

VII.B.3. Sacred Groves can be Substantiated as Sustenance

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Several Sacred Groves are found in secluded tribal areas in the district of Purulia of West Bengal. This district is under the Latitude 23°42' and 22°43' North and Longitude 86°54' and 85°49' East, acquires an area of 6,259 sq.km. The area is under archaean gneiss of Chhota Nagpur plateau. The place had deciduous type of monsoon vegetation. Reserve forests are 11,212 hectares, protected forests are 72,872 hectares, unclassified state forest lands are 3,523 hectares. Tribal are more than 20%. They preserve their specific social and cultural identity. Within February- March of the year 1999, 18 groves were studied. The relevant plants were identified on-the-spot along with the local people. Doubtful specimens were confirmed from standard herbaria and literature. The work was carried out on the lines of - Sacred Groves studied, species habit, species classified, individuality, aboriginality, festivity, ascendancy, species enumeration, and taboos. Special attention were led on their economic significance.

These 18 groves acquire 72,681 sq.m, areas and contain 106 species variform. Of them aboriginal tree species are 55, Their total population are 1936. Remainder are of shrubs-20, herbs-21, lianes-5, climbers-3, epiphytes-1, parasites-1. Divots are 100. Monocots are 6. Approximate age of the groves are varying from 200-400 years. Till now, aboriginal trees chiefly exhibited are of *Albizia chinensis* (10m.ht.), *Bombax ceiba* (26 m.ht.), *Casearia elhptica* (17m.ht), *Diospyros tomentosa* (14 m.ht.), *Ficus Benghalensis* (17 m.ht.),

Haldinia cordifolia (33 m.ht.), *Shorea robusta* (30 m.ht.), *Tararindus indica* (15 m.ht.), *Tenninalia crenulata* (16 m.ht.) etc. Main festivals observed are Ansari, Maghi, Sankranti, Sarul, Shrabani etc. Ethnic groups acquainted with festivity are Bhumijis, Kurmis, Lojaras, Mahalis, Sabars, Santhals and so on. They offer flowering twigs of *Aeqle marmelos*, *Combretum roxburghii*, *Madhuca indica*, *Nymphaea stellata*, *Oryza sativa*, *Phyllanthus emblica*, *Shorea robusta* and immolate Goat, Sheep, Swine, Calf, Fowl for respective deity in the Sacred Grove upon good faith and religious belief. Other prevalent species are trees like *Holarrhena pubescens*, *Oroxylum indicum*, *Schleichera oleosa*, shrubs like *Clerodendrum viscosum*, *Erycibe paniculata*, *Hemidesmus indicus*, herbs like *Costus speciosus*, *Elephantopus scaber* *Polyqala arvensis*, lianes like *Bauhinia vahliee*, *Butea superba*, *Celastrus paniculata*, climbers like *Ichnocarpus frutescens*, epiphytes like *Vanda testacea*, and parasites like *Loranthus longiflorus* etc.

Today, taboos are beginning to weaken. Some older plants are succumbed by termites and pathogenic infection and some by thunder-struck. Natural calamitous like wind, frost, soil erosion, forest-fire are not uncommon. Forest and people should jointly evolved plans for

utilization of these Biological Resources, constitute them in to a system of nature preserve, and make their economy condign by work.