marital happiness.

The celebration of Teej is marked by an array of vibrant activities, including singing and dancing, which enhance the festive atmosphere. The festival serves as a rich social tapestry, woven with beliefs, shared values, and social norms that are inherently fluid and dynamic. Additionally, Teej is an occasion for the exchange of generous gifts of food and clothing, further enriching the familial and communal bonds associated with this event.

However, the traditional values associated with Teej are undergoing transformation, influenced by modernity and the demands of contemporary life. The celebration has expanded beyond its original purpose, emerging as a platform for women's empowerment and unity. It provides a vital space for women to gather, share their life experiences, and advocate for their rights, thus highlighting their strength and resilience.

The changing dynamics of Teej can be attributed to various factors, including increased exposure, education, improved economic conditions, and the pervasive influence of social media. Acknowledging these shifts, SathSathai is championing the celebration of Teej in an environmentally conscious manner through the initiative termed "Green Teej." This initiative emphasizes preserving the essence of the festival while promoting sustainability. The focus on creating an eco-friendly celebration aligns with the urgent need to address climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, underscoring the importance of proactive actions in securing a greener future.

Objective

The primary goal of this initiative was to advocate for a sustainable future through meticulous management of carbon footprints. This vision extended beyond mere awareness; it established a proactive approach towards environmental stewardship. Three key objectives underpinned this initiative:

1. Amplify the voice, actions, interventions and leadership of women in the quest for greener future.
2. Fostering behavioral change within society.
3. Initiate innovative and impactful actions that directly reduce carbon footprints.

Program Overview

In a significant move towards environmental sustainability, fifty activists dedicated to environmental justice have come together to tackle the detrimental effects of climate change, particularly enhancing the environmental sustainability of festivals. They publicly synchronized their efforts by signing a five-point commitment during an event held in Kathmandu, which took place. This commitment emphasized essential actions such as reducing carbon emissions, minimizing waste, limiting plastic usage, promoting the reuse of items, and raising awareness surrounding environmental conservation.

The campaign's launch occurred during an event organized by SathSathai, an organization deeply engaged in environmental and climate change initiatives, in partnership with the Ministry of Forests and Environment. The chairperson of SathSathai, Prajita Karki, articulated the organization's dedication to fostering greener practices during festivals, specifically focusing on the celebration of Teej. Karki underscored the pivotal role of women in spearheading the movement for a more sustainable Teej, coining the program's motto as "Green, Women Leading the Change."

This initiative reflected a growing acknowledgment of the importance of sustainability in cultural practices and aimed to raise awareness and promote collective action within communities. The commitment to implement environmentally friendly measures during festivals signaled a significant step towards mitigating the ecological footprint of such events while fostering a culture of environmental responsibility.

For three years, SathSathai had been dedicated to promoting environmental and climate justice by conducting initiatives in various provinces aimed at addressing the effects of climate change and exploring mitigation strategies. The organization planned numerous programs throughout the year that sought to make cultural festivals more environmentally friendly. During a campaign launch event, actress Rekha Thapa emphasized the importance of raising awareness about climate change risks, asserting that protecting nature equates to safeguarding the essence of life. She advocated for extending these programs to rural areas. Meanwhile, human rights activist Saru Shrestha Joshi called for reducing financial waste during festivals and encouraged the reuse of old clothing.

Activists like Bhumikha Shrestha and Sabina Kafle advocated for more sustainable celebrations, highlighting the importance of living within one's means and considering the environment during festivities. Additionally, Nima Gyaltsen Sherpa, Chairperson of Helambu Rural Municipality, underscored the necessity of translating words into action, noting his municipality's stance against plastic use. Shraddha Shrestha, Director of the Nepal Tourism Board, pointed out the detrimental effects of climate change on Nepal's tourism sector, particularly in Himalayan tourism, urging collective efforts for mitigation. The discussions underscored a collective commitment to integrate climate awareness within cultural practices while fostering a more sustainable future.

In a significant initiative aimed at promoting environmental sustainability, Forest and Environment Minister Ain Bahadur Shahi Thakuri launched the 'Plastic Free Zone' campaign within the Central Administrative Building of Singha Darbar. This effort commenced after a meeting between the minister and representatives from the environmental organization 'SathSathai Foundation,' where the detrimental impacts of plastic materials on human health and the environment were discussed. As a symbolic act to underline the campaign's seriousness, Minister Thakuri began by removing plastic water bottles from his office and proclaimed a broader commitment to eradicate plastic materials across all working spaces within his ministry.

Minister Thakuri highlighted his resolve to make Singha Darbar a model 'Plastic Free Zone' by encouraging other ministries and agencies to join the initiative. He planned to enhance awareness through a hoarding board that would be placed at the entrance of Singha Darbar, urging the public to adopt reusable materials in their daily lives to promote a cleaner environment. Additionally, Prajita Karki, president of the SathSathai Foundation, shared her organization's vision for a cleaner and greener environment, stressing the importance of individual commitment to sustainability. She advocated for increased awareness around reducing and reusing materials to protect both the environment and the essence of sustainable living. SathSathai also selected 50 change agents advocating on climate change through out the country too to achieve the long term results.

Conclusion

In summary, a collective of fifty environmental activists united to form a campaign that concentrated on climate action and eco-friendly festival practices. Their articulated commitment highlighted essential strategies for reducing carbon emissions and waste, with SathSathai leading the charge, particularly regarding the celebration of Teej, underlining the influential role of women in the movement towards environmental stewardship

Similarly, the launch of the 'Plastic Free Zone' campaign by Forest and Environment Minister Ain Bahadur Shahi Thakuri represents a pivotal step toward enhancing environmental sustainability within the Central Administrative Building of Singha Durbar. Following discussions with the harmful effects of plastic, the minister began the initiative by removing plastic water bottles from his office, signifying a commitment to eliminate plastic water bottles from his office, signifying a commitment to eliminate plastic materials throughout his ministry. Hence, Minister Thakuri envisions Singha Durbar as a model for others to emulate, encouraging various ministries and agencies to participate.

Appendix

A. Media Coverage

1. https://www.sathsathainews.com/content/483?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAAR0Hrd0pqUXz_38gtMTQM8C_5FcSYmVIPDXOPfVq794f7ePePbDGWPedkDU_aem_a9qAB_rqQe0Vun2nI6NTqg
2. https://gorkhapatraonline.com/news/120067?fbclid=IwY2xjawEz8qBleHRuA2FlbQIxMQABHQio8IYb5-hi_z8fdo8n06vunDt30UhWrzxfBZ_ogv-MrSuGAYMe9Cp12A_aem_krY9-5ATPg12oDmU9JkNcg
3. <https://khabarhub.com/2024/16/674781/>

4. https://risingnepaldaily.com/news/47599?fbclid=IwY2xjawEuKaBleHRuA2FlbQIxMQABHT9x0YpCTDBVHqLgvQ4Vfwp0xervlZou3lZia_gnn8sA2qvfl1d5Off2EQ_aem_dsrxx2mNQTwCgpqmKIT09Q
5. <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/wWmq3hsTkRDxNuJF/>
6. <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/uBhkmwv84RgW1N5L/>
7. <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/ZLiVFgEFfGzNetsQ/>
8. <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/nudBX8tbHGY3auWv/>
9. <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/Eg5aJe6KCbJZk6Za/>
10. <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/VRoWzLnnzpcFX7U7/>
11. <https://sathsathai.org/media-coverage-green-teej-women-leading-the-change/>
12. <https://sathsathai.org/event/green-teej-women-leading-the-change/>
13. https://youtu.be/STybAI_lxy4

B. Pictures During the Event







