

CHAMPION OF THE SACRED GROVES

DC CORRESPONDENT

Environmentalist and writer Nanditha Krishna has been actively speaking and writing about the environment for the last three decades. In the 1990s, she took up sacred grove restoration as a pilot project and soon understood how each grove was given a spiritual dimension and by preserving it the village reaped benefits indirectly. The rise in developmental projects and caste wars led to many groves being damaged. With the help of the locals, she managed to restore as many as 52 of them in South India. To help everyone understand the value of groves and their part in helping humans survive, she has writ-



Dr. Nanditha
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ten a book, which captures the rituals and folklore that made these groves sacred, and the need to preserve them.

"Most of the villagers and tribes considered their groves sacred. They continued their rituals and traditions without understanding the deeper, symbiotic relationship between man and environment. Every grove has a temple situated nearby, with a local deity and a story about the importance of a particular

species. The younger generation followed the traditions without understanding the meaning behind them. When we restored a grove in the village, the water levels in the neighbouring village rose. That's when the locals understood why their ancestors had preserved it with such reverence," points out Nanditha.

One of the key challenges that Nanditha faced while doing her research was to do with caste wars and developmental projects. "In fact, I understood the concept of biodiversity from the groves. Unfortunately, we are in love with building roads and flats. We do need development, but not at the cost of groves," Nanditha says.

The book, which she intends to publish next year, will have details about every grove that she and her team secured and will be translated in different languages to help everyone speak and conserve their groves in their own language," she concludes.