

## Endemic and threatened flowering plants of sacred *Kaanu* forests of Sharavathi River basin, Central Western Ghats, Karnataka

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### ABSTRACT

Since long time, people of few villages located in the region of Sharavathi river basin conserved their village forests in the name of God as a cultural practice. Those sacred forests are generally called as *Kaanu* forests in the *Malenadu* region of Central Western Ghats. The traditional conservation practices followed was helped to retain its virgin state as a relic forest patch. The study area lies in the region of Central Western Ghats which is known for its luxuriant floristic wealth. In the present study, an attempt has been made to document the diversity and distribution of endemic and threatened flowering plants of sacred *Kaanu* forests in the region of Sharavathi river basin with due consideration of low disturbance. Evergreen to semi-evergreen vegetation type was observed. A total of 103 species of endemic & threatened categories in 79 genera which belongs to 43 families are recorded. The *Kaanu* forests having perennial stream supported high floral endemism. The diversity of life form includes herbs, shrubs, climbers, lianas, epiphytes, lithophytes and trees. A very less number of epipetric annual and epiphytic perennial endemic herbs were witnessed in the study area. Further, considering the existence of diverse endemic & threatened taxa in the region, the study emphasizes for strict conservation of relic forest patches.

**Key words:** Sharavathi river basin, *Kaanu* forest, Western Ghats, Endemic flowering plants, Threatened taxa

