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Traditional Ecological Knowledge, Sacred Groves and Conservation of Biodiversity in the Pachmarhi Biosphere Reserve of India

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ABSTRACT

The sacred groves in the Pachmarhi Biosphere Reserve (PBR) of India were studied to understand the concept of traditional ecological and biodiversity conservation systems. A questionnaire survey was conducted in the selected villages of the PBR along with the survey of sacred groves. In 10 selected villages of the PBR 7 sacred groves were managed by Mawasi and 16 sacred groves by Gond tribal communities. Different deities were worshipped in the sacred groves and each grove was named after the deity dwelling in the respective sacred grove. A total of 19 such deities were recorded during the survey worshipped by the local people. In study area, various traditional customs associated with sacred groves were in practice. The sacred groves were rich in plant genetic diversity and were composed of many ethnobotanically useful species, including wild edible fruits, medicinal plants, fodder, fuelwood and timber yielding species. Given the importance of conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem attempts should be made to maintain the sanctity of sacred groves.

KEYWORDS

Sacred Grove, Biosphere Reserve, Biodiversity Conservation, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, Gond & Mawasi Tribe

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