



Working with 'em Tigers, working for 'em Tigers

Description



The ruthless killing of tigers is leading to the extinction of the species, authorities show no concern.

Tehelka released a two month research into the close knit international poachers' network which revealed that the demand for tiger body parts has been streaming in mainly from countries closest to India. This should be a wake up call for the government to start making amendments to fight the situation.

The extinction of tigers has become a serious issue in our country and we keep listening to many people lobbying for the tigers but doing nothing about it. However, any such lobbying/discussions have one major drawback, that of becoming extinct themselves. The people not only forget about their expressions but the topic slowly tends to fade out of importance, into void. The possible extinction of tigers has been given umpteen reasons and finding solutions has become the harder part of this drama.

I would like to look into a new dimension of the same problem. The idea, that extinction is a natural phenomenon. The following paragraphs are to reflect the problem that this view poses about endangered species.

I came upon this over another one of the usual "save the eco-system" dinner table conversations. A friend, and an intellectual one, shunned me saying, "... let the tigers die, it'll be our turn next and that's the way nature works and survives." The existentialists' are those that see extinction of species as a natural phenomenon, and that it need not be reversed. The dinosaurs that had been on this planet are extinct now, and next in the process of evolution came various other species. Somewhere down this line we exist- human beings. The extinction process is inevitable, and should not be manipulated. The extinct species such as the half zebra and the Irish deer were first ones to go extinct, slowly all species will be erased out from this planet like they always have been. Man will go down on this list sometime or the other.

However the point I would like to make is that extinction is not always a natural process, human beings have been very much responsible for some of these animals to go extinct, most important of all these is the tiger. For the largest part, it is our lack of control on our own species that has resulted in the diminishing number of the tigers. If are able to control our system and not disturb the functioning of our forests we could probably save the tigers from becoming extinct. It is not about what school of study you categorize this problem under, it is about the mistakes we have committed, and how we correct them.

Tigers have been assumed to exist in our country from as early as 3000 BC, and seals from tribes at those times apparently depict a friendly co-existence. Of course there will always be new studies showing various dates. But no matter since when the tigers stepped into India, all the eight sub-species of the tiger existed all the way through until 1940 and that definitely says something about living and letting live. But the situation turned around when three out of the original eight sub-species became extinct in the next three decades. The reason? Poaching, deforestation and human expansion.

The Bali tiger, one of the extinct sub-species, was the first to diminish. It was found only on the small island of Bali and people wanted to populate that small island, the way to do so was by deforestation which led to the extermination of such a magnificent being. The last survivor among this sub-species was shot in 1937. We humans don't understand the intensity of losing the tiger species, but that doesn't mean there is no harm being done. If we do lose the tigers which stands right on top of the food chain, the herbivore population would increase and there will be no balance in the food chain. All we can see is the commercial aspect, and so I want to state the price people pay for this cruel deed: tiger bones are known to be used for CTM (Chinese Traditional Medicine) and sold or bought for \$600/lb, meat \$32-\$40lb, tail \$240 each, tongue, head, blood, even the penis is sold because of stupid beliefs that it makes you more virile. The insane cruelty shown to these beautiful creatures is far beyond my understanding, there is text to study human massacres all over the world but little is known of the fact that the Russian army was used to exterminate the Caspian tiger right off the face of the Earth.

In India, the weakest links in the exploitation drama are our administration strategies. It is only from this year that our country has posed regulations stating that only students from the science deanery can be considered for the Indian Forest Services. Thus with the knowledge of biology and sensitivity towards the ecological system we hope that our future administrators will be those guardian angels that our tigers need. But what went wrong all this while? Why would we be talking about conservation if we had always been sensitive enough to conserve? That's our problem; we threw our legs on the table while our tigers struggled at the hands of poachers all across the country, fell prey to human violence and greed for more money, more land and more development. We took lightly law enforcement, training and support.

There have been times when the emotive efforts hit a high peak and amazing ideas have come to the forefront, but what's the point? They cannot be implemented if our leaders don't want them to be implemented. Poaching, in the recent past, has reached an all time high, allowing illegal night drives into tiger habitats and national reserves just for the sake of some extra money or attention. This has resulted in the death of around 832 tigers from 1994-2007 (Wildlife Protection Society India) or more at the hand of poachers. There is no strike force strong enough to stop these poachers. Cases of defence personnel being out-smarted or out-gunned is just a slap on our faces, an insult, which we do not want to learn from. But that is hopefully the past.

I believe in just one thing, supporting change, the fact that you are reading this and I am writing it means we care and I want to appreciate that. And what happens when I do, the urge to carry the torch forward increases. I know we all crib as much as we can about a bad system, but there are so many steps being taken by many individuals and organizations to try and make the situation a little better than it was yesterday. Though it's a very gradual process, I see change. It's all in our hands after all. As a student and wildlife enthusiast I too did not know what to do and how to save wildlife, which led to the biggest step to take, educate myself and at least one person that I know.

The existential perspective of this problem tends to create a sort of ignorance in the people who would have been great potential for change. This sort of propaganda has started to seep into the society and they claim to be harmful for the survival of tigers. It is harmful to the society, as it is easily catching up and is also influential, and thus if people stop caring then nature can do more damage than we can ever imagine. It's probably a thought that has crossed or has not, but if there are no forests and the important parts of the ecological system are being wiped out, then the Earth retaliates through earthquakes, landslides, lesser oxygen, and imbalance in the life cycle. So every little effort anyone makes towards sensitizing people about the core thought of saving the tigers is enough to start a fire. Standing up against deforestation, letting tiger habitats prosper instead of being destroyed for wealth or development (human expansion) is a small step we can all take.

Yes, birth and death are part of the natural cycle, but what use is it letting nature take its toll if we are not going to take responsibility for our actions. This year has not even seen five full months but we've let approximately 18 individuals of our national animal be killed. I want to fight because these are beings that cannot speak and they being predators are not even scary enough for people to beware of. But the very fact that they cannot say a single thing against their murderers should be the reason that we have to fight to save them. Stop wanting, another hydro-power plant because the lesser water we use conserves our forests more, another weekend getaway in the forest because this leads to more resorts and jungle lodges being inaugurated. Would you like it if tigers kept visiting your house? Forget even accepting the idea, we are arrogant and selfish, and the worst characteristic is that we are ever so greedy and don't understand we are protecting our surroundings and our life by protecting the tiger.

Joining hands with NGO's like Wildlife Conservation Society is something a lot of people are taking to these days, helping spread awareness about tiger conservation, the truth about it and helping clear all the misunderstandings. This has been reaping its own glories and international funding also boosts this growth, because that makes people think it is a serious issue. The world consensus on Tiger Conservation has shown that other world leaders want to help save the tiger and maybe this way funds will stream in. The pieces of the puzzle are all falling in place; all we have to do is wake up to this fact and make the best of it.

India is and has always been known for its tigers and it does not give anyone the right to take that away from us. It's time we act less like animals and more like humans, learning to live and let live.

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Category

1. Earth Matters

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