

Silent Valley Movement – UPSC Notes

Silent Valley Movement was a movement against the state to protect Silent valley, an evergreen tropical forest in the Palakkad district of Kerala, India. It was started in **1973** to save the Silent Valley Reserve Forest from being flooded by a hydroelectric project.

History

- The British named the area 'Silent Valley' because of a perceived absence of noisy Cicadas.
- The Kuntipuzha is a major river that flows 15 km southwest from Silent Valley.
- It takes its origin in the lush green forests of Silent Valley.
- In 1928, the location on the Kunthipuzha River at Sairandhri was identified as an ideal site for electricity generation.
- Initially, the decision was made by the British government to build a dam across the river, which originates from the forest.
- In 1958, a study and survey of the area were conducted, and a hydroelectric project was proposed by the Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB).
- The plans for a hydroelectric project that threatened the park's high diversity of wildlife stimulated an Environmentalist Social Movement in the 1970s called 'Save Silent Valley' which resulted in the cancellation of the project.

Significance of Silent Valley

- The valley is famous for many rare species of birds and animals.
- Birdlife International listed 16 bird species in Silent Valley as threatened or restricted.
- The mammals in the valley include Gaur, the largest of all wild cattle. There are at least 34 species of mammals at Silent Valley, including the threatened species of mammals.
- Over 128 species of butterflies and 400 species of moths live here.
- Silent Valley is identified as a region with high biodiversity and an important **Gene Pool** resource for Recombinant DNA innovations by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, ICAR (India).

About the Movement

- The movement was first initiated by the local people and was subsequently taken over by the **Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP)**.
- The KSSP effectively aroused public opinion by publishing a techno-economic and socio-political assessment report on the Silent Valley hydroelectric project.
- The KSSP generated public opinion against the project.
- As a consequence, in 1979, the Government of Kerala passed legislation regarding the Silent Valley Protection Area (Protection of Ecological balance Act of 1979) and issued a notification declaring the exclusion of the hydroelectric project area from the proposed national park.

Conservation Status of Silent Valley

- In 1914 the forest of the Silent Valley area was declared a Reserve Forest.
- However, from 1927 to 1976 portions of the Silent Valley forest areas were subjected to forestry operations.
- In 1983, the Central Government instructed the State government to abandon the Project and on November 15, the Silent Valley forests were declared as a National Park.
- On September 7, 1985, the Silent Valley National Park was formally inaugurated.
- On September 1, 1986, Silent Valley National Park was designated as the core area of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve.