



**SYMPOSIUM  
ON  
ECOLOGY, BIOLOGY,  
MANAGEMENT AND  
DISEASES  
OF  
THE ASIAN ELEPHANT**

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## PREFACE

The elephant has been part of the Indian culture and ethos from time immemorial. In Indian mythology, Indian history and present day India the elephant figures prominently. To mention a few, we know of the celestial elephant *Airavata*. We worship Ganesa, the elephant-headed God of Wisdom; and the white elephant is so venerated by the Buddhists of South-east Asia. Probably the earliest work referring to elephant is Kautilya's *Arthashastra*. Vatsyayana's *Kamasutra* draws comparison between *Hastini* and women.

Historically, one of the most exhaustive writings on elephants is that of Abu'l-Fazl Allami (1551 -1602) in his *A'in-i Akbari* outlining also the management of thousands of elephants in the stables of Akbar the Great. His son Emperor Jahangir is said to have had over 12,000 elephants in the imperial Mughal fighting force.

A 1985 estimate gives the present population of elephants in the country as between 16,500, and 21,500 with about 5,750 to 7,050 in Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu; 8,705 to 12,231 in North-eastern India; about 1,635 in Orissa, Bihar and parts of West Bengal and hardly 445 in Uttar Pradesh.

Although the elephant has been on schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972, in the wild it is not only poached for its tusks, but is also one of the most persecuted and harassed creatures by man who has encroached on its domain and in the name of crop protection takes all devious means to drive away the herds to the ever shrinking forest cover. However, today there is a greater awareness to study the Indian elephant, both captive and wild. Like the tiger, the elephant has also been recently notified for special concerted attention towards its protection and management.

It is only appropriate that at this juncture we discuss at a common forum the rapidly accumulating information on the biology, ecology, management and health care of the Asian elephant. This Souvenir is brought out on the occasion of this Symposium to highlight elephant lore and elephant-man interaction. I hope the readers would enjoy perusing the articles presented here.

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&

Vellanikkara  
12th January, 1989

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