

SACRED GROVES AND WATER CONSERVATION

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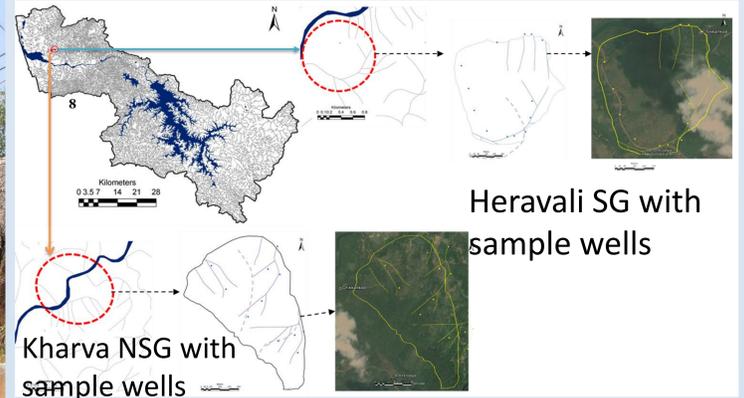
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1. Forest patches were preserved as sacred in the traditional cultures of Western Ghats and west coast of India. A major benefit to humans from worship of gods in sacred groves is one of water supply, clean, perennial and protected. Here are two case studies from Honavar taluk of Uttara Kannada district in Karnataka



Kamakoteswari temple in the middle of a sacred grove in Heravali village



Heravali SG with sample wells

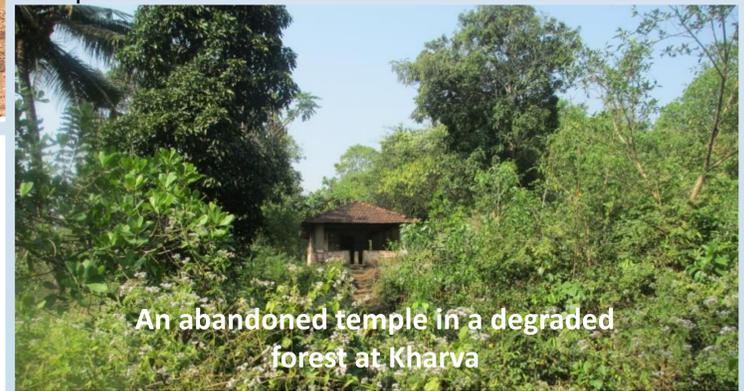
Kharva NSG with sample wells



Kamakoteswari, Mother Goddess of Heravali sacred grove

2. The ancient temple of Kamakoteswari (Mother Goddess of Heravali village), inside a 50 ha sacred grove, is recently fenced and protected by Forest Department, Honavar Division with community involvement. Here we studied water levels in 12 open wells through monthly measurements.

3. In the adjoining village of Kharva, no such sacred grove like that of Kamakoteswari exists currently, though temples are present. The forest here is more open and scrubby. Here also we chose 12 wells for monthly measuring of water levels



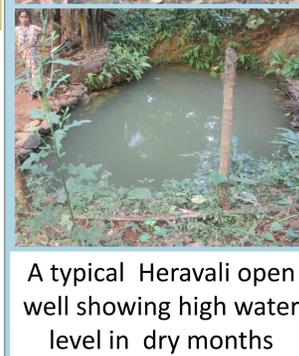
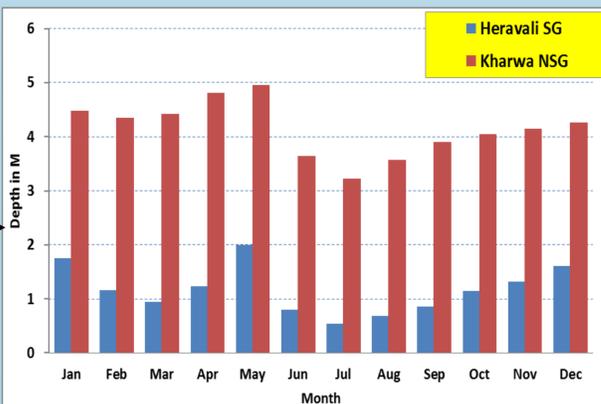
An abandoned temple in a degraded forest at Kharva



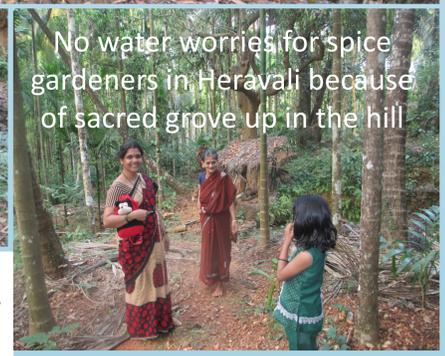
A scrub forest in Kharva

4. Water table in the sacred grove village of Heravali was at average depths of 1-2 m, even during dry months of December to May.

But in the next village Kharva hardly the rains recede in September the water table drops down to 4 m, almost down to 5 m in May, because Kharva has lost its sacred forest



A typical Heravali open well showing high water level in dry months



No water worries for spice gardeners in Heravali because of sacred grove up in the hill

SACRED GROVES AND WATER – A second case study

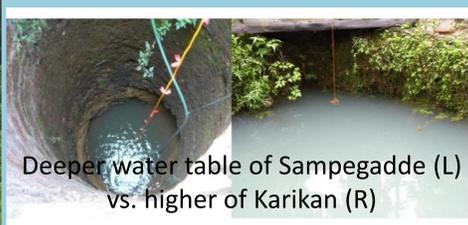
Source: Rajasri Ray, M.D.S. Chandran, T.V. Ramachandra. *Tropical Ecology* 56(1): 87-99, 2015



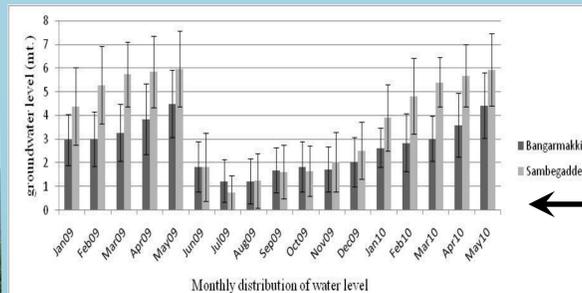
Karikanamman sacred grove in Honavar taluk



Sampegadde secondary forest



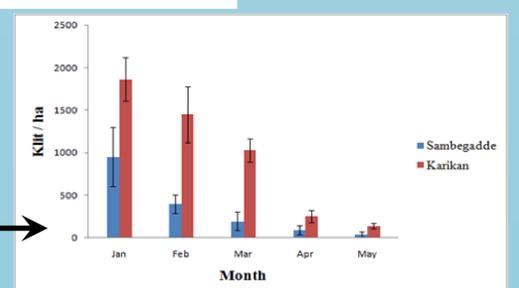
Deeper water table of Sampegadde (L) vs. higher of Karikan (R)



Monthly distribution of water level

Water table at lesser depth in Karikan SG village than in Sampegadde NSG

More liberal use of water for irrigation in dry months in Karikan SG village than Sampegadde NSG



Acknowledgement: We thank Mr. Madhav Naik, chairman Kamkodeshwari temple, Mr. Harishchandra Naik, for their active help in field Work. The financial assistance and infrastructure support from the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India and Indian Institute of Science is acknowledged