

**27– 11 – 2022**

**News:** Recreating sacred groves in north T.N.

- Govt. has embarked on a project to bring back the rich diversity of this ancient tradition in some of the 1,500 temples under its jurisdiction.

## **Sacred Groves**

- The sacred grove is a traditional method by locals to conserve the local forest and to worship the local deities.
- The Sacred Groves comprises patches of forest or natural vegetation- from a few trees to forests of several acres-that are usually dedicated to local folk deities. The sacred groves are important repositories of flora and fauna diversity that have been conserved by local communities in a sustainable manner.

### **Features**

- Hunting and logging are usually strictly prohibited within these patches.
- Other forms of forest usage like honey collection and deadwood collection are sometimes allowed on a sustainable basis.
- Sacred groves do not enjoy protection via federal legislation in India. Some NGOs work with local villagers to protect such groves. Traditionally, and in

some cases even today, members of the community take turns to protect the grove.

- However, the introduction of the protected area category community reserves under the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act, 2002 has introduced legislation for providing government protection to community-held lands, which could include sacred groves.
- Indian sacred groves are often associated with temples, monasteries, shrines or with burial grounds.
- Historically, sacred groves find their mentions in Hindu, Jain and Buddhist texts, from sacred tree groves in Hinduism to sacred deer parks in Buddhism example. Sacred groves may be loosely used to refer to natural habitats protected on religious grounds.
- Other historical references to sacred groves can be obtained in Vrukshayurveda an ancient treatise, and ancient classics such as Kalidas's Vikramuuvashiiya. There has been a growing interest in creating green patches such as the Nakshatravana grove.
- Among the largest sacred groves of India are the ones in Hariyali, near Gauchar in Chamoli District of Uttarakhand, and the Deodar grove in Shipin near Simla in Himachal Pradesh.

- A **Sarpakkavu or Snake Grove** is a kind of holy grove found in Kerala. Kavuvu is the traditional name given for sacred groves across the Malabar Coast in Kerala, South India. **Kavus are notable for Theyyam**, the centuries-old ritual dance.
- **Umang Lai** (literally, "Forest Deities") is a form of holy Sacred grove found in **Manipur**. There are more than 365 Umang Lais, affiliated with the ancient religion of Sanamahism, which exists in various regions scattered across the Himalayan state of Manipur since ancient times. The holy, as well as a religious festival of Lai Haraoba, is celebrated especially in regard to these holy sacred groves.
- The accounts of these holy sacred groves are found in the ancient Manipuri Manuscript named Karthong Lamlen. Interestingly, Manipur stands 8<sup>th</sup> rank among all the Indian States and 1<sup>st</sup> rank for North East India, for having the highest number of sacred groves across the country.

State	Local Term for Sacred Groves
Andhra Pradesh	Pavithravana
Arunachal Pradesh	Gumpa Forests
Goa	Deorai, Pann
Jharkhand	Sarana

Karnataka	Devara Kadu
Kerala	Kavu, Sarppa Kavu
Maharashtra	Devrai, Devrahati, Devgudi
Manipur	Gamkhap, Mauhak
Meghalaya	Ki Law Lyngdoh, Ki Law Kyntang, Ki Law Niam
Orissa	Jahera, Thukuramma
Puducherry	Kovil Kadu
Rajasthan	Orans, Kenkris, Jogmaya
Tamil Nadu	Swami Shoal, Koikadu
Uttarakhand	Deo Bhumi, Bughyal
West Bengal	Garamthan, Harithan, Jahera, Sabitrithan, Santalburithan