

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT IN NORTHEAST INDIA

Trends and Perspectives

Edited by
LANUKUMLA AO



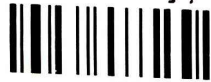
DON BOSCO COLLEGE
Kohima, Nagaland

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SACRED GROVES OF NAGALAND AND THEIR ETHOS

LANUKUMLA AO

Introduction

Sacred groves are forest areas of socio-cultural and religious significance which are protected by a community. These patches of virgin forests are closely guarded and protected from all kinds of human deprivation. These sacred groves are remnants of age old forestry with a different set of flora and fauna from adjoining areas due to protection offered by traditional taboos and religious beliefs that have transcended generations. They are present in every corner of the globe. Exploitation of such areas by hunting and logging is strictly prohibited (see Gadgil and Vartak, 1975; Hughes and Chandran, 1998). The sacred groves serve both traditional as well as modern purposes. Traditionally, sacred groves are used mainly for spiritual activities, burial grounds, and watershed management (Ormsby, 2013). The linkage between sacred groves and religion is well established in the literature (see Gadgil and Vartak, 1975; Hughes and Chandran, 1998; Kulkarni, 2018). The existence of sacred groves can be traced from the practice of nature worship which is as old as humanity itself, and is still prevalent in many parts of world (Barik *et al.*, 2006). An inherent part of this practice is preserving parts of a forest that had existed for centuries for posterity. Such sacred forests are found throughout the world and nicely protected and managed by the local communities for the welfare of society. They provide a repository for various Ayurvedic medicines. Since in most sacred groves hunting and logging are taboo, the vegetation cover reduces soil erosion and desertification. The modern uses of sacred groves include biodiversity hotspots as well as refuge for plant and animal species which have become extinct in other areas. Sacred groves also act as recreational parks in urban areas providing fresh air and scenes of natural greenery; and thus, a tourist attraction.

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