

SACRED GROVES IN INDIA



SACRED GROVES

Sacred groves comprise of **patches of forests or natural vegetation** that are usually dedicated to **local folk deities or tree spirits** (Vanadevatais).

These spaces are protected by local communities because of their religious beliefs and traditional rituals that run through several generations.



SACRED GROVES

Degree of sanctity of the sacred forests

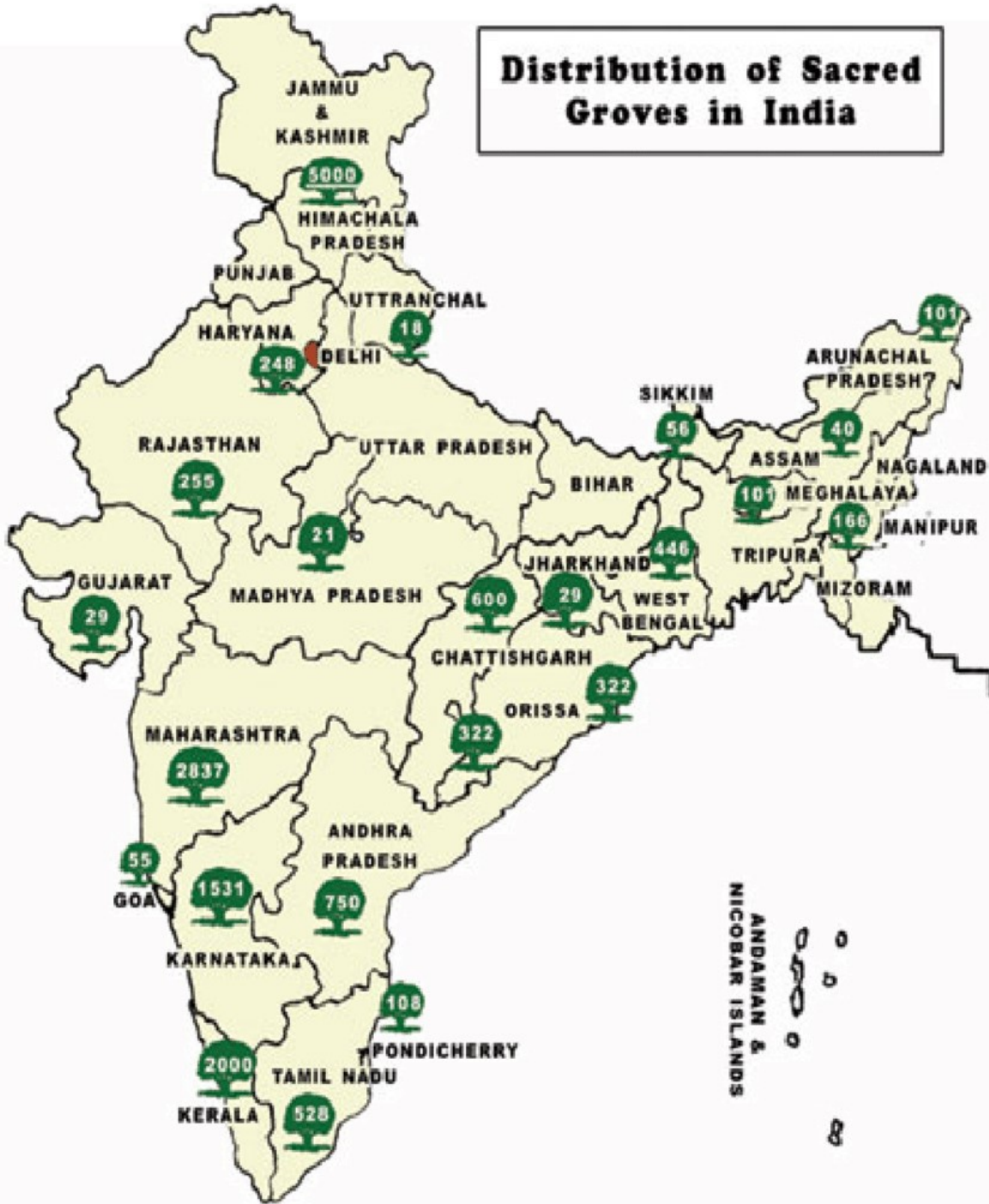
Complete prohibition of
human interference

Example:
Garo and Khasi tribe
of North East India

Partial prohibition of
human interference

Example:
Gonds of Central India

Distribution of Sacred Groves in India



ECOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF SACRED GROVES

- **Conservation of Biodiversity** – The sacred groves are important repositories of floral and faunal diversity that have been conserved by local communities in a sustainable manner.
- **Recharge of aquifers** – The groves are often associated with ponds, streams or springs, which help meet the water requirements of the local people. The vegetative cover also helps in the recharging the aquifers.
- **Soil conservation** - The vegetative cover of the sacred groves improves the soil stability of the area and also prevents soil erosion.



THREATS TO THE SACRED GROVES

- **Disappearance of the traditional belief systems**, which were fundamental to the concept of sacred groves. These systems and their rituals are now considered mere superstition.
- **Destruction due to rapid urbanization and developmental interventions** such as roads, railways tracks, dams including commercial forestry.
- Many groves are suffering due to the transformation of the primitive forms of nature worship into formal temple worship.
- Invasion by **exotic weeds** such as *Eupatorium odoratum*, *Lantana camara* and *Prosopis juliflora* is a serious threat to some groves.
- Pressures due to **increasing livestock** and fuelwood collection.



THANK YOU

Acknowledgements

[https://youtu.be/OZtiOdH0 -E?list=PLIC0i9IRboHb19v2dF0yuenG7xDOGJLeP](https://youtu.be/OZtiOdH0-E?list=PLIC0i9IRboHb19v2dF0yuenG7xDOGJLeP)

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