

## **FOREST AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION: A STEP AHEAD TO CONSERVE THE WORLD**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The environment comprises all living and non-living things as well as the air, water, soil, and plants. They have a close relationship with people.

Temperature, food, pollution, population density, sound, light, and parasites are a few examples of environmental influences. Numerous additional types of stress may have effects that are comparable to those produced by the variety of environmental pressures that have been demonstrated to induce asymmetry.

A large source of natural resources for habitation is forests. All of the basic products needed for daily life, including as fruits, vegetables, fuel, fodder, timber, paper, and cotton, are derived from these forests. These woods aid with climatic conditions, rain, and overall animal protection, which helps to preserve the ecological balance.

**Keywords:** forest, wildlife conservation

## INTRODUCTION

Environment includes air water soil, vegetation, and all other living and nonliving organism. they are closely connected to humans. Environmental factors include temperature, food, pollutants, population density, sound, light, and parasites. The diversity of environmental stresses that have been shown to cause an increase in asymmetry is probably not exclusive; many other kinds of stress might provide similar effects.<sup>1</sup> Forests are a great source of natural resources for living. These forests derive all the raw materials used for daily living like fruits, vegetables, fuel, fodder, wood, paper, pulp, and cotton. The ecological balance is also maintained by these forests as the help for climate conditions rain and conservation of wildlife at a large. According to the study of geography host.com, around 73789 square kilometers which is 21.71% of the total geographical area of the country is covered as forest. India added 1540 square kilometres of forest cover from 2019 to 2021. India, a biodiversity-rich country has just 2.4% of the world's geographical area but accounts for 11.4% of the world's plants (about 48000) species and 7.5% of its animals (about 96000).<sup>2</sup> But with habitat destruction and poaching, 25 species of animals and 77 plant species are critically endangered, 205 animals and 172 plants are endangered, while 385 animals and 138 plants are vulnerable, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature.<sup>3</sup>

## DEFINITION OF FOREST

The term forest has not been defined in the Indian Forest Act 1927 or the Forest Conservation Act 1980. According to the Oxford Dictionary, the term forest includes:

- An extensive tract of land covered with trees and undergrowth sometimes intermingled with Pasture,
- A woodland, usually belonging to the state set apart for hunting wild beasts and game etc
- A wild and uncultivated wasteland.

## DEFINITION OF WILDLIFE

According to the Wildlife Protection Act 1972, wildlife includes any animal aquatic or land vegetation that forms part of any habitat. There is a wide list of wild animals and various plants which are covered under the Wildlife Act.

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<sup>1</sup> Stress and Behavior

Anders Pape Møller, in Advances in the Study of Behavior, 1998

<sup>2</sup> according to government data

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.indiaspend.com>

## HISTORY OF FORESTS AND WILDLIFE

The vast majority of prehistoric cave drawings depict animals, not people. Some scientists believe that humans were in awe of the wild and fierce animals that they hunted. The hunters may have believed that they could exert some kind of magical power over animals by drawing pictures of them. Even though little is known for certain about the religious beliefs of the time, it is thought that prehistoric humans believed in a hidden world inhabited by the spirits of their dead ancestors, animals, and birds. Some spirits were considered good and others bad. People may have offered sacrifices of animals or other food to keep the spirits happy. A belief system called animism has been traced back to the Paleolithic Age (the earliest period of the Stone Age). Animism is the belief that every object, living or not, contains a soul. Thus, animals, trees, and even rocks had spiritual meaning to prehistoric peoples. Anthropologists theorize that humans may have believed that they could capture the spirits (and thus the fierceness, strength, and speed) of wild animals by eating their flesh. Likewise, some wild animals may have been worshipped as gods by early humans.<sup>4</sup>

In earlier times there were gurukuls which were settled in the forest and where they were taught how to be close to nature. And it was their basic responsibility not to hurt any animal, and to conserve forests and rivers. yagnas were performed for air purification. surroundings were cleaned by them without any machines.

while considering history, animals were treated as pure and pious or we can term them as a sacred thing and a perfect place was given to them. people have a very strong bond with their animals. with the changing time, human sentiments towards animals decreased. as a result of which animals were treated rudely and ignored.

In Manusmriti cutting trees was considered as killing of living creatures. Various Hindu rulers like Ashoka Chandragupta Maurya etc. encouraged the cutting of trees and encouraged their planting. At times when Britishers invaded India they had a restless attitude toward flora and fauna. They exploited natural resources to the fullest for their selfish needs. The awareness was first made in the year 1865 by the introduction of the Forest Act but later on, it was further better expressed through the Indian Forest Act 1927 which describes the laws relating to forest, the transit of forest produce, and the duty label on timber and other forest produce.

The Forest Conservation Act of 1980 was made to prevent deforestation as this leads to an imbalance in ecotone and environmental deterioration.

India has long compassion for nature and living organisms. The very old Indian concept of

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.encyclopedia.com/politics/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/history-human-animal-interaction>

‘ahimsa parmodharam’ which literally means non-violence or retraining from killing any life, whether plant or any other organism was the foremost duty of every human being. the ancient Hindu rules considered it as their dharma to preserve forests and wildlife and refrain from killing animals. Mughals' and Britishers' habits of eating non-veg and their craving for meat show their selfish attitude toward hunting. the animals were also used for entertainment as bullfighting or cock fighting. This all resulted in a huge destruction of wildlife.<sup>5</sup>

### **Vilas Shankar Donode versus State of Maharashtra (AIR 2008, BOM 10)**

The court held to reforest the sight which was used for non-forest purposes and construction of the road on forest land, and considered it as illegal construction.

### **T. N. Godavarman Thirumulpad Versus UOI.(1998)9 SCC 660**

The court held that no green trees to be cut down even if they were infected to preserve ecology. Furthermore, policies were made like:

National Forest Policy,1894

National Forest Policy,1952

National Forest Policy,1988

### **The Forest Rights Act,2006**

This act was made to protect the benefits of forest dwellers who were denied natural resources and land several times.

### **National Forest Commission 2003**

It was set up with a view to reconstruct, reform, and strengthen the entire forest management.

### **Forest Conservation Rules 2022**

This law was made to allow private developers to clear forest areas without obtaining permission from forest dwellers.

This law has been criticized by a major part of forest dwellers, and environmental activists. this law affects majorly the people who rely on forests for their livelihood.

### **1. The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (Last amended in 2006)**

The Wildlife (Protection) Act (WLPA), 1972 is an important statute that provides a powerful legal framework for:

- Prohibition of hunting

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<sup>5</sup> Paranjape, Dr. N. V.,(2015),Environmental Laws And Management In India.

- Protection and management of wildlife habitats
- Establishment of protected areas
- Regulation and control of trade in parts and products derived from wildlife
- Management of zoos.

### **The Indian Forest Act (1927) and Forest Acts of State Governments**

The main objective of the Indian Forest Act (1927) was to secure exclusive state control over forests to meet the demand for timber. Most of these untitled lands had traditionally belonged to the forest-dwelling communities. The Act defined state ownership, regulated its use, and appropriated the power to substitute or extinguish customary rights. The Act facilitates three categories of forests, namely

- Reserved forests
- Village forests
- Protected forests

### **3. The Forest Conservation Act (1980)**

In order to check rapid deforestation due to forestlands being released by state governments for agriculture, industry, and other development projects (allowed under the Indian Forest Act) the federal government enacted the Forest Conservation Act in 1980 with an amendment in 1988. The Act made the prior approval of the federal government necessary for the de-reservation of reserved forests, logging, and for use of forestland for non-forest purposes.

**4. The Environment (Protection) Act (1986)** The Environment Protection Act is an important legislation that provides for the coordination of activities of the various regulatory agencies, the creation of authorities with adequate powers for environmental protection, regulation of the discharge of environmental pollutants, handling of hazardous substances, etc. The Act provided an opportunity to extend legal protection to non-forest habitats ('Ecologically Sensitive Areas') such as grasslands, wetlands, and coastal zones.

**5. The Biological Diversity Act (2002)** India is a party to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. The provisions of the Biological Diversity Act are in addition to and not in derogation of the provisions in any other law relating to forests or wildlife.

**6. The National Wildlife Action Plan (2002-2016)** replaces the earlier Plan adopted in 1983

and was introduced in response to the need for a change in priorities given the increased commercial use of natural resources, continued growth of human and livestock populations, and changes in consumption patterns.

7. **National Forest Policy (1998)** The National Forest Policy, 1988, (NFP) is primarily concerned with the sustainable use and conservation of forests and further strengthens the Forest Conservation Act (1980). It marked a significant departure from earlier forest policies, which gave primacy to meeting government interests and industrial requirements for forest products at the expense of local subsistence requirements. The NFP prioritizes the maintenance of ecological balance through the conservation of biological diversity, soil and water management, increase of tree cover, efficient use of forest produce, substitution of wood, and ensuring peoples' involvement in achieving these objectives.<sup>6</sup>

### **Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitat**

The Indian government has launched an integrated development of a wildlife habitat scheme, 2009 which conserves wildlife. It includes 3 components:

- Support to protect areas including national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, conservation reserves, and community reserves;
- Protection of wildlife outside the protected areas; and
- Recovery programs for saving critically endangered species and habitats.<sup>7</sup>

For a better life and living, the conservation of flora and fauna is a must. This will maintain the ecological balance. This will eradicate so many medical problems arising out of technology, there is a chain in the ecosystem that has been misused and disturbed many times and has to be maintained. There have been many species of various plants, animals, and insects that are close to extinction and have to be preserved. There is much more need to be done to secure better surroundings and deliver a better place to live for our future generation. And for achieving all these, we all have to obey certain rules and duties towards nature which are provided as a part of environmental law.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.conservationindia.org/resources/the-legal-framework-for-wildlife-conservation-in-india-2>

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