



# Protecting Sacred Groves

Source: TH

## Why in News?

Recently, the [Supreme Court](#) directed the Union government to create a comprehensive policy for the protection of [sacred groves](#) across the country.

- The judgment was inspired from the [Piplantri Model](#) created in a **Piplantri village** in **Raasthan's Rajsamand district**.

## What are Sacred Groves?

- **About:** Sacred Groves are the tracts of **virgin forests** that are left untouched by the local inhabitants and are **protected by the local people** due to their **culture and religious beliefs**.
  - Sacred groves are **relic vegetation** of once dominant flora.
- **Sacred Groves in India:** Over 1 million sacred forests and **100,000 to 150,000 sacred groves** exist across India.
  - It is prominent in **Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Uttarakhand**.
- **Statutory Provision:** [Wild Life \(Protection\) Act, 1972](#) empowers State governments for declaration of any **private or community land**, as a [community reserve](#), under which sacred groves can be declared as community reserves.
  - [National Forest Policy, 1988](#), backed by the [Godavarman Case, 1996](#), encouraged communities with **customary rights** to protect and improve these forest patches on which they depend for their needs.
- **Cultural Significance:** It is integral to **Hindu beliefs**, promoting **coexistence and reverence** for nature.
- **Role in Conservation:** Practices like **tree worship** and strict prohibitions on logging and hunting align with biodiversity principles.
  - Serve as **refuges for diverse flora and fauna** and maintain clean water ecosystems.
  - They are examples of [Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures \(OECMs\)](#).
- **Different Names:**

Region/State	Name of Sacred Groves
Himachal Pradesh	Devban
Karnataka	Devarakadu
Kerala	Kavu
Madhya Pradesh	Sarna
Rajasthan	Oran
Maharashtra	Devrai
Manipur	Umanglai
Meghalaya	Law Kyntang/Law Lyngdoh
Uttarakhand	Devan/Deobhumi
West Bengal	Gramthan
Andhra Pradesh	Pavithravana

## Note:

- The **Supreme court (SC)** cited **Verse 20 from Chapter 13** of the Bhagavad Gita: **“Nature is the source of all material things: the maker, the means of making, and the things made. Spirit is the source of all consciousness which feels pleasure and feels pain.”**
- In the **Godavarman Case 1996**, the SC addressed multiple environmental issues, ranging from **encroachments of forest lands to wildlife conservation, the regulation of mining activities within forest areas.**

## Piplantri Model

- It showed how **environmental protection, gender equality, and economic growth** can work together to change communities.
- The sarpanch of the **Piplantri village** started the initiative to **plant 111 trees for every girl child born.**
  - It started after the tragic death of her girl child due to environmental damage caused due to excessive **marble mining**, leading to water shortages, deforestation, and economic decline.
- Environmentally, **over 40 lakh trees** have been planted, which has helped **raise the water table by 800-900 feet** and **cooled the climate by 3-4°C.**
- It also led to drastic lowering of **female foeticide, increased local income, avenues of education** and saw women self-help groups flourish.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

### Prelims

**Q. The most important strategy for the conservation of biodiversity together with traditional human life is the establishment of (2014)**

- (a) biosphere reserves
- (b) botanical gardens
- (c) national parks
- (d) wildlife sanctuaries

**Ans: (a)**