

# RUDRAKSH

**GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION, REASON FOR  
DECLINE & MEASURES TO ENHANCE PROPAGATION**



**Indian National Trust For Art and Cultural Heritage**

**May 2016**

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Documentation of Geographical Distribution,  
Reason for Decline, Measures to Enhance  
Propagation

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Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural  
Heritage  
71, Lodhi Estate, New Delhi

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Cover Page Pictures:

Top Left: Naturally Germinating Rudraksh Seeds in Dehradun

Top Right: Rudraksh Tree at FRI Campus, Dehradun

Bottom Left: Rudraksh Rosaries at Haridwar Market

Bottom middle: Unripe Fruit and Flowering in Rudraksh Tree

Bottom Right: Loose Rudraksh Beads sold at Rishikesh.

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## PREFACE

Rudraskh - literally meaning "*Shiva's tears*" is the seed of *Elaeocarpus spp.* The beads are sacred to Hindus, Buddhists and Jains since ancient times. It is ingrained in our belief systems. It truly is the **heritage tree of India**. In modern times people from all over the world inspired by Indian spiritualism and belief in its healing power have adopted it as sacred. Thus demand for the bead is constantly on the rise, putting pressure on both the cultivated and wild trees. Not only this, it is also encouraging a market of fake beads. In absence of awareness and knowledge on the part of consumer and lack of system of certification for authenticity common people are fleeced regularly. India regularly imports beads from Indonesia that are smaller in size and considered inferior to the traditional Indian bead of Rudraskh.

Increased Rudraskh seed collection for household and industrial use has resulted in a diminished seed bank in the soil, affecting the regeneration of the species. In addition to this, the fact that because of the hard seed coat, the natural regeneration is slow - taking up to few months to germinate, disturbance in forest areas adds to the threat for survival of this tree in the wild. For the tree seeds to germinate, consistently moist conditions and undisturbed forest floors are a necessity. In the degrading natural forests the tree is thus unable to regenerate. Further, lack of data related to the status of the tree in forest of India, leads to a significant gap in planning conservation action.

INTACH's study documents cultural, spiritual and medicinal values, mythological legends associated with the bead, issues related to natural regeneration, trade - supply and demand and presents recommendations for conservation action.

INTACH's study on the Rudraskh also attempts to address some of the gaps by a field study in the hills of Kotagiri in documenting *Elaeocarpus serratus* sacred to Badaga people of Nilgiris - presented in part - 2 of the report. This study identifies the trees in wild, classifies the trees as per age, regeneration/recruitment status and presents a summary of threats. This field study confirms that even though the tree is sacred there is a lack of conservation action and flourishing trade. Further studies are required to answer this anomaly and formulate conservation action in consultation with local populations.