

**CONFLICTS IN THE WOODS: CONSERVATION
STRATEGY AND FOREST RIGHTS IN THE SIMLIPAL
TIGER RESERVE, ODISHA, INDIA**

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Abstract

Keywords:

Conservation;
Displacement;
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The rural communities living near the forests share a strong bond with the surrounding nature and depend on the forests for their livelihood but the conservation policies of India, from their inception, prioritized exclusion of the inhabitants from the protected areas for preservation of wildlife. The plight of the people living near the tiger reserves increased due to several such legislations demanding creation of inviolate zones. People living in and around the Simlipal Tiger Reserve, Odisha faced similar threats and the authority undertook the policy of relocation of the villages from the core areas and buffer areas. The Scheduled Tribe and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 is the sole legislation which sought to secure the land rights of them. This legislation recognized the necessity of inviolate zones following the lines of the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act, 2006 but asserted that villagers should be displaced only when coexistence becomes impossible. Thus, the villagers were assured of rehabilitation packages there but, in reality, not all promises were kept properly. In this backdrop, the present paper seeks to explore the conservation policy in the Simlipal Tiger Reserve and the condition of the villagers after their relocation.

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1. Introduction

The concept of Protected Areas (PAs) emerged worldwide with the notion of conserving nature and arresting degeneration of forests by restricting human interferences. The origin of forest preservation began in the hands of the royal rule. In India, this concept gained prominence during the Mughal rule. The process of conservation took a concrete shape with the expansion of the colonies across the globe which seized the forest rights of the communities living in the vicinity of the forests. The British colonial administration in India formulated several legislations which restricted indigenous communities access to forests in order to secure supply of timber for railway sleepers and navies. India followed the approach of United States in preserving wildlife by labeling the local populace as “poachers” and “encroachers” in their own homelands (Colchester, 1994; Briggs, 2009).

National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries constitute the PAs of India which covers 5 per cent of the total geographical land of India. The core areas of the PAs comprise 1 per cent of the total land. One of the chief conservation policy advocated by most of the countries worldwide including India was creation of PAs which were devoid of human interference and resource extraction. This kind of conservational approach had dual effects on the local people who depend on forest resources for eons for their sustenance. This strategy restricted collection of forest products used for consumption as well as commercial purposes. Moreover, it displaced the inhabitants from the core areas of the PAs which were their ancestral homelands and relocated them either without compensation or with inadequate compensation. The conservation strategy led the conservationists and wildlife biologists hold contrary views with the activists who voice the predicament of the forest dwelling communities particularly the tribes. The wildlife conservationists believed that coexistence of rights and conservation is not possible. Moreover, they felt that relocation of the forest dwellers actually leads to their upgradation as it gives a chance to merge with the mainstream society. The rights based activists oppose this view and pointed out that uprooting the forest dwellers from their ancestral homesteads with a view to merge them with the mainstream society is an urban idea which will erode their own distinct cultural traits. They explained that displacing the forest dwellers from their habitat will lead to the disruption of not only their livelihood but also ecological stability as over the years they had developed a harmonious relationship with the surrounding nature. The statistics showed poor performance of the government in providing alternative livelihood opportunities to the populace after their relocation from the PAs. The Indian Board of

Wildlife accommodated both these views by promising prohibition of forced removal from the Indian PAs (Kabra, 2003).

The present paper is an attempt to explore the conservation strategy in the Simlipal Tiger Reserve of Odisha. The study also seeks to analyze the condition of the villagers after their relocation from the Simlipal Tiger Reserve.

2. Research Method

The data for this study was collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data was obtained from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with the local people living in the vicinity of the Simlipal Tiger Reserve and staffs from the civil society organizations. The secondary data was collected from published sources like books, journals, periodicals, reports of the government and civil society organizations.

3. 'Indigenous', 'Adivasi', 'Tribe' 'Scheduled Tribes' – Conceptualizing the Terms

In India, the forests are abode to the indigenous communities from time immemorial. It is essential to conceptualize the terms 'Indigenous', 'Adivasi', 'Tribes' 'Scheduled Tribes' as they are used mutually.

The term 'Adivasi' precisely meaning 'Indigenous People' or 'original inhabitants' is used in India particularly in the central region for several decades for connoting the tribes. Scholars have pointed out that the term is used not only for literary purpose but to bring forth their subaltern position and the hardships they underwent due to exclusionary policies. The term Adivasi was used to represent the rights of the tribes, the resistance, protests, struggles and movements they undertook over the years and their assertions. It was stated that the term 'Scheduled Tribe' (ST) is not identical with 'Adivasi'. ST has an administrative underpinning used specifically for executing and protecting certain privileges and benefits which are constitutionally guaranteed to a group of people marked as marginalized and backward. Several representatives from the tribal community proposed usage of the term 'Adivasi' but the architects of the Indian Constitution favoured the term 'Scheduled Tribe' stating the reason that it 'enumerates the tribes'. The Constitution of India never referred 'Adivasi' but used 'Anusuchit Jana Jati' to denote the STs. The reason behind co-terming the tribes with Adivasi is to secure their land rights and gain access to and control over the natural resources. The contention over the use of the

term 'Adivasi' for denoting the tribes emanated from viewing their position in different ways in India. The covert support of the terminological deviation by the anthropologists and sociologists threatened the rights and privileges of the tribal communities residing away from the India's heartland which is mainly considered as Hindi belt. History had revealed that all tribes in India are not the original inhabitants of the place where they reside presently. It was pointed out that the tribes shifted in the plain areas when the place became suitable for cultivation (Roy Burman, 2009; Rout, 2015).

Moreover, the Government of India (GOI) had not recognized the tribes as indigenous people. One prime reason behind such denial is the recognition of certain upper caste Brahmins and Rajput communities such as Jaunsari of the Uttarakhand and Kanaura communities of Himachal Pradesh as STs. The terminology 'Adivasi' was used widely in the Eastern and North Eastern India for marking the tribal workers and peasants who migrated from the central region of India. Scholars have reinforced the view that in India the term 'Adivasi' is not identical to the term 'Tribe'. The term 'Tribe' is a creation of the colonial administration in India (Roy Burman, 2009). The term 'Scheduled Tribe' categorizes people who differ in terms of geographical remoteness, dialect, customs, physical features and are economically poor (Rout, 2015).

4. Forests Based Resources: Lifeline of the Downtrodden Communities in Odisha

India has a large number of forest fringe communities who depend solely on forest ecosystem for their livelihood. Ninety one eco-cultural zones in India which were identified by the Anthropological Survey of India were dwelling places for 4,635 ethnic communities. In India, there are around 170,379 villages with a population of 10,674,334 located in and adjacent to the forests. 60.04 per cent of the total forest area of India falls in the 187 tribal districts i.e. districts which fall under Fifth and Sixth Schedules of the Indian Constitution. The enactment of legislations on forests was an outcome of the struggle between State's control over forest resources and initiatives of the local and indigenous communities to protect their rights to access and control over forests (Broome and Dash, 2012). It is difficult to figure out the exact number of forest dependent communities due to absence of official census data but various estimates pointed out that around 275 million to 400 million people depend on forest resources for their livelihood. Forests provide fruits, flowers, tubers, roots, edible leaves, medicines, honey, wax, tannin, gums and resins, firewood both for domestic use as well as for sale, forage and a wide range of Non Timber

Forest Products (NTFPs). It is also a source of grazing of livestock and materials required for agriculture and construction purposes. Documented sources showed that these forest fringe villages are inhabited by more than 40 per cent of the impoverished people of India (Datta et al., 2011; Nayak, et al., 2012).

Odisha is enriched with vast tracts of forests covering an area of 48,855 sq. km which constitutes 31.38 per cent of State's total geographical area. 85.03 per cent population resides in the rural areas of the State out of the total population of 36.7 million. The landless and marginal farmers belong to the 4-5 million poor population of Odisha who depend on forests for livelihood. Kendu leaves, Sal leaves and seeds, myrobolans, Char seeds, Mahua flowers and Mahua seeds are the major forest products which are source of livelihood to the populace. The total annual income generated from the NTFPs covers a wide range of variation from 15 to 50 per cent and at times even more in the southern, western and central part of the State. The various uses of NTFPs in Odisha are discussed in Table 1. Researches showed that 27 per cent and 52.2 per cent populace in undivided Koraput and Kalahandi districts respectively lean on NTFPs for sustenance (Behera and Nath, 2012). Behera and Nath (2012) in their research on the dependence of the people on NTFPs of Boudh district in Odisha showed that people residing in the hill areas depend more on NTFPs than those on the plain land population. 45 per cent depend on NTFPs in plain areas of Boudh while 78 per cent people depend on NTFPs in the hilly areas. It was found that hill people have to depend on rainfed farming which has a high possibility of crop failure and also insufficient for family consumption. As there is absence of alternative livelihood, the people in the upland areas depend solely on the NTFPs which are available abundantly. More than 95 per cent of the annual income from NTFPs in both the hill areas and plain lands of Boudh districts arrive from the dominant four species viz. Sal (*Shorea robusta*), Mahula (*Madhuca latifolia*), Chara (*Buchanania lanzan*) and Kendu (*Diospyrous melanoxylon*). The neighbouring district of Kandhamal also depends mostly on NTFPs for livelihood. The collection of NTFPs was greater in number by the villagers living in the vicinity of the Reserved Forests when compared to other villages of plain lands (Behera and Nath, 2012).

Table 1: Popular Uses of NTFPs in Odisha

Name of the NTFP	Uses
Mahua flowers	Food, Liquor preparation, used as cattle feed, commercial
Mahua seeds	Cooking Oil
Kendu eaves	Used as wrappers of <i>Bidi</i> (Indian Cigarette)
Sal leaves	Commercial
Sal seeds	Sal fat acts as a substitute for cocoa butter
Bamboo	Element of construction of houses, used as fences, basket making
Medicianl Plants (Myrobolans, Bael)	Medicine
Char seeds	Kernel of the seeds are used for preparing sweetmeats, oil is used particularly in the confectionery and traditional medicine
Others (Hill broom, Kusum seeds, tamarind, honey, Atta fruits, ber, wild mushroom)	Domestic and commercial purposes

(Source: Behera and Nath, 2012)

Among all the NTFPs, Kendu leaves are one of the largest sources of livelihood generation in Odisha particularly in the districts of western and central region like Bolangir, Sambalpur, Kalahandi, certain areas of Koraput, Angul, Sundargarh, Keonjhar and Phulbani. A substantial number of marginalized populace mostly belonging to the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) group rely on the Kendu leaves for their sustenance which creates around one crore person-days of employment during the summer season (Vasundhara, 1998).

Mahua leaves and seeds are traditionally collected for dietary purposes especially by the tribal people. Mahua flowers are used as substitute for cereals particularly from the late summer season to early autumn months when there occurs shortage of cereals. These flowers are still considered as important food items in the remote corners of Bolangir and Nuapada districts which are inhabited by a significant number of tribal people. The marginalized landless people in the villages of Bolangir district collect Mahua flowers and seeds from the adjoining forests which contribute substantially in their income. It was

found that forest products play a pivotal role in the lives of certain people during the lean summer season in the Bolangir district. Fuel woods collected from the surrounding forests also generate substantial income to the downtrodden landless people in the Bolangir district. Moreover, edible leaves, fruits, vegetables and climbers are also collected from the forests for self- consumption. The forest products of the Kechuapari Reserved Forest in the Nuapada district are also a source of food and medicine to the adjoining villages. Fruits like Kendu fruits and Jamun, Mahua seeds and Char seeds are collected primarily for consumption although a negligible amount is often sold in the market. Kendu leaves and Mahua flowers are used for commercial purposes (Vasundhara, 1998).

5. Forest Related Legislations in Odisha

The forests were administered by the traditional methods in different parts of Odisha in the pre-British period. The pattern of forest governance changed with the advent of British in India and during the eighteenth century forests of Odisha came under the direct control of the State. The framework of forest administration which evolved with the rulers of the princely states took a concrete shape with the establishment of Forest Department (hereafter FD) (Mohapatra, 2014).

The post- independent Odisha formulated several legislations in different periods which facilitated as well as hindered the rights of the tribes to access lands and forests. The two most important acts promulgated to protect the customary forest rights of the tribes and upheld self-governance are Panchayat Extension to the Scheduled Areas (PESA), Act, 1996 and the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights), Act 2006 which are discussed below (Rout, 2015):

5.1 Panchayat Extension to the Scheduled Areas Act, 1996

The Panchayat Extension to the Scheduled Areas Act, 1996 (hereafter PESA) was proclaimed by the GOI to extend the provisions of Part IX of the Constitution of India relating to the Panchayats and the Scheduled Areas. The Act empowered the States having Schedule V areas to formulate legislations along the lines of PESA within a year from its implementation date. PESA endowed the gram sabhas with the power to manage the natural resources as well as to formulate and supervise the programmes for socio-economic development. It also clearly pointed out that gram sabhas are entrusted with the task of

restraining land alienation and forcible land acquisition in the scheduled areas (Mukul, 1997; Pal, 2000).

5.2 The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights), Act 2006

The issue of a circular by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) in 2002 demanding eviction of all encroachers from the forests within six months dislocated approximately 300,000 families in the country. This action fomented the civil society organizations throughout the country to form an alliance under Campaign for Survival and Dignity (CSD) which became a national platform to voice the eviction cases and violation of human rights. The pressing demand from the CSD members along with the numerous forest dependent communities and tribal people to redress their sufferings led to the formulation of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights), Act 2006 (hereafter FRA). The Act was enacted in 2006 and it came into operation on 1st January, 2008. The FRA was enacted with the objective of rectifying the ‘historical injustice’ done to the tribes and other forest dwellers through the forest policies both in the colonial and post-independence period. The previous legislations like Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 and the Forest Conservation Act, 1980 viewed forest dwellers as “encroachers” while FRA empowered the communities by giving them “responsibilities and authority for sustainable use, conservation of biodiversity and maintenance of ecological balance”. The proclamation of this Act is imperative also for the relocation and rehabilitation policy. The Act pointed out that local people could be dislodged from the PAs for protection of wildlife but the idea of relocation was kept as the last resort. The FRA harped on the complete “settlement of rights” if any forest dweller is relocated (Shahabuddin and Bhamidipati, 2014; Sarangi, 2015; Tayal, 2015; Ramesh, 2017).

6. Conservation induced Displacement in the Simlipal Tiger Reserve, Odisha

Simlipal Tiger Reserve (STR) covers an area of 2,750 sq. km and is a part of the Simlipal Biosphere Reserve (hereafter SBR). The SBR situated in the north of Eastern Ghats of Odisha spreads over 5,569 sq. km. SBR is the sixth largest biosphere reserve of India. The management of Simlipal forests was initiated after proclamation of a forest policy by the then Maharaja of Mayurbhanj in 1885. The wildlife in the Simlipal was managed primarily for royal hunt and recreation of the royal family. 1,152 sq. mile of forest was declared as

reserved forest in 1907 that restricted leasing out the forests to private enterprises for timber. Prior to this notification, the Simlipal forest was leased out only once during 1890. In 1896-97, Mr. C. C. Hart devised a Working Plan based on which the forest of Simlipal was managed till 1946. Following the Working Plan, the Simlipal forest was exploited systematically till the ex-state merged with Odisha in 1949. The post-independent Odisha failed to protect the forest and its wildlife properly partly due to its liberal policy of issue of shooting permits. In 1956, SBR was officially given the status of 'Tiger Reserve' and, in 1973, it came under the 'Project Tiger' programme. In 1979, the state government declared Simlipal Reserved Forest as a wildlife sanctuary which has a core area of 845.70 sq. kms. The core area was designated as National Park by the Odisha government without the final notice by the GOI as all villages were not removed from the core area. Four villages are located in the core area covering an area of 1194.75 sq.km and 64 villages are in the buffer area constituting an area of 1,555.25 sq. km. In 1994, STR along with an area of 2250 sq. km was declared as a 'Biosphere Reserve' following the Man and Biosphere (MAB) programme of UNESCO that aims at lessening the dependence on forest products through Eco-Development programmes. The Simlipal Forest was significant as it was under two conservation projects viz. 'Project Tiger' and 'Project Elephant' and had obtained the status of biosphere reserve, sanctuary and proposed national park. (Dash and Behera, 2013; Pincha, 2016; Simlipal Tiger Reserve, 2017).

6.1 Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile

Altogether, 64 villages are located inside the STR and around 1200 villages are situated outside the Tiger Reserve. A substantial number of villages of both the core and buffer areas depend on forest products and NTFPs for their domestic needs and commercial purposes (Simlipal Tiger Reserve, 2017). The area was predominated by the tribal groups like Kolha, Santhala, Bhumija, Bhatudi, Gondas, Khadia, Mankadia and Sahara. The first five tribal groups are primarily agriculturists by occupation but rely to some extent on forest produces. The last three categories of tribes are hunter-gatherers and collect forest products for sustenance (WWF, India, 2017).

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) conceived the idea of controlling the decline of tiger population by launching the Operation Tiger project in 1972. The Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 was promulgated for protection of birds and animals and Project Tiger was launched by the GOI with financial aid from WWF in 1973. This project fostered by

prioritizing the conservation of ecosystems along with the tigers but the critics pointed out that this conservation strategy was not suitable as it led to the eviction of local people. The Indian Wildlife Act, 1972 already proscribed entry of local population within the National Parks. The collection of forest products was allowed in the Sanctuaries provided the forest department staff allows it. The inception of Project Tiger led to the displacement of local people from their ancestral homesteads across India either without compensation or with skimpy compensation. The problem was fixed by initiating the concept of 'eco-development'. The programmes for eco-development commenced in the early 1990s which provided alternative livelihood options in the buffer areas and fringes of the tiger reserves in order to limit the dependency on forest resources.(Karlsson, 2000).

6.2 Displacement of Villages in Simlipal Tiger Reserve

The FD of Odisha had decided to relocate three villages viz. Jamunagarh, Kabatghai and Bakua from the core areas of STR citing the reason of proper implementation of conservation strategy. Dr.Saroj Raj Chowdhury, the first Field Director of the STR undertook several measures to improve the forest condition. In the 1980s, nomadic PVTGs (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups) called Khadias and Kolhas settled inside the STR with the initiative of Dr. Chowdhury. He felt that local people living in the forest for generation can assist the FD with their knowledge and can contribute in the improvement of the conservation process (Das and Das, 2008; The Hindu, 2010; The Statesman, 2015). Later, the authorities ignored this policy and decided to evict the forest dwellers who had been living in the forests for generations in the name of preserving biodiversity.

The relocation of forest villages was previously limited to the core areas of STR but at the end of 2016 villagers of Kiajhari located in the buffer zone was displaced by the forest officials. The higher authority of STR pointed out that plan to shift the villagers from buffer area was possible after they became entitled to receive various benefits from the rehabilitation package that was earlier restricted for the displaced villagers of core area only. The Kiajhari village of Karanjia Forest Division was inhabited by 217 persons of 79 families. Out of these, 46 families belonged to Khadia community and the remaining 33 belonged to the Kolha community. The relocated villagers were rehabilitated at a camp temporarily in the Khandeidhar village of Badagaon panchayat under Karanjia block. The relocation plan was devised in 2008 but the STR officials were successful in executing it first in 2010. The shifting process started with Jenabil in 2010 followed by

Uparabarakamua and Bhaghar villages in 2013, relocation of 35 families from Jamunagada village in September, 2015 and 47 families of Kabatghai in May 2016. The STR authorities undertook the process of relocation of villages from both the core and buffer areas for achieving the status of national park that was due for several years owing to the settlement in STR. The authorities are still persuading 40 families of Bakua village and 3 families of Jamunagada for relocation. The STR authorities clarified that presence of tiger was found more in the areas that were designated as ‘non-violent zone’ and so they undertook the initiative of vacating particularly the core areas of STR which should be devoid of human disturbances (The Statesman, 2015; Odisha Post, 2016).

The villagers in the core area of STR faced stiff challenges once the FD officials conceived the idea of relocation. The denial of the right to access the forest exacerbated the predicament of the villagers with Khadia tribes being the hard hit. The Khadias who resided in the forest villages for generation were labeled as ‘Maoists’ and they were compelled to move out of their villages. FD officials took advantage of their illiteracy, as they had to sign papers without knowing the content in it (Pincha, 2016). The assurance of cash and kind as well as fear of harassment by the officials propelled the Khadia families to “voluntarily” agree to move out of the STR although the officials did not keep their promises. The land and livestock was not provided after the relocation and the relocated families received approximately one tenth of the assured compensation. The officials assured that remaining amount of compensation was transferred to the bank accounts of the relocated families that intensified the plight of the people since they had no knowledge of using bank accounts. People belonging to Munda community became more reluctant to relocate after visiting the village of Asankudar where the Khadia tribes had resettled. The crisis that the Khadia tribes were experiencing after relocation debarred the Munda community to agree to the relocation policy (Survival International, 2014).

7. Livelihood and Habitat: A Lose-Lose Situation

The rehabilitation process in the STR made a gross violation of the FRA. The FRA clearly stated the provision of either rehabilitation package or any alternative to the relocated families but it was found that rehabilitation package was not provided properly. The recurrent threat of eviction and fear of harassment by the FD officials made the villagers agree to a hasty rehabilitation process without looking at the rehabilitation packages. The villagers were compelled to give consent to the relocation process. The relocation was

supposed to take place after ensuring all the facilities but in reality, the villagers were forced to settle in the relocated area before the resettlement area was made suitable for living (Pincha, 2016).

The Wildlife Protection Act clearly stated that government should ensure agricultural and developmental facilities of the relocated villagers as well as alternative livelihood generation in the tiger reserves but it was not done in the STR. The agriculture was the mainstay of the villagers of STR and before relocation they were promised of getting land but it never happened. The landlessness diverted the villagers from their agricultural occupation and out of acute poverty; they migrated in search of jobs (Pincha, 2016).

Odisha was at the fore in granting highest number of title deeds that amounted to 331,939 in 2014 out of which 328,808 were individual forest rights and 3,131 were community forest rights. The Supreme Court in its landmark judgment on the Niyamgiri Case in 2013 highlighted the provisions of the FRA and marked the power of Gram Sabhas to protect the 'natural and cultural habitat'. The FD of Odisha violated the provisions of FRA and took advantages of the provisions of "Critical Wildlife Habitat" in pressurizing the forest dependent people to vacate the STR. The people of the relocated villages remained in complete darkness regarding right on the 3,982.44 acres of forestland derived under community rights. It was also found that villagers of Jamunagarh village opted for land instead of cash but district administrative officials forced them to accept ten lakhs making them believe it would be more beneficial to them (Mohanty, 2016).

The Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehra Dun carried out a tiger census in 2008 in Odisha employing the camera trap method and estimated the presence of total 45 tigers out of which 20 tigers were found in STR. However, the state government denied this report of WII and asserted that Odisha hosted 192 tigers out of which 101 were in the STR. Amidst this conflict, the wildlife experts opined that male tigers require at least 200 sq. km of free and undisturbed territory for killing animals like deer and wild boar. Biswajit Mohanty, a wildlife expert, stated that human interferences cause trouble in finding food and hinders the breeding process of the tigers (Mohanty, 2006; The Hindu, 2010).

The people living in and around the forests of STR procure forest products for daily needs, commercial purposes and professional requirement. The peasants apart from acquiring

insecticides and pesticides were also benefitted by the rich deposition of organic manure in their agricultural land carried by the local streams and rivulets. Earlier, the local populace was employed by the FD for felling of trees and other forest related activities. However, promulgation of stringent legislations regarding protection of PAs over the years had led to the decline of such employment. Acute poverty and absence of alternative livelihood instigated many of the local people to undertake illicit activities of felling and timber smuggling (Vasundhara, 1998).

The FD promised allotment of concrete houses, money, food, livestock and an allowance of INR 2000/- for a certain period during relocation but in reality, the villagers had to live in plastic shelter in the relocated village of Ambadiha. The district collector assured providing cooked food for three months but it was given only for eight days. The facility of water from lift points was available in the relocated village that only met the demand of drinking water. The relocated villagers were unable to take bath just after 15 days (Pincha, 2016).

The civil society organizations in Odisha are objecting the relocation of villagers from the buffer area as there is no order to evict the inhabitants from the buffer zone of the tiger reserve. This was regarded as violation of FRA as forest dwellers had either claimed their rights according to the provisions of FRA or their rights had been approved. Simlipal Suraksha Manch, a civil society organization in Odisha pointed out that the relocation policy had adverse effects on the lives of the forest dwellers and the Kharia and Kolha tribes are the worst affected. They stated that buffer area around a tiger reserve exists for maintaining a harmonious relationship between the people and wildlife without hampering the right to livelihood or curbing the social and cultural rights. It was felt that the displacement from Kiajhari marks the beginning of the relocation policy in the buffer area in the name of conservation that is not only illegal but a clear violation of human rights also as the PVTGs will be affected particularly (Nandi, 2017).

8. Conclusion

The decline in the number of big cats made it imperative to undertake the conservation policy but in India it took place at the cost of livelihoods of the forest dwellers. The burgeoning conservation efforts enforced by the creation of PAs led to the harassment and eviction of the local communities particularly the tribes by showing the carrot of protecting

animals. The scenario is extremely grim in the tiger reserves where need of inviolate zones compelled the authorities to evict the local communities but the irony is that the anti-people conservation policies failed to yield positive effects on the wildlife. The FRA was formulated to safeguard the rights of the tribes and other forest dwellers but there are several instances where the implementation of the Act was tardy and eviction from the PAs violated the provisions of FRA. The local communities especially the tribes acted as the hereditary stewards of environment which the conservationist should take into account and accordingly formulate policies. The dire need of the hour is to protect the tribes specially those who are endangered because ecological stability and social justice cannot be achieved without the collaborative efforts.

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