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# VANA PREMI

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Photo taken at Pakhal (Warangal dist) by Munna Mandalapu

**The Indian giant Squirrel or Malabar Giant Squirrel  
(*Ratufa indica*)**

JOURNAL OF THE ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED FOREST OFFICERS TELANGANA & ANDHRA PRADESH

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## EDITORIAL

**Nature and Natural calamities:** Neil de Grasse Tyson is an American astrophysicist, author, and science communicator. He is the Director of the Hayden Planetarium at the Rose Center for Earth and Space in New York City. He said “even with all our technologies and the inventions that made modern life so much easier than it once was, it takes just one big natural disaster to wipe all away and reminds us that, here on earth, we are still at the mercy of nature”. It is also a fact that the natural calamities didn't discriminate between people their animals and properties. It destroys whatever comes in its way. When we remember recent, 'Kerala floods' this seems to be very true. At last count, 445 people lost their lives, some people are still missing, the floods destroyed roughly 906,400 hectares worth of crops, property worth more than Rs 20,000 Crores has been lost. More than one million people have been displaced and are recovering in over 1500 relief camps. Kerala has one of the highest population densities in India, with 860 people per sq km., more than twice the national average which is 382 persons per sq km. High population density means more number of people being rendered homeless. Venomous snakes, like common cobra, Russell's viper and krait have entered into the houses during the floods and taking shelter in houses in the post-flood scenario. After rains have seized, animal carcasses, decaying garbage, houses covered in ankle deep mud, garbage filled wells, and uprooted trees, are common scenes with people suffering from communicable diseases in Kerala. We all believe that this huge destruction is because of heavy down pour and a natural calamity. We have to thoroughly probe into this

episode and come to a conclusion whether this was a natural calamity or manmade destruction by activities of few for gain?

Kerala has been receiving heavy rains in the past too, but in the last 4-5 years, rainfall in Kerala has been much below average. Monsoon was heavy in Kerala this year registering a surplus rainfall of 42% since 1<sup>st</sup> June to 19<sup>th</sup> August. Kerala received 2,346.6 mm rain till August 19 this year against normal of 1,649.5 mm. But Kerala has received less rainfall this year when compared to 2013. Kerala received 2,561.2 mm of monsoonal rain in 2013, about 215 mm more than this year's rainfall; there was no destruction like this. The 1924 rainfall was highest in the history of Kerala when it rained 3,368 mm within three weeks, which is 1022.0 mm higher than this year's rainfall, though record is not available it is believed that 1000 people died. So why was the rain of 2018 so heavily devastating and damaging? That's because Kerala has reduced its capacity to deal with such floods by allowing stone quarrying, cutting down forests and grasslands, changing drainage patterns construction of houses in low lying areas and sand mining on river beds. (Like any other State) The most damaged area is Kuttanad which is the agricultural part of Kerala. This is a region covering the Alappuzha and Kottayam Districts, of Kerala, well known for its vast paddy fields and geographical peculiarities, famous for Biosaline farming. Kuttanad area is 4 to 10 ft below the sea level. Kerala has a unique topography. It has a very large area of low lying. About 10 per cent of its total geographical area is below the sea level. The Kuttanad area is fully inundated during August 2018 and all the crops

are destroyed. People have built their homes and business establishments in these regions, which are not suitable for such settlements. It is an ecologically sensitive area and the government has to stop construction of buildings in this low lying agricultural area. There is only one law here and that is the law of nature. If we don't obey law of nature this is the result. This area is an activating factor for all the floods in the nearby areas." We have to be very careful about Kolleru area in A.P and other low lying areas of the country, and take action as per experts' prescriptions and not to bow to the wishes of politicians. The following is the rainfall data.

| Month                     | Actual Rainfall (mm) | Normal Rainfall (mm) | % Departure from normal |
|---------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| June, 2018                | 749.6                | 649.8                | 15                      |
| July, 2018                | 857.4                | 726.1                | 18                      |
| 1-19, Aug, 2018           | 758.6                | 287.6                | 18                      |
| 1 June to 19 August, 2018 | 2346.6               | 1649.5               | 42%                     |

Unauthorized encroachments have taken place in forest areas. The landslides are partly because of such encroachments. The other factor is deforestation. No Government of any State is interested in protection of forests. Extreme rainfall events cannot be stopped by human, but the impact of floods can be reduced if forests and natural landscapes are protected. A study in the southern region, comprising the states of Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, showed that between 1920 and 1990, about 40 per cent of the original forest cover, was lost or converted to other land uses.

There was widespread concern that the Western Ghats, which plays a key role in breaking up rain clouds over the subcontinent, was shrinking due to human interferences, Government of India in

2010 set up an expert panel under Madhava Gadgil who is an ecologist, academician, writer, and the founder of the Centre for Ecological Sciences Bengaluru. He was a former member of the Scientific Advisory Council to the Prime Minister of India and was awarded Padma Bhushan in 2006. The commission had eminent ecologists with 8 independent and 5 ex-officio members. Commission studied Western Ghats in detail and submitted its report to the Government of India on 31 August 2011. The report was labeled as "favorable to environment and environmentalists" but not to the development i.e., mining, quarrying, encroachments of Forests and construction of houses in low lying areas.

The Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (Gadgil committee) in their report recommended to designate the entire hill range as an Ecologically Sensitive Area, in its report, panel classified the 142 taluks in the Western Ghats boundary into Ecologically Sensitive Zones (ESZ) 1, 2 and 3, ESZ-1 being of high priority, almost all developmental activities like mining, quarrying and power plants etc was restricted in it, report recommended that "no new dams on large-scale storage be permitted in Ecologically Sensitive Zone 1, report specifies that the present system of governance of the environment should be changed. It also asked for decentralization and more powers to local authorities, the commission recommended constitution of a Western Ghats Ecology Authority, as a statutory authority under the MoEF, with the powers under Section 3 of the Environment (P) Act, 1986.

In 2011, the Centre and the Western-Ghats six states, including Kerala, refused to accept the Gadgil committee report. Report was criticized

by those who were responsible for these activities, and they said that it was more environment-friendly and not in tune with the ground realities, recommendations were criticized and cited as impracticable to implement, they alleged that the report hamper different states on energy and development fronts, there was a criticism against the proposed constitution of a new body called Western Ghats Ecology Authority, States insisted that protection can be given under existing laws, it is said that, report doesn't give a solution for revenue losses due to the implementation of its recommendations, and report is against dams in the Western Ghats, which is a crucial blow on the power sector *and the most important the Gadgil Committee report, adversely affects the various mafias.*

Ministry of environment and forests kept the Gadgil report for eight months without taking any action. It was not available for public discussion. People asked for a copy, but the ministry said it cannot be given. When an RTI petition was filed, it was rejected. Then the matter was taken to the High Court and only when the Court passed an order, the ministry released the report. The Court ordered that the report should be put on website. The report with 522 pages is kept in the ministry's website after Court's verdict. Mafias created fear among the public that the Gadgil report is anti-farmers and anti-people.

When all the six States falling under the *Ghats* region opposed the Gadgil committee's recommendations, Government of India under former ISRO chief Kasturirangan formed another committee. The Kasturirangan committee was constituted to examine the report of Madhava Gadgil panel. This committee submitted its report on April 15, 2013. Kasturirangan had made

some changes in the zonal classification and reduced ecologically sensitive areas to 37% from 64%. But still many states opposed it saying people living in the fringe areas of *Ghats* will be thrown out of their habitat if the report was implemented.

There was a third committee constituted in October 2013, by the Kerala State government, to study the Kasturirangan report in detail and submitted its report to chief minister. Madhava Gadgil said that Kerala Floods are partly man-made. He said the scale of the disaster would have been smaller had the state government and local authorities followed environmental laws, and many other causes which could had been stopped, like quarrying, mining, illegal repurposing of forests, and high-rise building constructions in low lying areas were man-made, controllable factors. Dr V.S. Vijayan, a member of the Gadgil committee and former chairman of Kerala State Biodiversity Board, said that cutting of trees in the catchment areas of dams, illegal construction and farming on slopes exceeding 30 degrees were among the main reasons for recent devastation. When we analyze above facts we are sure that this is a man-made calamity and there is no assurance that there won't be a repeat of this whenever there is heavy rains since there has been significant damage to the state's ecosystem on account of mining, quarrying, deforestation, illegal encroachments on the river banks and pollution.

Vana Premi wishes that all vulnerable areas of our country, like hills, low lying areas and River banks in different States of the country are studied by expert ecologists on war footings and all such areas may be treated as per expert's suggestions, opinions and advises, as early as possible to avoid large scale calamities and for saving precious human lives their property and animal life. **QMK**

# LETTERS TO EDITOR

Sir,

I have gone through the very interesting, informative and immensely readable article by Sri Raghotham Rao Desai, in September issue of Vana Premi which gives a glimpse of the cultural and educational milieu of erstwhile Hyderabad State during Asaf jahi era. That separation of executive from judiciary took place in Hyderabad as far back as in 1921 was an eye opener - something which could be implemented in the rest of India only over 50 years later! Along with other firsts of that era of Hyderabad, introduction of an Indian language as medium of instruction for higher education was also a very progressive measure. The accompanying article "A Botanical Garden in a Reserved Forest" by Sri K.B.R. Reddy was also very well written and equally informative. The latter article gave me the impression that perhaps the land in the erstwhile Hyderabad State had been cadastral surveyed and you had records showing land termed as 'sarf-e-khas' and consequently perhaps also land records pertaining to 'sarf-e-aam'. If my presumption in this regard be correct, it would be another first for Hyderabad because land in most of the princely states that merged into the India Union, had hardly any land record and in any case no cadastral survey had been carried out in most of them. Therefore there did not exist the record of the forest cover in most of these princely states. I am trying to study the position of forest cover of the country during 1950, and in that direction I request the learned authors and equally enlightened readers of the esteemed journal to send me information in this regard on the address given below.

Yours Sincerely,

S.B. Singh

18/494, Indira Nagar Lucknow, 226016

E-mail id sbsingh39@yahoo.co.in -Mobile 7376610825.

Dear Sir,

I am delighted to read your editorial on "International Day of Peace". The theme for this year's celebration, "The Right to Peace – The Universal declaration of Human Rights at 70" and the theme for last year, "Together for Peace: Respect, Safety and Dignity for All" sprinkled with your comments are interesting and informative. We, in India that is Bharat, are peace loving. This view is fortified by the contents of our ancient scriptures:

*Sarvesham shantirbhavatu* (May there be peace in all); *sarvesham mangalam bhavatu* (May prosperity be unto all); *sarvesham swasthirbhavatu* (May there be well being in all); *Loka samastha sukhino bhavantu* (May the world be happy); *shantirantariksham* (May there be peace in heaven and sky); *sarve bhavantu sukinaha* (May all be happy). These are only a few stanzas quoted from

*Shanti Mantra* (Prayers for Peace). In fact, “sarve bhavantu sukhinaha” is the motto of our Association, which over a period is consigned to oblivion.

I admire the way in which rich tributes are paid to our past Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpai.

Sri P.K. Sharma has done well in writing his detailed Memoirs. I wish he continued the series filled with interesting anecdotes.

Sri Surya B. Singh has depicted a tragic picture of Indian Forestry vis-à-vis the essentiality of forest ecosystem, particularly viewed in dharmic traditions. His article on the status of the present societies (civil or otherwise) is a reflection of his rich experience. It is indeed thought provoking. Thanks to him for his beautiful contribution.

Dr. Raghotham Rao Desai has done a marvelous job in garnering historical facts from various sources, of Deccan from the period earlier to Asafjah Avval (First Nizam) to Asafjah Sabe (Seventh Nizam) in his article.

The other articles by S.B. Deshpande, M.P. Reddy, V.V. Hariprasad add to the poise and richness of our magazine. I appeal to the other readers to contribute articles depicting their varied experience. In the last month's issue of Vana Premi there was an article by Sri V.S.S Babu covering all aspects of Wildlife Protection. He has painstakingly collected lot of information to prepare the article which is commendable. I am fully in agreement with the views expressed by Sri Suresh Deshpande.

Yours sincerely

K.B.R. Reddy

Email id: buchiramkeesara@yahoo.co.in

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Sir,

This has reference to the article “Of societies, civil and otherwise” by Sri Surya B. Singh (Vana Premi September 2018). The author on couple of occasions has misquoted the F.R.A., he said F.R.A approves allotment of 4 ha. of R.F. land in situ to encroachers. He further said most of the other forest dwellers were given the bonanza by the Act are pure encroachers. This is a once sided view of (few) foresters. In my article **Forest Rights Act – Who lost and who gained** (Vana Premi April 2018) I have said, I am attempting to see F.R.A. from civil society point of view and it should be taken in a right spirit. It appears Mr. Surya B. Singh did not read the F.R.A. or properly understood my article. The preamble of F.R.A says “The Forest rights on ancestral lands and their habitat were not adequately recognized in the consolidation of state forests during the colonial period as well as independent India resulting in historical injustice to the forest dwelling S.T.s and other traditional forest dwellers who are integral to the very survival and sustainability of the forest eco system. It has become necessary to address the long standing insecurity of tenure and access rights to forest dwelling S.T.s and other traditional forest dwellers”. This being the firm belief of law makers of the country, unfortunately

Mr. Singh thinks otherwise.

F.R.A. is not an instrument to distribute forest lands as Mr. Singh believes, but it facilitates recognition of rights over the land which is already under occupation. Even for recognition of rights there is a system in place. The claim is processed by *Grama Sabha*, Sub-divisional level committee and district level committee. For example in the state of Telangana about 1,86,534 claims were received and after processing only 93,494 beneficiaries' rights have been recognized and given certificates covering an area of 3,00,092 Ac. which works out to 3.2 Ac. per family. F.R.A. never said to dole out 4 ha. of forest land to every applicant as Mr. Singh presumes. His observation that my "article advocating for destruction of forest ecosystem is enjoying the hospitality of Vana Premi, therefore we cannot ignore such nebulous and bizarre ideas of a tree-less development". In this regard my clarification is that nowhere in the article I said tree - less development, it is a pure imagination of Mr. Singh. The objectives of Vana Premi are to provide a platform for expressing the views by retired as well as working forests and others on forestry and allied subjects. There are many occasions where the authors differed but they had the magnanimity to appreciate the views expressed by others, but for the first time the article of Mr. Singh resorted to personal criticism. There is no space in Vana Premi for words like "nebulous and bizarre ideas, so called self proclaimed civilized people" etc. which Mr. Singh freely used. There are ethics in journalism which everybody should follow. Mr. Singh, it appears, has crossed the Laxamana Rekha.

It is not the first time that rights of tribals over occupied forest land is recognized. In the early 40s in the State of Hyderabad large tracts of forests were dis-reserved and handed over to tribals. Again in 1970 encroachments in forests were regularized keeping 1964 as cut of date. Subsequently the F.C. Act took away the powers of state government to dis-reserve forests, so the Government of India in 2006 passed the R.O.F.R. Act keeping 13-12-2005 as cutoff date for recognizing the rights. Instigated by unscrupulous politicians coupled with land hunger encroachment continued unabated from 2007 onwards and an area of 58032 Ac. of Reserve forests are freshly encroached in Telangana, any attempt to stop encroachments by forest staff is met with stiff resistance and physical assaults. (God forbid) if the trend continues, the day is not far off the government may be forced to extend the cutoff date of R.O.F.R. from 31-12-2005 to something like 2022 and encroachments of intervening period recognized. Forest minister of Telangana, while conducting video conference on 22-6-2018 with field staff has instructed them not to harass the villagers who have encroached forest land prior to June 2014. There is therefore an urgent need for serious public discussion to prevent further loss of forests

Yours sincerely

**M. Padmanabha Reddy**

## THE GIANT SQUIRREL OR *RATUFA INDICA*

The Indian giant squirrel, sometimes called the Malabar giant squirrel, is a large species of tree squirrel endemic to India.

### Physical Description

**Size:** The head-body length in adults is 10-18 (25.4-45.7 cm).

**Weight:** They weigh around 3.3-4.4 lb (1.5-2 kg).

**Tail Length:** The tail length for Indian giant squirrels is 2 ft (61 cm).

**Color:** Variable from a brown to dark red, undersides have white fur. There is a white spot found between the ears.

**Habitat:** The Indian giant squirrel lives in the moist tropical forests of Peninsular India at elevations of 590-7,546 ft (180-2,300 m) above sea level.

**Distribution:** Its range is across the Indian states of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Madhya Pradesh.

**Behavior:** Indian giant squirrels are primarily solitary, although some mating pairs have been observed to be staying together. They are an exceptionally cautious creature on the constant lookout for any potential trouble. Being arboreal, they spend almost all of their time in the upper canopies of tall and heavily branched trees. These squirrels are diurnal, remaining active during early morning and evening. They make several nests across their territory and may take refuge in any one depending on proximity. Having a shy disposition, it is rather difficult to spot them in the wild. A peculiar behavior of the Indian giant squirrel is that when it is under duress, instead of leaping its way out of trouble, it freezes before flattening itself along the tree-trunk. To save themselves from predators, these animals build large, globe-shaped nests on preferably thin branches which can support their weight.

**Mating and Reproduction:** Mating season for the Indian giant squirrel is between the months of October and January. Males compete for mating rights with one female, with the victor getting the

first go at copulation. He prevents his competition to engage with the female for at least a few hours after copulation to give an advantage to his chances at paternity. The subordinate male eventually also copulates with the female. A litter of a single pup is born after a gestation period of 21-25 days.

**Life-cycle:** Young are born without fur and eyesight. The latter is achieved after 22-26 days. They come out of the nest after 30 days and are eventually weaned at 6 months. They reach sexual maturity at 2 years of age.

**Lifespan:** The maximum a captive Indian giant squirrel had lived was for 16 years, life expectancy in the wild is much shorter.

**Sounds and Communication:** They are a loud species, and their territorial calls are loud and staccato like vocalizations which go on for several minutes before tapering into softer chirps. The most common vocalization of the Indian giant squirrel is the alarm call. Other calls include mating calls, vocal communication between mother and her young, and calls of appeasement.

**Diet:** They are omnivorous, feeding on flowers, fruits, bark, seeds, nuts, bird eggs, and insects.

**Adaptations:** It is well suited for its arboreality, with its long tail providing a useful balancing function. Its hind legs provide the Indian giant squirrel with super-agility, leaping great distances to go from one tree to another. It can also feed while hanging from a branch with just the hind legs.

**Predators:** Indian giant squirrels are hunted by various birds of prey like the black eagle, crested serpent eagle, crested hawk eagle, and brown fish owl, as well as apex predators like the Indian leopard. Snakes are also known to have at least tried to prey on Indian giant squirrels.

**Interesting Facts:** They play an important role in seed dispersal. It is the state animal of the Maharashtra, where it is called 'shekru' in the native Marathi language. These animals prefer to have their individual nests, rather than sharing it with their kids. **Source : Internet**

# DISTRIBUTION OF WILD UNGULATES IN ANDHRA PRADESH

By  
A.V. Joseph

The state of Andhra Pradesh was reorganized in the year 2014 with a geographical area of 1,62,970 sq km and with a notified forest area of 24,424sq km. As per Rodgers, W.A and Panwar, S.H. Biogeographical classification of India, the Andhra Pradesh state comes under the Deccan Peninsula (6-CD&E) classification. The forests of Andhra Pradesh are basically classified under Southern tropical dry deciduous forest, Southern tropical dry thorn forest and a very small proportion of Mangrove forest occurring in the estuary of rivers Godavari, Krishna and Pennar. The major forest is distributed in the Nallamallais, the Eastern Ghats, the Seshachalam hills and along the banks of river Krishna and river Godavari. A very small patch of grassland is found in Rollapadu. The Andhra Pradesh state is richly endowed with wild ungulates like Gaur, Nilgai, Black buck, Chinkara, Chousingha, Sambar deer, spotted deer, Barking deer and Mouse deer, well distributed throughout the land.

The Gaur is a large herbivore almost standing to a height of 6 feet and weighing nearly a ton. The adult male is an imposing animal with a jet-black coloration with a striking muscular ridge upon its shoulders. They are essentially hill animals taking shelter in wooded forests. The distribution of Indian Gaur is limited to the forests along Godavari river and the Eastern Ghats of Andhra Pradesh. Their presence is noticed in West Godavari, East Godavari and Vishakhapatnam districts of the state in hilly bamboo forests with streams. Only small herds are sighted and that

too rarely. Their population is under severe threat due to habitat degradation and hunting. They occur in Papikonda National Park and with strict protection the population can be consolidated. Surprisingly their occurrence is absent in the Nallamallais even though the Gundla Brahmeshwaram habitat is quite suitable for Gaur. Locally they are called *adavi dunna*.

The largest antelope Nilgai, the distribution extends from the central Deccan plains to the southern limits of Nallamais and Lankamallais hill ranges. They are found in Nagarjunsagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve and Lankamalla Wildlife Sanctuary. As per Prater's "The book of Indian Animals" the distribution of Nilgai is from the base of the Himalayas to Mysore in the Indian peninsula. However, there is a gap in its distribution as the animal is not found below the south of Lankamallais in the districts of Chittoor, Nellore, Anantapur and in Eastern Ghats of A.P.

The state animal, Indian black buck is well distributed in Krishna, Godavari and Pennar basins. They are found in good numbers in Nagarjunsagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve, Rollapadu Wildlife Sanctuary, Lankamalla Wildlife Sanctuary, Papikonda National Park, Kaundinya Wildlife Sanctuary and in the dry plains of Kurnool, Ananthapur, Nellore and Chittoor districts of Andhra Pradesh. It has assumed pest level population in Kurnool and Ananthapur districts and the forest department

successfully Trans located more than 3000 number individuals from the agricultural fields of Kurnool to Nagarjuna sagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve.

The Indian gazelle or Chinkara is a slender built graceful animal with the males having S-shaped curved horns. It is the smallest of the antelope family and found thinly distributed in Nagarjunasagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve. (Sirigiripadu), Lankamalla Wildlife Sanctuary (Kadapa), Sri Venkateshwara Wildlife Sanctuary (Kodur), Nellore district. They are rare and in Lankamalla Wildlife Sanctuary are seen together in habitat occupied by Jerdon's courser bird. Locally they called *gaddi jinka* (occur in grassy patches and consume grass).

The Chousingha or four horned antelope is a beautiful animal found well distributed in Nallamaia and Seshachalam hill forests in Nagarjunasagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve, Lankamalla Wildlife Sanctuary, Sri Venkateshwara National Park, Kaundinya Wildlife Sanctuary but not in the Eastern Ghats forests of the state. They are solitary in nature and are mostly seen together as a breeding pair or a mother with its pair of fawns. Though they are well distributed but are neither common nor rare in occurrence and are locally called *konda gorre*.

The Sambhar deer and the spotted deer are widely distributed throughout the state covering the Nallamais, Seshachalam and Eastern Ghats forests. They are majestic animals with branched antlers. They form the main prey base for all carnivores including the apex predator the tiger in Nallamalais. The distribution and occurrence of all carnivores is dependent on the population of sambar and spotted deer in AP.

The barking deer is the smallest of the deer species found in the forest of Andhra Pradesh. Their alarm calls sound much like the bark of a dog. Their occurrence is confined to the hilly well forested regions of Eastern Ghats and Seshachalam hill forests of Chamala valley in Sri Venkateshwara National Park. In fact, Sri Venkateshwara National Park is the last place where one can find the Chousingha and the barking deer occurring side by side. Further South or west of Sri Venkateshwara National Park barking deer is not found in Andhra Pradesh. Incidentally barking deer is locally called *konda gorre*.

The Mouse deer or the Indian Chevrotain is the smallest of the deer family member and though classified under deer does not possess any antlers. The mouse deer is a tiny, dainty looking animal with slender limbs and raised hindquarters. They are shy animals and nocturnal in habits. They are found discontinuously distributed in Nallamalais, Seshachalam, Kaundinya and Kambalakonda forests of Andhra Pradesh. The mouse deer is a solitary animal and their occurrence increases to its maximum in Gundlabrahmeshwaram Wildlife Sanctuary, probably because of the lush, moist forest habitat with wide variety of forest fruit and flowering trees. It locally called *koorapandi* by the tribals. The basic founder stock of mouse deer from Sri Venkateshwara National Park and Kaundinya Wildlife Sanctuary has greatly contributed to the breeding population of mouse deer rehabilitation programme undertaken by the forest dept. of Telangana state.

Andhra Pradesh is endowed with excellent forests and wildlife and its worth conserving this rich heritage for the future generation of the state.

# SAVING YAVAL WILDLIFE SANCTUARY AND THE LIKE: IS *LOCO PARENTIS* AN ANSWER?

By  
Dr A.K.Jha

**Introduction:** Yawal Wildlife Sanctuary notified in 1996 is located in the Jalgaon District of Maharashtra. The Sanctuary is spread in an area of 175.58 sq. kms and is at a distance of 25 kilometers from the Raver Railway Station. It shares its northern boundary of about 35 to 40 kms with Madhya Pradesh along the banks of the rivers Aner and Manjal that flows to the west. The Sanctuary, a part of Satpuda ranges, has inside its area four villages namely Jamnya, Usmali, Gadrya, and Garbardi and one hamlet named as Langda Amba. The tribes living in this area are Tadvi, Pawara, Koli and Bhill. An old Forest Rest House at Langda Amba built during the British period is uniquely located inside the Sanctuary. The sanctuary has Southern Tropical Dry Deciduous Forests and is a major catchment of Aner, Suki and Manjal rivers. Important Carnivores found here are Leopard, Wolf, Jackal, Hyena, Jungle Cat, Sloth Bear etc. It boasted of being home to Tiger also but its sighting has not been reported since 2001. The herbivores found in the area include Sambar, Barking deer, Chinkara, Black buck etc. From a macro perspective at landscape level, it serves as an important link to the corridor of Annerdam sanctuary, Ambabarwa Sanctuary, Van and Narnala Sanctuary, Melghat Tiger Reserve, Satpuda Tiger Reserve & Pench Tiger Reserve.

Subsequent to the announcement of Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers

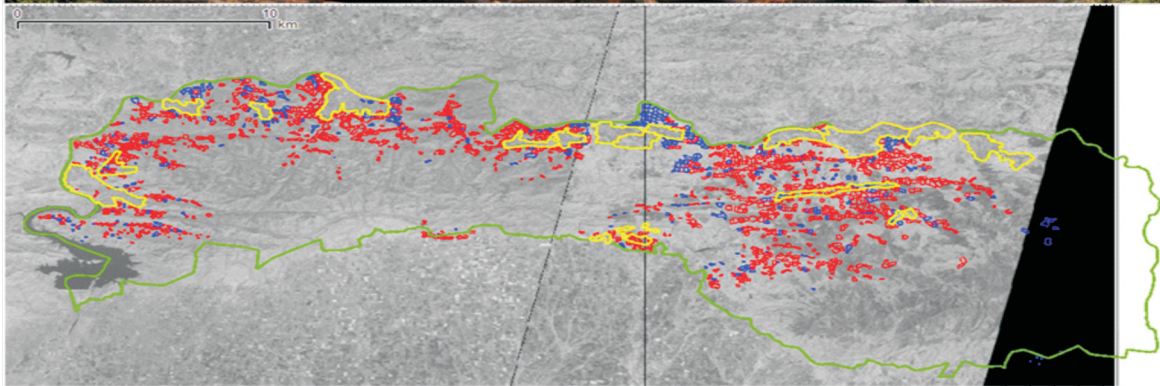
(Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (FRA, in short) massive encroachments and illegal claims under the Act started in this area for recognition of forest rights. The trend also became a commonplace in the neighboring forest areas affecting the total Satpuda ranges. In many patches it happened in a very systematic and well-organized manner. Before submission of the claim standing trees were girdled, felled in the subsequent years and stumps were either burnt or liquid jaggery was put on them so that they degenerated fast. Such opened up patches were ploughed and claimed for cultivation rights under FRA. This coupled with intermittent mass felling by large gangs coming from Madhya Pradesh made for the sanctuary staff the task of protection of Yawal wildlife sanctuary, particularly in the compartment Nos. 41, 49, 54, 106, 112, 129, 134, 135, 136 and 170, highly challenging and critical.

Interestingly, a local non-government organization in the name of *Satpuda Bachav Kriti Samiti* (SBKS) attempted to raise consciousness about the massive damage being caused to the Satpudas and initiated Save Satpuda Movement supported by about a dozen other civil society groups. They worked in tandem with the forest department with the support of activists, academicians, and birdwatchers but

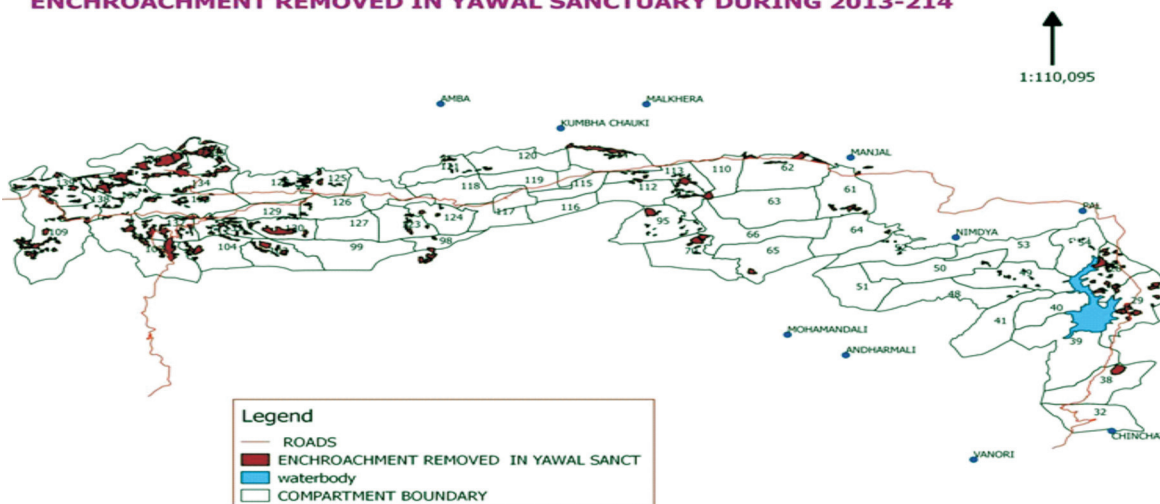
it could not make much dent in view of the powerfully driven fast paced implementation of FRA by the Tribal Department of the Government that, in effect, resulted, more often than not, in a gross misuse of its provisions to the gross subservience of the ecological interests of the Sanctuary. Coupled with it was the destructively oriented immense pressure of people who were encouraged to encroach new areas on the ground and were quite aggressive and belligerent. Encroachers, more often than not, openly challenged the forest department and cut huge patches of forest in front of them in the whole tract including in the areas of Devziri, Devgad, and Devhari of Chopda taluka also. This resulted in building up of an atmosphere all around that sent strong messages to the people that this was a lifetime chance to get '*patta*' in their name, by hook or by crook. People also threatened to burn the rest house of forest department in case this movement was hindered by the foresters. The situation could be saved from worsening further only by intermittent use of State Reserve Police Force. In addition to the local people who encroached on yaval sanctuary's land, however, a system operationalized by '*Navad Patils*' in the area was of disastrous consequence.

*Navad* land locally means the forest land prepared for cultivation. *Navad Patils* worked as land mafias in Satpuda region. They organized gangs of wood cutters mostly from the neighboring Madhya Pradesh for illicit felling and clearing sites for encroachment in the forest land. Crossing the River *Aner*, often *gangs* of hundred

people from MP crossed over to Maharashtra, felled the trees overnight and prepared the land in plot sizes as per instructions of *Navad Patil*. After such overnight operation *Navad Patil* handed over the forest land for cultivation to locals or people from Madhya Pradesh at pre-determined rates. These people were given protection by *Navad Patil* and his men. Such people started cultivation and immediately made an application under FRA for forest right of self-cultivation under section 3(1) (a) of the Act in order to show that their application was pending under FRA. As a result he got a complete protection from eviction as per section 4 (5) of the Act and continued to enjoy the right till the finalization of his case, which, just lingered on under one pretext or the other. Most encroachers, interestingly, also insisted that the forest department should book case against them as they were made to believe that it will be the strongest evidence for them to get the encroachment regularized in future. They expressed a strong belief that since there is no cutoff date mentioned in the Act for filing an application for the forest rights and extensions could be given by their own *Gram Sabha*, the cutoff date of 13<sup>th</sup> December 2005 in the FRA will definitely be extended by one Government or the other in future. Forest Department seeking action against such people was branded as anti-tribal and the officers were despised and humiliated. This was often quite crudely reflected in the statements made in various meetings and public forums by politicians, Revenue Department officers as

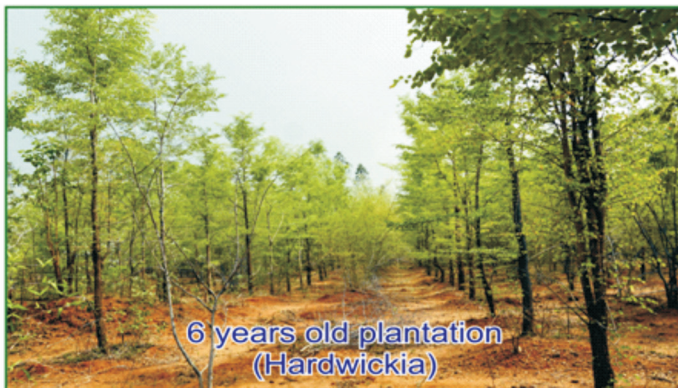


**ENCHROACHMENT REMOVED IN YAWAL SANCTUARY DURING 2013-214**





Sri N.Sridhar, I.A.S., C&MD, SCCL inaugurating Telanganaku Harithaharam in Singareni



6 years old plantation  
(Hardwickia)

- SCCL contributes 10% of country's total coal production. SCCL achieved the highest ever coal dispatches of 64.6 M.T. during 2017-18.
- SCCL planted 3.72 crores of saplings in 10,932 Hectars of land (up to July 2017)

#### Rehabilitation of RF land (Non mandated)

- SCCL honoured with "Indira Gandhi Vriksha Mitra Award - 2004", "Teri Corporate Environment Award - 2004", "Golden Peacock Environment Management Award-2005" and "Golden Peacock Innovative Product/ service award -2015" and many more for it's Eco & Environmental friendly mining.
- Sri N.Sridhar I.A.S., C&MD SCCL honoured with "Asia Pacific Enterprenuer Ship Award - 2018" and "Outstanding Leadership Award - 2018".



**THE SINGARENI COLLIERIES COMPANY LIMITED**

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Telangana State

well as members of NGOs working for Tribal. The Forest Department's field staff had to carry out the task of saving Yawal in such demanding circumstances.

**Action by the Forest Department:** The local staff of the Forest Department found the network of the *Navad Patils* too strong and deep-rooted in entire Satpuda. The wildlife staff, apparently, was quite demoralized in the overall environment created and was no match to the dominant Non Government Organizations championing the cause of tribals who were obviously emboldened by the FRA and had easy access to the corridors of *Mantralaya* as well as Ministry of Tribal Affairs in the Government of India. Some Foresters, however, were courageous enough to arrest the *Navad Patil* in the name of Idya Pudya Barela and Raju Bhika Tadvī in forest compartment No.144 of Vagzira. Another two viz. Satish Bhavsar & Suresh Chaudhari were arrested with the support of police in compartment No.79. Subsequent to the MP gang attack in Compartment no. 147 of Adgao-Vagzira in Yawal area in which one Baba Mahahansji, an environmental activist and member of the Satpuda Bachao Kriti Samiti was attacked, the Yawal police arrested 14 persons and filed cases under Sections 307, 353, 143, 147, 323, 504, 506 and 427 of Indian Penal Code. The environment in the neighborhood of Yawal was similar and that was indicated by the tribal leader Mr. Padmakar Valvi, the then Guardian Minister of Nandurbar who accepted the fact in a press conference that fresh forest cutting (after December-13<sup>th</sup> 2005) was done in about 5000

hectares due to FRA in his district. With continuous submissions by the Forest Department about such situations, the Chief Secretary sent a letter No. VHK-2011/PK 26/K14 dated February-9<sup>th</sup> 2011 to the Director General of Police, Maharashtra for appropriately supporting the Forest Department for preventing illicit felling and encroachment. This was a morale booster for the field staff but it hardly changed the mind-set of the people and institutions engaged in the process of recognition of forest rights.

The Forest Department, apparently tired of advocating for fault free implementation of FRA at various forums, commissioned a study for the whole state in the name of '**STUDY OF CHANGES IN VEGETATIVE COVER AND LAND USE IN FOREST LAND WITH CLAIMS AND FOREST RIGHTS FINALLY RECOGNIZED UNDER THE FOREST RIGHTS ACT 2006**' in the year 2013. This was done also to examine the efficacy of the geo informatics based verification system designed and deployed by the Tribal Research and Training Institute, Pune of the Government of Maharashtra intended to provide an objective evidence to the decision maker District Level Committees. Cartosat-1 images with 2.5 meter resolution pertaining to the relevant time periods as obtained from National Remote Sensing Agency, Hyderabad were used. Seven forested districts viz. Thane, Raigad, Nasik, Bhandara, Gondia, Gadchiroli, and Chandrapur did not provide their data for the study. The results of analysis of the available cases were shocking, to say the least. Out of 36,640 cases in which forest rights were finally recognized, 2433 had roads/streams/Nallas passing through the

land, 1466 finalized cases had area more than the prescribed limit of 4 ha., 3021 finally granted cases showed the area as barren and uncultivated as per satellite image of 2011-12, 252 finally granted cases showed their area as barren (not under cultivation) as per 2007-08 satellite imagery, and 406 cases with finally granted forest right of cultivation had dense forest cover on the plot as per 2011-12 images. Needless to say, each case of recognition of individual forest right of cultivation in violation of the provisions of FRA is a violation of the Forest Conservation act 1980. The study report was submitted by the CAMPA wing in the office of PCCF (HOFF), Maharashtra to the Government of Maharashtra as well as Government of India. One doesn't know whether it had any positive impact on the implementation quality of the FRA but a prominent response by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India to the use of satellite imagery in the verification process was the amendment in 2012 made in the Forest Rights Rules 2008 with the insertion of explanation to Rule 12A (11) that reads "The satellite imagery and other uses of technology may supplement other form of evidence and shall not be treated as a replacement." One can very well contrast it with the evidence prescribed in Rule 13 (i) that is admissible for the recognition of forest rights on a public property like forest land and is described as "Statement of elders other than claimants, reduced in writing." Presumably afraid of being accused of stirring up a hornet's nest, the Ministry of Environment of Forests avoided taking an appropriate cognizance of the report.

Yet another study on Implementation of FRA and Climate Change Vulnerability of Forests and Forest Dwelling Communities in Maharashtra was got done through TERI, New Delhi in 2014 by taking a sample of four forested districts. It was found that 1748.45 hectare forest land on which cultivation rights got recognized was under tree cover in the year 2005 and before and therefore its deforestation emitted 4.57 Lakh Tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. The study also found that the Rights recognized on 433.38 hectare forest land was with tree cover in 2012 also which could be deforested beyond 2012 and may contribute 1.13 Lakh tones of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere. Further, it also concluded that loss of opportunity of future carbon sequestration in the 14,668.96 hectare area of these districts diverted for cultivation under FRA amounted to 9017 Tones of CO<sub>2</sub> per year. This report was also submitted to the Government. The ways as well as scope of implementation of the FRA, which has conservation of forest resources also as one of the fundamental objectives duly mentioned in the preamble, however, were unaffected due to the results of any such studies.

Implementation of FRA in Yawal Sanctuary was no exception. Trapped in the whirlpool of isolation, poor staffing, inadequate mobility, pitiable facilities, and branding as anti-tribals, gross erosion of authority of the foresters was the inevitable logical consequence. The encroachments were on the rise. Illicit felling of trees showed phenomenal rise moving from 1028 to 1462 and then to 2999 in the years

2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14 respectively. As per data collected in 2013-14, about 3000 cattle were crossing over regularly into Yawal from Madhya Pradesh for grazing. Open border provided easy escape routes to the offenders. As is reported, within a period of about 6 years from the enactment of FRA, the Yawal Sanctuary was reduced to a pock-marked forest where hardly any wild animals could be sighted now. The Cartosat-1 satellite image with overlaid GPS polygons, depicting areas under legal as well as illegal claims under FRA bear testimony to this fact (Photo-1).

A special drive was, however, initiated in 2014 by the Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests of the Wildlife Circle, Nasik to resurrect the Yawal Sanctuary after his thorough inspection visits to the area in the end of 2013 and beginning of 2014. In addition to large scale encroachments many new ones that were deliberately avoided to be recorded for fear of creation of evidence were noticed by him. The issue was discussed threadbare with the local staff, village heads and NGOs. The matter was taken up with the local Revenue and Police departments and a strategy of deploying SRPF, Forest Guard Trainees of Pal Training School, staff of Wildlife wing and laborers' from outside areas was worked out for the purpose. A joint meeting of the encroachers was taken on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2014 at Langda Amba to impress upon them the objective of the drive and for appealing to them to vacate the encroachments. The genuine right holders were assured of no harm to them and after discussing the problems with them majority of them agreed to support the drive.

After this appeal many encroachers, mostly from MP, started vacating and dismantling the encroachments on their own. Curfew was imposed in the specific areas during the operation. JCBs were used as and where needed. The operations went ahead and concluded without any violence. As is shown in the photograph (Photo-2), a total of 13,036 logs admeasuring about 360 cubic meters of timber was collected from the vacated premises. A total of 865 encroachers who had not submitted their claim under FRA were removed from an area of 1208.64 ha. However, 581 encroachers, who had submitted claims for 1329.57 ha., were not touched although only 6 claims were finally recognized till the time the drive was taken in 2014 i.e. in about eight years of the enactment of FRA. Curbing of encroachment did have an impact on illicit felling too which reduced from 2999 trees (179.95 cum.) in 2013-14 to 438 trees (54.916 cum) in 2014-15. The encroachers tried at least five times to come back in 2014-15 but were driven away by the vigilant staff with the help of SRPF and police.

The Yawal Sanctuary's report for the year 2015 has shown that one tiger was sighted in the sanctuary. Herbivores have also increased in the area and the number of tiger sighted in the sanctuary has gradually increased to four in the years that followed. The pressure from the forest department is kept on to prevent any downward slide in the condition of Yawal Sanctuary ecosystem but only time will tell as to how stable and sustainable will be the current trend. The vulnerability of results of such

efforts by the Forest Department is always high in the wake of preponderance of policies, legal instruments, and their anthropocentric interpretations and implementations that have always kept the rights of natural resources subservient to those of human beings. The handling of Forest Rights Act 2006 by our country is a strong case in point.

**Forest Rights Act and Wildlife Sanctuary: The Critical Wildlife Habitat:**

The FRA keeps sanctuaries and national parks on the same pedestal as any other “forest land” which is defined, as per its section 2(d), as land of any description falling within any forest area and includes unclassified forests, un-demarcated forests, existing or deemed forests, protected forests, and reserved forests. The forest rights of two categories of human beings viz. Forest Dwelling Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers duly defined under the Act can be recognized in sanctuaries and national parks. Interestingly, forest rights are recognizable in all Sanctuaries and National Parks irrespective of the category or legal status of the land on which it exists.

FRA, the way it is interpreted and implemented, does not take cognizance of the special status sanctuary and national parks have from the point of view of their special importance for protection, propagation, and development of wildlife or its environment therein. The special purpose of sanctuary and national park is indicated in the sections 18 and 35 respectively of the Wildlife Protection Act 1972. An area is declared as sanctuary if it is “of adequate ecological, faunal, floral, geo morphological,

natural or zoological significance, for the purpose of protecting, propagating or developing wild life or its environment.” Similarly, an area is declared as a National Park if it is important “by reason of its ecological, faunal, floral, geo morphological or zoological association or importance, .....for the purpose of protecting, propagating or developing wild life therein or its environment.”

FRA also speaks of critical wildlife habitat (CWH) which is defined as an area of sanctuary or national park that is required to be kept inviolate for the purposes of wildlife conservation. Determination of critical wildlife habitat is to be done, case by case, on the basis of scientific and objective criteria and notified by the Central Government. The Expert Committee is supposed to, after open process of consultation; determine the CWH. As per FRA, the Committee has to include an expert from the locality and also a representative of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. Pursuant to this requirement, the Ministry of Environment and Forests issued guidelines for determination of CWH on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2007. Responding to the demand from various agencies, they were, however, withdrawn and revised guidelines issued on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2011. Again, in response to the concerns expressed by some civil society organizations, the revised guidelines were also withdrawn on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2011. After almost 7 years when no guidelines existed for CWH, new guidelines have been issued by the MOEF&CC on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2018. This document, instead of providing detailed

guidelines on the scientific and objective criteria relevant to the specific purpose as per sections 18 and 35 of the Wildlife Protection Act 1972, provides mainly details of structure of the Expert Committee and procedural guidelines for determination of CWH. The procedural guidelines have included consultation with the FR holders which seems to suggest that the FR claims should be finalized before the process of determination of CWH is started. This, considering the current state of implementation of FRA that seems to be a never ending process especially due to a time limit assigned for submitting the claim applications, makes the chances of creation of any inviolate areas extremely remote and honestly processed creation of CWH using FRA provisions may remain a pipe dream. Such a situation in many sanctuaries and national parks can definitely work against the purpose of protecting, propagating or developing wild life or its environment which is the foundation of declaration of any sanctuary and national park. In fact the declaration of CWH could even be kept independent of the completion of process of recognition of forest rights in the sanctuary and national park areas and could even precede the same depending on the criticality of the situation in which the concerned wildlife and its habitat are.

In the Para 2.2 of the objectives, the guidelines on CWH have missed out the crucial term 'forest dwelling' before the mention of the term scheduled tribes which needs to be corrected. Further, the section 4 (2) of FRA states that the forest rights recognised under the Act in critical

wildlife habitats of National Parks and Sanctuaries may subsequently be modified or resettled, provided that no forest rights holders shall be resettled or have their rights in any manner affected for the purposes of creating inviolate areas for wildlife conservation except in case all the conditions from 4 (2) (a) to (f) are satisfied. A careful study of the conditions reveals that all of these can be satisfied only if the option of relocation of the villages is chosen and not otherwise. Thus the proviso in the 4 (2) must be read and understood only in reference to a situation where relocation is the objective. With that in focus, the first part of section 4 (2) must be understood objectively to allow modification or resettlement of forest rights in CWH, the provision being consistent with the section 13 of the Act which says "Save as otherwise provided in this Act and the Provisions of the *Panchayats* (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, the provisions of this Act shall be in addition to and not in derogation of the provisions of any other law for the time being in force." This allows a pragmatic solution of co-existence in CWH also where resident FR holder's such forest rights, that may be causing irreversible damage and threaten the existence of said species and their habitat, are surrendered in favor of the wildlife's right to life and are duly compensated. Unless the above approach is adopted, the proviso at the end of 4 (2) (f) that "the critical wildlife habitats from which rights holders are thus relocated for purposes of wildlife conservation shall not be subsequently diverted by the State Government or the Central Government or any

other entity for other uses.” will remain a nice sounding phrase to highlight the concern of FRA for conservation of wildlife and their habitat.

Ministry of Tribal affairs has issued various guidelines based on the FRA and its Rules and has even expanded the definitions of various terms to enlarge not only the universe of claimants but also the resources on which the claims can be made. There are hardly any guidelines, however, issued in respect of sustainable use, conservation of biodiversity and maintenance of ecological balance and resultant strengthening of the conservation regime of the forests in general and sanctuaries and national parks in particular. Rights on community forest resource including that of management under section 3(1)(i) are being liberally recognized even in sanctuaries and national parks that are inadmissible. Through legal instruments designed in favor of human beings, we are encroaching into the natural resources’ rights despite the fact that we are holding them as trustees for the future generations of all life forms. With the reactions of Nature staring harshly on humanity, hasn’t the time come when we should consciously adopt a different approach than the one that has been grossly selfish and disgustingly anthropocentric?

**Sanctuary and National Park : Legal Persons with Loco parentis?:**

There are two types of persons in common law jurisprudence - natural persons or human beings and artificial persons, also known as juristic persons or legal persons. The Division Bench of Hon. High Court of Uttarakhand hearing the PIL no. 43 of 2014 filed by Mr. Narayan Dutt Bhatt stated in their

judgment “The entire animal kingdom, including avian and aquatic ones, are declared as legal entities having a distinct persona with corresponding rights, duties and liabilities of a living person. All the citizens throughout the state of Uttarakhand are hereby declared persons in loco parentis as the human face for the welfare/protection of animals”. While extending legal personhood to animals, the Uttarakhand Court relied on the decision in *Animal Welfare Board of India v. A. Nagaraja & others* in which the Apex Court had clearly recognized that the freedoms of animals included the freedom from hunger, fear and distress, physical and thermal discomfort, freedom from pain and injury and freedom to express normal behavioral patterns. These freedoms are applicable to the wildlife for which the mankind has earmarked specific areas like sanctuary and national park from out of their own traditional territories but are failing in their obligation to provide them the abovementioned freedoms. With many encroachments still in position with legal protection under FRA, Yawal Wildlife sanctuary is just a case in point.

Later, the Hon. High Court of Uttarakhand in their judgment in March 2017 in the PIL WP (PIL) No. 126/2014] declared The Ganga and Yamuna as legal persons and directed that the Director of NAMAMI Ganga, the Chief Secretary of Uttarakhand, and the Advocate General of the State of Uttarakhand will be persons in loco parentis, i.e. as the ‘human face’ to protect, conserve and preserve the rivers and their tributaries. Justice Rajiv Sharma and Justice Alok

Singh observed "Rivers Ganga and Yamuna are central to the existence of half of Indian population and their health and well being. The rivers have provided both physical and spiritual sustenance to all of us from time immemorial. Rivers Ganga and Yamuna have spiritual and physical sustenance. They support and assist both the life and natural resources and health and well-being of the entire community. Rivers Ganga and Yamuna are breathing, living and sustaining the communities from mountains to sea." The judgment obviously reflects the Indian culture's inherent holistic viewpoint and an 'inclusive approach' which extends to natural resources that have no voice.

Considering the global scenario, one finds that the trend to recognize rights in favor of ecosystems and their elements like the earth, rivers, animals and natural resources is an emerging trend in environmental legislation and jurisprudence. The first country to assign rights under its Constitution to Nature was Ecuador. It gave Nature "the right to exist, persist, maintain and regenerate its vital cycles, structure, functions and its processes in evolution." Later, Bolivia passed in 2010 the "Law of the Rights of Mother Earth". This legislation addressed the concerns about its protection from commercial exploitation and ecological degradation. New Zealand enacted in 2014 the Te Urewara Act which gave the Te Urewara national park the status of a legal entity with "all the rights, powers, duties and liabilities of a legal person". In March 2017, Whanganui River in New Zealand was recognized as being a legal person. In India, the Hon. Supreme Court of India, however, stayed the

order in July 2017 on the move from the Government of India that cited administrative problems in implementing the order since the river passed through a number of states.

The Indian judiciary while deciding environmental petitions, has often relied on the 'doctrine of public trust', which states that the State is merely the trustee and not the owner of natural resources within its territory, which it holds in trust for its current and future citizens. In the latest judgment on the subject of Mangrove Conservation in the PIL nos. 87 of 2006, 2741 of 2017 and 2208 of 2004 delivered on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2018 also, the Hon. Mumbai High Court has relied on this principle while quoting the decisions of the Apex Court in the Nature Lovers Movement vs. State of Kerala [(2009) 5 SCC 373] and Association for Environment Protection vs. State of Kerala [(2013) 7 SCC 226] stating "The doctrine enjoins upon the Government to protect the resources for the enjoyment of the general public rather than to permit their use for private ownership or commercial exploitation to satisfy the greed of a few." It also quotes the observation of the Apex Court in the case of Fomento Resorts & Hotels Limited and Anr. Vs. Manguel Martins and Ors [(2009) 3 SCC 571] which says "The heart of the public trust doctrine is that it imposes limits and obligations upon government agencies and their administrators on behalf of all the people and especially future generations.....The same obligations apply to managers of forests, monuments, parks, the public domain and other public assets..... The public trust doctrine is a

tool for exerting long established public rights over short-term public rights and private gain.” Various judgments on environmental conservation quote the ‘Precautionary Principle’ which is accepted as a part of the law of land. It makes it mandatory for the Governments to protect and improve the environment by not only safeguarding the forests and wildlife of the country but anticipate, prevent and attack the causes of environment degradation. The Articles 21, 47, 48-A and 51-A(g) of Indian Constitution make this obligation on the part of human beings very clear as the right to wholesome environment is a part of right to life and personal liberty guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution.

We, as citizens of the country, have adopted, enacted and given to ourselves a Constitution and a democratic structure that is primarily citizen-centric in its approach. All natural resources on which the citizens as natural persons depend are perceived and managed for ensuring their welfare. Indian Judiciary has from time to time attempted to shift the focus in specific cases that provides priority to the conservation of environment, forests and wildlife but that also, more often than not, emphasized an anthropocentric viewpoint perhaps because that is the language we as self-interested species understand. It is important for us perhaps to return to the fundamental philosophy of Indian culture that shows that we are just a part of the species kingdom that our earth supports and nurtures. Declaring a natural resource, for example, a sanctuary as a legal person may raise certain new challenges in administration but

considering the massive failures that are being encountered while using the presently prevalent anthropocentric paradigm of conservation of natural resources; it is high time that they are declared as legal persons and a system of appointing *Loco parentis* is put in place who will represent and protect their legal interests. Developing a commonly shared mind-set in which both the “guardian” and resource dependent people have to recognize and honor each other’s rights and responsibilities will be a major task. A real challenge also will be the legislative independence of the “guardian” from state and national governments especially if the domain under contest is politically sensitive.

The case study of Yawal Wildlife Sanctuary referred to in this article is a story that emerged due to a sincere, fearless and street smart officer. Such cases are many times situation specific and appear as a shooting star in the sky of natural resource management. Here, for example, most of the offenders were from MP and hence didn’t have much local or political support. Further, the drive got a good support from various wings of state administration. Considering the current scenario of natural resource conservation in the country, however, the option of providing legal personhood to natural resources needs to be taken forward. Conferring legal rights to Nature will just be the beginning of a movement that would ensure sustainable co-existence of all species on this earth including the human beings.

(The Author is PCCF (Rtd). of Maharashtra. He can be contacted on email ID: dr\_arvindjha@yahoo.com)

# JINXED FORESTS OF TELANGANA STATE

By

**J. V. Sharma**

I remember to have written an article captioned 'Jinxed Forests of Adilabad' a decade and half ago for Vana Premi wherein I tried to portray the status of forests and the woes they were subjected to. The article was with specific reference to Adilabad District and the travails the forests in general undergo are more or less the same for the entire Telangana State. Much water had flowed down the rivers of Telangana since then and so also the problems of the forests had multiplied several fold with time. Public comments made by Hon Chief Minister, Sri K. Chandrasekhara Rao, from time to time, in favour of forests evoked a glimmer of hope that forests would have better deal at least henceforth. Latest developments now hold another bout of disaster for forests. *The Hindu* dated 5<sup>th</sup> August 2018 (Hyderabad Edition) published a news report filed by Swathi Vadlamudi titled "Forest Dept. in a fix over minister's diktat on forest encroachments" with a subheading 'Condone encroachments before State bifurcation'. *Vana Premi* of August 2018 carried an article by me captioned "Forest Encroachments: Need for new thinking" where in I expressed my own views on the encroachment problem the forests are afflicted with.

In fact, the latest news report is the continuation of earlier reports filed by the scribe on forest encroachments. The earlier reports created apprehensions that the Government could be lax or lenient about the encroachments in view of the pressure exerted by the local political functionaries or the MLA during the run up period to Panchayat polls or the general elections which are not far behind. I stated in my article that this is the standard practice of encouraging and perpetuating forest encroachments and the Telangana forests could possibly have a fighting chance of survival if only the Hon Chief Minister stands by his words. I made it clear that the forests are not safe under the existing circumstances and an out of box thinking is necessary to find an effective solution.

The present report makes it abundantly clear that no less than the Forest Minister himself is insisting on forest officials going soft on pre-bifurcation of State encroachments and that the Head of the Forest Force (PCCF) addressed the State Government to clarify whether a policy decision had been taken to regularise all such encroachments. The State of composite Andhra Pradesh was bifurcated on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2014 and the latest move could mean that all forest encroachments as on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2014 could be regularised.

The Forest Minister's view on pre-bifurcation encroachments is a very serious matter for several reasons. The subject 'Forests' is on the Concurrent List of Schedule VII of the Constitution and the State Government cannot exercise unilateral or exclusive control & management OR to put it otherwise, State Government's executive jurisdiction is subject to provisions of law in force. The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 stipulates that clearance from Central Government for diversion of any forest land for non-forest purpose is mandatory. Forest encroachments in general are to use the land for agriculture purpose and all such diversions need prior approval from the Central Government. Besides this, there is clear embargo in National Forest Policy 1988 against regularisation of encroachments and the Hon Supreme Court in its Order in Lafarge Mumium Mining Company Case laid down the law that Forest Policy should guide all activities concerning forests. The Minister's move runs counter to the spirit behind Directive Principles of State Policy under Art. 48-A of the Constitution besides amounting to negation of various other forest and environmental laws and rules.

In addition to the legal issues mentioned, there are a host of other issues concerning propriety and political ramifications. While it is not my case to dwell upon political matters, it has to be however said that it is not the best of principles of propriety for a minister to act in a manner that is not in tune with the policy decided by the Chief Minister. Hon CM is on record that forest lands are no longer available for agriculture purpose and that his government is keen to increase the area under forests to one-third of its geographical area. Minister's views are at variance with the declared policy of the CM and the minister's diktat to forest officials is at odds with the basic principle of collective responsibility of cabinet system and governance. In any case, it is for the Chief Minister to sort out matters with his minister whether to discipline him to fall in line with his already stated position or ignore the matter totally which can only be understood as his covert support to the minister. Some analysts already feel that the minister would not make such significant statement of policy without a green signal from the CM. The matter is in public domain now and the CM needs to clarify his position on the fate of forest lands which precariously hangs in the air. His silence over the matter is no longer a substitute for his presumed good intentions and much less to the interests of the forests. Strictly speaking, out of step comments by an individual minister make his position untenable in the cabinet. On the lighter note it is like the tail wagging the dog.

But the issue is much more serious than discussed. The covert and overt encouragement to the lawbreaking encroachers leads to more disastrous consequences. It is like creating a Frankenstein. Aggression and violence lead to assaults culminating even in murders. Matters simply go out of control and the consequences can be unpredictable and disastrous. It is not long ago that Mr. Dharmaiah, a Range Officer in Nizamabad District, who proceeded to the spot to stop encroachment was killed and a leftist party was behind it. I am aware of a case where a Dy. Range Officer in Bhadrachalam area was attacked at the scene of offence resulting head injuries to him. Seriousness of the injury could not be assessed in time and he succumbed to the resultant neurological complications some months later. Violent reactions against the regulatory mechanism from the offenders, for one reason or the other, are not uncommon. Our senior colleague, Mr. R. D. Reddy had grievous injuries when he went to an encroachment area as DFO, Illicit Cultivation Division in the same vicinity of Komaram Bheem. We have the latest incident reported in *Times of India* (Hyderabad edition) dated 19<sup>th</sup> August 2018 according to which two forest officials were seriously injured in an assault by villagers near Kothaguda in Warangal District when the forest staff went there to prevent encroachment.

To provide authenticity to the story of the malady of forest encroachments and its spread in Telangana, I am rather constrained to correlate it to my own journey in the Department. I purposely offer this clarification here lest the readers may not construe that it is a self promotion exercise. I had been a witness to the good days the forests had once and also its plummeting fortunes. I was selected as Range Officer in erstwhile Hyderabad State in 1955 and sent to the then composite Karimnagar Division for practical training for three months before deputing me to Forest College, Coimbatore. I was made to spend much of the time in Mahadevpur area which extended from Kaleshwar in north-west to Muknur, the last village of the District situated on Godavari bank. I could see the pristine forests that existed. There was invaluable tree growth in vast extents outside the notified forests, called Beroons. Forest protection was so secure that the the local villagers depended on the Beroons for their requirement of firewood & small timber for agricultural implements. Cattle's grazing was permitted on payment of fee and grazing was prohibited in freshly felled coupes to protect the coppice regeneration. Notified forests were perfectly safe and forest laws were respected in letter and spirit.

After training in SFRC, I was sent to Uttoor as a probationer for six months to learn Range Administration under the guidance of the RO. It so happened that there was a change of four range officers in the short time which kept me mostly confined to field. Uttoor range of that period included the whole of area from Kerimerighat in the north-east near Asifabad to Kuptighat on Nirmal-Adilabad Highway and the forests included about 40,000 acres of Manikgarh RF, the lion's share of the block going to Maharashtra along with Rajura. I had seen the most wonderful forests of the State in this range. Figuratively speaking, it was a treasure house of ideal vegetation and the true example of 'forests' people can imagine. The standing growth comprised of all age gradations with fairly good proportion of mature and over-mature trees and the exploitable girth at breast height for teak was 54". After the 6-month stint at Uttoor, I happened to work as Special Duty Range Officer in Adilabad Division which provided me further opportunity to know the forests of the entire north-west quadrant of the District. Significant fact is that forest encroachments were unknown in the area till then.

The next posting to me was highly rewarding. I was posted as Range Officer in Working Plan Division of composite Karimnagar Division. A strange incident led to the survey of all forest blocks in the Division. Our WPO, noticed deviations in control maps and felt that they are due to incorrect depiction of forest boundaries. He ordered for a fresh survey of all forest blocks despite my feeble submission that the maps in contention were Survey of India maps on 2"=1 Mile scale specially surveyed for use by the Forest Department and the prismatic compass survey we were to undertake is beset with several in-built deficiencies and cannot match with Survey of India work in accuracy. All the forest blocks were surveyed and that took us each forest block and to each village abutting the block. We had stock-mapped all the forests which necessitated compulsory visit to each Compartment to prepare Field Description Sheets and Compartment History Sheets. It was a very rich experience as we not only knew the forests well but also the socio-economic conditions prevalent. It has to be again said that there were no forest encroachments. This was the period between 1958 to 1961.

I was posted as Range Officer, Uttoor after the Working Plan duty. I found altogether a different Uttoor. There is a spurt of forest encroachments. Daboli Block of a lakh of acres became severely fragmented. Wadgaon Block of an extent of about 19000 acres became almost extinct. So also, the forests along roadside from Tarnam to Ichoda. The worst were the spate of encroachments in highly rich forests of Sirchalma and Uttoor blocks. People girdled the standing trees in the rich valleys and removed them on mass scale. I had to invite the ire of my boss for reporting these developments and paid heavy price. He feared that it would snowball into an adverse reflection on Divisional administration. But nothing of the sort happened. Soon, it became clear that the department is insensitive. If only the department made an issue of it leading to some tangible action to prevent encroachments and effect evictions the story would have been different!

Then I spent three years in Medak District. Encroachments were not a problem. I happened to work for nearly two years in Fying Squad Party, Hyderabad thereafter. The FSP had a jurisdiction over five districts viz, undivided Hyderabad District, Mahbubnagar, Nalgonda, Medak and Nizamabad. None of these districts has any serious threat of forest encroachment barring stray incidents here and there and the situation was under control. Then I happened to work in Nizamabad Division for over four years where the forest encroachments were not a problem except in few areas near Kowlas.

In 1971, the State government ordered for deletion of encroachment patches, from the notified forests. Illegal cultivation with standing growth were also given away. The State suffered immensely

by loss of some very good patches on patches were not surveyed and the estimation of encroachments was ocular and very liberal implying that even forested areas were shown as encroachment. Almost coinciding with this incident. The State regularised all pre-1964 encroachments of Adilabad District. It was the biggest blow to the forests. The whole exercise was tardy and consequently many excellent forests were lost in this exercise. Forest Department took up the survey of remaining patches and had even erected boundary pillars. These were the darkest days for forests of the State in that huge extents of forests were relocation, rehabilitation and resettlement of the Pochampad Project oustees.

But the woes of forests were not over. Regularisation of illegal cultivation proved to be trigger for unabated encroachments thereafter. A meeting was held in the Chambers of Revenue Minister on plethora of claims over forest lands. A case was made out that all the encroachment patches of pre-1964 encroachments were not correctly surveyed and it was decided to send a Committee to assess the situation. Needless to say that it kept the issue live resulting in illegal occupations. Incidentally the Hon. Revenue Minister hailed from Adilabad District. Forest Rights Act, 2006 recognised the illegal occupations upto 2005 it was the worst blow the forests had ever faced. It opened the flood gates and the sanctity attached to forests had evaporated. Vast areas of forests are encroached even after implementation of Forest Rights Act. It is about these encroachments the Hon Minister for Forests desires his officials to soft.

If we look at the figures in cold print, it will be more revealing. The forest area of Telangana is 27292 sq. km out of total geographic area of 112077 sq. km. of the State at 24.35%. Forest area to an extent of 754147 Acres was ceded by the Government to claimants under the Scheduled Tribes and under FRA Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (FRA). Thus 14.13% of the State forest area stands alienated. Remaining forest area is far lesser than the minimum one-third prescribed in National Forest Policy. It is evident that the State is much poorer in forest wealth and cannot afford the luxury of sparing any land for farming. With a population of 3.50 crores the State is already in the red on environmental front at 312 persons per sq. km. Greed for votes to win a single election may push the livability and welfare of coming generations in jeopardy. Now that the Assembly Elections are round the corner, one has to wait and see how the Minister and the Department go about the issue. Should the Minister have his say, it will be an environmental catastrophe rendering the State to eternal bankruptcy on livable standards.

For once, the Forest Department appears to have taken the right step by seeking clarification whether the Government had taken a policy decision to regularise the forest encroachments that occurred prior to bifurcation of the State. The suggestion of the cut-off date is tactical because of the importance attached to the date for Telangana and the sentiment attached to it. It is a subtle clever move to paint a picture that regularisation is a sort of generous and compassionate gesture from the government befitting the great occasion. The point to be remembered in this context is forest encroachment is an offence under Forest Act, punishable with imprisonment or fine or both. Regularisation of encroachments amounts to condoning the crime. India is a land of Rule of Law and the law of the land does not condone any crime. Criminals include thieves, dacoits, anti-nationals, rapists, murderers, arsonists, vandals etc like the encroachers now under discussion, and a highly significant event like formation of Telangana should not be used for the benefit of such nefarious elements. Such a move, can only act as incentive for commission of more crime as is the past experience.

# TREE FELLING PERMISSION UNDER WALTA

By  
**K.B.R. Reddy**

1. A friend of mine representing an educational institution called me one day to seek guidance to obtain permission for disposal of a fallen tree within the campus and permission to fell two more standing trees which have become dangerous to the students and the building. I advised him to make an application to the DFO concerned for according necessary permission.

2. I knew the problem of my friend falls within the purview of the WATER, LAND and TREES ACT 2002, (State Act No.10 of 2002) - known by the acronym WALTA - and the DFO is empowered to deal with the matter under the Act as Designated Officer. I am told that an application was already submitted and two foresters had visited the scene and advised my friend to put in an on line petition. This piece of information gave me an insight to study the subject and understand the prescribed procedure presently in vogue. Fortunately the required information through various Government orders issued from time to time is available on line and I took full advantage of the material to study the subject in detail.

3. The WALTA was enacted with a view to Promote Conservation of Water and Tree Cover etc. In the said Act, Chapter 5 deals with TREES. To give effect to the intendment of the Act, the procedural law is laid down in the Rules made under the Act called, The Water, Land and Trees Rule 2004. These rules are made by the Govt. in *Panchayat Raj* and Rural Development Department in supersession of the rules made earlier in 2002.

From the Heading of Section 28 of the Act, it appears that the provisions relating to tree plantation are applicable to urban areas only. But, by reading Section 30 (3), it appears that the provisions are also applicable to other areas like agricultural lands, obviously in rural areas.

The words and expressions 'Marginal and small farmers' is not defined. According to the ordinary parlance, a person cultivating in an area up to 2 ha is marginal farmer; and a small farmer is one who cultivates land above 1 ha and not exceeding 2 ha is small farmer. All agricultural land holders, with exception of marginal and small owners and wet land owners, are required to plant trees in 5 % of their total holding. But the question is as to who will monitor the planting etc? Land covered by horticultural crop is included for calculating area under tree growth. Incentives may have to be prescribed in the rules for encouraging progressive farmers to plant trees.

4. As for the Trees, including cutting and planting are concerned, the Act and the rules stipulate that the Forest Department is the implementing agency. Rule 3 (5) of the rules made under WALTA, give powers to the Authority (That is the Water, Land and Trees Authority) to choose officers by a separate order, to work as designated officers.

G.O. Ms. No. 47 PR & RD dated 03.03.2003 declared that officers of different departments shall nominate its officers as 'designated officers'

for the purpose of implementing the provisions of the Act. The Forest Department appears to have nominated FRO and DFO as designated officers for carrying out the functions of inspection of trees and granting permission for felling trees respectively. But the order of the Forest Department nominating FRO and DFO is not forthcoming.

5. In R. 24 (5), while fixing the time limit of three days, it is made compulsory for the DFO (as designated officer) to inspect the trees of High Risk Species viz. teak, rose wood, red sanders and sandal wood (Why the four Spp. And trees in excess of 20 per acres are branded as High Risk Species? Is it not possible to give any other acceptable/appropriate name, like valuable/precious tree species? For inspection of trees of other species, the job can be assigned to FRO (designated officer) and based upon his report the DFO (designated officer) will have to grant, or refuse to grant permission within the stipulated time limit. Eucalyptus, Subabul and Casuarina are declared as Agricultural Produce under G.O.MS No. 288 Agri. and Coop. Department dated 10-06-1999 and they are exempted from selling permission. But this is not reflected in the rules.

6. After enactment of the WALTA in 2002 and framing of the WALT Rules in 2004, a series of orders have been issued by the Govt. in PR & RD Dept and EFS&T Dept.,

Notable among them are as follows:

(1). G.O.Ms. No. 58 EFS&T Dept. dated 08.06.2016 (This refers to letters from GOI and PR&RD Dept., object being Ease of Doing Business -

EODB)

(2). G.O.Ms. No. 17 PR & RD Dept. dated 23.02.2016 (Amendment to WALT Rules)

(3). G.O.Ms.No.19 EFS & T Dept dated 13.05.2016 (Simplification of tree felling permission)

(4). G.O. Ms.No.61 EFS & T Dpt.dated 24.10.2016 (Amendment to G.O. 19)

(5). G.O. Ms.No.30 EFS & T Dept. date.28.05.2016 (Amendment to G.O 19)

(6). G.O. Ms. No. 23 EFS & T Dot. Dated 05.07.2016 (The latest on simplification of tree felling permission)

7. In the latest G.O under reference and in the earlier orders, it is said to be simplified procedure on the subject but to a common man it looks a complicated procedure. Under the WALT Rules, the following forms are prescribed: Form 13: Application for permission for felling trees.

Form 13-A: Application for permission for felling exempted trees.

Form 14: Permission for felling trees.

8. In the present G.O under reference, certain forms are furnished as Annexure I to X. As against the aforesaid statutory forms prescribed under the rules, i.e. Form 13, Form 13-A and Form 14, Annexure I and Annexure VI respectively now specified in the G.O. correspond to the forms prescribed in the rules; but they are differently worded. These forms are in contravention of the provision in Sec. 39 of the WALTA, because of the presence of *non obstante* clause in the said section. It says, "The provisions of this Act shall have effect notwithstanding anything to the contrary

contained in any other law for the time being in force." The rules have force of law as they are made under Sec. 45 of the Act. The rules are intended to carry out the purposes of the Act and they cannot transgress the provisions of the Act. Rule 26(1) is unnecessary ; Rule 26(2) is in excess of the power of the Government and is therefore Ultra Vires.

9. In the scheme of things introduced by G.O. Ms. No. 23 of EFS&T dated 05.07.2016, the application seeking permission to fell trees is required to be made on line and the follow up action is to be communicated by e-mail. Undoubtedly the process quickens the decision making by the designated officer. But if this procedure alone has to be followed, what would be the fate of innocent applicant who has no access to any computer? Does the new procedure invalidate the existing procedure prescribed in the rules? Is it not violation of the statutory rules?

10. Another feature of the aforesaid G.O. is that it has mixed up the procedure of two enactments viz. WALTA and the Forest Act. There is a dichotomy between the two laws. The procedure in so far as the Forest Produce Transit Rules is concerned; it is already standardized by statutory rules and guidelines. That should not be a subject of the guidelines under the WALTA.

11. Before felling a tree, the applicant is expected to produce ownership certificate from the MRO concerned. If the permission is needed for felling one or two trees, even then this certificate seems obligatory. This certificate of the MRO can be dispensed with because the FRO (designated officer) himself can verify the ownership of the land and the trees in the premises by referring to property tax receipt, Aadhar card etc. Any rule made should be simple and people friendly.

12. There is a list of exempted trees under WALTA. It needs to be updated and trees like Gulmohar, Peltophorum etc should be included in the exempted trees.

13. I submit that the contents of the G.O. Ms. No. 23 EFS&T dated 05.07.2016 may need to be examined afresh to facilitate smooth working of the scheme with least inconvenience to the public.

14. My friend managed to get the permission to cut trees and that is an end of his ordeal.

15. If my comments herein are worthy of consideration, I submit that the guidelines laid down in G.O. Ms. No. 23 EFS&T dated 05.07.2017 may need a review. (The author may be contacted through e-mail I.D. buchiramkeesara@yahoo.co.in)

***When nails grow long, we cut nails not fingers. Similarly when misunderstandings grow up, cut your ego, not your relationship. (Dr. Abdul Kalam.)***

# HAVE YOU TAKEN YOUR LIVER FOR GRANTED?

By

Dr. B. Raghotham Rao Desai

**1. Basic facts:** One of the largest organs in the body happens to be the **remarkable liver**, which **supports almost every other organ in the body**: consisting of two lobes connected by a ligament which anchors to the diaphragm, located above liver, on the upper-right side of the body, a complicated connection. It is part of a complex processing system which **ensures that all parts of the body receive energy and nutrients in sufficient amounts** — also involved in both: the removal of waste produced by the body and in neutralizing the toxins & drugs in our body. **Release of bile**, that helps in digestion of food, as a part of digestion of fats, cholesterol and **absorption of some vitamins; removal of toxins, including alcohol; maintain the health of butterfly-shaped thyroid gland** (located below the Adam's apple, in the base of the neck); reuse of iron for **synthesis of new blood cells** after breakdown of hemoglobin; **synthesis of proteins and carbohydrate metabolism** are among the functions performed by the liver. Liver has thus many functions in the body – this factory acting as a storage organ for the absorbed nutrients while detoxifying drugs and other chemicals.

**2. Liver disease:** Liver being the main site of alcohol metabolism (the chemical processes that occur within a living organism to maintain life), alcohol abuse leads to the development of alcoholic liver disease — a couple of enzymes converting alcohol to acetaldehyde which is partly responsible for the damage to liver. Consumption of alcohol in excess (as much as 40g/day) regularly can induce the formation of a

range of liver lesions with variable degrees of hepatic abnormalities. In chronic alcohol abusers, liver disease arises from chronic changes **leading to cirrhosis later in life, a condition in which long term damage is caused to the liver** — with the abstinence for a few weeks, the condition though happens to be reversible but with chronic abuse it can lead to severe alcoholic hepatitis which can have a high death rate: hepatitis being the term used to describe inflammation of the liver, and an enzyme being a catalyst speeding up every reaction with its magical touch — and our body relies entirely on enzymes for its chemical reactions.

**Liver diseases are rising of late, as one of the major lifestyle disorders in our country — adversely affecting the quality of life and also reducing life expectancy:** either resolving on its own or progressing into cirrhosis, arising from several factors like alcohol abuse, some drugs, autoimmune conditions and infections (caused by virus, bacteria, fungi & parasites). Disease conditions require **lifestyle modifications which include both dietary intervention & increase in physical activity** — majority of the patients (with non-alcoholic fatty liver) are found to be obese: this condition reduces the response to therapy as circulating insulin has increased levels. And remember: what your body is exactly will give you in return. This simple relationship is understood from the liver diseases, where food and alcohol consumed affect the liver-health & function and its consequence is pronounced

throughout the body.

Then there is **heavy smoking** which not only **harms the organs which are directly in contact with the smoke, but also cause damage to other organs including the liver** — having direct & indirect toxic effects, producing a substance in the body which has increased inflammation effect: causing damage to the liver. Smoking also affects all the branches of immune system and suppresses tumor-suppressor-gene.

Liver disorders can be diagnosed by **blood tests** and **imaging tests (like abdominal ultrasound)** which can indicate the potential severity of liver-injury-as well as any changes in the status of liver-health over a period of time.

**3. Conclusion:** Importance of liver can be understood by the fact functional liver failure

does not occur until much of the liver tissue has been damaged, but once it crosses this capacity: the damage is irreparable. Hence a preventive outlook is very crucial to maintain this super-factory called liver. Stay healthy and monitor its proper functioning with timely screening.

However, many liver disorders are asymptomatic — it being easy to fall into the sway of creature-comforts and ignore the fact that our actions have consequences unseen! **The liver is an organ that tirelessly functions in systems as diverse as digestion and immunity.** The silver lining to this cloud is the fact that for a very long time, **damage to liver caused by lifestyle is reversible** — this being the best example that mending our ways in time can indeed avert a greater calamity in the future.

## UNSUNG HEROES

By  
VALIMIDI

Total serene and divine peace

Everywhere the blissful silence!

It is the Nature's Valuable gift

That is the Forest! A valuable asset!!

Few Foresters patrolling in the forest

To protect and conserve the Nature at night!

Sudden abrupt with huge noises

Cutting of trees with power saws & axes!!

Tens of smugglers with dangerous weapons

Declared war on the weaponless Foresters!

Broke the silence and broken their Heads

Law & order is crushed under their feet!!

These Foresters loved the Nature

These Foresters lived for Nature!

Their Life and death is for Mother Nature

Leaving their Families without Future!!

They dedicated their lives for Nature

To protect green for Generations of Future!

Let us pray for these Forest Martyrs

The "Unsung Heroes" and "Unveiled Angels"!!

# STATE BIRD OF ANDHRA PRADESH

By  
**K. Mrutyumjaya Rao.**

After bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh the Andhra Pradesh Government reselected its state bird as Rose - ringed Parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*). The Telangana Government retained the Indian Roller (*Coracias benghalensis*) as its State bird.

Rose- ringed Parakeet size of 40 cm is slender bird with long pointed tail. Grass green colored with typical short deeply hooked red bill. Female lacks the black and rose pink collar of male. Distributed throughout Indian union and found in cultivation, lightly wooded country, parks and gardens. The bird is pretty and mentioned in Sanskrit literature, but a serious pest to the farmers. The main food is grains and fruits. They swoop down in large flocks on standing crops and on fruiting orchards causing enormous damage to the crops and the fruiting orchards. gnawing and wasting is more than it actually eats. Agriculture department treated this bird as a pest. The farmers are chasing away these parakeets from their fields with different traditional methods and arranging the glittering ribbons throughout their fields. These birds are under wildlife trade. These birds don't build their own nest. They select cavities and burrows in the trees or sometimes in the holes and cracks of buildings for breeding. The call is harsh.

Black Drongo with a size of 30 cm is slim glossy jet black bird with long deeply forked tail, active and agile. Sexes are alike. It is locally called as 'Kotwal' and 'Police pitta'. Distributed throughout

the country. Bird of open country, forest edges, gardens and surroundings of villages and towns. Their calls are sweet and also mimic the calls of other species. This is one of the earliest risers among birds well before dawn with sweet calls and one of the last birds to retire for the day. These birds are insectivores they destroy large quantities of insect pests and are thus invaluable friends of farmers. This bird is also consumer of flower nectar thus helping pollination. The agricultural department has declared this bird as friend of farmer. The bird is bold, brave and aggressive at nest. Black Drongo nests on a tree with an unobstructed view of surroundings to monitor the surroundings areas and attacking the intruders such as crows and kites ferociously. The mild, gentle and soft birds like orioles, bulbuls, doves, and green pigeons etc. build their nest on the same tree or very close to Drongo's nests to protect their eggs and young once, given by Black drongo. Hence the Black Drongo is called as *Kotwal/ Police pitta* locally. Rose Ringed Parakeet is destroying the agricultural crops and causing damage to the agriculturist and Black Drongo is friend of farmers the Black Drongo (*Dicrurus macrocercus*) may be considered as a State Bird of Andhra Pradesh. (The author can be contacted on Mob No. 9441214848 and E-mail I.D. [mrutyumjaya@hotmail.com](mailto:mrutyumjaya@hotmail.com))

# *Birthday Greetings*

*We wish the following born on the dates mentioned*  
*"A very Happy Birth Day"*

| S.No. | Name of the member | D.O.B.     |     |                                      |
|-------|--------------------|------------|-----|--------------------------------------|
|       | Sarva Sri          |            | 6.  | P.Ramesh 10-10-1959                  |
|       |                    |            | 7.  | M.Ashok Kumar 13-10-1965             |
| 1.    | A.Rasheed Khan     | 06-10-1937 | 8.  | R.D.Venkateshwarlu 13-10-1960        |
| 2.    | T.Krishna Murthy   | 07-10-1926 | 9.  | D.Sudhakar Reddy 14-10-1966          |
| 3.    | L.Lohith Reddy     | 08-10-1931 | 10. | Smt. G.A.P. Prasuna 21-10-1979       |
| 4.    | U.Govind Rao       | 08-10-1953 | 11. | K. Kamalakar 02-11-1958              |
| 5.    | R.K.Rao            | 20-10-1935 | 12. | K.Appala Narasimha Chary 03-11-01961 |
| 6.    | V.Ranga Rao        | 20-10-1945 |     |                                      |
| 7.    | C.Subba Rao        | 24-10-1943 |     |                                      |
| 8.    | B.M.Swamydas       | 24-10-1954 |     |                                      |
| 9.    | Dr.G.Narsaiah      | 24-10-1957 |     |                                      |
| 10.   | G.Prakash          | 02-11-1950 |     |                                      |
| 11.   | K.Jagan Mohan Rao  | 05-11-1941 |     |                                      |
| 12.   | D. Nagabhushanam   | 05-11-1955 |     |                                      |

**Secretary**

| S.No. | Name of Serving Officers | D.O.B.     |
|-------|--------------------------|------------|
| 1.    | Smt. P. Rajeswari        | 21-10-1973 |
| 2.    | C.P.Vinod Kumar          | 21-10-1963 |
| 3.    | Lokesh Jaiswal           | 22-10-1963 |
| 4.    | Y.Madhusudan Reddy       | 04-11-1963 |
| 5.    | P.Krishnamachary         | 07-10-1964 |



# BURSTING OF REDSANDERS SMUGGLING RACKET A CASE STUDY

By  
V.SANTHASEELA BABU

**Introduction:** Redsanders wood, like Sandal Wood, is sold by its weight and not by the cubical contents. The scientific name of Redsanders tree is '*Pterocarpus santalinus*' and it belongs to the family '*Fabaceae*', and it occurs in the forest which is classified as 5A/C3 Southern Tropical Dry Deciduous Forests" as per Champion and Seth Classification. Red sanders species is endemic to Chittoor and Cuddapah Districts and also occurs in the borders of Nellore and Kurnool Districts of Andhra Pradesh State only and does not naturally occur anywhere in the world. The heartwood of the tree is highly valuable and it is smuggled out to countries like Japan, China, Singapore and Malaysia etc. In the process of its smuggling, different ways and means are adopted by the smugglers to delude the Forest Officials. It is mainly smuggled through fast moving vehicles like Cars, Jeeps, Vans, Lorries and even Buses. Of late to hoodwink the checking officials, Tractors are also being utilized to transport this wood stealthily. It is smuggled through trains also. Goods trains that transport iron ore to Madras are mainly utilized for smuggling of Red sanders wood. The wood is smuggled in Lorries by covering it under the top loads like onions, watermelons, cantaloupes, mangoes, banana bunches, paddy husk, cotton, papaya fruits and any material that is easily available to the smugglers which they think that

would be fit for camouflaging or hiding of the wood.

The smuggling of Red sanders wood dates back to the later part of 18<sup>th</sup> century. In India the Red sanders wood is utilized mainly for pillars, poles and beams in building material, and for pounding sticks, cot legs, ploughs etc. and in toy making. Other than these domestic uses no other uses are known. The end use of the wood in foreign countries importing Red sanders wood is still a million dollar question for us. It is said that they use it in the manufacture of music instruments called '*Shamisen*' & '*Koto*' manufactured in Japan. It is stated that the wood is being utilized in furniture making also. But sometimes powder and chips of Redsanders wood was also seized while being smuggled. Somehow there is some ulterior usage of the wood which has been kept as a trade secret till now. It is presumed that it might be utilized in atomic reactors and also in the manufacture of some medicines.

**Booking of Cases:** In spite of Number of cases that are being booked involving Redsanders wood, seizing vehicles transporting the wood and arresting of the accused involved in this activity in Andhra Pradesh and other states in India, the smuggling is not coming down. Of late the labor from other states like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka are also being involved in felling and

transport of Redsanders wood by the traders. Stringent measures are initiated by the Govt. of Andhra Pradesh to put down the smuggling of Redsanders wood and protect the Forests. Police personnel headed by the officer of the rank of an Inspector General of Police is exclusively assisting and coordinating with the Forest department. Redsanders Anti smuggling Task Force consisting of Police and Forest officials is formed with headquarters at Tirupati with their teams spread over at vulnerable stations in the Redsanders bearing areas to swing in to action to curb the smuggling activities.

**Case Study:** The following is a case study of an instance of bursting of Redsanders wood smuggling racket that took place and it was possible only because of the meticulous observation, analyzing capacity and daring follow up actions, presence of mind, forethought etc; displayed in a high order by the Forest Officers and staff at different levels involved in the entire episode from time to time.

One Forest Beat Officer and one Assistant Beat officer, during their routine patrolling of highways, found a vehicle in suspicious circumstances wherein the spring plates at the bottom of the vehicle were found reinforced and elevated with extra plates and cambering. Generally this phenomenon will be adopted for vehicles that transport extra load than the normal load. This made the staff to suspect the vehicle. They intended to stop and check the contents of the vehicle. When the staff, which were in uniform, signaled to stop the vehicle the vehicle did not stop and instead speeded up. The

Forest staff chased the vehicle in their two wheelers and could stop it after overtaking the same. As soon as the vehicle was stopped the Forest staff introduced themselves as Forest officials and informed the travelers of the vehicle about their intention to check the same. When the vehicle was inspected, it was found that the floor of the vehicle was spread with some newspapers. When the newspapers were lifted, the staff found some small chips of Redsanders wood underneath them. On seeing the Redsanders chips, the suspicion grew stronger to the staff about the involvement of the inmates and the vehicle in Redsanders smuggling. One of the staff went aside and informed his Range Officer on his mobile phone about the facts and the Range Officer directed them to somehow bring the vehicle to the office without any rupture with the inmates of the vehicle.

Accordingly one of the staff requested them to give a lift to the nearby town and got in to the vehicle. After the vehicle reached the town it was brought to the Range office and the Forest Range Officer took control of the inmates and the vehicle and after inspection of the vehicle started interrogating them about their antecedents and the reason for the availability of Redsanders chips in the vehicle. They started giving all baffling replies saying that they do not know anything about the Redsanders chips. Then the Range Officer checked them and took their mobile phones into his possession and unlocked the pattern by deeply observing the phones in a tilted position wherein he could

observe the usual marks of unlocking on the mobile screen. After unlocking it was found that there was a 'selfie' of the person, from whom this mobile phone was recovered, along with a backdrop of Redsanders trees. On further verification, he found some photos of freshly rough dressed Redsanders logs and some logs which were taken out from water. These photographs were found to be sent to some persons in the contact list through WhatsApp. The Range Officer also found some audio clips with Redsanders trade details in the mobile phones. There were also certain newspaper clippings containing the news of Redsanders seizures. Some photos of Redsanders logs were found which were sent to some contacts in the phones and some contacts replied "OK".

All the above facts lead to establish that these people were not innocent and were actively involved in the clandestine trade of illegal Redsanders wood. All the above persons were taken into custody for interrogation. The Range Officer informed his Divisional Forest Officer about these facts.

The DFO and the Flying Squad DFO and other Officers proceeded to the Range Office and examined the entire circumstances leading to the detection of this case and the available evidence. Then a strategy was evolved by both the DFOs to go in to the episode much deeply and to elicit additional information to bring more persons on to the book. They took all the mobile phones of the persons in to custody and kept them at one place. Basing on the information divulged by them each person was asked to give

a ring to the other person who was involved in this trade. They were tutored first as to what they should converse with the other person. The speakers of mobile phones were switched on and they were asked to go ahead with the telephonic talk. The conversations were all recorded in another mobile phone.

They started interrogating the persons who were taken in to custody. On a balanced and thorough interrogation by the DFOs, one person stated that he is a trader in Redsanders and revealed the names of some more persons who were actively involved in the Redsanders smuggling right from the wood cutters, stockists, mediators, transporters and traders. On the information given by this trader a call was made from his mobile phone, by switching on the speaker, to one person who acts as a mediator in the trade of Redsanders. Instead of lifting the phone a message was flashed by him stating that he is busy at the moment at some place and messaged his present location. Immediately the Forest officials proceeded to that location along with this trader who identified him and nabbed him. Similarly from his mobile phone he was made to call some more people involved in the Redsanders smuggling and they were asked to come over to some specific places to meet him. As and when they arrived, they were identified by this mediator and they were nabbed by Forest officials.

Similarly other persons were also interrogated and they revealed the names of some more persons who were acting as mediators, stockists

and transporters. Basing upon this information divulged by them telephone calls from their mobile phones were made to each of them and their whereabouts were elicited. Basing on this the Officers and staff proceeded to those places and took them in to custody for interrogation.

There were some persons from Karnataka state also among the people detained by the Forest officials. When they were enquired, in the beginning they stated that they were only travelers and they do not have any knowledge of Redsanders. But on further interrogation, one of them revealed the names of some local people involved in this business directly with the traders in Karnataka state. One such person was trapped in the above manner and as soon as he was nabbed, through his mobile, phone calls were got made to one key individual, who was a buyer of Redsanders wood in Karnataka, informing him that Redsanders material is available at this place and he was asked to send vehicles for lifting the same. From that time onwards they have been in constant touch about the dispatch of vehicle from Karnataka. Finally the person from Karnataka confirmed about the dispatch of a vehicle from there along with a driver and his agent. The Forest officers pre-planned about 5 locations after carrying out a thorough 'recce' for meeting the persons arriving from Karnataka. He was informed about all these locations where they can meet this person after reaching here. Strict surveillance was kept at all the above 5 locations with the Forest Officers in disguise to nab the people coming from Karnataka. As envisaged they missed meeting at one location

and instead came to the second location. After arriving at the spot they got down from the vehicle and were talking to the person planted by the Forest officials. At that time the Officers who were keenly watching the situation pounced upon them and took them in to custody. As informed one among them was a driver and the other person was the agent deputed by the buyer.

The Forest officials intended to get the buyer himself in to the scene. They took over the agent and after a thorough tutoring; they made the agent to call the buyer through his mobile to this place informing him that there is huge material available here for purchasing and that his presence is very much required here with a bigger vehicle and to negotiate with the produce owners. Even after prolonged persuasion, the buyer did not yield and did not agree to come. Instead he instructed them to return to Karnataka by loading the available material. Probably the buyer must have smelt some foul play in this.

After a series of individual interrogations of all the persons nabbed about their role and involvement in this clandestine activity, the actual locations where the Redsanders logs were concealed have been elicited, the officers along with the staff proceeded to those spots, traced out and seized the contraband along with some vehicles available at the scene of offence which were transporting the same and all the accused were arrested and cases booked against them.

The telephone calls as mentioned above, were

made by using the technique of taking the person in the custody of Forest officials in to confidence, brain washing him and tutoring the person as to whom he should call and what he should convey to the other person by switching on the speaker of the mobile and simultaneously the conversation was recorded.

In the process of investigation of this case another racket involving the illegal trade in Redsanders old hut material has come to light. During the process of interrogation of these people, one person revealed that he is playing the role of a transporter in the trade of Redsanders old hut material and admitted that he recently delivered a consignment of illegal Redsanders old hut material in Karnataka state. He also disclosed the name of a local person acting as a supplier of this material. He also informed the location of a place from where the Redsanders hut material was lifted earlier. The Forest officials proceeded to the spot and noticed but ends, saw dust and the leftover waste material of Redsanders old hut material in the premises of a house. On enquiry it was revealed that the owner of the house is a carpenter who is working in a saw mill. He was taken in to custody and through him the main person was tracked and was taken in to custody. On interrogating this person he revealed the names of two more persons who were supplying material to him. They were also traced out and were taken in to custody and some more produce containing the old Redsanders hut material was recovered along with a Tractor. The trolley of the Tractor was specially designed with some special secret

chambers underneath the body of the Tractor. This material was roughly dressed and was giving the look of fresh Redsanders wood and was being sold on the basis of its weight as is evident from the tracing out of a weigh bridge bill in the Tractor.

**Analysis of the Case:** In this case once we analyze and evaluate the incidents that took place right from the beginning till the end the following inferences can be drawn.

1. Firstly the Forest Beat Officer and the Assistant Beat Officer who noticed the vehicle with reinforced spring plates with extra camber have displayed an extra ordinary observation capacity in analyzing the evidence which they came across. Secondly when the news papers were found spread on the floor of the vehicle, they removed the same and found Redsanders chips underneath the papers. This again goes to show that how much of intelligence is required in investigating a case. Informing the superior officers about the factual situation and travelling in the same vehicle to the Forest Office by requesting them for a lift without giving any scope of suspicion to the inmates of the vehicle involves the presence of mind that is required while detecting a case.

2. The efforts of the Forest Range Officer in interrogation and investigation by opening the mobile phones and finding the evidence of availability of photographs and the audio clips pertaining to the Redsanders wood goes to show as to how an investigating officer has to proceed with to establish an evidence. Without these evidences from the mobile phones it

would have been impracticable to fix up the inmates of the vehicle in this case and in the absence of the evidences they were to be let go scot free.

3. The interrogation by the DFOs and extraction of valuable information about the persons involved in the trade of Redsanders is again very crucial in the investigation conducted in this case. Generally the miscreants will never divulge any information about their method of smuggling or about their accomplices. Only when they are psychologically prepared to cooperate with the investigating officer, we can expect any truth that could be shared by them. This is possible when we create sufficient amount of confidence in them by brain washing and win over them. The DFOs have acted with a lot of patience and tackled the situation in a balanced way. Because of this they could make them to follow the tutoring given by them and phone calls could be made asking their accomplices to come to the specified places. Again lot of care was taken by recce of the specified places where they were asked to come so that there were no untoward incidents while nabbing them. Before nabbing the culprits all the Forest Officials were to be in disguise so that they would not get any suspicion about the presence of Forest Officials.

4. The idea of getting the buyer personally in to this scenario is also a daring step taken by the DFOs. Though the efforts made to get the buyer have failed, they succeeded in getting his agent and a driver with the buyer's vehicle in to the picture. Again the interrogation that lead to

the location of concealed Redsanders wood and seizure of vehicles intended for the transport of the Redsanders wood and the arrest of the accused is the final outcome of this case wherein splendid efforts were made by the Officers and staff involved in this case in every stage.

5. Similarly eliciting the information of smuggling of Redsanders wood old hut material and the detection of a Tractor involved in the transport of the same with specially designed chambers to conceal them to hoodwink the checking officials is again a wonderful strategy adopted by the Officers.

6. All this goes to show that whenever a case is detected, the Officers and staff involved in detection, investigation and interrogation have to be more vigilant, observe precisely every aspect that they come across, deeply analyze the situation, exhibit the presence of mind, exercise a balanced way of handling the situation and should not leave any stone unturned in gathering the evidences for bringing the accused to book and making them to face the legal proceedings.

IN THIS OPERATION OF BURSTING THIS REDSANDERS SMUGGLING RACKET, THE ASPECTS OF ANALYZATION OF EVIDENCE, COVER, ALIBI, RECCE, SURVILLANCE, INTELLIGENCE GATHERING, AND MOLDING OF THE SITUATION FAVOURABLY Etc; HAVE PLAYED A VITAL ROLE. ADOPTION OF THESE TECHNIQUES IS A VERY RARE PHENOMENON IN FOREST DEPARTMENT.

# TIGER! TIGER!!... HYENA!!!

By

**M. Ram Mohan**

On June 28, 2017, I received a call, at about 6.30 am, from a villager saying that tiger hid beneath a culvert present on the busy road between Bejjur and Marthidi villages. From that moment my mobile phone was flooded with many a call right from anonymous people, informers, local public representatives, police, media people...to my DFO. I was surprised on receiving the information that a Tiger hid in the Hume pipe in an area where there is no forest around and having a tank on one side and large swathe of fields and full of human activity with moderate vehicular traffic.

Immediately I reached the spot along with the staff members and again surprised to see lot of people mobbing that area making hue and cry and some were wielding sticks. The curious onlookers and especially the media persons wanted to get the visuals of the said animal and posed umpteen numbers of questions to forest personnel, why tiger came there, any lurking danger to people, any efforts by the forest department to trap, etc.

We asked the crowd not to disturb the animal as it may pose threat to people and to leave the place immediately, few obliged. But many stayed back. Since the culvert is lying in the transit route, the passersby joined the curious onlookers and the mob burgeoned to about 300. Some inquisitive people were even venturing close to the Hume pipe down the road to have a glimpse or visual of the hidden animal. Taking stock of the situation, police help was requested. It took about half an hour to fan out the crowd few hundred meters away from the spot.

I, along with my watchers who were well versed in animal tracking, examined the area around and located a few pug marks which bore the nail marks on the toe tips and the size of the pug mark was admeasuring about 8 cm. More pug

marks were either disturbed or erased due to people mobbing the area. And the opening of the Hume pipe with moderate dia., in which the said animal said to have entered into was also small as more than half of Hume pipe was filled with sand. The culvert with Hume pipe was meant for over-flown water of the nearby tank to pass through crossing the road. After assessing the situation, I told the people present especially the media persons that the said animal might not be the tiger as assumed and explained them that the tiger pug mark would not have the nail marks and it could be bigger than the pugmarks present and the animal could be either Hyena or Jackal, etc, Though they satisfied visibly with my explanation, they did not leave the spot and wanted to know the identity of animal and it seemed their penchant for glimpse of the tiger did not die.

We enquired with a person hailing from adjacent Marthidi village who was said to have seen the animal directly. He revealed that he saw the tiger while crossing the road and entering the pipe of the culvert in the early morning. When asked persistently whether that animal was tiger in reality or else, he firmly said that he himself saw the animal and it was tiger. When asked whether the animal appeared awkward, having dog-like face and low hind legs, he replied in negative emphatically. Moreover, he said that he was well aware of wildlife including tiger as he belonged to a forest village and worked as cattle glazier, grazing the cattle in forest and did not mistake other animal to tiger. Incidentally, he was local public representative, MPTC member, at that time which gave much credence to his words among the people.

After an hour or so, the local MLA also came all

the way from Kaghaznagar which is sixty km away exclusively to have a glance at the tiger and enquired whether the animal was still hidden and could be seen. On his arrival the crowd became bigger and frenzy. Hon'ble Member of Assembly was briefed that the animal could not be the tiger going by its pug marks. Convinced with the answer, he left the place spending a few minutes.

About two hours of time elapsed. Relentlessly people were thronging the spot since the area was lying on main road that connects the Bejjur Mandal to mainland. At this juncture, I thought it was pertinent to take a picture of the animal with help of torch light focusing on the animal as it was dark in the Hume pipe, though it was lurking in my mind that it was quite dangerous and our action might disturb the animal and moreover, our action would be perilous, if the animal turns out to be the tiger. Already lot of commotion occurred resulting from presence of crowd and vehicular traffic which might have annoyed the animal. Furthermore, there had been an adequate amount of tiger movement in the Bejjur forests at that point of time and also no Hyena movement was recorded for the past few years.

But, given the nature of the pug marks present, we were rather of the opinion that the animal could be Hyena, since pugmark with somewhat twisted- rosette-form, though not clear, was also observed. Hence the animal was photographed. As presumed, it turned out to be Hyena, the Striped Hyena, *egolam* in Telugu, and the same was shown to the media persons describing its dog-like face, stripes and the higher authorities were also informed. As soon as the news that the animal was not a tiger spread, the crowd dissipated leaving a few. Parley

A thought of rescuing the animal by trapping using trap/cage and releasing it into nearby forests was pondered over. But, it was decided, after due parleys with wildlife experts and higher

authorities, as first option, to let the animal leave the place on its own, if it could. The area was kept under surveillance by a team of forest personnel watching closely from a distance hoping that the animal may leave the spot at dusk time. The spot being on the main road, people thronged the area even till the late evening. Camera traps were fixed at both the ends of the Hume pipe. As expectedly, the Hyena emerged out of the culvert at twilight time and was seen venturing towards the Gudem forests which are about one mile away from the spot ending the episode on a happy note. We could capture some images, though blurred because of failing light, while it was leaving. Next morning the animal trackers could track the movement of the animal towards the forest following its pugmarks and the Hume pipe was checked for a few days keeping the camera trap to ascertain whether it was being used as den/shelter by the animal. But, no such activity was observed.

Probably the said animal, the Hyena, was moving apparently from the Bejjur RF Block to Gudem RF Block which is apart by non-forest area or retreating into forest after foraging during night in the open fields early in the morning. On observing human presence while crossing the road, the animal might have hid itself beneath the culvert in the Hume pipe. The villager, because of its stripes and very low light in early hours mistook it for the Tiger. Since the presence of tiger was being reported and heard of, he thought that it was tiger. This incident, though a reincarnation to the poor animal, shed light on the existence of this nocturnal animal in the Bejjur forests and gave concrete evidence of the animal for which hitherto no record was present. Being primarily a scavenger animal which feeds mainly on felids' kills, Hyena is considered to be precursor to the big cats and is classified by IUCN under Near Threatened species category and is a Schedule-I animal under WLP.

## NEWS AND NOTES

### **The Indian Railways has installed devices which mimic the humming of a swarm of bees to keep elephants off the tracks:**

The Indian Railways is creating a buzz with its "Plan Bee" to tackle a mammoth problem at a meager cost: It has installed devices which mimic the humming of a swarm of bees to keep elephants off the tracks to avert accidents.

The Indian Railways said that its "Plan Bee", launched in November last year to stop elephants from being hit by speeding trains in the Northeast Frontier Railways (NFR), has been a great success as the number of casualties has gone down drastically.

The idea to use the buzz of bees as a deterrent to keep elephants away from the tracks came after the Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) of Assam's Ranigya Station suggested that the elephants can be distracted by some particular sound or frequency when a train is passing through the elephant corridor.

Based on this idea, an instrument, costing just Rs 2,000, was built that generated the high, continuous buzzing of honey bees that can go beyond 300 to 400 meters.

"The device amplifies the buzz of swarming honeybees, which is considered as a natural nemesis of elephants and is audible to elephants 600 meters away and thus helps them in keeping away from the tracks," the official said.

After the success of the instrument, it was first installed between the Azara-Kamakhyia stations in Assam and in its first month about five probable elephant-train accidents were averted, he said.

Currently, about 11 such devices have been installed by the railways in the elephant corridor of the NFR division. The installation of these devices has also resulted in protecting the railway infrastructure in the area.

### **Rivers, Wells Dry Up In Kerala after Floods, Government Orders Study:**

- With mercury levels rising and abnormal drying up of rivers and wells reported in flood-hit Kerala, the state government has decided to conduct scientific studies on the post-flood phenomenon in the state.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has directed the State Council for Science, Technology &

Environment to carry out studies on the phenomenon after floods across the state and suggest possible solutions to the problems.

A series of issues including soaring mercury level, unprecedented dip in water level of rivers, sudden drying-up of wells, depletion of groundwater reserves and mass perishing of earthworms have caused widespread concern in various parts of Kerala after the devastating deluge last month.

The flood-battered Wayanad district, known for its rich biodiversity, recently witnessed the mass perishing of earthworms, causing concern among farmers who attributed it to the rapid drying up of earth and change in soil structure.

Many rivers including Periyar, Bharathapuzha, Pampa and Kabani, which were in a spate during the days of flood, are now getting dried up and their water level has decreased abnormally. Besides the drying up of wells, their caving in was also reported in many districts. The flood had altered the topography of the land in many places and km-long cracks had been developed especially in high range areas of Idukki and Wayanad which had witnessed a large number of landslides.

After floods, drought condition was also predicted by experts in many districts of the southern state. "The Centre for Water Resources Management has been assigned the task of studying fall in water levels, changes in groundwater and land cracks," Mr. Vijayan, who is under treatment in US, said in a Face book post.

The topic of biodiversity renovation has been assigned to the Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute, Kerala Forest Research Institute and the Malabar Botanical Garden and Institute for Plant Sciences, he said.

The study of issues related to roads and bridges had been entrusted with the National Transportation Planning and Research Centre. The Council was also asked to study separately the structural changes to environment in terms of biodiversity and changes in the habitat of animals and plants and its impacts, the Chief Minister added.



FOREST MARTYRS DAY 2018: - Forest Martyrs Day was observed on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2018 at the Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad. Forest Minister Sri Jogu Ramanna was the chief guest. The PCCF (IT & P) read out the Roll of Honor. For the occasion, the Ho'ble Chief Minister Sri K. Chandrasekhar Rao sent a message which was read out by the APCCF, Hyderabad Circle. Senior Officers of the Forest Department gave their messages on the occasion. The Forest Minister and others placed wreaths at the Martyrs Memorial. The parade is brought to *SHOK* and the Buglers sounded the last post and two minutes silence was observed for the Martyrs souls to rest in peace.



# GreenAP Mobile App

- ◆ With a vision to increase green spaces and to improve the quality of life of the people, **Andhra Pradesh** Government has come up with a unique initiative with the support of APG&BC in launching **GreenAP** mobile application.
- ◆ This app helps in bridging the gap between consumers and the vast vendor eco-system across the country who are dealing with green products and services.
- ◆ Consumers will now have access to vendors to procure plants of various kinds including indoor, exotic, lawns, roof top gardens, vertical gardens, etc.
- ◆ With this mobile app they will have access to the products like pot vendors, aquariums, landscape designers and many more.

## Salient Features



Vendor Directory



News



Enquiries



Forums



Events

Consumers can select vendors who are closer to their city or town for any purchase by browsing through the hundreds of profiles available in the **GreenAP** mobile app. Consumers can access vendors via WhatsApp, SMS or Phone.



Download **GreenAP** app today!



For more information, please contact our help line number: **+91 7997650835**

## WHY EXOTIC WEEDS- IN P.A.S SHOULD NOT BE DECLARED AS ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTANTS?

By  
B.M.T.RAJEEV

**Preamble:** Wildlife management in India is in the 5<sup>th</sup> decade of the ambitious Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (WLPA), declaration of wildlife habitats as Protected Areas (PAs), launch of Project Tiger (PT) and start of the wildlife wing within the Forest Department in 1973. A lot has been achieved in wildlife management in India with the success of PT-the flagship project initiated by the Government of India for the conservation of tiger-the representative animal of the Indian ecosystem-as it is occupying the crown of the Indian biological pyramid. The management of the wildlife was piloted by the Government of India (Gol) with equal concern by all the states by sacrificing the commercial exploitation of timber/forest produce from the forests declared as PAs in the interest of conservation of the wildlife/biodiversity for the posterity, science, education and enjoyment of the future generation.

The wildlife management successfully maneuvered the hurdles in poaching of animals and the trade in their parts, selling of timber and non-timber forest products, incendiary fires; and achieved success in providing drinking water facilities to the animals throughout the year, creation of infrastructures, wildlife tourism, mitigating the problems of the stake holders-local people to win their co-operation for conservation of wildlife. Many schemes were launched to upgrade the management strategies to address the problems faced by different animals in different regions jointly by the Gol and the state governments. The success of PT gave a boost to the management

capabilities of wildlife in India in the international forum of wildlife conservation and brought credit. The improvements were markedly visible in the population of tiger and its prey base; floral/faunal diversity, water regimes and in the health of the ecosystems-habitats.

*PAs in Karnataka State:* With the over enthusiasm in conservation of wildlife-biodiversity, the concept of the PT- Leave the wildlife habitats in core area to nature without interference was observed in all the TRs and also in the PAs and the other concept-Initiate development of the habitats in buffer zone to repair the damage suffered before declaring the area as Tiger Reserve (TR) till it attains its original status- was also left to the nature. The rigid measures were imposed to fulfill the first concept of the PT in all the PAs in Karnataka State. With this protective measures-the habitats of the PAs shown tremendous improvement in the diversity of flora-the succession in vegetation with regeneration of all local species including trees with improvement in water regimes, to the applaud of the management/on lookers/ evaluators. The faunal components- the herbivores and the predators both responded to the improved habitats and the protection given against poaching and other deleterious activities shown rise in the population of all animal species including tigers by the 'Silver jubilee year celebration of PT or WLPA-1993'. It was goody-goody everywhere.

**Third decade of WLPA (1990s):** In this decade,

struck a rise in the incidences of poaching of tigers, other predators and rhinos for trade in their animal parts in the international markets; the wildlife management suffered a setback during this period which forced for amendments to WLPA, 1972 prescribing severe punishments for offenders; and formation of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) in 2006 to streamline the wildlife management by plugging all loop holes in the wildlife administration. The budget allocations too improved by both the union and states governments.

*PAs in Karnataka:* The third decade of the PAs in Karnataka, saw cropping up of new problems like...

*(a) Human-Animals Conflicts (HAC):* The increase in the population of animals and dearth of fodder in PAs/Tiger Reserves (TRs)-Nagarahole TR, Bandipur TR, BRT Hills TR, Cauvery WLS and Bannerghatta NP saw the wild animals spreading spatially in search of food, water and space for spread of their genes-to the forests/PAs abutting their habitats towards-Western Ghats via Kodagu/ Hassan/Chickamagalur. This spatial dispersal of animals saw no reasons to worry but, with the elephants invading coffee estates in Kodagu, Shakaleshpur/Alur Taluks of Hassan Dist and depredation in to farm lands creating HACs became a heart burning issue for the wildlife management.

The spread of herbivores towards adjoining human habitations abutting PAs in Bengaluru, Kolar, Mandya, Chamarajanagar and Mysore districts especially elephants caused heart burn to farming community by invading farm lands in to Tumkuru/Chickamagaluru districts by plundering crops in search of food during pinch period-summer, during lean period-pre-

monsoon and during autumn (When crops remain succulent/in fruits).

The depredation of elephants became common every year causing HACs/ agitations against it by the farming community forcing the governments to create barriers in between the PAs and the farm lands abutting PAs- to check mate the wild animals within the PAs. Huge budgets were spent for creation of *barriers like Elephant proof Trench, Rough Rubble Stone wall, Size Stone Masonry Wall, Solar Pulsating Fence and finally went for Old Rail Fence (Steel Rails Fence) all along the boundaries between the PAs and the human habitations.*

*(b) Invasion of forest floor by Weeds:* The vegetation which was flourishing due to non-interference during the 1st two decades gave space for the multiplication of the local weeds in the like *Desmodium (3spp)*, *Indigofera (2spp)*, *Decoschistia crotonifolia*, *Strobilanthes asperum*, *Leea wightii*, *Sida (2 spp)*, *Spatholubus roxburgii*, and the Exotics weeds- *Lantan camara*, *Eupatorium odrata* and *Parthenium hysterophorus* (All unpalatable shrubs to herbivores except *Desmodium pulchellum* found to be occasionally browsed by elephants) to occupy the forest floors wherever open/ was with grasses.

**The 4<sup>th</sup> decade of the WLPA (-2000s AD):** This decade saw the vegetation in most of the Tiger Reserves (TRs) of Karnataka where the forestry operations were suspended way back in 1970s showing the sign of ecological/secondary succession in the deciduous forest types of the PAs.

*Problem of vegetative succession/Climax in PAs:* The PAs started in 1970s shown a tremendous success in vegetation and most of the dry/ moist deciduous forests marched towards vegetative

succession-climax-projecting grey or dead trees, lack of regeneration of tree spp with bamboo flowering gregariously in pockets. The Exotic weeds-*Lantana*, *Eupatorium* and *Parthenium* (*L.Eup.P*) were seen overtaking the other local spp of weeds as could be seen in Bandipur, Nagarahole, and BRT Hills TRs. Bhadra TR, Shettihalli WLS the *Lantana/ Eupatorium* were found vigorously colonising all over the areas as thickets by killing the grasses and the regeneration of tree spp. The *Parthenium* went viral in all the openings leaving no space for grasses. The *Lantana* and *Eupatorium* thickets started obstructing the movement of herbivores for forage and also obstructing the predators in hunting. The thickets of the exotic *L.Eup.P* weeds forced the increased animals to move/ forage/ hunt on the forest roads, view lines on either side of the roads, view lines created for observations/ tourism, fire lines and D'lines, swamps and hill tops (eg: Congregation of elephants on Himavad Gopalaswamy Hills in Bandipur TR is a classic example for this trend) as they could hardly find open space or grassy patches or grasses in the forest floors of the PAs for forage.

*Grim situations:* At this stage/situation in the PAs with dead bamboo, dead trees, lack of regenerations and thickets of exotic weeds led for forest fires to become rampant. *Devastating fires were witnessed in Bhadra TR-2004, Nagarahole TR-2012 & 2014, Bandipur TR-2012 & 2014 & 2017, Shettyhalli WLS-2012, 2014 and B R T Hills TR- 2010 & 2012 other in PAs.* However, the PAs management did not interfere with the habitats and left them to nature with protective measures to conserve flora/fauna. The population of wild animals on rise continued to depredate out of the PAs causing HACs in spite

of creating barriers against depredation-forcing the management for the relocation of the straying animals in to forests or Zoos or taming centres (elephants) or zoo (tigers/leopards) and forced the government to speed up the Old rail fencing along the boundaries of PAs and the human habitation in Bengaluru, Mandya, Chamaraajanagar, Mysore and Kodagu districts. About 3-4 drives were also conducted to capture the elephants repeatedly invading farm lands in Hassan and translocated in to forests/tamed some rogue bulls for departmental use. Karnataka State succeeded in resolving the HACs considerably by the 5<sup>th</sup> decade of the WLPA.

**The 5<sup>th</sup> decade (2010s) –a decade of terminus situations:** It is a very tough situation; the exotic weeds *L. Eup. P* have become uncontrollable, threatening the very fodder base of the herbivores by affecting the *carrying capacity of the PAs*. The PAs' are in FIX with problem of these weeds. The nature-forest on its own cannot overcome the menace of these weeds and rejuvenate the fodder base of the PAs-grasses in near future. E.g.: Even open farm lands in Karnataka are found to be infested with the *Parthenium* killing the very fodder base of the cattle; farmers are troubled by the *Parthenium* as it invades the farm/open fields, if the area is unattended for just for 3 months after pre-monsoon showers; in this situation one has to put grass cutting machines/Rotators to clear *Parthenium* before tilling ant farm land. The PA authorities in Karnataka tried to initiate some measure to eradicate exotic weeds-*L.Eup.P* in Nagarahole TR in 2012 after the devastating fires and dropped the move by declaring it to be a very difficult job to tackle after experiment. Where has....

i) The Mudumalai TR in Tamil Nadu which is contiguous to Bandipur to the south went on trying against the menace of the *Lantana*- first; they went on de-fruiting the *Lantana* bushes manually before the fruits ripe to stall the spread of seeds/regeneration. It was found to be a failure. Then they started uprooting the *Lantana* bushes and maintain weed free to see that the grasses rejuvenate to provide fodder for the herbivores. The process of *Lantana* and other weeds control is on in the Mudumalai TR.

ii) The Wynadu WLS of Kerala which is contiguous to Bandipur to the south has declared very recently (June, 2018) that it has decided to tackle the menace of the weeds- as they are causing depletion of the fodder wealth in the PA.

The situation in PAs of Karnataka is so grave/fix/terminus that there is no alternative other than going for the mechanical and biological control of the exotic weeds-*L.Eup.P* in the best interest of herbivores- chital, sambar, muntjac, gaur the very food base of the *National animal of India* - Tiger and other predators; and in the interest of elephant-the *National Heritage Animal of India*.  
*Pic: Lantana* that has come after devastating fires in 2012 in Nagarahole TR as seen in 2016.  
 How come these Exotic Weeds entered in to the PAs?

**1. *Lantana camara*:** It is an exotic plant from Mexico, North America-a flowering garden plant brought from Srilanka and introduced in India in 1807-in all the Botanical gardens. It is a woody stemmed shrub of 'Verbenaceae' family; a light demander, very fire hardy and comes up in all weather/edaphic conditions of tropics. It flowers and fruits profusely, with seed dispersal mechanism by birds. This garden plant was said to have entered in to forests of Madikeri in 1933 and escaped to Western Ghats and became wild

by 1950s. It is said to have occupied 13 million ha of land/forests in India by 2010s. It is one of the 10 worst weeds in the world.

Methods of controlling *Lantana*: i) *Lantana*-cutting and Uprooting by manual labour; or Setting fire to *Lantana* bushes in summer and then cutting and uprooting the stumps after rains manually or mechanically.

ii) Uprooting of *Lantana* by using tamed elephants for pulling the bushes tied to ropes after disturbing the root system with crow bars manually during rains, heaping and allow to dry vide- Art of Indian Wildlife Management in Kannada by B.M.T. Rajeev

iii) Cutting of *Lantana* stems close to base and apply 'Sodium arsenate' solution to the cut face of the stump, for absorption and kill of the root system... as prescribed in the South Indian Flora of SFRC by Somasundaram.

iv) Biological control- *Lantana* is not out of reach for Biological control, but it has not been tried successfully in India even though it is one of the 10 worst weeds in the world. There are known bugs and moths that feed on the leaves/sap of the *Lantana* and affect its growth. A bug has been recently (2017 as per The Hindu report) identified in the Bandipur TR which feeds on and kills *Lantana camara*. Measures have to be taken to work against *Lantana* by entrusting the research to the Entomologists to come out with an effective biological control measure against *Lantana* immediately.

Eg: A rust fungus introduced in New Zealand two years ago to wage biological war against '*Lantana camara*' is starting to give a noticeable impact on the pest plant in North New Zealand.

**2. *Eupatorium odorata* or *Chromola odorata*:** It is a non-woody stemmed shrub of 'Asteraceae' family; a light demander with profuse flowering, seeding and aerial seed dispersal mechanism.

It entered in to India along with the food grains imported from America during the world war in 1940s; and first entered India via-Kolkata and Cochin ports and was seen spreading in those states. It was named as 'Communist plant' since those states were influenced by the political ideologies of Communists. This is also a very worst weed as it not browsed by any herbivores. It is used only for mulching in the gardens and in farm yard pits. It is very difficult to uproot and control this weed.

**Biological control:** After experiencing the difficulty in physical removal of this weed, the affected countries like... Latin America, West Indies, and Srilanka have tried biological control and have achieved some success. The technical knowhow is available with Srilanka for us to follow.

Some of the insects introduced are....

*Pareucchaetes pseudoinsulata* Rego Barros (Lepidoptera:Arcitiidae)

*Cecidochares connexa* Macquart (Diptera: Tephritidae)

*Pareuchetes insulate* (Walter) etc etc

**1. *Parthenium hysterophorus*:** It is also a non-woody stemmed shrub of '*Asteraceae*' family; a light demander with profuse flowering, seeding and aerial seed dispersal mechanism. It entered India along with the PL480 food grains from America in 1956 and was fond spreading all over India-like 'Congress Party' and it was named as 'Congress plant'. It is unpalatable to herbivorous and comes up in all most all the areas of tropics in India. It is poisonous to handle by human as it causes skin diseases and allergenic to Asthma. It is a monstrous weed. It has to be biologically controlled. It has been found successfully controlled in and around Bengaluru since 1980s by introducing an insect

'*Zygogamma bicolorata*' that feeds on the succulent leaves of this plant.

Pic: Luxuriant growth of *Parthenium* leaving no scope for grass

**Conclusion:** These exotic weeds- *L.Eup.P* in the PAs of Karnataka should be declared as menace and also declared as environmental pollutants since they have polluted the environment of the PAs in Karnataka by depleting their carrying capacity very badly and also the open lands outside the PAs. The PAs habitats are withering and not in the position of meeting the diverse food, shelter and spatial requirements of the diverse animals' on increase in population due to protection/conservation efforts in the PAs. To tackle this daunting problem of PAs due to exotic weeds, the PAs' management-the Authority, the Chief Wildlife Warden of the State has to initiate action with the powers vested with him under Section 33 (a) (b) (c) (d) of WLPA, 1972 to check and control the menace of these exotic weeds *L.Eup.P* to restore the carrying capacities of the PAs and especially in TRs in the best interest of wildlife. Further, he has to move the government to declare the said weeds as pollutants of the environment in PAs. Eg: It is a fact that the weeds- *L.Eup.P* have occupied more than 60-70 % of the forest floor in the flagship PA of Karnataka-Bandipur / Nagarhole NPs/ TRs and BRT Hills TR causing dearth of fodder to herbivores in addition to aggravating fires in summer and also obstruct the movement of staff in fighting fires (e.g. A young Forest Guard was trapped and burnt in forest fire in Lantana bush during Feb, 2017 in Bandipur). (The Author is a Former Dy. Wildlife Warden of Bandipur TR and Bannerghatta NP, Karnataka, Mob: 9632781811; Email:bmt.rajeev.ifs@gamil.com)

# NATIONAL PARKS & WILDLIFE SANCTUARIES IN ANDHRA PRADESH

BY

V.SANTHASEELA BABU

**Wildlife in Andhra Pradesh:** By virtue of its location and due to the presence of different geographical regions starting from coastal belts to plains and hilly terrains, the state of Andhra Pradesh is endowed with affluent and an array of wildlife like Tigers, Leopards, Jackals, Hyenas, Antelopes, Spotted Deer, Mouse Deer, Barking Deer, Black bucks, Sambar, Bison, Bears, Porcupines, Dhole etc; and a variety of Reptiles, Birds and other Wild animals. Once upon a time Elephants were completely absent in Andhra Pradesh. But in the recent past they have also made their gigantic appearance in to the state from neighboring states of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Odisha by straying in to adjoining borders of our state. The Government of Andhra Pradesh is also concentrating its attention in the matter of protection and conservation of wildlife in the state by treating the subject on priority basis with prime importance.

Wildlife protection is emphasized by enacting stringent laws and establishing protected areas like National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, Zoological Parks, Tiger Reserves, Elephant Reserves and Deer Parks etc; besides declaring certain crucial areas as Biosphere Reserves. The essence in establishing these protected areas is to conserve and protect the whole ecosystem from exploitation and to protect the ecosystem, we need to conserve its biodiversity at all levels that means both in its natural environment like forest and artificially created environments.

The following National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, Tiger Reserve, Elephant Reserve and

Zoological Parks are established in Andhra Pradesh:

**National Parks:** National Parks provide protection to the entire set of the ecosystem i.e. flora, fauna, landscape etc. of that region. National park is an area which is strictly reserved for the betterment of the wildlife & biodiversity and where activities like developmental, forestry, poaching, hunting and grazing or cultivation are not permitted. In these parks, even private ownership rights are not allowed. Their boundaries are well marked and circumscribed. "National Park" means an area declared, whether under sec.35. or sec.38 of Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 or deemed, under sub-section (3) of sec.66. to be declared, as a National Park.

National park is the area of countryside, which is specifically designated for wildlife, where they can live freely and use the natural resources. They are highly known for preserving the flora, fauna, landscape and historical objects. They safeguard the environmental, scenic and cultural heritage of the region. National Parks are highly restricted areas, which are not open to all the people, whereas wildlife sanctuaries have lesser restrictions than National Parks. To visit National Parks, official permission is to be taken from the requisite authorities. Human activities are allowed to a limited extent in the wildlife sanctuaries, but in case of National Parks, they are strictly prohibited by the authorities.

The following National Parks are constituted by

the Government in the state of Andhra Pradesh:  
List of National Parks in Andhra Pradesh

| S. N. | Name of the National Park      | Year of Notification | Area in Sq.kms. |
|-------|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| 1     | Sri Venkateswara National Park | 1998                 | 353.63          |
| 2     | Rajiv Gandhi National Park     | 2005                 | 2.40            |
| 3     | Papikonda National Park        | 2008                 | 1012.86         |

**1. Sri Venkateswara National Park:** This National Park was declared in Seshachalam Hills near Tirupati during the year 1998 over an area of 353.63 sq.kms vide G.O.Ms.No.58, Environment, Forests, Science and Technology (For.III) Dt.13<sup>th</sup> May, 1998. Out of which, an area of 120.93 Sq. kms. falls in Chittoor District and an area of 232.70 Sq.kms. falls in Kadapa District. The Govt. of India declared the region as one of the Biosphere Reserves also.

**Fauna available in the National Park:** Among the Mammals Leopard, Asiatic Elephant, Sloth Bear, Sambar, Mouse Deer, Barking Deer, Spotted Deer, Wild Boar, Wild Dog, Slender Loris, Four horned Antelope, Indian Hare, Indian Porcupine, Indian Giant Squirrel, Bonnet Macaque, Common (Hanuman) Langur, Indian Pangolin etc; are found in this National Park.

The avifauna comprises of birds like Common Peafowl, Grey Heron, Purple Heron, Darter, Great Cormorant, Little Cormorant, Indian Pond Heron, Cattle Egret, Asian Open-billed Stork, White Ibis, Black Ibis, Painted Stork, Northern Pintail, Common Teal, Spot-billed Duck, etc.

The Reptilian found in this National park include Marsh Crocodile, Indian Monitor Lizard, Indian Chameleon, Common Garden Lizard, Forest Calottes, Bark Gecko, Golden Gecko, House Gecko, Starred Tortoise, Common Indian Krait, Russell's viper, Rat Snake, Indian Python, Indian Cobra, etc.

**Flora available in the National Park:** The National Park is unique in possessing rich and diversified flora including some endemic species and important medicinal plants.

The tree species found here include *Pterocarpus*

*santalinus, Santalum album, Shorea roxburghii, Shorea tumbuggaia, Shorea talura, Pterospermum suberifolium, Sterculia urens, Grewia tiliifolia, Aegle marmelos, Atalantia monophylla, Chloroxylon swietenia, Ailanthus excelsa, Boswellia ovalifoliata, Ziziphus xylopyrus, Sapindus emarginatus, Schleicheria oleosa, Syzygium alternifolium, Syzygium cumini, Terminalia pallida, Terminalia chebula, Terminalia arjuna, Terminalia bellerica, Terminalia paniculata, Careya arborea, Memecylon edule* etc.

Shrubs like *Dodonaea viscosa, Helicteres isora, Grewia hirsuta, Pavonia odorata, Memecylon angustifolium, Pavetta indica, Eupatorium odoratum* etc; are quite commonly found in the National Park. Herbaceous species found in this National Park are *Pimpinella tirupatiensis, Polygala arvensis, Polygala sibirica, Argemone mexicana, Coronopus didymus, Polycarpon prostratum, Portulaca oleracea, Portulaca tuberosa, Bergia ammanioides, Centella asiatica*, etc. SV National Park is also noted for its Endemic Species such as *Boswellia ovalifoliolata, Cycas beddomei, Pimpinella tirupatiensis, Pterocarpus santalinus, Shorea tumbuggaia, Syzygium alternifolium, Terminalia pallida* etc.

**2. Rajiv Gandhi National Park:** In the Rameswaram Reserved Forest of Proddatur Division on Proddatur – Yerraguntla main road in Kadapa District, Rajiv Gandhi National Park is located. This National Park was constituted in the year 2005 vide G.O.Ms. No. 107 EFS & T (For – II) Dept. Dt : 18-10-2005. Part of Rameswaram Reserved Forest with an extent of 2.39 Sq.kms. has been declared as Rajiv Gandhi National Park.

This park is divided into two zones viz; (1) Conservation Zone (200 Ha) (2) Visitors Zone (39.52 ha).

This National Park consists of Tropical Dry Deciduous Forest and the majority area of the National Park consists of sand dunes where plantations of species like *Dalbergia sissoo, Eucalyptus* and *Palmyrah* are raised in addition to the *Tecomella undulata* (Rajasthan Teak) which

exists naturally.

The Wildlife found in this Park are Black napped Hare, Pangolin, Jungle cat, Wild Pig, *Varanus indicus* (Mangrove Monitor), Russell's Viper, Indian Python and Birds like Blue Jay, Red vented Bulbul, Blue Kite, Parakeets, Bee eaters etc; By elevating this area as to the status of National Park, sand dune ecosystem is protected from all kinds of natural and biotic interferences.

**3. Papikonda National Park:** The total area of the National Park is about 1012.86 km<sup>2</sup>. It was declared as a National park in the year 2008. The floral variety of the Park is mainly Eastern Ghats vegetation. The mythological significance attached to the Park is that it was the kingdom of the apes during the epic time of holy Ramayana. The erstwhile name of the area was 'Kishkindha', whose residents had helped Lord Rama to bring back Sita from Lanka. Papikonda National Park is a beautiful place, located in East Godavari and West Godavari Districts of Andhra Pradesh and Khammam District of Telangana. The park lies on the left and right banks of the river Godavari and cuts through the Papikonda hill range of Eastern Ghats. The River Godavari enriches the Papikonda Park with its natural beauty. Papikonda National Park is one of the main tourist destinations of the state of Andhra Pradesh. The pristine atmosphere of the park is the best place to observe nature in her pious form. The park provides necessary ambience to the wildlife to regenerate and develop. This Park is not only the homeland of the animals but a wide variety of plants and shrubs grow that make the vegetation of the place rich and vibrant. The birds found in the region are both resident and migratory.

Papikonda Wildlife Sanctuary was declared as a National Park in the year 2008. Total area of the National Park is 1,012.86 sq.kms. The areas included in the National Park Forest Division wise are as follows:

| S. No | Division                                                 | Area (Sq. Km)   |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1     | Eluru                                                    | 261.828         |
| 2     | Kakinada                                                 | 310.621         |
| 3     | Paloncha                                                 | 163.824         |
| 4     | Chinturu<br>[Earstwhile<br>Bhadrachalam<br>(S) Division] | 276.585         |
|       | <b>Total Area</b>                                        | <b>1012.858</b> |

**FLORA:** The floral species seen in the National Park area are *Tectona grandis*, *Dalbergia latifolia*, *Pterocarpus marsupium*, *Termenalia tomentosa*, *Adina cordifolia*, *Tamarindus indica*, *Madhuca indica*, *Lagerstroemia parviflora*, *Gmelina arborea*, *Mangifera indica*, *Artocarpus intergrifolia*, *Pongamia pinnata*, *Chloroxylon swietenia*, *Anogeissus latifolia*, *Mallotus philippensis*, *Albizzia lebeck*, *Albizzia amara*, *Butea frondosa*, *Bauhinia recemosa*, *Bridelia retusa*, *Trema orientalis*, *Cassia fistula*, *Cleistanthus collinus*, *Emblia officinalis*, *Dendrocalamus strictus*, *Bambusa arundinacea* etc.

**Fauna:** The Mammals found in this National Park area Tiger, Gaur, Panther, Barking deer, Wild dog, Sambar, Spotted deer, Sloth bear, Wild boar, Hyenas, Jackal, Hare, Indian giant squirrel, Common giant flying squirrel etc.

The Birds that are found in this Park comprise of Pea fowl, Red jungle fowl, Brahminy duck, Egret, Heron, Stork, Teal, King fisher, Vulture, Kite, Eagle, Hawk, Falcon, Myna, Horn bill, Robin, Eastern larger golden backed wood pecker, Barred jungle owl, Paradise fly catcher etc.

**Wildlife Sanctuaries:** Wildlife Sanctuaries are areas which provide protection and favorable living conditions to the wild animals. A state government can declare any area as a wildlife sanctuary if it feels that the area has the necessary ecological importance.

Wildlife sanctuaries can be understood as the regions where wildlife and their habitat is protected from any disturbance. Sanctuaries are famous for the conservation of wildlife, which includes animals, insects, microorganisms, birds, etc. of different genes and species. They aim at

ensuring that a substantial population of the wildlife and their habitats are maintained. They have lesser restrictions than National Parks. No official permission is to be taken to visit a wildlife sanctuary and their boundaries of are not sacrosanct. Human activities are allowed to a limited extent here.

The following are the Wildlife Sanctuaries in Andhra Pradesh which have been declared by the Govt. of Andhra Pradesh.

| S No | Name of the Sanctuary                                                         | Year of Formation | Location Area (Sq. Km) |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| 1    | Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary Kakinada Division East Godavari Dist.              | 1998              | 235.70                 |
| 2    | Kolleru Wildlife Sanctuary West Godavari Dist. Krishna Dist.                  | 1999              | 308.55                 |
| 3    | Krishna Wildlife Sanctuary Krishna Dist :Guntur Dist :                        | 1998              | 194.81                 |
| 4    | Rajiv Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary Kurnool Dist. Prakasam Dist.Guntur Dist.      | 1978              | 2,131.72               |
| 5    | Rollapadu Wildlife Sanctuary Kurnool Dist.                                    | 1988              | 6.14                   |
| 6    | Gundla Brahmeswaram Wildlife Sanctuary Kurnool Dist.Prakasam Dist.            | 1990              | 1,193.68               |
| 7    | Sri Lanka Malleswara Wildlife Sanctuary Kadapa Dist.                          | 1988              | 464.42                 |
| 8    | Nelapattu Wildlife Sanctuary SPSR Nellore Dist.                               | 1976              | 4.59                   |
| 9    | Pulicat Wildlife Sanctuary SPSR Nellore Dist.                                 | 1976              | 600.00                 |
| 10   | Kaundinya Wildlife Sanctuary Chittoor Dist                                    | 1990              | 356.70                 |
| 11   | Sri Venkateswara Wildlife Sanctuary Chittoor Dist. Kadapa Dist.               | 1998              | 525.97                 |
| 12   | Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary Visakhapatnam Dist.                           | 2002              | 71.39                  |
| 13   | Sri Penusila Narasimha Swamy Wildlife Sanctuary SPSR Nellore Dist.Kadapa Dist | 1997              | 1,030.86               |

**Tiger Reserve:** In addition to the above, there is a Tiger Reserve called the 'Nagarjuna Sagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve'. Two Wildlife Sanctuaries namely "Rajiv Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary" and "Gundla Brahmeswaram Wildlife Sanctuary" (GBM) constitute the Tiger Reserve area.

**Nagarjuna Sagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve:** Nestled in Nallamala Ranges of Eastern Ghats, the "Nagarjuna Sagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve" (NSTR) is a repository of Biodiversity and an abode for endangered flora and fauna. The total area of the Tiger Reserve is 3,727.82 sq.kms. spreading over Prakasam, Kurnool and Guntur Districts of Andhra Pradesh.

Elephant Reserve:

**Rayala Elephant Reserve:** In order to further strengthen the cause of the Elephant protection and its habitat conservation, an area of 766.13 Sq. Km which includes Koundinya Sanctuary in Chittoor District is notified as "**Rayala Elephant Reserve**" vide G.O.Ms. No: 106, EFS&T (For.II) Department Dated: 09.12.2003

**Zoological Parks:** A Zoological garden, *Zoological Park*, or *Zoo* is a place where many different species (types) of animals are kept so that people can see and watch them. Modern Zoos try not only to be for people's entertainment, but also for education, research, and conservation and protection of animals. Zoological Park is very important medium of communication to educate the visitors about conservation and protection of Wildlife. The connections that the people make with wild animals during their visit to the Zoos will definitely help them to care about the animals and develop love and affection towards them. Modern zoos also aim to help teach visitors the importance on animal conservation, often through letting visitors witness the animals firsthand.

In Andhra Pradesh state there are two Zoological Parks established. They are as follows:

1. Indira Gandhi Zoological Park, Visakhapatnam
2. Sri Venkateswara Zoological Park, Tirupati.

As described above, the Forest Department of Andhra Pradesh with the support from the Government is taking all the precautionary measures and the necessary steps required in this regard and making the best possible efforts in the field of protection and conservation of Wildlife and Biodiversity.

## LEGAL NOTES

### ***Jal Jungle Jameen Sangharsh Samithi vs. Dilip Buildcon & others***

Dilip Buildcon Respondent-1 in the case is a corporate body engaged in construction of roads, claiming to be "the largest and the fastest". They were under a contract for construction of two roads viz. from Jaora to Piplodha; and Piplodha to Sailana. The contract of construction of roads to R-1 was entrusted by the Madhya Pradesh Road Development Corporation (R5). For the construction of the road, R-1 required minor mineral like stone and murram. Therefore the company obtained a temporary lease for the purpose, at Amba village and the temporary mining lease was granted by the Collector, Ratlam (R-3) on 15.07.2013 at the instance of the M.P. State Road Development Corporation. While the work of extraction of material was in progress, the petitioner felt that the extraction of minerals is causing disturbance to the villagers by the noise and had become a nuisance causing damage to the environment, particularly for the Lesser Floricon breeding in the Sailana Wildlife Sanctuary. The petitioner filed Original Application No. 118 / 2014 before the National Green Tribunal, Central Zone at Bhopal. The application was heard by the Bench comprising The Hon'ble Justice Mr. J. Dalip Singh (Judicial Member) and The Hon'ble Mr. P.S. Rao (Expert Member)

The petitioner is represented by its Convener. R-1 is represented by its Managing Director. The other respondents are: R-2 Sarpanch of village Amba of Ratlam district; R-3 the State of M.P represented by the District Collector, Ratlam; R-4 the Divisional Forest Officer, Ratlam; R-5 the Madhya Pradesh State Environment Impact

Assessment Authority; R-6 the Principal CCF, Madhya Pradesh; R-7 the Government of India in the Min. of Environment & Forest represented by its Secretary; R-8 the Madhya Pradesh Road Development Corporation represented by its Managing Director.

The leased area was close to the Sailana Wildlife Sanctuary famous for Lesser Floricon, which is said to be on the verge of extinction. The Sailana Wildlife Sanctuary is one of the habitats, left for the purpose of breeding, is extensively disturbed because of mining activity. The sanctuary is limited to about 13 sq. km.

The Petitioner submitted that the habitat is conducive for breeding of the bird on account of open grass land. The respondents of Forest Department contended that Lesser Floricon is critically endangered. Any slight ecological disturbance due to use of dynamite and blasting by other means and transporting of stones etc. by heavily loaded trucks by high decibel noise will surely disturb the ecological balance and adversely affect the breeding of the birds. About 238 birds were recorded in 1999 in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan and the population dropped to 84 in 2011.

Respondent-1 brought to the notice of the Tribunal that the Collector, Ratlam cancelled the mining lease on 03.10.2013. The DFO, Ratlam (R-4) and the PCCF, MP (R-6) submitted that the mining site is just 500 mtrs. away from the boundary of the sanctuary and therefore, on the report of the forest officers, the District Collector, cancelled the temporary lease on

03.10.2013. A proposal dated 08.02.2014 was sent to the Government of India for demarcating and notifying an area up to 2 km as Eco-Sensitive Zone under the Environment Protection Act. The Tribunal sought response form the Forest Department with regard to the existing situation of the Lesser Floricon in the State, particularly in the Sailana Wildlife Sanctuary and the adjoining sanctuaries of Jhabua and Sardarpur and what measures and precautions required for their improvement. It was submitted that there is a gradual decline in the arrival of Less Floricon into Sailana Wildlife Sanctuary and only 8 such birds were sighted, which shows that their number is dwindling as against 20 birds sighted in 2012. Respondent-1 submitted that they would contribute significantly towards any project for effective management, conservation and protection of the habitat. The PCCF (WL) personally appeared before the Tribunal and explained the problems faced for the protection and management of the sanctuary against grazing problem, growth of obnoxious weeds;

and the need to remedy the situation and further to carry out repairs to the pond.

Later, the R-1 and the DFO (R-4) together drew up a scheme for improving the status by identifying four works, viz. 1. Deepening of tank; 2. Eradication of Lantana; 3. Removal Prosopis, Babul, Khejri etc.; and 4. Supply of equipment to the staff. All the works are estimated to cost Rs.29.55 lakh, which the company was readily willing to pay as a Corporate Social Responsibility.

The Tribunal directed that the scheme as approved by the PCCF (WL) may be implemented with any changes or modification needed in a rational manner. The money to be deposited by R-1 shall be kept as non-lapsable Head of Account. It is also ordered that to effectively utilize the funds, the villagers may be involved and the money may be spent through the Eco-Development Committee. The order of the Tribunal was passed on 26.09.2014.

**K.B.R.** (The author may be contacted through E-mail I.D buchiramkeesara@yahoo.co.in)

#### **ONE DAY WORKSHOP ON REVISION OF DRAFT TELANGANA FOREST DEPARTMENT CODE: -**

The workshop was held in the conference hall of Aranya Bhavan on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2018 under the chairmanship of the PCCF (Prod). While welcoming the participants comprising representatives of Service Organizations, members of the Retired Forest Officers Association and officers of the PCCF's office, the PCCF Sri Prudhvi Raju explained the need for revision of the Code. He gave a brief account of the Draft Code by power point presentation. The rest of the proceedings were conducted by Dr. Tirupathaiah, Director, TS FA assisted by Dy. Dir. Sri Anjaneyulu. All the participants zealously made their contributions. While the proceedings were in progress the PCCF & HoFF Sri A.K. Jha graced the occasion and gave valuable suggestions. The workshop came to a close with the vote of thanks by Sri Anjaneyulu.

# OBITUARY

**K Vidyasagar IFS**  
**(10-06-1967 to 08-09-2018)**



Sri K. Vidyasagar expired on 8-8-2018 due to massive cardiac arrest. He was born on 10-06-1967 to Sri K. Satyam and Smt. Ramulamma in the village Ramadugu, of Nalgonda District. His father was noted for his generous attitude

towards poor and distributed his agricultural lands to the poor. Sri K. Vidyasagar followed his father's footsteps and was also pursuing pro poor policies in his service, earning him recognition in Uttaranchal as honest and committed officer for development of forest dwellers.

He was educated in Chinthagudem, Chalakurthi, Yacharam Bothuguda villages of Nalgonda. He studied Intermediate during 1983-85 in Govt. Junior College, Devarakonda and passed in first class.

He graduated in Mechanical Production Engineering from Chaitanya Bharathi Institute of Technology and topped the course winning the Gold Medal in 1989. He worked as Maintenance Engineer in the APSEB, Nagarjuna Sagar from 1990 to 1992. He was selected by A.P.S.C. as ACF and completed training in SFS College, Coimbatore during 1993 -1995. While undergoing practical training in Warangal Circle he was selected to the Indian Forest Service and allotted to the Uttar Pradesh Cadre.

During his service in Uttar Pradesh he worked in Agra and Lucknow and later on he was allotted to Uttaranchal cadre on bifurcation of the UP State. He worked as DFO, Bageshwar, DFO Civil Soyam, Almora and Tarai East Division with headquarters at Haldwani, during 2002 to 2007.

He joined Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore in 2008 and completed post graduate diploma in Public Policy & Management in the year 2009.

He came to Andhra Pradesh on inter-state deputation and served in Rural Development Department as CCF/Special Commissioner, MGNRES and Member Secretary SRDS from April 2009 to March 2014. On repatriation to his parent cadre he was appointed as staff officer in the PCCF office till August 2017.

He was empanelled as joint Secretary in Govt. of India and deputed to National Mineral Development Corporation as Chief Vigilance Officer, NMDC on 16-08-2017.

He suffered massive cardiac arrest in the early hours of 8<sup>th</sup> September and passed away.

He is survived by wife Himabindu and only daughter Sai Deepthi, who is pursuing B. Tech (Mechanical Eng.)

He was very famous in Department and was awarded the highest award of Govt. of Uttarakhand "Uttarakhand Formation Day Trophy" for his outstanding contribution in Civil Service and Natural Resource Management in the years 2004, 2005 and 2006 continuously, was awarded the "Chief Minister's Trophy" by Govt. of Uttarakhand in 2004 for his outstanding contribution in the field of livelihood promotion, was awarded the "Governor's Trophy" by Govt. of Uttarakhand in the year 2004 for his outstanding contribution in the field of Natural Resource Protection, was awarded the "Forest Minister's Trophy" by Govt. of Uttarakhand in the year 2004 and 2003 for his outstanding contribution in the field of medicinal plants promotion. **May his noble soul rest in peace**



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