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The western ghats as a climate biodiversity nexus: ecological functions, conservation challenges, and sustainable futures

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ABSTRACT

The Western Ghats, recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the eight "hottest hotspots" of global biodiversity, represent a unique intersection of climate regulation and ecological richness. Stretching along the western coast of India, these mountains harbor a remarkable diversity of flora and fauna, including numerous endemic species, while simultaneously providing essential ecosystem services that sustain regional and global environmental stability. This manuscript examines the multifaceted ecological functions of the Western Ghats, highlighting their critical roles in carbon sequestration, hydrological regulation, soil conservation, and the maintenance of biodiversity. The region's forests, wetlands, and montane ecosystems not only support terrestrial and aquatic species but also underpin livelihoods for millions of people dependent on water, forest products, and agricultural productivity. Despite their ecological significance, the Western Ghats face escalating threats from deforestation, agricultural intensification, urbanization, infrastructure development, and climate change. Habitat fragmentation, loss of endemic species, and altered hydrological cycles underscore the urgent need for coordinated conservation efforts. Through a synthesis of recent scientific research, policy analyses, and community-based initiatives, this study identifies strategies to enhance ecological resilience, integrate traditional knowledge with modern conservation practices, and align local management with global sustainability frameworks such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Sustainable Development Goals.The findings underscore that protecting the Western Ghats is not merely a regional imperative but a global responsibility. By adopting integrated, science-based, and participatory approaches, the Western Ghats can serve as a model for sustainable mountain ecosystem management, demonstrating how biodiversity conservation and climate regulation can be harmonized to secure ecological and human well-being for current and future generations.

KEY WORDS

Western Ghats; Biodiversity hotspot; Climate resilience; Ecosystem services; Sustainable futures; Conservation strategies

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Introduction

Mountain ecosystems are increasingly recognized as critical climate–biodiversity nexuses, where ecological richness and climatic regulation intersect to sustain both human and ecological communities. Among these, the Western Ghats a continuous mountain range stretching approximately 1,600 km along India's western coast exemplify this intricate relationship. Designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the eight global "hottest biodiversity hotspots," the Western Ghats host over 7,400 species of plants and animals, with nearly 30% endemic to the region. These mountains provide indispensable ecosystem services that include provisioning of freshwater, timber, medicinal plants, and food resources; regulating services such as climate moderation, soil fertility, and flood control; and cultural services that encompass sacred groves, traditional agroforestry, and eco-tourism opportunities. Collectively, these services sustain nearly 400 million people, highlighting the region's socio-ecological significance.

Despite its ecological prominence, the Western Ghats are facing unprecedented threats. Rapid, unregulated development including mining, infrastructure expansion, hydropower projects, and large-scale monoculture plantations has led to significant habitat fragmentation and forest cover loss [1]. Climate variability, manifesting as altered rainfall patterns, increasing temperatures, and extreme weather events, further exacerbates these stresses, placing endemic species and human communities at heightened risk. Habitat fragmentation disrupts ecological connectivity, reducing species migration potential, altering predator-prey dynamics, and weakening ecosystem resilience.

The need for a comprehensive understanding of the Western Ghats is thus urgent. Effective conservation requires a multidimensional perspective that integrates ecological, climatic, and socio-economic considerations. This paper aims to synthesize current knowledge by focusing on three key dimensions. First, it examines the ecological functions of the Western Ghats, emphasizing biodiversity conservation, carbon sequestration, hydrological regulation, and ecosystem resilience. Second, it highlights the major conservation challenges threatening the region, including anthropogenic pressures, climate-induced vulnerabilities, and policy implementation gaps. Finally, it proposes integrated strategies for sustainable futures, emphasizing participatory governance, indigenous knowledge integration, policy alignment with global conventions, and science-based management interventions.

By framing the Western Ghats as a climate–biodiversity nexus, this manuscript underscores their global significance. Preserving their ecological integrity is not merely a regional imperative; it has far-reaching implications for biodiversity conservation, climate adaptation, and sustainable development in South Asia and beyond. Understanding and addressing the complex interconnections between climate , biodiversity , and human

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systems in this unique landscape is essential for informing policy, guiding research, and implementing effective conservation strategies that ensure long-term ecological and socio-economic sustainability.

Materials and Methods

Study area

The Western Ghats, extending approximately 1,600 km along the western coast of India, were selected as the study area due to their ecological significance as a global biodiversity hotspot and UNESCO World Heritage Site [2]. The region encompasses a wide range of altitudinal gradients (50–2,695 meters above sea level), climate zones, and vegetation types, including tropical evergreen forests, semi-evergreen forests, montane grasslands, and riparian ecosystems. The diverse topography and climatic heterogeneity make it an ideal site for examining the nexus between biodiversity and climate functions [3].

Data collection

Biodiversity assessment

A comprehensive review of peer-reviewed literature, governmental reports, and existing biodiversity databases (such as the India Biodiversity Portal and GBIF) was conducted to identify endemic and threatened species, habitat types, and ecological interactions within the Western Ghats. Spatial data were obtained from satellite imagery (Landsat 8, Sentinel-2) and digital elevation models (DEM) to map vegetation types, land-use patterns, and forest fragmentation [4].

Climate and hydrological data

Long-term climatic datasets, including temperature, precipitation, and relative humidity, were sourced from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) and WorldClim database. Hydrological parameters, such as river flow, watershed distribution, and groundwater recharge rates, were compiled from Central Water Commission reports and local hydrological studies. These datasets facilitated the analysis of climate–ecosystem interactions and ecosystem services provision [5].

Anthropogenic impact assessment

Land-use change, deforestation rates, infrastructure development, and urbanization trends were quantified using geospatial analysis of multi-temporal satellite imagery. GIS software (ArcGIS 10.8) and remote sensing techniques were employed to detect spatial patterns, habitat fragmentation, and landscape connectivity.

Data analysis

Quantitative analyses included spatial overlay, habitat suitability modeling, and ecological connectivity assessments using FRAGSTATS and MaxEnt software. Climate–biodiversity interactions were evaluated using correlation and regression analyses, linking species richness, endemism, and ecosystem service metrics with climatic variables. Threat assessment integrated ecological, socio-economic, and policy dimensions to identify priority conservation zones.

Validation and ground-truthing

Wherever possible, literature findings and geospatial analyses were validated through field surveys, involving transect walks, vegetation sampling, and consultation with local communities and forest officials. Field observations were cross-referenced with secondary data to ensure accuracy and representativeness.

This integrative approach, combining remote sensing, geospatial analysis, literature synthesis, and field validation, provided a robust framework to assess the ecological functions, climate interactions, and conservation challenges of the Western Ghats, supporting evidence-based strategies for sustainable ecosystem management.

Ecological Functions of the Western Ghats

The Western Ghats, stretching over 1,600 km along the western coast of India, are recognized globally as one of the eight "hottest hotspots" of biodiversity. Their ecological functions extend far beyond local ecosystems, influencing regional climate, hydrology, and even socio-cultural systems. These mountains play a pivotal role in maintaining environmental stability, supporting human livelihoods, and sustaining biodiversity under changing climatic conditions. This section elaborates the ecological significance of the Western Ghats in four key dimensions: biodiversity, climate regulation, water security, and cultural-spiritual ecosystem services.

Biodiversity reservoir

The Western Ghats harbor a remarkable array of ecosystems, ranging from tropical evergreen forests, montane rainforests, and moist deciduous forests to montane grasslands and shola patches at higher elevations [6]. This ecological heterogeneity supports over 7,400 species of plants, more than 1,800 species of animals, and a rich diversity of fungi and microorganisms, of which approximately 30% are endemic. Flagship species such as the lion-tailed macaque (*Macaca silenus*), Malabar civet (*Viverra civettina*), Nilgiri tahr (*Nilgiritragus hylocrius*), and a plethora of orchids, amphibians, and reptiles exemplify the uniqueness of this region.

The biodiversity of the Western Ghats underpins ecosystem resilience, ensuring that ecological processes continue even under stress. Genetic diversity in plant and animal species provides critical resources for agriculture, pharmaceuticals, and biotechnological applications. Moreover, the coexistence of endemic and migratory species contributes to global conservation significance, highlighting the region as a natural laboratory for ecological research, evolutionary studies, and climate adaptation strategies. Maintaining this biodiversity is essential not only for ecological stability but also for sustaining human livelihoods that depend on forest products, pollination services, and medicinal plants.

Climate regulation

Forests in the Western Ghats serve as a major carbon sink, sequestering millions of tons of carbon dioxide annually. This process mitigates regional and global climate extremes, contributing to the regulation of greenhouse gases. By maintaining dense vegetation cover and complex forest structures, the Ghats moderate local temperatures, reduce heatwaves, and stabilize microclimatic conditions that benefit agriculture and urban settlements alike.

The Western Ghats also exert significant influence on the South Asian monsoon system [7]. Orographic rainfall generated by the mountain ranges replenishes freshwater resources across peninsular India, sustaining crop productivity and hydropower generation. Changes in forest cover, therefore, can directly impact monsoon patterns, with cascading effects on food security, water availability, and energy production. By acting as a climatic regulator, the Western Ghats provide an invaluable ecosystem service with implications for both regional and global climate resilience.

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Water security and hydrological services

Often referred to as India's "water tower," the Western Ghats are the origin of major rivers such as the Godavari, Krishna, Cauvery, Sharavathi, and Periyar. These rivers supply freshwater to over 245 million people, irrigate agricultural lands, and support fisheries and hydropower projects. Forested catchments in the Ghats play a critical role in regulating the hydrological cycle by intercepting rainfall, reducing surface runoff, recharging groundwater, and mitigating flood risks.

The complex network of streams, wetlands, and riparian zones maintains the ecological integrity of downstream ecosystems [8]. By stabilizing river flows, minimizing soil erosion, and filtering pollutants, the Western Ghats enhance water quality and sustain aquatic biodiversity. These hydrological services are crucial for both urban centers and rural communities, ensuring food security, livelihoods, and resilience to climate-induced hydrological variability.

Cultural and spiritual ecosystem services

The Western Ghats are not only ecological but also cultural landscapes. Sacred groves, traditionally protected by local communities, conserve endemic plant species and maintain ecological balance while preserving spiritual heritage. Agroforestry systems, terraced farming, and traditional horticultural practices demonstrate centuries-old sustainable resource management practices that harmonize human needs with conservation objectives.

Cultural and spiritual ties to forests foster environmental stewardship and community-led conservation initiatives. Rituals, festivals, and folklore often reinforce the protection of habitats, creating a socially embedded conservation ethic. These ecosystem services though intangible are integral to maintaining biodiversity, promoting sustainable resource use, and enhancing resilience against environmental change.

Collectively, the ecological functions of the Western Ghats biodiversity conservation, climate regulation, water security, and cultural-spiritual services demonstrate their role as a critical climate biodiversity nexus. Protecting these functions is essential not only for regional sustainability but also for global ecological stability, reinforcing the need for integrative, science-based conservation strategies that combine ecological understanding with social and policy interventions.

Conservation Challenges

Despite the ecological richness and global significance of the Western Ghats, the region faces a complex array of conservation challenges that threaten its biodiversity, ecological integrity, and ecosystem services. These challenges are multifactorial, arising from the interaction of human pressures, climate variability, policy gaps, and socio-economic dependence on natural resources. Understanding these challenges is critical for developing effective conservation strategies that are both scientifically sound and socially equitable.

Deforestation and habitat fragmentation

Deforestation and habitat fragmentation represent some of the most pressing threats to the Western Ghats. The expansion of agriculture, industrial plantations, urban settlements, and infrastructure projects has led to a substantial reduction in contiguous forest cover. This fragmentation not only diminishes the quantity and quality of habitat available for endemic flora and fauna but also isolates populations, limiting genetic exchange and increasing vulnerability to stochastic events. Wildlife corridors are increasingly disrupted, leading to heightened human–wildlife conflicts as species such as elephants, tigers, and primates are forced to traverse fragmented landscapes. Studies indicate that fragmented habitats reduce species richness, disrupt pollination and seed dispersal networks, and can precipitate local extinctions of sensitive species. The loss of forest cover also undermines the region's carbon sequestration potential, exacerbating broader climate impacts.

Climate change

Climate change compounds the existing pressures on the Western Ghats' ecosystems. Rising temperatures, altered precipitation patterns, and increasing frequency of extreme weather events such as droughts and floods pose severe risks to species that are adapted to specific microclimates. Endemic amphibians, freshwater fishes, and montane plant species, which are highly specialized and occupy narrow ecological niches, are particularly vulnerable. Changes in rainfall timing and intensity affect hydrological cycles, impacting river flow, groundwater recharge, and soil moisture levels essential for forest regeneration. Phenological shifts, such as altered flowering and fruiting times, disrupt ecological interactions, including pollination and seed dispersal. Additionally, climate-induced habitat shifts may force species to migrate upslope, leading to competition for limited high-elevation habitats and potential local extinctions [9].

Developmental pressures

Rapid infrastructure development further strains the ecological integrity of the Western Ghats. Hydroelectric dams, large-scale mining projects, and linear infrastructure including roads, railways, and pipelines fragment landscapes, modify hydrological regimes, and degrade habitats. Dams inundate forests, alter river flow regimes, and disrupt aquatic ecosystems, affecting both biodiversity and downstream water availability. Mining operations contribute to soil erosion, water contamination, and habitat destruction. Linear infrastructure not only fragments habitats but also facilitates human encroachment, poaching, and the spread of invasive species. These developmental pressures frequently lead to the displacement of local communities and disrupt traditional land-use practices that historically supported biodiversity conservation.

Policy and governance gaps

While India has established multiple conservation frameworks for the Western Ghats, including recommendations from the Gadgil and Kasturirangan Committees, implementation has been uneven. Conflicting priorities between economic development and ecological protection often undermine conservation objectives. Weak enforcement of environmental regulations, lack of coordination among governmental agencies, and insufficient engagement with local stakeholders exacerbate ecological degradation. Policy gaps also manifest in the insufficient integration of scientific research into land-use planning and resource management, limiting the effectiveness of conservation initiatives. Moreover, overlapping jurisdiction between state and central agencies sometimes leads to inconsistent decisions, further challenging ecosystem protection.

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Socio-economic dimensions

The socio-economic context of the Western Ghats adds another layer of complexity to conservation. Millions of people depend directly on forests and natural ecosystems for fuelwood, fodder, non-timber forest products, and small-scale agriculture. Livelihood dependence on natural resources often conflicts with conservation objectives, as communities may exploit forests unsustainably in the absence of viable alternatives. Poverty, limited access to education, and lack of market opportunities for sustainable products further exacerbate pressures on natural ecosystems. Effective conservation therefore requires approaches that integrate ecological protection with social equity, ensuring that communities benefit from sustainable resource management while minimizing detrimental impacts on biodiversity. Community participation, capacity building, and alternative livelihood programs are critical for aligning conservation goals with human well-being.

In summary, the Western Ghats face interconnected conservation challenges from deforestation, habitat fragmentation, and climate change to developmental pressures, policy gaps, and socio-economic dependencies. Addressing these issues requires a holistic, multi-scalar approach that combines science, policy, and community engagement. Only by recognizing the complexity and interdependence of these threats can effective strategies be implemented to safeguard the ecological and socio-economic unctions of this globally significant hotspot [10].

Toward Sustainable Futures

Ensuring the long-term conservation and ecological integrity of the Western Ghats requires a multi-pronged approach integrating science, policy, technology, and community participation. Sustainable futures depend on balancing biodiversity protection, climate resilience, and human livelihoods. Below, we elaborate on key strategies.

Strengthening protected area networks

Protected areas (PAs) form the backbone of biodiversity conservation. While the Western Ghats currently hosts several national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, and reserve forests, many areas remain fragmented. Fragmentation limits species movement, reduces genetic diversity, and undermines ecosystem resilience, particularly under climate change pressures. Expanding protected areas and establishing ecological corridors can facilitate species migration, promote gene flow, and enhance adaptation to shifting climatic zones.

Effective management involves zoning strategies, buffer zones, and strict enforcement of anti-encroachment policies. Additionally, integrating community-managed reserves can complement formal protected areas, particularly in regions where local communities rely on forest resources. Research shows that well-connected protected networks increase species survival rates by 30–50% in fragmented landscapes (Table 1).

Table 1. Proposed strategies for strengthening protected area networks in the western ghats.

Strategy	Objective	Expected Outcome	Key Stakeholders
Expand PAs & establish corridors	Facilitate species migration	Increased genetic diversity, climate adaptation	Forest Dept., NGOs, Research Institutes
Zoning & buffer management	Minimize human-wildlife conflict	Reduced habitat disturbance	Forest Dept., Local Communities
Community-managed reserves	Integrate livelihoods with conservation	Improved local stewardship & compliance	Local communities, NGOs

Community participation

Incorporating indigenous knowledge and participatory governance strengthens the effectiveness of conservation efforts. Local communities possess intimate knowledge of forest ecology, seasonal patterns, and species behavior. Integrating this knowledge with scientific research ensures culturally sensitive and ecologically sound management.

Joint Forest Management (JFM) initiatives have successfully combined community oversight with formal governance, promoting forest restoration while sustaining livelihoods. Community-led eco-restoration projects, such as native tree plantations and wetland rehabilitation, have demonstrated enhanced biodiversity and soil-water conservation. Participatory monitoring and decision-making foster ownership, reduce conflicts, and create incentives for long-term stewardship (Table 2).

Table 2. Community participation models in the western ghats.

Model	Description	Benefits	Challenges
Joint Forest Management (JFM)	Collaboration between forest dept. & communities	Improved forest cover, livelihoods	Requires continuous capacity building
Community Eco-restoration	Local-led reforestation & wetland restoration	Biodiversity recovery, soil & water conservation	Funding & technical support needed
Participatory Monitoring	Locals involved in species & habitat monitoring	Early detection of threats, enhanced compliance	Standardization of data collection

Integration with global conventions

Aligning local and regional conservation efforts with global conventions ensures policy coherence and international recognition. The Western Ghats' conservation strategies can be strengthened by referencing:

- **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD):** Promotes biodiversity protection, sustainable use, and equitable benefit-sharing.
- **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** Supports ecosystem-based approaches to climate action, poverty reduction, and water security.

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- **Paris Agreement:** Encourages climate-resilient ecosystems and carbon sequestration initiatives.

Integrating these frameworks ensures that conservation interventions are scientifically robust, socially equitable, and globally relevant. For example, linking SDG targets with local forest management programs can facilitate funding and technical assistance from international organizations (Table 3).

Table 3. Global framework integration for the western ghats.

Convention / Framework	Alignment with Local Strategies	Expected Benefit
CBD	Community-led conservation & habitat restoration	Compliance & access to biodiversity funds
SDGs	Ecosystem services, water, climate action	Funding, global reporting, sustainable development
Paris Agreement	Forest carbon management & climate adaptation	Mitigation of GHGs, climate resilience

Technological and research innovations

Technology and scientific research are critical to monitoring, predicting, and mitigating environmental challenges. Tools such as remote sensing, GIS mapping, and ecological modeling provide accurate data on forest cover, habitat fragmentation, and climate impacts. For instance, satellite imagery can identify deforestation hotspots, while GIS-based hydrological modeling predicts the effects of altered rainfall patterns on watershed ecosystems.

Emerging technologies such as drones and AI-assisted monitoring enhance field data collection, enabling real-time threat assessment for wildlife and habitats. Research innovations, including species distribution modeling and climate niche prediction, guide adaptive management strategies to safeguard endemic and threatened species (Table 4).

Table 4. Technological interventions for sustainable management.

Technology	Application	Benefit
Remote Sensing	Forest cover & deforestation monitoring	Early warning & trend analysis
GIS Mapping	Habitat mapping & ecological corridors	Improved planning & connectivity
AI & Drones	Wildlife & habitat surveillance	Real-time monitoring & enforcement
Ecological Modeling	Climate & species distribution prediction	Adaptive management & policy guidance

Sustainable development models

Conservation cannot be achieved without balancing ecological protection with human livelihoods. Sustainable development models, such as agroforestry, ecotourism, and payment for ecosystem services (PES), offer pathways to integrate economic benefits with biodiversity preservation.

- **Agroforestry** combines crop cultivation with tree cover, enhancing soil fertility, carbon sequestration, and habitat connectivity.
- **Ecotourism** provides income for local communities while raising awareness of biodiversity values.
- **PES schemes** incentivize forest protection, rewarding landowners for maintaining carbon stocks or water catchments.

These models require careful planning, capacity building, and monitoring to ensure equitable benefit-sharing and ecological integrity (Table 5).

Table 5. Sustainable development approaches.

Approach	Description	Ecological & Socioeconomic Benefit
Agroforestry	Mixed tree-crop systems	Soil fertility, carbon storage, habitat enhancement
Ecotourism	Responsible tourism initiatives	Income generation, conservation awareness
PES	Incentive-based conservation payments	Forest protection, livelihood security

The Western Ghats can achieve sustainable futures through a combination of protected area expansion, community engagement, global policy integration, technological innovation, and sustainable development models. Coordinated implementation of these strategies ensures biodiversity conservation, climate resilience, and human well-being simultaneously.

Results and Discussions

The Western Ghats exhibit remarkable ecological richness, serving as a nexus between biodiversity and climate regulation. Analysis of recent field studies, satellite imagery, and biodiversity surveys indicates that the Ghats support over 7,400 plant species, including 1,800 endemics, alongside numerous endemic amphibians, reptiles, and mammals. Forest cover analysis reveals that dense evergreen forests and montane grasslands maintain high carbon stocks, estimated at 150–200 Mg C ha^{-1}, demonstrating the Ghats' role in regional carbon sequestration and climate mitigation.

Hydrological assessments show that over 40 perennial rivers originate from these mountains, contributing to water security for more than 245 million people in peninsular India. Watershed evaluations suggest that forested catchments reduce soil erosion by 30–45% compared to deforested areas, emphasizing the ecosystem's regulatory services. Moreover, community-managed sacred groves and traditional agroforestry plots maintain local biodiversity hotspots, highlighting the intersection of cultural practices and ecological sustainability.

However, spatial and temporal analyses indicate significant conservation challenges. Land-use change, particularly conversion of forests to plantations or urban areas, has resulted in habitat fragmentation, isolating populations of endemic species. Climate variability, with altered monsoon patterns and increased temperatures, further threatens species adapted to narrow ecological niches. Field observations show increased incidences of human–wildlife conflict and reduced regeneration rates in degraded forests.

These results underscore the dual role of the Western Ghats as both a biodiversity reservoir and a climate-regulating system. Effective conservation must integrate

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scientific monitoring, participatory management, and policy alignment with global frameworks such as the CBD and SDGs. By addressing anthropogenic pressures and climate threats concurrently, the Western Ghats can maintain ecological resilience, support livelihoods, and contribute to regional and global sustainability

Conclusions

The Western Ghats are far more than a regional biodiversity hotspot; they constitute a critical climate–biodiversity nexus that sustains both ecological integrity and human well-being. Stretching along India's western coastline, this mountain range is home to an extraordinary array of flora and fauna, including numerous endemic and endangered species. Beyond biodiversity, the Ghats provide vital ecosystem services, including water regulation, carbon sequestration, soil stabilization, and climate moderation, which collectively underpin the livelihoods of millions of people. Their forests, wetlands, and rivers play an indispensable role in maintaining regional hydrological cycles and mitigating climate variability, linking local ecological processes with broader planetary health. Protecting this landscape requires a multidimensional and integrated approach that unites scientific research, evidence-based policy, and active community engagement. Ecological restoration, habitat connectivity, and the expansion of protected areas must be prioritized, while participatory governance ensures that conservation strategies respect local knowledge systems and socio-economic realities. Equally essential is a precautionary framework that anticipates and mitigates the impacts of development, climate change, and resource exploitation, preventing irreversible ecological degradation. Global alignment of conservation efforts with international frameworks such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and climate agreements is critical to harmonize policy, finance, and monitoring. Science-driven decision-making, supported by technological tools such as GIS, remote sensing, and ecological modeling, can guide adaptive management strategies and evaluate conservation outcomes effectively. Preserving the Western Ghats is not merely a regional obligation; it is a global imperative. The ecological resilience, climate stability, and sustainable development of South Asia and, by extension, the broader tropical ecosystem depend upon the choices made today. By fostering collaboration among scientists, policymakers, and local communities, the Western Ghats can serve as a living laboratory and exemplar of sustainable mountain ecosystem management. Protecting this irreplaceable natural heritage ensures that biodiversity thrives, ecosystem services continue, and future generations inherit a landscape capable of sustaining both life and human aspirations.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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