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WILDLIFE CRIME IN INDIA: A MULTI-FACETED ANALYSIS

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. ABSTRACT

Wildlife crimes are a complex and multifaceted issue in India that calls for a thorough study of its root causes, scope, and effects. This study aims to offer a thorough analysis of the various aspects of wildlife crimes in India, including the types of crimes, the socioeconomic factors that motivate them, the effectiveness of current laws and policies, the function of organized crime syndicates and international networks, the effects on the environment and human health, and the attitudes and perceptions of stakeholders.

This study used a mixed-methods technique to gather data from a variety of sources, including secondary literature and official records. The results showed that poaching, wildlife trafficking, and habitat degradation are India's most frequent types of wildlife crimes. Poverty, illiteracy, cultural norms, and the demand for animal items in domestic and foreign markets contribute to wildlife crimes.

While India has a solid legal framework for protecting wildlife, the study also found that enforcement is weak and ineffective, with few resources and insufficient training for law enforcement employees. Additionally, transnational networks and organized crime syndicates actively participate in the illegal wildlife trade by taking advantage of corrupt officials and bad governance.

Wildlife crimes have a tremendous negative influence on the environment, biodiversity, and public health, pushing numerous species to the verge of extinction and upsetting ecosystems.

The study also showed that different groups of stakeholders have different perspectives on wildlife crimes, ranging from indifference to active involvement.

Based on the findings, this study suggests a multifaceted strategy to combat wildlife crimes in India, including bolstering governance and law enforcement, addressing the underlying causes of poverty and illiteracy, encouraging community-based conservation, and fostering international cooperation.

KEYWORDS : Conservation, Policy, Trafficking, Wildlife trade, Awareness

1. TYPES OF WILDLIFE CRIME

Wildlife crimes are serious offenses that endanger numerous species' survival and disturb the equilibrium of ecosystems. India is home to a wide variety of plants and animals, but regrettably, it is also a hotspot for wildlife crimes. The main types of wildlife crimes that are prevalent in India include:

- **Poaching:** Poaching is the illegal hunting, killing, or capturing of wild animals. Numerous animal species in India, including tigers, elephants, rhinoceroses, and leopards, are seriously threatened by poaching. While poaching is widespread in India, the severity and frequency of it differ from place to region. Poaching is frequently done for profit, including the unlawful sale of animal parts for use in traditional treatments, clothing, and other products.
- **Illegal wildlife trade:** Illegal wildlife trade is a global issue, and one of the leading countries from which items like ivory,

tiger bones, and rhino horns are sourced in India. The demand from foreign markets is what fuels the projected billion-dollar annual value of the trade in wildlife items. The illegal trade in wildlife severely harms the protection of ecosystems and the conservation of endangered species.

- **Habitat destruction:** Another significant threat to India's wildlife is the destruction of natural habitats. Human activities, including deforestation, mining, and urbanization, frequently bring on Habitat loss. This causes the loss of many animal species' essential habitats, which in turn causes a reduction in their populations and, in some circumstances, their extinction.
- **Human-Wildlife Conflict:** When wild animals come into touch with human populations, conflicts such as attacks on people, livestock, and crops happen. This is a severe issue in India, especially in rural areas where people depend on agriculture for a living. Natural ecosystems are degraded when human populations rise, forcing animals to fight for resources and increasing the likelihood of human-wildlife conflict.
- **Illegal hunting:** Killing animals for entertainment, such as sport hunting, constitutes illegal hunting. In some regions of India, it is common and seen as a status symbol. Although illegal hunting doesn't happen often, it is a severe crime that jeopardizes many endangered species' survival.

2. SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO WILDLIFE CRIME

Wildlife crimes are a significant issue in India, where many animal species are threatened by poaching, illegal hunting, and the illegal wildlife trade. Creating successful tactics to fight wildlife crime requires understanding the socioeconomic variables that contribute to it. We will examine the numerous socioeconomic aspects of wildlife crime in India.

One of the main socioeconomic variables influencing wildlife crime in India is poverty. India's rural inhabitants rely primarily on natural resources for their survival. People who are struggling to survive turn to wildlife crime as a method of subsistence. People may, for instance, capture animals for use in traditional medicine, sell animal parts in the illegal wildlife trade, or poach animals for their meat. People who are poor are also more likely to engage in other criminal activities like logging, mining, and growing illicit crops.

Another significant socioeconomic issue that fuels wildlife crime in India is a lack of education. It is challenging for many residents of rural areas to obtain employment outside of agriculture or natural resource exploitation since they have limited access to schooling. Due to this lack of education, people may not be aware of the value of wildlife protection or the legal repercussions of committing wildlife crimes. Combating the issue requires educating individuals about the value of wildlife protection and the legal repercussions of engaging in wildlife crime.

Additionally, cultural norms influence wildlife crime in India. Some Indian cultures have entrenched traditional medicine and other cultural practices that involve the use of animal parts. There is a high demand for some animal parts in the illegal wildlife trade because many people think they have magical or medicinal characteristics. It is challenging to alter deeply rooted cultural norms, yet doing so is necessary to stop wildlife crime in India.

Wildlife crime is fuelled in India by the lucrative illegal wildlife trade. In many regions of the world, there is a significant demand for wildlife products like ivory, tiger skins, and pangolin scales, and India is a major supplier of these goods. Demand from customers who are willing to pay high rates for these products, particularly in Asia and North America, fuels the illegal wildlife trade. Illegal wildlife trafficking must be addressed, and consumer education and demand reduction are crucial components.



The illicit wildlife trade, poverty, a lack of education, cultural norms, and other socioeconomic issues all contribute to the complexity of the wildlife crime problem in India. It is crucial to address these issues if India wants to combat wildlife crime successfully. This can be accomplished by combining education, community involvement, and legislative actions designed to lessen poverty and increase access to education and employment opportunities.

3. EFFECTIVES OF EXISTING LAWS, POLICIES, AND ENFORCEMENT MEASURES

India is a country with a diverse range of flora and wildlife. It is home to several endangered species like the Asiatic Lion, Bengal Tiger, Indian Rhino, Snow Leopard, etc. Despite having a comprehensive legal framework and several enforcement tools, the nation faces significant difficulties in preventing and combating wildlife crimes.

The Wildlife Protection Act 1972, which was enacted to protect and conserve species and their habitats, essentially governs the current laws and policies in India for wildlife conservation. National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, and Conservation Reserves have been established under the Act. Along with the penalties for poaching and illegal trading, it also includes a list of the species that are protected by it. The Act has undergone numerous amendments over the years to enhance the provisions and punishments for offenses involving animals.

India also has a number of other laws that handle certain issues relating to wildlife crimes, in addition to the Wildlife Protection Act. **The Indian Forest Act, of 1927** prohibits the unauthorized occupation of forest land and the cutting of trees without permission. The diverting of forest land for uses other than forestry is prohibited by the **Forest Conservation Act of 1980**. **The 1960 Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act** makes harming or killing animals illegal.

In addition to these laws, India has ratified a number of international conventions and treaties pertaining to the preservation of wildlife, including the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** and the **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)**. To safeguard endangered species and their ecosystems, these international accords offer a framework for collaboration and coordination between governments.

Wildlife crimes in India continue to pose a severe threat to the country's biodiversity despite the existence of these laws and policies. Due to the high demand from both domestic and foreign markets, poaching and illegal trading in wildlife and its by-products are still commonplace. The trade-in of rhino horns, ivory, and tiger parts remains a substantial obstacle. Wildlife is also at risk from habitat damage brought on by human encroachment, mining, and infrastructural development.

The lack of implementation of the existing regulations is one of the main obstacles to preventing wildlife crimes in India. The various agencies in charge of enforcing the laws and policies frequently lack coordination, which results in the ineffective application of the laws and regulations. The principal organizations in charge of upholding the laws pertaining to wildlife protection are the police, forest department, and customs officials. However, these organizations frequently lack the tools and expertise required to take on the intricate and sophisticated networks involved in wildlife crimes.

The corruption of the judiciary and law enforcement is also a severe problem. The effectiveness of the legislation is frequently undermined by corrupt authorities working together with traders and poachers. Low conviction rates are frequently the result of the penalties for wildlife offenses not being harsh enough to serve as a deterrent.



In recent years, there have been some encouraging advancements in India's efforts to fight wildlife crimes. The government has started a number of programs, including the capacity-building and training of enforcement agencies, to increase the enforcement of wildlife protection regulations. Drones and satellite photography are two examples of technology that is being used to monitor and trace unlawful activity.

India's existing laws, policies, and enforcement measures for preventing and combating wildlife crimes are comprehensive. However, a number of issues, including a lack of agency cooperation, corruption, and insufficient punishments, hinder the effectiveness of these initiatives. To overcome these obstacles, the government, civic society, and international organizations must work together to increase enforcement and raise public understanding of the value of wildlife conservation.

4. ROLE OF ORGANIZED CRIMES SYNDICATES AND TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS

Over the past few years, the illegal wildlife trade has grown into a multi-billion-dollar industry. Organized crime gangs and international networks that deal in the poaching, trafficking, and sale of endangered species are the driving forces behind this trade. Given that it is home to several species highly prized on the global market, India is one of the nation severely impacted by the illegal wildlife trade.

Transnational networks and organized crime gangs are significant players in India's illegal wildlife trade. All facets of the trade, including poaching, trafficking, and the sale of illegitimate wildlife items, are carried out by these organizations. They have sophisticated networks that span multiple countries and are able to move large quantities of wildlife products across international borders. Profit is their primary driving force, and they're willing to take chances to enhance it. Additionally, they have the means to evade capture, bribe officials, and launder money, making it

challenging for law enforcement to apprehend them.

Strengthening law enforcement authorities is one way to thwart the activities of transnational networks and organized crime syndicates engaged in the illegal wildlife trade in India. This can be achieved by hiring more staff, upgrading their instruction and tools, and giving them better incentives. In order to exchange information and coordinate their activities, law enforcement authorities should also interact closely with one another and with international partners. This can aid in locating and identifying the networks responsible for the illegal wildlife trade.

Targeting their financial networks is another tactic to thwart the operations of transnational networks and organized crime syndicates engaged in the illegal wildlife trade in India. To do this, it is possible to freeze their assets, bring criminal charges against individuals who engage in money laundering, and stiffen the penalty for those who conduct financial transactions related to the illicit wildlife trade. This may make it harder for these organizations to run their businesses and cut into their earnings.

In India's illegal wildlife trade, education, and awareness initiatives can severely disrupt organized crime syndicates and international networks. These efforts can aid in increasing public awareness of the adverse effects of the illegal wildlife trade and compel people to alert law authorities to suspicious activity. They can also encourage conservation efforts and alter attitudes towards wildlife.

Another critical tactic to stop transnational networks and organized crime syndicates from operating in India's illegal wildlife trade is to strengthen international collaboration. This can be accomplished by collaborating with other nations impacted by the illegal wildlife trade and international organizations like the United Nations and Interpol. Identifying and locating



the networks involved in the illegal wildlife trade can help to stop their operations.

Finally, addressing the underlying causes of India's illegal wildlife trade is critical. This can be accomplished by lowering the demand for wildlife items on global markets, fostering sustainable development, and empowering regional groups to look after and safeguard their own natural resources. It may be possible to lessen the incentive for organized criminal syndicates and multinational networks to engage in these activities by addressing the root causes of the illegal wildlife trade.

5. IMPACT OF WILDLIFE CRIMES

The ecosystem, biodiversity, human health, and well-being in India are all significantly impacted by wildlife crimes such as poaching, habitat damage, and illicit wildlife trading. A wide variety of animals, including tigers, elephants, rhinos, and many more species, may be found throughout India. Unfortunately, many of these species are in danger of going extinct because of a variety of circumstances, including habitat loss and poaching.

The destruction of habitats is one of the most severe effects of wildlife crimes on the ecosystem. As forests are cut down to make way for construction, wildlife habitats are destroyed, which reduces biodiversity. As a result of this biodiversity loss, the environment suffers from soil erosion, decreased water quality, and deteriorated air quality. A further factor in climate change is the release of carbon into the atmosphere as a result of the destruction of forests and other habitats.

In India, poaching is a severe threat to wildlife in addition to habitat deterioration. Stealing animals for their meat, skin, and other organs is lucrative, with some species commanding high prices on the black market. The populations of numerous species, including tigers, elephants, rhinos, and pangolins, have been significantly impacted by this practice. These species have crucial roles in the food chain and in preserving

ecological equilibrium. Hence their extinction has an impact on the ecosystem as a whole.

The health and welfare of people are significantly impacted by wildlife crime as well. Numerous apex predators that are important in managing animal populations, like tigers and rhinos, are the targets of poachers. When these creatures are killed, their prey populations might soar, which can cause a number of issues. For instance, as tiger populations decrease, deer and other herbivore populations may rise, resulting in overgrazing and the eradication of vegetation. Food shortages for humans and domesticated animals may come from this, which may also cause wildlife and human conflicts.

The illegal wildlife trade is also quite dangerous for people's health. Animals that are sold illegally frequently have zoonotic diseases that can spread to humans. For instance, it has been proven that the illegal bushmeat trade contributes to the spread of diseases like SARS and Ebola. The introduction of invasive species, which can harm native species and ecosystems, is another consequence of the illegal trade in wildlife.

The direct repercussions of wildlife crimes on wildlife and ecosystems are only one aspect of how they affect India's environment, biodiversity, and human health and well-being. Because the illicit wildlife trade proceeds are used to finance other criminal operations, it is also associated with organized crime and corruption. This has a number of detrimental effects on society, such as an uptick in violence and unrest, slower economic growth, and a decline in faith in governmental institutions.

In India, efforts are being made to stop wildlife crimes. The creation of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries, the use of anti-poaching squads, and other actions have all been taken by the Indian government to safeguard wildlife. Additionally, the government has passed legislation to safeguard wildlife, such as the Wildlife Protection Act, which calls for its



preservation and forbids its illicit sale and poaching.

As a result, wildlife crimes significantly affect India's ecosystem, biodiversity, and population health and welfare. The reduction in biodiversity, the spread of disease, and a number of other negative effects have been brought on by habitat degradation, poaching, and the illegal wildlife trade. By creating protected areas, enforcing laws, and raising public awareness of the value of wildlife conservation, efforts must be made to counteract these crimes. We can assure a healthy and sustainable future for everyone by taking steps to conserve wildlife and ecosystems.

6. ATTITUDE AND PERCEPTION OF VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS

In order to stop these criminal activities and guarantee the protection of wildlife, it is essential that different stakeholders, such as local people, law enforcement organizations, policymakers, and conservationists, have positive attitudes and perceptions regarding wildlife crimes in India.

Local Community

Given that many of these communities are located in or close to animal habitats, local communities in India are essential to wildlife conservation. However, because of their frequent marginalization and restricted access to opportunities and resources, they frequently engage in illicit activities like poaching and the illegal wildlife trade. Many local populations may not recognize the harm caused by poaching or the illegal wildlife trade because they perceive wildlife as a source of revenue. However, there are also many neighborhood groups that genuinely value animals and support conservation initiatives. Therefore, it is vital to interact with the local populations, offer them other means of subsistence, and inform them of the value of animal protection.

Law Enforcement Agencies

Wildlife offenses must be vigorously prosecuted, and law enforcement officials must enforce laws governing wildlife protection. However, there are several difficulties that Indian law enforcement organizations must overcome, such as a lack of political will, corruption, and scarce resources. In addition to having inadequate people and training, many law enforcement organizations struggle to tackle wildlife crimes successfully. However, major efforts have been made to increase the ability of law enforcement agencies to combat wildlife crimes, including developing specialized units and deploying cutting-edge tools like drones and DNA testing.

Policymakers

Legislators are in charge of passing laws and regulations that safeguard wildlife and their habitats. The Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, which offers legal protection to endangered animals and their habitats, was passed by the Indian government in an effort to safeguard the country's biodiversity. There are obstacles, though, such as the need for more money for conservation activities, more cooperation amongst various government agencies, and the requirement for laws that deal with the underlying issues that lead to wildlife crimes.

Conservationist

Conservationists are essential in promoting animal protection and aiding conservation initiatives. They collaborate closely with regional communities, decision-makers, and law enforcement organizations to support conservation efforts and safeguard endangered species. However, there are many obstacles to conservation efforts in India, including a lack of financing and support from the government and the demand for improved coordination and communication among many stakeholders.

In conclusion, there are many different stakeholders who have different attitudes and

opinions of wildlife crimes in India. Engaging with local communities, boosting law enforcement capabilities, passing legislation that deals with the underlying issues that lead to wildlife crimes, and assisting conservationists in their fight to preserve endangered species are all essential. By banding together, India can guarantee the future survival of its iconic and endangered animal species.

7. RECOMMENDATION

Wildlife crime is a serious issue in India, which is home to many endangered species. A multifaceted strategy involving the application of technology, community-based methods, and international cooperation is required to address this issue. Here are some recommendations for improving the prevention and prosecution of wildlife crimes in India:

- **Use of Technology:** Technology has the potential to be a potent weapon in the war against wildlife crime. Drones, satellite imaging, and other technology can be used to keep an eye on and safeguard wildlife habitats. Advanced forensic methods can also be used to find and apprehend poachers and smugglers. To combat wildlife crimes, the Indian government can spend money on equipment and advanced technologies.
- **Community-based Approach:** Local communities that are situated in and close to natural habitats can be vital to the preservation of wildlife. The government can collaborate with these groups to raise awareness of the value of conservation and give them the tools and resources they need to safeguard local natural resources. This can involve offering them alternative means of subsistence to lessen their reliance on poaching and other illicit activities.
- **International Cooperation:** Since wildlife crimes frequently have a global element, efficient international collaboration is crucial. India can cooperate with other nations, groups, and international

organizations to exchange information and intelligence, plan measures, and take action against transnational wildlife crime syndicates.

- **Strengthening enforcement mechanisms:** India must improve its law enforcement practices to identify and prosecute wildlife crimes correctly. This can involve enhancing the skills and training of forest officials, toughening up on offenders, and creating specialized units to look into wildlife crime.
- **Creating Awareness:** It is essential to raise awareness about the value of wildlife conservation in order to stop wildlife crimes. The government can start initiatives to educate the general public, schoolchildren, and the media about the risks of wildlife crime and the value of conservation.

In conclusion, wildlife crimes seriously threaten India's biodiversity and their eradication calls for a multifaceted strategy. India can efficiently prevent, identify, and prosecute wildlife crimes as well as save its extensive biodiversity for future generations by utilizing technology, community-based methods, and international cooperation.

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