



## Mains Marathon

### Day 55: Case Study

In a region containing a tiger biosphere reserve, you have been assigned as a forest range officer. The habitat for tigers has recently shrunk owing to the building of a highway that runs through the biosphere reserve, and tiger populations have increased sharply. As a result, there have been instances of tigers escaping the forest and infiltrating the adjacent villages, killing animals and leaving people killed. Agitated locals have started poisoning and killing tigers as a result.

(1) Do you think action taken by villagers in this situation is right? Give reasons in support of your answer.

(2) What are the options available to you to resolve this situation? (250 words)

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### Approach / Explanation / Answer

- Constitutional provisions pertaining to animal protection should be used to introduce the case.
- Describe the ethical challenge raised in the case.
- Consider the different players in this situation, as well as the moral and ethical standards that would apply.
- Justify your stance on the acts of the villagers.
- Share your thoughts on the best way to address the problem going forward.

### Answer:

- **Article 48(A)** of our Constitution imposes a duty on the Government to protect the environment and safeguard forest and wildlife while Article 51A places the same obligation on the citizens. Therefore, it becomes our constitutional duty to protect the tigers.
- Killing anybody whether human being or any animal cannot be justified on any ethical or moral grounds because the right to life is a universal right.

### The ethical dilemmas involved in the case are:

- **Development Vs Environmental Ethics:** The case presents a conflict between development and protection of the environment. Here due to widening of roads in the biosphere reserve, tiger habitat has been destroyed.
- **Survival Vs Compassion toward animals:** Due to habitat destruction, tigers are encroaching into villagers' territory which is the root cause for increasing conflict between the tigers and villagers which is resulting in killings from both sides to protect themselves.

## **Stakeholders:**

- Government
- Forest Department
- Villagers
- Civil Society

## **Ethical Values involved:**

- Environmental Ethics
- Compassion toward animals
- Sentience

**1.** Killings cannot be justified on any ethical or moral grounds. Since there is a long history of peaceful co-existence of humans and wildlife in India, there is a need to delve deeper into the causes of the crisis.

- The main cause of the increasing human and wildlife conflict is the encroachment of animal territory by increasing population and decrease of prey for wild species due to increased incidents of disease among wild species.
- Tigers, like all other wild animals, always tend to avoid people, and they attack only in defense if they are taken by surprise.
- It is the human beings who have encroached into their area. Therefore, killing them cannot be justified as laws of nature grants inalienable right to life to them also.

**2.** Being a forest range officer, it is my constitutional duty to protect wildlife and a moral obligation to have compassion toward animals, therefore to resolve the crisis, I would prefer the following course of action.

- The immediate attention requires necessary steps to stop killing from both sides and ensure safety. The very first thing is to fence the boundaries of villages and provide tigers with food so that they do not attack the cattles or enter villages.
- Secondly, killing a tiger is a criminal offense under the Wildlife Protection Act 1972, therefore people responsible for killing must be charged under the law. This will send a strong message to villagers to avoid any further killing of tigers.
- Thirdly, taking all the measures within the constitutional limits possible to compensate the villagers for their losses.
- Fourthly, deploying the wildlife monitoring force equipped with adequate personnel, equipment and communication system to prevent any further attack from tigers on innocent villagers.

## **Long-Term Solution:**

- Rehabilitating villagers from the areas where the frequency of conflict is high.
- Secondly, creating appropriate corridors for wildlife to pass through, so that conflict may be minimized.
- Thirdly, protecting villagers from any loss by registering them under appropriate government plans such as crop insurance or jivan bima schemes etc
- Fourthly, involving villagers in sustainable wildlife management, thus ensuring alternate livelihood for them.
- However, the key to resolving the conflict lies in the proper sensitization of communities.

Therefore, using principles of behavioral psychology so that villagers emotionally associate themselves with tigers as they enjoy a significant place in Hindu mythology as the vehicle of Goddess Durga. This might change the villagers' viewpoint of treating tigers as their co-habitats on earth rather than an enemy species.

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