



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)