

Traditional Knowledge and Biodiversity Conservation: A Preliminary Study of the Sacred Natural Sites in Uttarakhand, Central Himalaya

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ABSTRACT Cultural diversity is closely linked to bio-diversity. The study of these interrelationships need to be studied mainly for the simple reason that culture is not only the ethical imperative for development, it is a condition of its sustainability; for there exists a symbiotic relationship between habitats and cultures, between ecosystems and cultural identity, and that this relationship constitutes a determining factor in ensuring sustainable human development. The association of religion with eco-system management is interwoven in the symbolic network of the Himalayan traditional communities. Infact, we cannot think of ecology in the Himalaya without religion. The present study deals with the study of sacred natural sites (forests/groves, pastures, water bodies), within the State of Uttarakhand, and the inherent traditional knowledge-based systems, the taboos, as regards the resource exploitation and other traditional beliefs and customs, in practice surrounding these sacred natural sites. Even though, dilution in norms and taboos restricting the resource use, has undoubtedly got diluted in many of the sacred forests, a significant number of very-well preserved sacred forests, with religiously guarded taboos, do exists, which warrants a detail study, for their floral and faunal diversity.