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Ecological Importance of Relic Forest Patches – From Species to Ecosystem

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Relic forest patches are often integral part of socio-religious life in rural India. These patches popularly known as sacred grove, are usually characterized by having assemblage of native species, regional and local endemics and provision for various ecosystem services. Ecological characteristics of the sacred groves are governed by their surroundings as well as human interaction with the system. The different nature of this interaction leads to varied ecological profile of the grove system which could be observed in both micro and macro level i.e. from species to ecosystem. This presentation deals with various examples drawn from sacred groves of central Western Ghats to illustrate the phenomena and contemporary issues challenging the age old tradition.

Keywords: Relic forests, Western Ghats, Sacred groves, ecosystems

