

## Tiger Reserve in Kawal Wildlife Sanctuary: Issues and Concerns

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**Abstract:** The tribal societies, which have been still in the hunting, gathering and slash-and-burn stages, have a much closer relationship with nature and its management. Development projects initiated so far have been displaced the indigenous people. Consequently, there has been a near total disintegration of the tribal ecosystem. This has led to the breakdown of the tribal community and their culture with overwhelming majority of individuals within the tribal society unable to cope with a society which has nearly become de-linked from nature. The tribals understood and interacted with the nature in a manner, which according to many anthropologists and environmentalists is unique and a key to the future management and relationship with nature. At this context, it is also important to analyse the reasons and processes involved in integrating the tribal communities into the so called mainstream society and the accompanying changes likely to be occurred in the man-community-environment relationship which bring miseries to their basic life and mere survival. The paper is an attempt to analyse the issues and concerns involved in the proposed Tiger Reserve Project (TRP) in the Kawal Wildlife Sanctuary (KWS) of Adilabad district in Andhra Pradesh, India based on anthropological perspectives.

**Keywords:** Natural Environment, Wildlife, Indigenous People and Harmonious Co-Existence.

### Introduction

There are more than 600 protected areas covering nearly 5% of total land of the country that has been declared as wildlife sanctuaries and National parks in India (Sekhsaria 2007). Most of these protected areas are in the fifth schedule where tribal population is high. The Wildlife Protection Act (WPA), 1972 (as amended in 2006) is a strong regulatory statute that restricts almost all activities inside protected areas. These include restrictions on entry to sanctuary (as per section 27), collection of Minor Forest Products (MFPs) including Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs), except for bona-fide self consumption and grazing / movement of livestock, etc. This effectively exiles people living inside the protected area over generations.

More than 1,500 villages are still inside the existing sanctuaries. Apart from these, a large number of non-surveyed villages and settlements exist inside these sanctuaries (Sekhsaria 2007). In this process, most of the tribal communities are treated as encroachers, even though; these villages have been existed inside the sanctuaries since centuries. Satellite pictures of these areas reveal the state of extensive cultivation of both the settled and shifting types. Many of the tribal villages have not even been surveyed and are treated as encroachments, even today.

As per the WPA, 1972 many of the villages are supposed to be evicted from the sanctuary areas. Even where they are not being evicted, the collection of NTFPs and other forest products are totally restricted and this makes their livelihoods extremely difficult. This has been the cause of regular conflict and has led to impoverishment of people living inside these areas. The powers granted to the forest department under the WPA, 1972 also helps them in harassing and exploiting the tribals and other marginalised sections.

#### **Location of the KWS in Adilabad District**

Adilabad district is situated between 77°46 and 80°0 of the eastern longitudes and 18°40 and 19°56 of northern latitudes. It is surrounded by Yavatmal and Chandrapur on the north, Karimnagar and Nizamabad on the south and Nanded district on the west. The KWS was established in 1965 and later declared as the Protected Area (PA) in 1999 under the WPA, 1972. It is located in the schedule area of Adilabad district at a distance of 100 km from its district headquarters. It extended from the sahyadri hill ranges to the Tadoba forest in Maharashtra (GoAP 2012; Rajagopal 1976).

#### **Governments' Move to Establish the TRP**

Recently, the Government of Andhra Pradesh (GoAP) has declared the KWS in Adilabad as the second TRP, next to the establishment of Nagarjunasagar Tiger Reserve Project (NTRP) in 1983 in the midst of major controversies. The proposed TRP falls under the forest divisions of Adilabad, Bellampalli, Nirmal and Jannaram. The total coverage of the sanctuary is 892.23 sq km that forms the core area and an extent of 1,123.212 sq

km in the surrounding notified forest area (located in the radius of 10 km constitutes the buffer area to the proposed TRP. It is estimated that as many as 1,000 households covering more than 42 tribal villages are likely to be displaced / relocated due to the TRP (GoAP 2012; Sayanna 2012).

The officials of the forest department argue that all the villages existed in the project area are not included under TRP and hence, there will be no displacement / relocation of local tribal communities. On the other, they also announced the compensation at the rate of rupees 10 lakh to the each household in the core area for those who wish to vacate voluntarily. At this point, the project affected tribal communities have been voicing against the threats of forceful displacement and loss of their livelihoods by ignoring the false claims of the officials. According to officials of the forest department, the purpose behind establishment of TRP is to provide the water, grass, etc., resources to the wildlife. And this will prohibit the wildlife not to enter into the agricultural fields and habitats of Forest Dependent Communities (FDCs) for not destroying the crops and attacking the human (GoAP 2012).

In this process, the officials of the forest department further argue that they will prohibit hunting; pay compensation to the humans for the injuries caused by the wild animals; evolve strategies for the benefits of FDCs villages living in core and buffer areas; recognise the needs of FDCs for forest resources; provide infrastructure needed to FDCs; develop tourism in order to provide knowledge over the nature to the visitors; provide employment to FDCs families in order to protect wildlife and the forests; improve the life standards of the FDCs; take up activities under the TRP are

same as the activities taken up for the sanctuary earlier; protect the rights of culture / tradition of FDCs; provide Re-settlement and Rehabilitation (R&R) for the FDCs who voluntarily vacate the forest; and provide Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) cylinders to the FDCs families by prohibiting collection of firewood from their forest in the name of reducing the local communities' pressure on the use forest in core and buffer areas (GoAP 2012).

### **Inhabitant Indigenous Communities**

The inhabitant traditional tribal groups in the project area are the Raj Gonds, the Nayakpods, the Kolams, the Pardhans, the Thotis, the Lambadas and other marginalised / weaker sections who primarily depend on forest resources as the FDCs and also other agricultural activities for their survival. Poverty and marginalisation of tribals has been a historical process aided by the state formation and extension, has led to impoverishment of a large section of tribal society. Structural factors constraining access to land and forests have played an important and fundamental role in the marginalisation process. Larger political factors frame these structural constraints which need to be addressed through political processes (Haimendorf 1949, 1982; Murty 1988; Rajagopal 1976; Rao 1952; Rao 1993).

### **Socio-Cultural, Ecological and Economic Systems of the PAPs and their Livelihoods**

The tribals in the region mainly cultivate pulses and vegetables as well as maize, jowar, cotton, chilly and tobacco. They collect more than 100 varieties of NTFPs / MFPs and 250 other medicinal products from the nearby forests which are thick, dry deciduous woodlands of *Tectona terminalia* series. Most of these products, i.e. nuts and fruits are used

for household purpose and also for sale or exchange at the weekly market fairs (*shandis*) and as well as at the ration shops, established by the Girijana Cooperative Corporation (GCC) (Babu 2006; Murty 1981, 1988; Rao 1993).

The NTFPs / MFPs generally collected by the tribal communities in the region include tene (Honey), usiri (*Emblia officinalis*), ippa (*Bassia latifolia*), chintha (*Tamarindus indica*), vepa (*Azadirachta indica*) tapsi (*Sterculia urenus*), musti (*Strychnos nuxvomica*), tangedu (*Cassia auriculata*), rela (*Cassia fistula*), veduru (*Bambusa arundinacea / Dendrocalamus strictus*), ganuga (*Pongamia pinnata*), beedi (*Diospyros melanoxylon*), etc. which are available in different seasons (Babu 2006).

Plantations, i.e. teak (*Tectona grandis*), eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis / Eucalyptus grandis*), rubber (*Hevea brasiliensis*), mulberry (*Morus alba*), jackfruit (*Artocarpus heterophyllus*), mango (*Mangifera indica*), guava (*Psidium guajava*), cashew (*Anacardium occidentale*), etc. have been growing by extending to nearby forest land. However, this may also gradually affects the traditional livelihood patterns of tribal communities, forest flora and wildlife in future (Babu 2006). According to the reports of forest department, there are more than 673 plant species, 10 varieties of amphibians, 34 varieties of snakes, 270 varieties of birds, and 75 varieties of mammals existed in KWS (Ali 1941; GoAP 2012).

According to the reports of Integrated Tribal Development Agencies (ITDAs) in Andhra Pradesh and the available field data, most of the tribals work as labourer in their fields which have been cultivated by the non-tribal farmers on lease, except

for a few tribal cultivators. The fertile lands, possessed by the tribals earlier, have been already alienated by the non-tribal settlers with several illegal methods. Apart from agriculture, and NTFPs / MFPs collection, they also rear cattle, sheep, pigs, goats, hen, etc. for their agriculture and commercial purposes. As the tribals, are illiterates, and due to their simplicity, they are unable to coup up with the market operations, from time to time. Consequently the gullible tribals have been exploited by the traders and non-tribals in most cases. Most often they take loans from traders and non-tribals and remain indebted (Babu 2006).

They have been following their own cultural practices and indigenous knowledge systems for their sustenance over generations, even though they are in transition (Murty 1994, 2003). Many of them have been living in extreme poverty even without basic amenities like health care, drinking water and education. Poverty, hunger, malnutrition and impoverishment are the important evils which have been facing by the most of tribal communities since long time. Threats of land alienation, indebtedness, displacement and inadequate resettlement measures are the major problems, which have been haunting these tribal groups. Paradoxically no proper protection is extended to tribal communities for the loss of thier lands to the single most important source of their expropriation, namely the state itself (Babu 2006).

#### **Harmonious Co-Existence of Indigenous People and Wildlife in Natural Environment**

In the tribal areas of Eastern Ghats region of Andhra Pradesh as well as other tribal societies, the ecological balance can be seen as the level of congruence between human needs and the

sustenance of the natural environment. This balance is primarily maintained through cultural practices in the form of taboos or prohibitions or norms, which define the nature and extent of exploitation within the communities. Any imbalance in this relation either by changes in nature or culture because of forced displacement due to development projects including TRPs acts as man made catastrophe and leads to destruction of livelihood patterns which has been the very basis for survival of communities (Babu 2006; Jha 1994; Murty 1994; Rao 1993; Shahabuddin and Shah 2003).

The ecosystem from the tribal point of view is the relationship they have as individuals and as community with the natural resources around them. This includes the use of natural resources for livelihood and the various values, beliefs, practices and cultural norms which regulate the use of these. These systems were evolved not only to ensure a continuous supply of livelihood requirements but also to reinforce the continuation of a relationship between the individual, the community and nature. Tribals looked upon themselves as an integral part of nature. It is imperative here to critically examine this relationship because there has been a continuous shift in the individual-community-nature relationship with the progress of civilisation and an increasing alienation from nature. Such a shift in relationship must be dealt with great concern and viewed as a part of the process of development (Babu 2008; Biksham and Krishna 2007; Gold and Gujar 1989; Jha 1994; Misra and Narendra 2007; Murty 2003; Shahabuddin and Shah 2003).

#### **Why Tiger is so Important at the Cost of Indigenous Communities?**

As the tiger is the national animal in India, the efforts of appropriate governments for conservation of tigers are welcomed in the context of their extinction. The Government of India (GoI) has initiated various safeguards for the conservation and protection of the tigers since 1970s. The Tiger Task Force Report (TTFR) suggested several measures for the protection of tigers by strengthening the institutions of governance; checking, poaching, convicting wildlife criminals and breaking the international trade network; expanding the inviolate spaces for the tiger by minimizing human pressure in these areas; repair the relationships with the people who share the tiger's habitat by building strategies for co-existence; and regenerate the forest habitats in the fringes of the tiger's protective enclaves by investing in forest, water and grassland economies of the people (GoI 2005; Indira 1992).

However, the grassroots level practices adopted by the officials of the forest department for the protection of tigers are seemingly different in their approach as they have been targeting the inhabitant tribal communities for their forceful evacuation, either by the direct or indirect administrative actions from the core and buffer areas of the tiger reserves by ignoring the nature and context of the FDCs from the historical point of view, in the line of the arguments made by the wildlife and conservation filmmaker Shekar Dattatri (2005) in his article "the myth of harmonious co-existence" as "humans and wildlife trying to share the same patch of forest is a recipe for disaster. Voluntary resettlement is the only permanent way to resolve conflict between people and wildlife".

It is unfortunate to mention the comments made by the another filmmaker and conversationalist Mike

Pandey on the proposed forest rights bill 2005, when it was recommended by the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) as "If these recommendations are incorporated, we can forget about our forests and all conservation concerns" (Prasad 2006). In this process, they have been ignoring the socio-cultural and economic aspects of the indigenous peoples who have been living as individuals, communities and members in the same habitats since centuries.

The PAs situation in India is hazardous as the government officials have been acquiring the forest lands in the name of wildlife sanctuaries, tiger reserves and national parks. Later these areas have also been de-reserved and allotted for the promotion of paper, mining, cement, bauxite and other industries at the cost of livelihoods of the FDCs. A study by Ashish Kothari (1995) on Narayan Sarovar Sanctuary (NSS) and Shoolpaneshwar Sanctuary (SS) in Gujarat; Kaila Devi Sanctuary (KDS), Ranthambhor Tiger Reserve (RTR) and Sariska Tiger Reserve (STR) in Rajasthan; and Radhanagari Sanctuary (RS) in Maharashtra, exposed these irregularities as the forest officials encouraged other development projects.

In case of NTPP (Srisailam TRP), the forest department officials argue that so far no enclosures and families were shifted outside from the forest. On the contrary 350 Chenchus who belong to most vulnerable tribal community have got livelihood in the form of animal trackers, protection watchers, fire watchers, etc. They are enjoying their traditional rights which were recognised like MFPs / NTFPs collection, grazing, etc. They further say that, the livelihoods of the tribals will not be affected by the notification of TRP in KWS. On the

other, there will be better livelihood opportunities for the tribals due to improved and increased eco-tourism activities. They claim that already more than 100 youth, mostly tribals are employed in different works in TRP of KWS (GoAP 2012).

In reality the main source of livelihood for the inhabitant vulnerable tribal community the Chenchus is the NTRP region (Haimendorf 1943). We don't know, whether the total number of tigers said to be existed in this protected area by the forest officials is correct or not, but the efforts being taken up by the forest officials in the name of tigers' protection have been worstly affecting the mere survival of these forest dwelling and dependent tribals. On the other, the tribal welfare officials, who supposed to look after the development of these tribals, have not paid any attention to hear and solve their problems. Whereas the forest officials have been concerning only the welfare of forests and the animals existed in it but not the tribals living in it.

Further, they have also been trying to displace the tribals from the forest settlements by using several unjustified methods like, leaving poisonous snakes in their surroundings by the forest department. The process of recognising the cultivable forest lands of the inhabitant tribals and their rights over the MFPs / NTFPs is not at all completed, even though, the recognition of forest rights act was introduced by the central government, even after more than five years. On the other, the forest officials have been trying to increase the strength of tigers all over the country in the name of keeping the equilibrium between the animals and their natural environment (Srinivas 2009).

In this context, the forest officials have also been initiated the process of evicting the tribals from their home lands located in the NTRP. For this purpose, the forest officials have also been implementing the RoFRA, 2006 as an eye-washing effort, just before their evicting strategy for the protection of tigers. At this juncture, eviction of tribals in the name of tiger protection, the forest officials have just ignored the problems being faced by the inhabitant (local) tribals, their aspirations, and also their relation with the forests and natural environment to survive as individuals and as community. NTRP is extended all along the nallamala forest ranges covering Mahaboobnagar, Karnool, Prakasam and Guntur districts with an extent of 3,568 sq km. The entire PA comprise of 200 villages, out which more than 120 villages are located in the outskirts of the forest. This was declared as Wildlife Protection Forest Area (WPFA) for the first time in 1973. Later, this area was recognised as one of the Tigers' Protection Areas (TPA) in 1983. It is estimated that there are about 5,000 population representing 1,500 families, covering 24 villages located in the core area of the protected region.

The figures pertain the population of the Chenchus of this region, prepared by the ITDA, Srisailam and Forest Department are vary with one to other. More than 50,000 and 1,30,000 tribals have been living in the buffer zone and the PA respectively belong to 80 villages located in the forest out skirts. According to the sources forest department, there existed 100 tigers during 1990. These sources further say that because of government policies, increase of extremist activities, illegal hunting, and lack of stringent measures for the protection of tribals, the forest in this region was heavily degraded, and resulted in decreasing the population

of the tigers to 34 in 1994. Later this situation was said to be improved by more than 70 tigers. However, there is no reliability on the data provided by the forest department in this regard (Srinivas 2009).

As part of the wider national strategy to increase the tiger population and protecting the reserve forests, the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MEF) permitted to declare an extent of 1,000 sq km core area of the nallamala forest as the critical tiger habitat. In this context, forest rights act enacted by the Indian parliament five years ago has created new hopes among the Chenchus as like other FDCs in the country. If we deeply look at the implementation part of this forest rights act, it is very difficult to think of socio-economic change to be brought in the lives of the Chenchus, as it remained far beyond the tribal reach. Lack of awareness among the Chenchus, coordination between forest and tribal welfare department, interest to the officials at the state level to streamline the administrative activities, and the problems / factors involved in implementation of RoFRA 2006 have remained as the main obstacles before the new hopes / aspirations of the Chenchus.

On the other, Nayak, A K Field Director and Conservator (FDC) of NTRP says that after providing the rights over land and forests to the Chenchus as per the RoFRA 2006, all the Chenchus families will be convinced and rehabilitated to outside the tiger reserve area by providing appropriate Rehabilitation and Resettlement (R&R) package with their consultation (Srinivas 2009).

### **Violation of Constitutional Safeguards and other Legal Provisions Applicable to the Scheduled Areas**

In the post-independent period, there are various safeguards for the protection and development of Scheduled Tribes (STs) in accordance with the special provisions mentioned in the Indian constitution and fifth and sixth schedules. In pursuance of the article 46 of the Indian constitution, the welfare of the STs is being looked after by the State government. In order to protect the interest of the STs and to curb exploitation at the hands of others, the fifth schedule of the Indian constitution empowers the Governor to modify the State and Central legislations regarding their applicability to the Scheduled Areas and to frame regulations for good Governance (MCRHRDI 2000; Rao 1972; Reddy and Reddy 1995).

Accordingly, the GoAP has framed the 'Andhra Pradesh State Agency Land Transfer Regulation' (APSALTR) of 1959. Regulation 1 of 1959 protects the tribal interest regarding land issues. In 1963 this regulation was amended by regulation 2 of 1963. It was again amended in the year 1970s by regulations 1 of 1970s and 2 of 1970s. In exercise of the powers confirmed by sub section 1 of section 8 of the APSALTR 1959, the GoAP made rules called the 'Andhra Pradesh State Agency Land Transfer Regulation Rules (APSALTRR) in 1969 (MCRHRDI 2000; Rao 1972; Reddy and Reddy 1995).

In addition to the above safeguards, there also existed, the other protective regulations and acts such as: Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Areas Money Lenders Regulation (APSAMLR) of 1960s, Andhra

Pradesh Scheduled Areas Debt Relief Regulation (APSADRR) of 1960s, National Forest Policy (NFP) of 1894, 1952 and 1988; Panchayatraj Extension Act to Scheduled Areas (PESA) of 1996, besides other government policies and government orders (GOs), The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers Recognition of Forest Rights Act (RoFRA), 2006 and several historical judgments pronounced by different courts from time to time, especially the land mark Samata judgment (MCRHRDI 2000; Rao 1972; Reddy and Reddy 1995; Samata 2003).

#### **Implementation of RoFRA, 2006 in the Scheduled Area of Adilabad District**

As per the RoFRA, 2006 the tribal communities have rights to claim the *pattas* (title deeds) for their individual and community (common) lands / Common Property Resources (CPRs). But their rights have been denied and *pattas* have not been issued properly to all the eligible tribals. The main reason behind this may be due to declaration of the TRP and escaping from paying proper compensation, and also legal problems involved in acquiring the tribal lands in schedule areas for initiating the project. In Adilabad district, this Act facilitated to re-identify the community lands (such as grazing lands, pathways, burial grounds, temples, rivers and streams) which have been under the illegal possession of the forest department and other private companies, like the Orient Cement Company (Reddy, Kumar and Nagaraju 2009).

As per government records, about 2,276 titles have been issued towards common land claims covering an extent of 7,84,949 acres. Majority of the claims approved under the common lands belong to Vana Samrakshana Samitis (VSSs) which have no right

to claim under the Act. If the VSSs continue like this, the gram sabhas empowered to protect, conserve and manage CPRs for sustainable management / use will deprive their statutory rights as the forest departments will retain control over Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs) as earlier. On the other, many of the community claims filed by tribal villagers have either been rejected or approved for a much smaller area than the total extent claimed. The Adivasi Aikya Vedike (AAV) fought for proper implementation RoFRA 2006 in Adilabad. Most of the villagers have tried to file fresh claims over the community rights. Herding and grazing communities have been struggling to file claims for seasonal grazing rights which have also been ignored (Reddy, Kumar and Nagaraju 2009).

In total 2,66,000 acres covering 341 VSSs, out of total claims of 3,542.54 acres under community land has been issued. The GoAP (2010) has issued titles covering an extent of 9,48,076 acres related to 1,669 VSSs in Andhra Pradesh. Even though, the progress report says that there are no pending cases / claims before the District Land Committee (DLC), there also existed as many as 8,538 pending claims covering an extent of 29,132 acres before the *gram sabha* for consideration. The total budget allocated and implemented under the forest lands development scheme is over 1,043.36 crore. Paradoxically, the state seems to exercise the control on the use of these forest lands in the form of VSSs / JFM. Such an initiative may not increase the livelihood options of people, instead forcing them to work in plantations by ignoring their new rights as per RoFRA 2006.

The contest between the state and forest people for control over forest landscapes will be continued in



different forms. The trainings said to be initiated by the government officials have not raised awareness on the provisions of the collective rights as conferred in the RoFRA 2006. On the other, the representatives of the local communities and other civil society functionaries have not given any stake in the process of claiming the community rights (Reddy, Kumar and Nagaraju 2009).

#### **Why Information is not Disclosed to the PAPs prior to the Establishment of TRP?**

Instead of providing the information to the affected communities and their respective *grama-sabhas* related to TRP, the authorities responded in undemocratic manner without disclosing any information. On the other hand, the officials of the forest department initiated the process for formation of TRP. However, the affected communities and their representatives have been trying to get the information relevant to TRP through the Right to Information Act (RTA), 2005. Further, they are also demanding the forest officials for the disclosure of detailed information regarding the proposed TRP.

#### **Mandatory Public Hearing (MPH)**

The Government announced the establishment of TRP in KWS on 10 April 2012 as per vide G.O. Ms. No. 27, EFS& T (For. II) without serving any notice for organising the mandatory public hearing. There was no proper information to the project affected tribal families or even the Project Officer (PO) of the concerned ITDA, Utnoor.

According to the circular dated 11 November 1998 of the Department of Rural Development and Order of the Hon'ble High Court of Andhra Pradesh on the writ petition no. 8476 of 2001, the village

council (*grama-sabha*) meeting should be held in the project affected villages. The decision of the *grama-sabha* is ultimate in this regard and this must be ratified by the members of the Mandal Parishad Territorial Council (MPTC). Then only the State Government should specify the complete details of the proposed project based on the socio-economic assessment study conducted by the reputed social sciences research institute (Babu 2006). None of these norms have been followed. No *grama-sabha* meeting was organised for the project affected as revealed by many respondents from the Ali Nagar and Dongapalli of Jannaram and other villages which fall under the TRP.

#### **Role of ITDA, Political Parties and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in Establishment of the TRP**

According to Mutyala Raju Revu the PO of ITDA, the forest department did not serve any information regarding the TRP, even though this project displaces several tribal villages located in the jurisdiction of ITDA. It indicates that the role of ITDA in safeguarding the interests of the project affected families under TRP was ignored by the officials of the forest department.

#### **Actors Opposing the TRP**

The PAPs, civil society and other organisation such as Adivasi Hakkula Porata Samiti (AHPS), Tiger Zone Vyatireka Porata Samiti (TZPS), Progressive Democratic Students' Union (PDSU), Adivasi Samkshema Parishad (ASP), Telangana Vidhyarthi Vedika (TVV), Gramina Peddala Sangham (GPS), Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee (APCLC), Human Rights Forum (HRF), Telangana Peoples Front (TPF), Arunodaya Samskrutika Samakya (ASS), Kolam Sangham (KS), Akhila

Bharateeya Rytu Coolie Sangham (ABRCS), Telangana Rastra Samiti Youth (TRSY), Madiga Reservation Porata Samiti (MRPS), etc., and other political parties like CPI, CPM, CPI (ML) New Democracy, CPI (Maoist) have been opposing the establishment of TRP in KWS.

### **Indigenous Communities as the Real Conservators of Natural Environment and Protectors of Wildlife**

Indigenous people conserve and protect the nature in their surroundings of their habitats. They have several taboos / prohibitions / restrictions with regard to use of certain plants / trees and animals which have been deeply rooted in their culture in the form of socio-economic and religious practices. For instance, tribal communities follow certain norms in using a particular (part of) plants / trees and animals based on their respective clan names and thereby conserve the natural resources in a sustainable manner. They consider certain plants / trees and animals as their gods and goddesses or clan deities in the form of totems / totemic symbols and sacred groves. In the same way they preserve various seeds for the use in future. They will not use any agro based product without performing the harvesting festivals. They have very excellent practices of preservation / conservation / regeneration of their traditional foods and other grains and foods, MFPS / NTFPS, CPRs and other natural resources (NRs). They worship nature, plants and animals as gods / goddesses (Babu 2008; Bikku 2012; Jha 1994).

### **Role of Indigenous Communities for the Protection Wildlife under TRP**

The officials of the forest department and the ITDA have responded in a manner without providing any

information to the affected communities for their involvement in the formation of TRP. Hence, there would be no any appropriate role of PAPs in the project activities and its maintenance in future in view of their total denial. Roles likely to be played by the Wildlife Protection Committees (WPCs) and VSSs formed by the forest department as part of the JFM is not clear.

### **Who Conducted the Studies on the Socio-Cultural and Economic Aspects of the PAPs and their Impoverishment Risks related to Relocation and Resettlement?**

Before initiating any project, there is a need to conduct a socio-cultural and economic assessment study among the affected communities or FDCs as mandatory. It is observed that the department of forest did not undertake any socio-culture and economic assessment study before establishing TRP.

### **Is Relocation of Indigenous Communities by Force or Voluntary?**

The communities and the wildlife have been harmoniously co-existed in the forest over generations. At this point where is the question of voluntary relocation / resettlement of the displaced communities as the tigers are being brought and said to be protected by the officials of the forest department in the name of TRP in the core area. Even though they offered the compensation at the rate of rupees 10 lakh to the each affected family who wish to relocate by themselves from the core area, it sounds much but how long this compensation is helpful to displaced communities living outside the forest fringes at the cost of their precious culture and livelihoods. It is not clear to the question how the officials estimated the cost of

the relocation / resettlement in view of the forced displacement. The claim of forest officials said to be using the services of the affected communities even after their evacuation for the protection of wildlife in the TRP is baseless argument.

In many cases, relocation involves the issue of transformation of an entire way of life of the oustees. In such situations, displaced people have had to face the transition from a nomadic hunter-gatherer or grazer existence to a livelihood based on settled agriculture. Several communities such as the Gujjars in Uttaranchal, Sahariyas in Madhya Pradesh and the Maldharis in Gujarat have had to face this difficult transition, which is difficult in the best of circumstances (Shahabuddin and Shah 2003).

#### **Ecotourism - Myths and Realities**

Promotion of eco-tourism activities under TRP is not at all suggestive in view of the safety of local communities, wildlife and natural environment. The experiences from Andaman, Eastern Ghats (Papihills), Arku valley, Western Ghats (Nilagiris), etc., reveal that introducing tourism will definitely bring miseries to the affected people in the form of addiction to alcohol, changes in the traditional food habits, prone to new diseases and lifestyles. Women are more vulnerable in this case and sometimes this may also lead to breakdown / total disintegration of their traditional families / communities / society. Providing employment to affected families in the project and paying salaries from the revenue generated out of tourism activities is a myth (Vinodan and Manalel 2011). Arranging traditional tribal performances by the tourism agencies for the enjoyment of tourists / guests who

visit the tribal areas by just paying some money is not at all branded as development.

It is observed that the officials of forest department did not learn any lesson from their past experiences. It is evident from the experience of NTRP, where they have failed to relocate / resettle the Chenchus from core area, even today. Herein, understanding the socio-cultural and economic aspects of livelihoods of the affected communities and their association with natural environment cannot be underestimated / altered / bartered / forcefully relocated or evacuated by paying a mere compensation in the name of development / TRP.

#### **Setting up of Special Taskforce for the Protection of Tigers is Alright and Where is the Taskforce for Understanding the Problems of Vulnerable Indigenous Communities?**

Just for the cause of tiger protection, we have the Tiger Task Force Committee (TTFC) at the national level. Unfortunately, it is pity that we do not have any effective task force committee at the higher level for the protection of vulnerable tribal communities in India, even though after witnessing too many deaths of tribals due to hunger and ill-health, especially malaria. It shows the lukewarm attitude of the government in order to understand the travails of marginalised millions of the country who deprived and alienated from their rights over resources, livelihoods and environment and finally life.

#### **PAPs vs TRP: Who will Benefit and Who will Lose?**

All the development strategies in the present era revolve round the rich with their own advantage at the cost of / exclusion of the vulnerable

communities. A close observation on the formulation, implementation and execution of these development projects reveals that there is a nexus between politicians, bureaucrats and contractors behind the screen for their own advantage (Fernandes 1989; Kothari 1995).

### **PAPs Struggle for Survival with Dignity**

In the wake of TRP, the affected tribal communities have been felt threaten by the dangers / threats of displacement and loss of livelihoods and culture. Without any information from the officials on the benefits and the burdens of the project to the people and wildlife, the officials responded in a casual manner. Hence, the FDCs have been raising their voices against all kinds of injustices with the support of various civil society organisations and political parties in opposition for the past 10 months. They have been demanding for the total withdrawal of the TRP and ensuring their rights over *Jal, Jangle, Jameen* to survive as human beings with dignity.

### **Conclusion**

In order to rectify the historical injustices done to tribal communities, the RoFRA 2006 came into prominence. The tribals and their supporters have struggled a lot to pass this act in the Indian Parliament. This act created new hopes for their lives as they get titles (*pattas*) for their forest lands to the extent cultivated by them so far and also the rights over MFPs / NTFPs for collection and marketing as guaranteed and conferred by it. But they have been pushed to confusion by the indifferent attitude of the states machinery to implement the law. There are no field studies, strict rules and guidelines, efficient and affirmative administrative actions to implement this law in all

the states. With this indifference attitude of the forest officials, the tribals have been losing their faith over the act and living with lot of discouragement and insecurity. They have been worrying that this act will also be remained ineffective, like other protective acts which have been confined / restricted to papers.

Thus, violations against the legal framework existed for the protection of indigenous communities and their territories in the implementation of TRP causing tensions among the affected tribal communities. In the manner through which the officials of forest department have been moving to establish the TRP is objectionable and un-democratic as the officials of forest department did not disclose any information to the public, ITDA and other line departments, and in view of the concerns explained by the PAPs. Ignoring the affected peoples' concerns may lead to tensions among the communities regarding their survival. Occurrence of tribal movements in the scheduled area of Adilabad district against displacement / evacuation and loss of livelihoods and alienation of their lands is its testimony. Without involvement of local communities and ensuring their livelihood opportunities properly, it is not advisable to relocate inhabitants by themselves voluntarily or force either by directly or indirectly due to TRP as they cannot sustain any longer outside forest. Linking tourism to TRP is dangerous move of the forest department and not at all suggestive in view of the vanishing cultures of the indigenous communities. Any imbalance in the individual, community and nature relationship due to TRP may lead to total destruction of the affected communities in future.

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