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## AN INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR ECOTOURISM IN TIGER RESERVE: A CASE STUDY OF VALMIKI NAGAR TIGER RESERVE, WEST CHAMPARAN, BIHAR

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### ABSTRACT:

Valmiki nagar tiger reserve is being situated at the foothill of Himalaya, known as Tarai region. The only national park of Bihar is sharing its border with Royal chitwan national park, Nepal. Due to its peculiar location and presence of corridor, it has been successful model for Tiger conservation. Now, Bihar government is promoting ecotourism initiative in the Valmiki Nagar Tiger Reserve. The study will try to evaluate an institutional framework which encompasses actors, process and institutions so that a viable

model for ecotourism in Tiger reserve may develop. The present analysis is purely based on literature review and encapsulates wider experiences of Indian subcontinent.

**KEYWORDS:** Eco-tourism, Indian Subcontinent, Institutional Framework, Tiger Reserve.

### INTRODUCTION :

At the outset, it is imperative to be aware of historical exploration and major landmarks in the development of Valmiki Nagar Tiger Reserve. Before independence, the Valmiki forests were owned by two erstwhile Zamindari states- Bettiah Raj and Ramnagar Raj. It was managed for timber production. The state government took over the management of ramnagar forest area in 1950 and Bettiah Raj jungle in 1953 and 1954 under Bihar Private Protected Forest Act, 1947.it

covers almost 909.86sq.km. It encompasses Udaipur wildlife sanctuary. From early sixties to 1974, it was under the management of state forest department. It was subject to afforestation with teak, shemal, sheesham and bamboo. In 1974, it was handed over to the Bihar state forest development corporation on lease, with commercial objectives. The forests were taken back from state forest development corporation in 1994 and Valmiki Tiger Reserve was constituted as 18 th tiger reserve under project tiger of India.

It is incidental to assume environmental history of India and correspond it to the development of Valmiki Nagar Tiger Reserve .Before independence, it was under the private management. During

medieval period, rulers used to go in jungle to hunt as manifested. The latent function was with social consequences to claim sovereignty in that area. There is larger debate on the relationship among state, forest and animals. Animals were often used in symbolic terms that is why tiger hunting was popular among Europeans to claim superior status. Now, we are vouching for tiger conservation under the project tiger initiative. In 1970's, there was much focus on social forestry. In that decade, commercial plantation was major objective. Through 1990, with the emergence of eco- development committees and institutions like Joint forest management committees (JFMC), scientific forestry and local participation in the management of forest were

key objectives and explanation varies accordingly. Now, in 21<sup>st</sup> century, state sponsored ecotourism initiative is the buzzword. Ecotourism is basically catering for tourists in the natural environment without damaging it or disturbing habitats. It is a form of tourism involving visiting fragile, pristine, and relatively undisturbed natural areas, intended as a low- impact and often small scale alternative to commercial mass tourism. While it is repudiating the core commercial principles and tries to apply business model in forest area. It is neo-liberal agenda. However, we have to learn from past experiences and I am highlighting major learning's by literature review.

### **Valmiki Nagar Tiger Reserve and its Peculiarity**

I will highlight the areas of concern. There is basically an overall increase in the numbers of tiger during recent survey as it has increased to 2967. It encapsulated 70% of tiger population across the world and thus fulfilling its target of doubling the count by 2022 as decided by 2010 St. Petersburg agreement. Secondly, Valmiki nagar tiger reserve is located in terai region and it has 32 tigers. As of habit, Tigers live in separately and requires vast jungle territory. So, to increase numbers of tigers, depend upon many factors such as Corridors to other national parks and availability of prey. Valmikinagar tiger reserve is connected to Chitwan national park of Nepal and Bardita-Katernighat-sohelwa forest range. In terai tiger landscape, long from west of Yamuna river to Gandak river between Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, narrow in many places. Roads and heavy traffic are one of the main threats. About 500 tigers live here. Landscape is very much vulnerable to poaching as it is closer to Nepal. Biotic pressures are very high in UP part of landscape due to sugarcane cultivation.

Then, Ecotourism initiative at Valmiki Nagar Tiger Reserve has bright future as VTR has all the required prerequisite keeping in view the increase in Tiger population. Conservation efforts must be direct towards restraining poaching of animals so to maintain prey-base, it is vital. While other activities must be synchronized with better collaboration and partnership between forest officials and local communities. Apart from that, there is failure of tiger reserve projects in Jharkhand, Odisha and Chhattisgarh. It is primarily due to tribal population in the jungle. Whereas, there is failure of Tiger reserves in North-East India, due to lower prey base. These are two vital points.

Elsewhere, Ranthambhore tiger reserve and Corbett national park is at the forefront of tourist activity in India. As seeing is believing, it reinforces our conservation efforts. In Ranthambhore national park, Rajasthan government has launched many livestock development programmes. These can work as guideline in developing ecotourism in Tiger reserve.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Rucha Ghate and Kim Beazley (2007) have added some supplementary points besides the contentious dichotomous view of biologist and social scientist over displacement from the study of Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR). Taking the viewpoint of villagers indicates otherwise, they are not particularly averse to the idea of relocation. So, it is important not to fall into the trap of arguing against relocation as a matter of social principle. According to Tribal act (2006) stipulates that the status of those who will have been relocated from protected areas to other forest land since 13 December 2005 remains ambiguous. The basic issue is with status of relocated land as forest land/revenue land and legal imperative to relocate only in revenue land according to Indian forest act (1927).

Bidhan Kanti Das (2008) have analyzed India ecodevelopment project (IEDP) funded by world bank to advocate the policy of reduction of cattle populations from protected areas by minimizing negative human-wildlife interaction; here Buxa Tiger Reserve have been covered. The international system of conservation may not be viable unless and until we take regional peculiarities in to cognizance. There is utter failure in imagining cattle reduction strategy, it would be better to streamline them by adopting rotational grazing rather than resolving the issue right away.

McKenzie F. Johnson et al. (2018) have analysed compensation as a policy for mitigating human-wildlife conflict around four protected areas in Rajasthan. Compensation as a policy is failing due to ignoring livelihood cost of human-wildlife interactions. The focuses on mega fauna such as Tiger,

elephant have lead to ignoring the damage of crop and livestock due to herbivore animals. Incident based compensation policy is centrally controlled and difficult to prove and even file report due to insensitivity of forest bureaucrats as well as ignorance on the part of forest dwellers. Instead, Entitlement base compensatory provision can be successful as threshold level being already defined.

Maria Costanza Torri(2011) examines conservation, relocation and the social consequences of conservation policies in Sariska Tiger Reserve, India. Argued against top- bottom approach and heavy handedness of forest bureaucracy towards local people. There is need to adopt even- handed framework by aligning human needs with conservation needs. The negative perception of local people is highly detrimental for conservation and is evidenced in poor conservation outcome as it is the highly funded tiger reserve. Participatory approach between forest authorities and local communities requires a wider process of reorienting institutional policies, procedures and development practices.

Sudha Vasan (2005) have deconstructed the word “public” in the context of wildlife conservation and flagged the issue of legitimacy. There is disparity in the demands of two sections of our society- urban privileged elite and a marginalised poor. Project Tiger have been driven by powerful elite interest, the issue of legitimacy hinges upon the how this elite responds to other protagonists in wildlife conservation. Tiger task force report and the scheduled tribes (Recognition of forest right bill,) 2005 is working on the same paradigm for collaborative forest policy.

Mahesh Rangarajan and Ghazala Shahabuddin (2006) made distinction between American conservation model of displacement and indicant case. The focus in American case was to safeguard “natural wonders” like grand canyon and not to protect rare fauna whereas Indian case is much more revenue oriented as well as mega fauna oriented. Their tone is basically anti displacement in nature and highlights contours of displacement and social injustice. The peculiarity in regional variation in terms of history/ politics and social milieu reinforces hierarchy among bureaucracy and villagers. Displacement should be seen as last resort.

Neil H.Carter et al(2014) advocates coupled human and natural systems(CHANS) approach to wildlife research and conservation. The CHANS framework emphasizes that human and natural system are coupled rather than separate and emphasizes to explore interaction among system component of human subsystem community, local residents, natural subsystem land cover, wildlife and telecoupling.Telecoupling refers to socioeconomic and environmental interactions between distant coupled human and natural systems, and has become more extensive and intensive in the globalized era.It encompasses out- migration and tourism in protected areas.

Rucha Ghate(2005) argues the case of relocation versus wildlife preservation .A poor relocation package can uproot tribal people socially and psychological trauma will persists. As, social problem of today is psychological problem for the future. Relocation must be in commensurate with pre-displacement level.

Nilanjan Ghosh and Emil Uddhammar (2013) argued the need of institutional tourism in developing symbiotic relationship between resource units and resource system(protected areas).It can be alternative as agriculture and livestock rearing is leading to competitive relationship between resource units and resource system.

## CONCLUSION

Keeping all the learning’s, there is urgent need to develop institutional framework for the management of tiger reserve. Ecotourism can be an institution which may actively engage local population and promoting stall cattle , thereby non- interference with the prey base of Tigers.But,A Proper design of entitlements should be at place rather than compensation in human – wildlife conflict so that a viable model of ecotourism may develop in the Tiger reserves across country.

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