

RESEARCH PAPER BY

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Sustainable Environmental Management: A Critical Issue In Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra.

Wild life attracts many tourists and watching wild animals in their natural habitat is a memorable experience. In India there are very few places left where one can see the wild animals in their natural habitat. The government of India has been making all the efforts to conserve the wild life and protect their natural habitat. Project Tiger is one such step in preserving the most endangered and majestic animal, the tiger. According to tiger census in India in 2015-16 there are less than 2000 tigers left in the wild in India⁽¹⁾. Being an apex predator, tiger keeps the whole eco system alive. But, it is very difficult to maintain a sustainable environment and conditions suitable for this big cat.

TATR in Maharashtra, an ambitious Project Tiger. The research paper aims to discuss some of the critical issues faced by sustainable environmental management at TATR.

Human proximity and settlements near and in the TATR

At its inception, back in 1955 Andhari National Park was 116.55 square kilometres. In 1993-94, as it was declared a Tiger Reserve, its area has covered sprawling 1100 square kilometre of buffer and 625 kilometres of core. There are several villages and settlements within the buffer zone totally depending on agriculture and minor forest goods for their survival. Even today there are six villages inside the core zone waiting to be settled.⁽²⁾ This brings humans and animals dangerously close. In recent times the farmers are illegally power fencing the farm fences to get rid of herbivorous animals and in the attempt to peruse the kill near farms three tigers are killed in six months alone near TATR.⁽³⁾ The villages in core area, still waiting to be settled, need to have access road, public transport, light and water supply. Agricultural activities are limited by the rule and they are denied access to minor forest goods which was their right earlier. The compensation in case of tiger killing their live stock is not satisfactory. From 2005-2007, 132, carnivorous attacked human beings. 71 were fatal. Tigers were responsible for 78% of the attacks and leopards 22%⁽⁴⁾ The life comes to standstill and many villagers are protesting to expansion of forest area which is vital for the survival of wild animals.

Tourism development leading to loss of bio diversity and degradation of ecology and natural habitat.

TATR has six core and six buffer entry gates allowing tourists the entry⁽⁵⁾. All the entry gates except the Kolsa(Zari) gate provides the tourists with lodging and boarding facilities. Accommodations are ranging from home stays to five star luxury resorts. With every new facility coming up it is consuming land, water, and in some cases it is blocking the natural passages the animals use for their movements, thus creating obstacles in their natural habitat.

The number of vehicles allowed to enter the core area is also huge. The number of gypsies entering is as follows; Mohorli gate 30, Kolara gate 10, Pangadi gate 5, Kolsa gate 5, Navegaon gate 5, Khutvanda gate 5, a total of 60 gypsies in each shift. Private vehicles are allowed separately. There are 4 cantors of capacity of 22 people each and a bus from Chandrapur, nearby district place tours about 30 tourists for a day visit.

Apart from the entry gates to core area there are six entry gates to buffer zone, totally allowing 42 gypsies for each shift. It has been observed that a traffic jam on narrow forest roads with so many vehicles is a common site at TATR. This certainly causes disturbance to wild life.

Flora and fauna plays a pivotal role in maintaining bio diversity in an ecology. The original clay roads in TATR are replaced by moroum, excavated from local area to facilitate the tourist vehicle traffic. The moroum, contains weeds (*Al ternanthera tenella*), a native of tropical America, invading tropical dry deciduous forest of Deccan Peninsula. It is in turn affecting the herbivorous food supply, ultimately affecting the tiger, an apex predator in the food chain.⁽²⁾

Attention is also required to be paid to buffer zones as well; as, a severe degradation is setting in by the settlements in buffer zones.⁽⁶⁾

Economic loss of local people leading to discontent and ignorance towards sustainable development

Economic loss due to wild life is a considerable threat to animal conservation. There is an increased resentment amongst the residents that may result into retaliation. Buffer zone comprises of over 70 villages with agriculture as a major livelihood.⁽⁷⁾

Live stock and farm products are guarded by the farmers fiercely, as they are depending on these factors for their survival. The attacks by carnivorous are increasing as their territory includes the human habitat. Often the compensation offered is not sustaining the damage. Sometimes the discontent leads to killing wild animals or helping poachers to get rid of the wild animals. This poses serious threat to conservation efforts taken up by forest department.

Coal mining, bamboo plantation leading to environmental degradation

Chandrapur a nearest district place which is about 25 kilometres from TATR, is a major power generation unit in Maharashtra running on coal. The coal is excavated from around the area of TATR. The jungle is cut down in the process. The power plant also generates smoke and a fine layer of coal dust adding to the pollution.

Paper making is another industry, using forest wealth. Till 2015 TATR was to cultivate bamboo to supply raw material to paper making industry. The buffer area was allotted to contractors by bidding the bamboo forest to cut down for raw material supply.

This has caused extinction of natural forest and fauna in some buffer areas.

The TATR also faces some common challenges faced by other wild life conservation facilities . Ever increasing human population, lack of funds and manpower with forest department and limited space available for wild animals to name a few. Thus sustainable development is a crucial issue at TATR which needs to be addressed seriously.

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