

Saving Sacred Spaces

RCE , Kodagu, India

Centre for Environment Education , India

CBD – COP 13 Cancun , Mexico

Glimpses of Programmes and Activities

CEE

Centre for Environment Education



Legend:

- Andhra Pradesh
- Assam
- Bihar
- Chhattisgarh
- Goa
- Gujarat
- Haryana
- Himachal Pradesh
- Jharkhand
- Karnataka
- Kerala
- Madhya Pradesh
- Madagascar
- Manipur
- Madagascar
- Mizoram
- Nagaland
- Northern Territory
- Odisha
- Punjab
- Rajasthan
- Tamil Nadu
- Telangana
- Uttar Pradesh
- West Bengal

Programmes and Activities:

- Fieldwork in various states (e.g., Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu)
- Classroom activities and presentations
- Community projects and awareness campaigns
- Workshops and seminars
- Environmental monitoring and assessment
- Publications and media work
- Collaborative projects with other organizations

Sacred Groves : Islands of Biodiversity

- Indigenous communities in many parts of the world have been protecting biodiversity based on spiritual and cultural values
- Sacred groves are protected in the name of local deities, worshiped to protect them from different calamities.
- Sacred groves are found in almost all the continents
- The present occurrence is mostly restricted to Africa and Asia



Sacred groves in India

- In India, sacred groves are recorded from across
- Diverse range of ecosystem is preserved through grove tradition with its regional and local identities as represented in name, practices and management of groves.



Conservation at the highest level

- Sacred groves of India have pre-vedic origin.
- Traditional knowledge played a vital role
- Sacred groves acted as the reservoirs preserving unique flora and fauna; corridors to reduce human wildlife conflicts ; important role in soil water conservation
- The importance of groves from ecological, economic socio-cultural, environmental services including its educational value is unparalleled.



The Case of Devera Kadu in Kodagu

- Devarakadu - Gods own forests
- Kodagu district has over 1214 sacred groves covers an area of 2250 (ha)
- There is one grove for every 300 acres, covering every village ,possibly highest in the world
- Each is unique in terms of biodiversity, including cultural diversity with 121 deities on record
- All communities pray together, participate in annual activities symbolizing unity and harmony.



Location

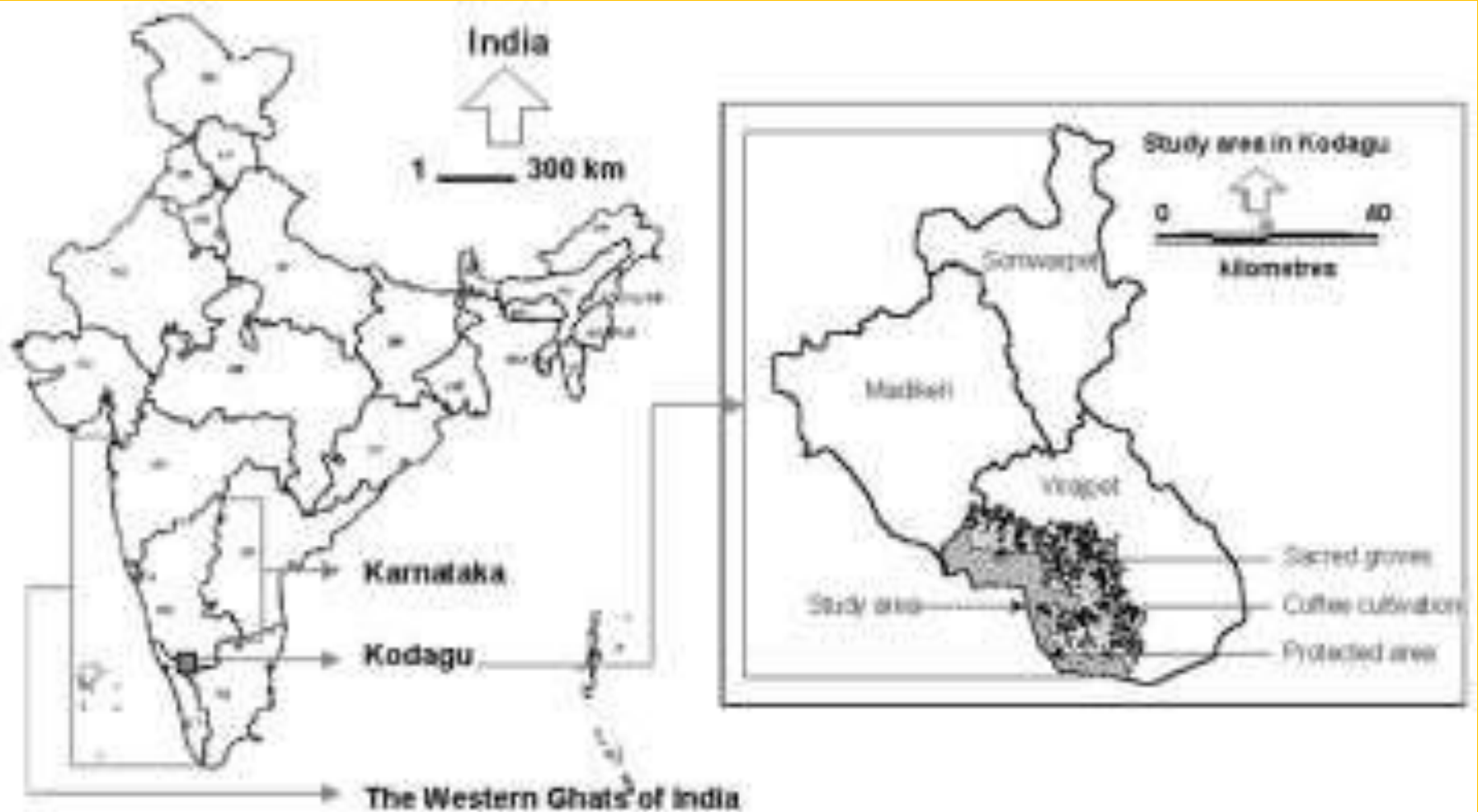


Figure 1 – The study area in the southern part of Kodagu district, Virajpet taluk, in the Western Ghats of India.

Lurking danger

- Eroding religious beliefs , changing dynamics of community structure; changing landscape, commercial ventures, are threats
- Loss of 3727 hectares in the last 80 years
- Sacred groves are declared as Protected Forests
- Owned by Forest Department. And managed by local communities under JFM



Multi stakeholder participation

- Increasing and strengthening community participation, enhancing capacities , engagement of local youth are the need of the hour.
- Can RECs facilitate this process?



Role and strength of RECs

- The composition of RECs
- Local presence
- The vital requirement of multi-stakeholder engagement in sacred groves conservation
- REC Kodugu with its partners initiated a project on sacred grove conservation in ten selected groves.



Aim

- To restore the groves from the ecological, economic and socio-cultural, environmental and educational perspectives through multistakeholder engagement



Objectives

- Identifying and bringing multi stakeholders together on a common platform
- Increasing their participation
- Strengthening capacities through information, skills and attitudinal changes
- Making sacred groves a biodiversity learning centre



Location

10 sacred groves in Virajpet taluk, Kodagu district

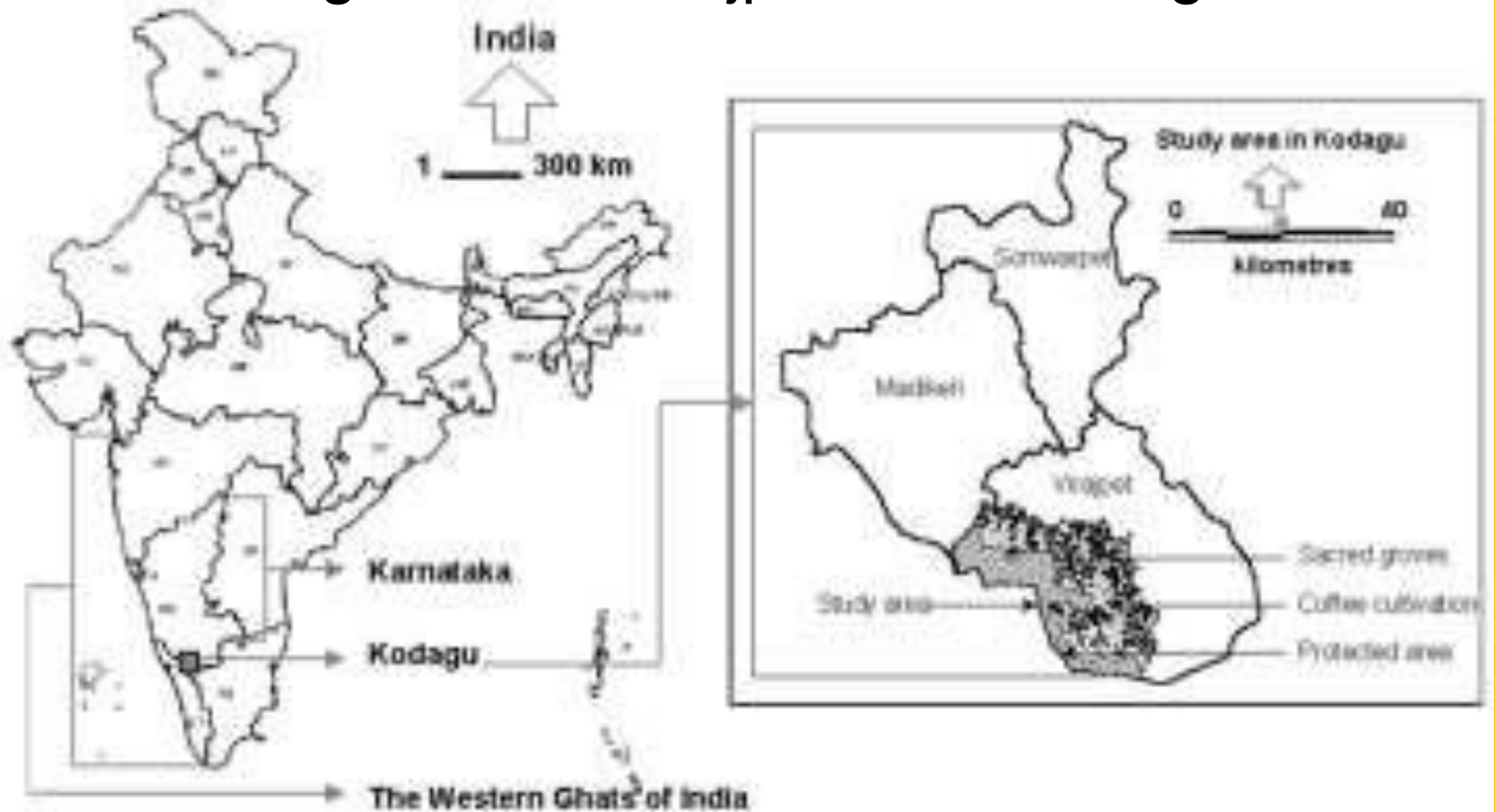


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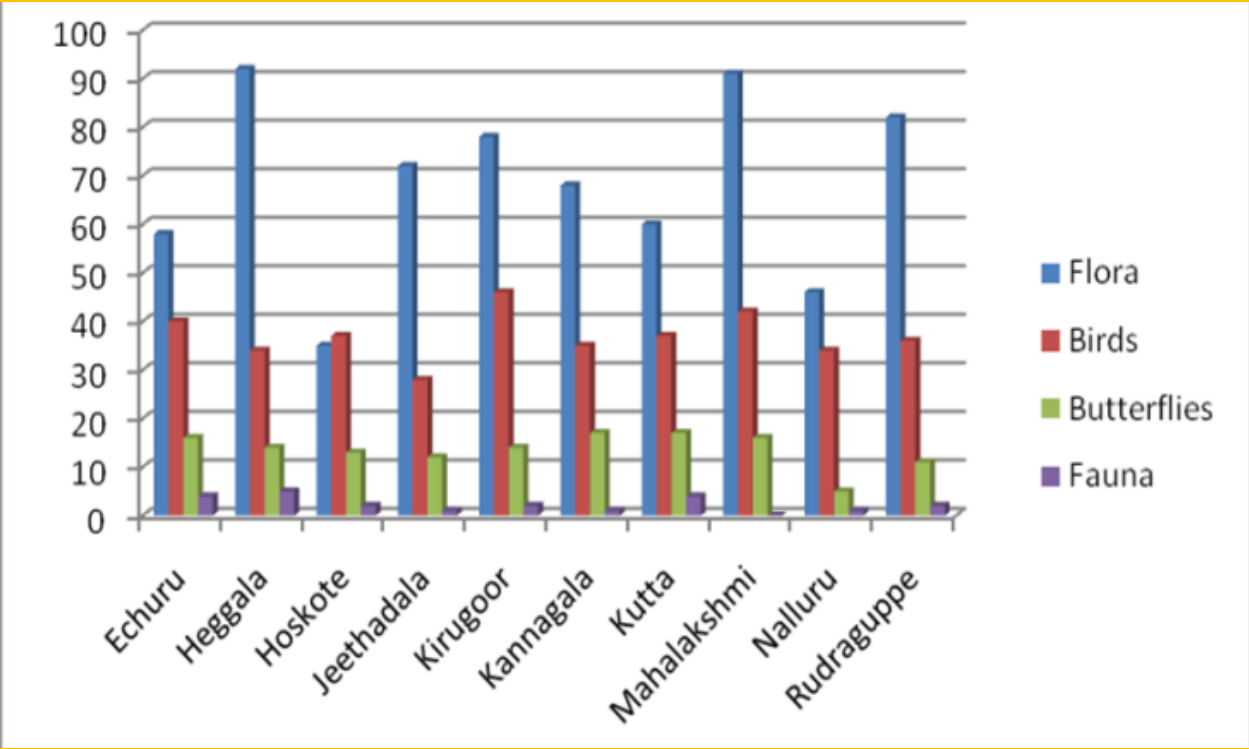
Approaches

- Orienting teachers, students and youth on sacred groves residing around the groves



- Training them in skills of scientific inventory involving technical institutions and forest department officials

- Scientific inventory of flora and fauna in 10 selected groves in Kodagu involving school and youth.



- Structured and semi structured interviews with local communities documenting traditional beliefs and practices

- Meetings with local communities , Forest department and technical institutions (F.college)
- Student – parent interaction for awareness and information
- Awareness programmes through student camps, campaigns, materials
- Waysides, informative panels and trail paths created inside groves to enable tourists to enrich their experiences and spread awareness





Out come

- Inventory facilitating research and planning
- Publication of Inventory
- Capacity building 300 schools+ 50 youth + 25 teachers
- Engaging 55 community members
- Involving 16 researchers
- Campaigns and awareness materials
- Way sides , panels and trail paths





Stakeholders



Schools and youth

Research/academic
Institutions Forest
Department

Community

Visitors

Learning for RCE

Need for

- Strong ESD
- Multi-stakeholder engagement
- Active participation of people facilitating cross learning
- Scientific temper
- Outreach and communication tools
- Active Forest department / Government participation in JFM in protecting sacred groves.
- Sustainability factor

