Studies in Protected Areas

Human Issues in Protected Areas:  
A Case Study in Shimilipal Tiger Reserve

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**INTRODUCTION:**

Similipal is a Reserve Forest located in the northern district of Mayurbhanj in Orissa. In view of its rich floral and faunal diversity, it has been declared as a Bio-sphere Reserve in 1994 and has been the attraction of researchers on wildlife and botany. At the same time, it serves as an interesting site for social & anthropological research by sheltering since millennia some nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes who depend on this forest for their life & livelihood.

This vast natural treasure is now under threat due to the operation of a number of hostile forces. Also, unsolved socio-economic issues are among the factors that are behind this situation. We intend to bring into limelight some of these aspects in detail in the following paragraphs.

**FORESTTYPEANDBIO-DIVERSITY:**

The forests of Similipal belong to the following types:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forest type</th>
<th>Dominant areas</th>
<th>Representing species</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dense semi-evergreen</td>
<td>Deep valleys</td>
<td><em>Michelia champaka</em>(Champa), <em>Trewia nudiflora</em>(Pani-gamhar), etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dense moist deciduous Sal</td>
<td>Gentle hill slopes and flat grounds where the soil is deep &amp; unbroken</td>
<td><em>Shorea robusta</em>(Sal), <em>Pterocarpus marsupium</em>(Piasal), etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open dry deciduous Sal</td>
<td>Some parts of southern Similipal</td>
<td><em>Shorea robusta</em>(Sal), <em>Terminalia tomentosa</em>(Asan), <em>Bauhinia vahlii</em>(Siali), etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open dry miscellaneous Sal</td>
<td>Bouldery &amp; rocky slopes</td>
<td><em>Shorea robusta</em>(Sal), <em>Pterocarpus marsupium</em>(Piasal), etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, the overall description of the forest is that it belongs to the semi-evergreen type of vegetation with local variations as described in the table above. The dominant species is *Sal* in most areas and *Bamboos* are rather uncommon, except in village areas.

The geomorphology of Similipal is very interesting. Topographical features vary from plains to mountains and from undulatory valleys to gorges. Many perennial rivers (viz., the East Deo, the West Deo, the Khair, the Bandhan, the Budhabalanga, etc.) originate in
the high hills of Similipal and the average rainfall is 2000 mm. It is under such favourable conditions that luxuriant vegetation grows from top to bottom favouring a great diversity in flora & fauna as briefed below:

*Floral richness:*

Atleast 1076 plant species are found in Similipal among which the orchids number 92. The plants include a large variety of timber trees, medicinal plants, creepers/climbers and grasses.

*Faunal richness:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Royal Bengal Tiger</td>
<td>101$^1$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elephant</td>
<td>512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leopard</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deer</td>
<td>3500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bison</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild boars</td>
<td>10000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Besides, there are 29 reptilian species and major mammalian species number 42. The avian species found are 241 in number.

Giant squirrel, Bison, Wild dogs and many other rare species find shelter here. However, the presence of wild dogs, whose sighting was rare in 1990s as compared to that in the ’70s, is now doubtful. Late Saroj Raj Chowdhury is known to have asked his staff to beat them (wild dogs) off because he found tigers and wild dogs could not co-exist as they were more or less equal competitors for the same prey, and that, even a small group of these dogs might force a tiger to leave his prey to them since they were ferocious predators as well as competitors. Due to the attack on them by the staff of the Reserve and also, due to the threat of competition caused by the uncontrolled entry of pet dogs in the local villages; the existence of wild dogs in the Reserve is a matter of doubt and concern now (based on *The New Indian Express*, 22-4-03, p.5).

*Forest history:*

Mayurbhanj was a feudatory state till 1949 and Similipal constituted roughly 5/8th of this ex-state area. Most of the forest-related activities of the ex-state were concentrated in this area.

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$^1$ As per the census of 2004 (for other species, the updated data was not available)
A preliminary working plan for the forests of Mayurbhanj state was prepared during the latter half of 1890s. By that time Similipal constituted 88% of the total Reserve Forest area of this ex-state.

The rulers of Mayurbhanj utilised the timber wealth of this forest for commercial purposes and it was with this objective that they even established railway communication to exploit this wealth. However, there was always a pressure on their part for systematic exploitation of the trees and rampant cutting was not permitted.

The rulers, like their counterparts in other princely states, were fond of gaming and used Similipal for recreation purposes. At that time, population was scarce and wild beasts used to create havoc in many areas. Members of the royal family took it as their responsibility to save the people from the dreaded beasts and besides shooting the latter themselves, also rewarded others who showed such kind of bravery. Besides, *kheda* or elephant-catching operations were also carried out by the authorities inside the forest.

After the merger of Mayurbhanj in 1949, the Forest Department of the Govt of Orissa took over the administrative control of the Similipal Reserve Forest. The strict administrative control of feudatory rulers was no more and people were given right on trees in their homestead lands. This created an opportunity for the local people as well as other stake-holders for indiscriminate exploitation of timber trees and Similipal also suffered its impact. Simultaneously, encroachments in the forest increased and liberal issue of shooting permits also created a menace. Moreover, with increasing communication facilities, threats to the forest wealth of Similipal also increased significantly.

In view of the wildlife management of this forest, the govt created a Forest Division at Jashipur under the name ‘National Park Division’, in 1956. However, the strength of this Division was insufficient to control and monitor the vast area.

In 1973, Similipal was declared as a Tiger Reserve under ‘Project Tiger’. The National Park Division merged into this project the regional headquarters of which has since then been located at Baripada.

Dr. Saroj Raj Chowdhury was the first field director of the Similipal Tiger Reserve(STR). A very duty-bound and dedicated officer, he took some important measures to safeguard the forest wealth of Similipal, particularly its wild-life. The prescriptions of his management plan were in force for more than two decades.
During the feudatory period, the forest wealth of Similipal was being exploited mostly through lease-holders. After merger, the Govt of Orissa gradually altered this system and a govt agency known as Orissa Forest development Corporation became the authorised organisation for this purpose, towards mid-sixties of the last century, as in other parts of the state. However, in view of the extraordinary richness of forest wealth of Similipal, the govt created a separate establishment under the name Similipahar Forest Development Corporation in 1979, but after the ban on extraction of timber all over Similipal, it lost the major source of revenue and eventually merged in OFDC in early 1990s. The remarkable thing about SFDC is that for its operations it developed the communication facilities inside the forest which, it is said, later made the access of timber-smugglers easier and also, after the ban was imposed in 1982, with the operation of SFDC reduced to its minimum, organised theft of timber increased.

Among the major factors that have contributed to the devastation of Similipal in many of its areas is the extension of habitation/cultivation. However, with continuous effort on the part of the authorities, areas under encroachment have been gradually reduced.

Collection of Sal seed was started in Similipal in 1981, but was stopped in the core area (where the maximum potential exists) after three years so as to minimise human interference in the Tiger Reserve. Collection of the same however continues in the periphery areas.

Towards the end of 1980s, the local people were engaged in large scale collection of a glutinous bark known as Pojo chhali. Not only they debarked mature & immature trees of Pojo, but also cut down many such trees for convenience. As a result, hardly any mature Pojo trees can now be seen in Similipal.

**History of the protected status:**

Although the govt intended to confer the National Park status to Similipal as early as 1956, the first declaration was for a Tiger Reserve in 1973. It constitutes a core area and a buffer zone.

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In 1979, the forest was declared as a Sanctuary and in 1980, the govt published its intention to declare the core area of the Tiger Reserve as a National Park. A second core was delineated in 1985 followed by a notification of 1986 expressing the intention of the govt to make this new core zone also a National Park. Although the authorities use this legal status for all official purposes, the actual implementation is yet to be done due to the incomplete eviction operations from the core area.

Meanwhile, the Govt of India has declared the whole Reserve as a Bio-sphere Reserve in a notification dated 21-06-1994.

**Area and Management:**

When Mr. C.L. Hatt prepared a report on the State forests of Mayurbhanj in 1895-96, the area of Similipal was 922.35 sq. miles (approx. 2389.50 sq. km). However, at present the total RF area in Similipal is 2091 sq. km.

Following is a brief account of the dimensions of the Similipal Tiger Reserve:

- Total area: 2750 sq. km.
- Area of RF: 2091 sq. km.
- Non-RF area: 659 sq. km. (includes Protected Forests, Revenue Lands, village sites and cultivated lands, etc.).

- Original (1st) core area: 303 sq. km. (Northern Similipal)
- Extended (in 1985) or the 2nd core area: 545.70 sq. km. (Southern Similipal)
- Buffer zone: 1904.30 sq. km.

It is the 6th largest Bio-sphere Reserve in the country with an area of 4374 sq. km. 4

The major authority in the STR is the Field Director of STR who is of the rank of a Conservator of Forests. It is his department that can issue entry permits to the visitors/researchers who intend to enter the Tiger Reserve. Under him are the DFO, Baripada and DFO, Karanjia whose area of jurisdiction (inside the STR) is the Buffer Zone. The Core Zone is managed solely by the Director, STR.

Besides, there are a number of other govt departments/agencies which are active inside the Buffer Zone in connection with the Revenue Lands and village sites, etc.

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3 That is how two NPs were proposed in Similipal.
4 Source: www.westbengal.com/wildlife/ch12.html
**Human Habitation and Population:**

There are four villages in the core area and 61 in the buffer. The dominating group are the tribes among which the Kolhas outnumber others followed by the Bathudi, Khadia and Santhal tribals.

Among the non-tribal castes are the Mohantas and the Goudas. However, their percentage is insignificant in comparison with the tribal population so far the number is concerned although in financial powers and other influential capabilities many of them (particularly, the Mohantas) dominate the tribals.

There are three Gram Panchayats inside Similipal, viz., Gudgudia, Barehipani and Astakumar. Besides, parts of Podagad and Dhalabani Gram Panchayats are also said to be under the STR area.

Population statistics of the three GPs inside Similipal are furnished below based on the 1991 census:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gram Panchayat</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Scheduled caste</th>
<th>Scheduled tribes (and their percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gudgudia</td>
<td>3586</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3161 (88%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barehipani</td>
<td>2343</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2287 (97%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astakumar</td>
<td>2327</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2211 (95%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The population in the core zone has increased from 394 to 576 between 1981 and 1991 whereas it has increased from 8249 to 9697 during the same period.

The Makdias and the Khadias are the nomadic tribes. While the Makdias are a migratory tribe, the Khadias and Bathudis are among the early settlers of Similipal whereas the many of the Kolhas, Santhals, Gonds and Mundas have migrated from neighbouring districts in Orissa, West Bengal and undivided Bihar during the last century.

**Relationship of the Inhabitants with Similipal:**

The relationship of the inhabitants of Similipal with the local natural resources is greatly diversified. The factors that influence this diversification are as follows:

- Traditional livelihood and cultural practices:

For example, the Mohanta community is essentially an agricultural community while the Makdias are essentially forest-dwellers. Again, the Khadias collect and process Paluo which other tribes do not practice even though the resource is available in their area.

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5 All these are located in the 2nd Core and there is no village in the 1st Core.
6 Source: www.sanctuaryasia.com/projecttiger/similipal.doc
• Availability of resources:

For ex., the local people are not concerned about the collection of Mahua in Gudgudia, Barehipani and Astakumar GPs simply because the item is hardly available there whereas in areas under the Podagad GP (i.e., villages like Jamuani-Chirosahi and Sanjhilli, etc.) Mahua is available in considerable quantities and the local people sell it.

• Adoption of alternative systems:

This is particularly true for the traditional system of health care. Where access to the hospital is not very difficult, people prefer to go there instead of using traditional medicine in many cases.

• Market facilities.

In Astakumar GP, for instance, potential exists for large scale production of Khali(leaf-plate); but since the authorities do not allow traders’ transport vehicles and supply in cycles is not viable there; hence no body makes Khali and as such, there is no collection of Siali- or Sal leaves for this purpose there whereas in villages which are nearer to Jashipur (thus making access of/to the traders easier), the market centre for Khali trading, this potential is well harnessed by those who have no hesitation in doing this.

Thus we have area-specific relationship, tribe- or caste-specific relationship, opportunity-specific relationship, etc. Among the general relationship that is found independent of caste, tribe, tradition and area etc. is the collection of timber and firewood from the forests for domestic use and utilisation of water resources for various purposes.

The major items which people collect from the forests for own use and/or commercial purposes are:

Timber:

Timber of Sal, Gamhari, Piasal, Kasi, Kurum, Champa, Tun and Sissoo, etc. are used for furniture making and construction purposes. Since last few years, the sawn timber Piasal and Sissoo is being supplied by the locals to the timber-mafias of Thakurmunda, Baniabasa and Ramjori earning them significant cash income.

An estimation suggests that if three persons work for two/three days, then they cut down tree(s) and make 20 pieces of the sawn timber of Piasal of the size approx. 6-7 feet in length, 1 foot in width and 1 to 1.5 inches in thickness for which they get approx. Rs. 2000 to 2200 on spot and upto Rs.4000/- at Ramjori\(^7\) (near Gudgudia).

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\(^7\) Six to seven kms from Gudgudia in the shortest route.
Firewood:

There is enough salvage timber in many parts of the forest (and this is because departmental extraction of timber has been stopped) to be used as firewood (in fact, this is what is collected for use in the rest houses provided by the Forest Department for the tourists) and there are also other materials available as substitute.

NTFPs:

The major NTFPs collected are:

- Honey:
  Honey is mostly collected by the Khadias and Kolhas. They, particularly the Khadias have traditional expertise in its collection and the season is May-June. Usually the honeycombs made by rock bees are collected for further processing at domestic level. Finally, honey and wax are separated out and sold at the following rates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Price (in rupees per kg) received at doorstep/nearest haat(^8)</th>
<th>Price (in rupees per kg) received at Jashipur</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Honey</td>
<td>25-40</td>
<td>50-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wax</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>70-80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Mahul:
  As explained earlier, the collection and trade of Mahul is area-specific; but the practice is not confined to any single community though some like the Makdias still shy away from it. The rates received last year varied from Rs.600 to 700 per quintal.

- Paluo:
  Paluo collection is essentially confined to the Khadia community. During late winter months when the Paluo plants die showing signs of rhizome-maturity, they move to the digging grounds (which may be far enough) in groups with ration and other necessities so as to camp there for weeks as digging the Paluo rhizomes (of certain species of *Curcuma*, like *Curcuma aromatica*) itself is a tedious job and the processing that is needed for extraction of Arrowroot from these rhizomes is also not less complicated. The whole work takes two or three weeks (or even more) and the groups return with Arrowroot which is usually sold at the doorstep/local haats at Rs.70/- per kg on an average.

\(^8\) Weekly market
• Jhuna (Sal Resin):

This is collected by the Kolhas and the Khadias. The season is Sept.-Nov. and two varieties of Sal resin are collected, viz., Chhali jhuna (adulterated/mixed with the bark of Sal) and Kathijhuna or Khadijhuna (pure ‘sticks’ of the resin). The selling prices are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Price (in rupees per kg) received at doorstep/nearest haat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khadijhuna</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chhalijhuna</td>
<td>20-25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Gum:

Gum or atha collection is a business of the Khadias, but the Kolhas may also share it. The collection season is January-April. Usually the gum of what the Khadias call as Bagh-neula tree\(^9\) (the Kolhas call it Jardaru) is collected. It requires certain skills. First, cuts are made by axe on mature trees of this species in what ultimately looks like a kind of mosaic pattern. After a few days, gummy juice comes out through these cuts and gets deposited on the tree trunk or below which is collected. The gap in collection from a single tree during a season may vary from 7 to 15 days.

This gum is sundried for two or more days. The selling prices are Rs.10 to 15 at doorstep/nearest haat and Rs.15-18 at Jashipur.

• Mushrooms:

Two varieties of non-edible mushrooms are collected for commercial purposes and these are known as Kathachhatu (i.e. mushroom growing on tree branches or salvage timber). These appear in the rainy season, but collection in late winter helps in getting them in a naturally dried condition. Otherwise, drying may take 4-5 days for the white (and heavier) one and 2 to 3 days for the ‘red’ one.

The ‘red’ variety, otherwise known as the Mayurapankshi chhatu, is better priced (Rs.10/kg) than the white one (Rs.2/kg).

• Bark:

The Makdias are/were solely dependant on the bark of Siali from which they extract fibre and make a variety of finished products. The rates of these bark-fibre products are as below:

\(^9\) Trewia nudiflora.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Price in rupees per piece</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tupa (small basket-like thing)</td>
<td>5-6.75</td>
<td>The usual unit price is for three pieces. The rate may be as high as Rs 25 to 30 in its ‘season’ when Tupa is in great demand by the extractors of Tol(Mahul seed) through indigenous process. This being a flexible basket, the Tol pulp is put inside it and pressed to extract the oil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pagha (ready-made halter)</td>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>It may be small(for goats) or big(for cattle).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shika (hanging rope-shelf, the small ones being used domestic purposes while the large one are for carrying loads of various kinds)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Usually sold in pairs if it is the bigger one because porters need a pair to attach to both the ends of a strong stick so as to hang it on their shoulder. The demand increases in the agricultural season (for carrying manure or soil, etc.) and so is the rate which may be as high as Rs. 20-30 per pair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daudi (rope)</td>
<td>15-20</td>
<td>The demand is better during the harvesting season of paddy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the Makdias extract Siali fibre for commercial purposes, other people occasionally collect it for their own use\(^{11}\). This strength of this fibre depends on its moisture content; the drier, the weaker. So people keep it wet sometimes.

The other bark which has been exploited on a large scale during the last 13/14 years is the Pojo chhali. There are more than two varieties of Pojo of which the ‘white’ one, which turns blackish on exposure (hence some people call it Kala Pojo also), has been the most affected being in high demand than the other ones. The rates varied from 50 paise to one rupee in raw state and 3 to 5 rupees in dried/semi-dried condition. The current rate is as high as 10 to 12 rupees for the dried one.

- Malika chero:

This root of a creeping medicinal plant(\(Akanabindi\)) is used as an ingredient in the preparation of Handia, liquor prepared from fermented rice. Dried roots are sold in small bundles (approx.100 grams) at the rate of Rs.5/bundle. This plant is available all over

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\(^{10}\) A hand measure more or less equivalent to one foot.

\(^{11}\) Instead of making rope from it, they directly use it as a substitute of rope.
Similipal and its collection is not confined to the Khadias only though they are the major collectors of the same. The season of collection is usually Aswain.

- Sal- and Siali leaves:

Collection of Sal- and Siali leaves for making leaf plates or cups is comparatively a recent development in Similipal because the plate makers say that they started this business 10 to 12 years back. In Gudgudia site, mostly the Bathudi community is involved in this trade while in Sanjhilli and Jamuani (Podagad GP), etc. other communities also seem to have taken interest in it. All these places are nearer to Jashipur and the Khali traders have easy access to these areas. Moreover, the Khali-makers also carry their product as a cycle-load or head-load to which the Forest Department staff do not object.

The prices are Rs.4/- and Rs.5/- respectively for 100 pieces of Sal- and Siali leaf-plates\(^{12}\). In Podagad side, some people do not make cups and rather sell a pair of Sal leaves stitched in between (known as Pali) at the rate of Rs.10 per thousand (Pali) which are used elsewhere for cup-making.

Other minor forest products often collected for domestic consumption are edible fruits like Asadhua and Bhalia, edible seeds like that of Siali, edible leaves like Kantiada and Mathiada Saga\(^ {13}\), edible tubers like Pitalu and grasses like Sabai. These are however not collected by all or in all areas. For ex., Sabai and Hill Broom Grass are scarcely available in parts of Similipal and some people collect them for rope-making and broom-making for domestic purposes. However, in Barehipani GP and beyond, Hill Broom Grass is exploited for commercial purposes and some people in villages like Sana Makabadi reportedly make brooms (by tying the broom sticks with Siali fibre) for which they get Rs.5/- at doorstep and Rs.10/- at Jashipur.

The number of plants used for medicinal purposes is more than 500 (Subuddhi:2002). Lac is also reportedly collected from towards the Khunta side.

Besides timber and NTFP collection, occasional hunting was/is a practice in some communities (particularly, the tribals). The Makdias are very fond of Monkey-meat and killing monkeys for this purpose is an weekly affair for many of them\(^{14}\).  

\(^{12}\) The Siali plate may be 18” in diameter.  
\(^{13}\) Used by the Makdias.  
\(^{14}\) Hence the name Makdia though they identify themselves as Birhors.
The Bio-sphere Reserve covers more than 1200 villages and almost all these villages are dependent on Similipal in one way or another. The dependent population is estimated to be around 4.5 lakhs (Subuddhi:2002).

AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES:

The Mahantas and few other non-tribal communities are dependent more on agriculture than on forest produce. Among the tribals, the Bathudis are most advanced in this system although some Kolha, Khadia and other tribal families are also resorted to agricultural practices either as a primary or secondary occupation.

Paddy is the major crop followed by few others like Biri, Kolatha, etc. Banana and vegetables are also grown at many places. In absence of state-sponsored irrigation facilities people have made their own arrangements for that or have adopted crops which need less water.

In the frost-prone areas like Astakumar GP, frost(locally known as Pondu) causes damage to the Banana plants and some other crops like paddy. Even Sal forests are not spared and the damage is reportedly more if the land area has a lower moisture content.

OTHER SOURCES OF INCOME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OTHER SOURCES OF INCOME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working as agricultural labourers or in various development projects sponsored by the govt is an important source of income for many poor families. Besides, some people sell their goats, fowl and eggs in the local markets or haats.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IMPACT OF HUMAN DEPENDENCY ON THE BIO-DIVERSITY:

As one proceeds from Gudgudia towards Astakumar, village sites, cultivated fields and other non-forest projects are frequently encountered and one can see to what extent Similipal in its so-called Buffer Zone has been denuded.

As a 52-year old local resident Sri Surendra Nayak (Head Master, Gudgudia) explained, the forests of Gudgudia region have been reduced by 30% during the last 35/40 years causing a subsequent decrease in the wild life population by 50%. Deers are hardly seen now and tigers & elephants are almost absent.Similarly, Pojo trees have been destroyed by 85% while Piasal (the trade of which started in Gudgudia area after the Pojo trade declined three or four years back due to lack of resource) population has been reduced by 30-40%.

In fact, some scholars of Sambalpur University, who conducted a study in Similipal in 1985, found a remarkable dearth of the (mature) Silk Cotton tree (Simili) the abundance of which once named the forest as Similipal or Similipahar (literally meaning the hill of Simili trees).

Similipal has been more affected in its northern side than the southern part and that is how the major concentration of wild life is in the latter side. Wild dogs have become rare and even hares are no more frequently met with in the denuded areas.
The degradation of Similipal has been mostly promoted and facilitated by the non-tribal outsiders, particularly the mafias who illegally get large supplies of medicinal plants, barks and timber etc. from there. These outsiders prompted the local tribals to indulge in the large scale illegal exploitation of the forest wealth, who, due to their miserable conditions, worked for these people. They showed them (the tribals) the easier way of making money which was accepted by the latter in the absence of any other dignified options.

Besides, certain traditional practices of the local people have also been seen as a contributing factor in this degradation. For instance, Akhand Shikar or continuous mass-hunting is an annual practice which threatens the wildlife population. This is organised usually in the month of April and after performing certain rituals, the male members of the communities start the hunting expedition. The hunt is selective, i.e., elephants, tigers, wild boars, peacocks and many such species are not to be aimed at. However, being a mass-hunting expedition, it creates great chaos in the forest disturbing the wild life and is thus entirely against the strategy of habitat development for wild life. However, the interesting thing is that the original system is said to have been broken in many respects (for ex., the number of hunting days has increased) particularly by the outsiders \(^{15}\) (tribals from the neighbouring district of Singhbhum in the Jharkhand) and some of their political leaders have tried to defend their cause also.

Recent surveys reveal that although population of leopards and other wild cats have significantly increased in Similipal, the population of tiger has not increased to such extent and the reason attributed to this is that since the habitat of tiger is not totally free from human interference of various kinds, hence reproductive behaviour of this animal has been affected since tiger is very sensitive to its surroundings.

\(^{15}\) Even not all the local tribes take equal interest in this expedition. For ex. The Bathudis, who are more inclined to agriculture, have little interest in it.
Between 1992-93 and 1997-98, following cases of animal poaching have been recorded:

Elephants: 12
Sambar: 13
Wild boar: 4
Others: 7

The total number of elephants killed since 1982-83 by poachers is 59 (The Samaj, 22-10-02).

Among the faunal species facing extinction are the Hill Mynas who are reportedly sold to the smugglers by the local tribals at prices ranging between Rs.50 to 100 (The New Indian Express, 2-08-02).

**Stepstakenbythegovernmenttopreservethebiodiversity:**

By allotting various protected status to Similipal, the govt has tried to safeguard the biodiversity there. Access of the tourists have been limited to the Buffer Zone mostly and core areas have been declared as ‘no entry’ zones. Even many revenue village areas come under the ‘no entry’ zone, as in the Astakumar GP.

Picnics have been prohibited inside the Sanctuary and tourists have been forbidden from taking any kind meat. Eviction of villages in the core area has been initiated to provide an undisturbed habitat for the wild life.

Since the departmental staff are not in a position to prevent Akhand Shikar, each year the authorities take the help of military police who camp inside the forest to check the hunters.

Silvicultural operations are not undertaken and departmental extraction of timber has also been stopped so as to reduce biotic interference. Grazing has been restricted in many areas and plantations of Acacia and Eucalyptus have been raised at a number of places.

A major contribution towards the conservation of fauna in Similipal is the rehabilitation of fresh-water crocodiles or muggers. These crocodiles were virtually extinct in Similipal by 1979 when the Ramtirtha Mugger Rearing Project was started near Jashipur. The project has been successful and more than 650 mugger juveniles have been released in the streams of Similipal since then. It is believed that these crocodiles usually remain confined to their area of rehabilitation and since they are smaller then the salt-water crocodiles of Bhitarkanika, hence chances of their conflict with humans is rare.

Among other measures, salt-licks are maintained at various places for the animals and research is carried out on animal inventory and plant inventory.

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16 Source: www.sanctuaryasia.com/projecttiger/similipal.doc
The success of conservation operations inside STR can be judged from the fact that while in 1972 there were only 17\(^{17}\) tigers in Similipal, their number now is about to cross one hundred.

**Stepstakenbythegovtintheinterestofthepeople:**

The govt has started various rehabilitation projects for the evicted people and also for the landless and/or migratory tribes. Houses have been allotted to the Khadias at Gudgudia also besides areas outside Similipal.

A special development authority called Hill Khadia and Makdia Development Agency was set up in mid-1980s which started working since 1986-87. This agency has pioneered various rehabilitation projects for two of the most backward and nomadic tribes of Similipal, viz., the Khadias and the Makdias. It has also provided some alternative sources of income besides arranging for their free education and medical treatment.

Various other agencies of the govt are operating inside Similipal to provide health care services, education and other basic infrastructure to the revenue villages although many of their schemes are either inadequate or incomplete. For ex., ponds have been constructed in many villages, but are yet to be completed. Solar lights have been provided at certain places which are in defunct state. Specially-designed chullahs (that consume less fuel) and bio-gas were introduced in some areas years ago, but the attempt was not successful particularly because the local people did not find such alternatives convenient.

All the GPs have post offices and schools. The only primary health centre is located at Gudgudia and a mobile unit is working there to go to remote areas in case of emergency. Besides, DDCs (Drug Distribution Centres) have been opened at a number of places to distribute anti-malaria medicine.

Irrigation facilities have been developed at a few places like Saharpat. The World Food Programme has sponsored certain projects (like the Hatimundi Check Dam under the Integrated Microplan of Jamuani cluster of villages) and Tulu Pumps were reportedly given for collective use in villages like Jamuani, Sanjhilli, Bhodusar and Hatimundi although these are in a defunct state\(^{18}\) now.

At Jamuani-Chirosahi, we came to know that 10 quintals of Sabai grass were distributed free of cost by the authorities in three villages in June 2002, but the villagers have hardly utilised it since they find no scope for the marketing of ropes to be prepared from it.

It is not true that the Forest Department has provided most of the facilities to the people. Rather, other civil departments are active in the region since there are Panchayats

\(^{17}\) This official estimate is suspected to be very low.

\(^{18}\) One pump was provided to each of these villages and for the land less people it had no use. There was no repairing facility and thus the defunct condition.
and revenue villages. Also, politicians have facilitated the development projects due to their interest in getting votes.

**Rights and Privileges of the People:**

So far the collection of timber and NTFPs are concerned, there are no admitted rights of the people in the STR. However, they exercise these ‘rights’ to secure their livelihood and the departmental staff often ignore the same particularly if they see that the need is genuine. That is how the Khadias continue to collect Paluo even from core areas.

However, the reasons behind the conscious ignorance shown on the part of the departmental staff are not confined to humanitarian feelings but also to the following:

- Lack of necessary manpower to monitor the whole forest.
- The National Parks are still in the proposed state.
- Some of the staff reportedly receive bribe in the form of cash or kind (like, a hen).

Again, most of the regular collection activities are rather outside the core areas; so the botheration is less.

Regarding Akhand Shikar, the management plan of 1987-88 to 1996-97 says the following:

> “The local tribals may be allowed to practice this kind of shikar in some restricted manner and under regulated conditions on token payment.” (p.17)

**Impact of Restrictions on the Life and Livelihood of the Residents:**

The major contradiction being non-forest activities inside the Sanctuary area, the authorities are eager to reduce the former to the minimum. On the other hand, the villagers say that since they are inside the Sanctuary area, they can’t enjoy all the facilities that are available to their counterparts outside the Sanctuary. For ex., marriage of young boys and girls have been quite difficult since access to these villages by interested negotiators is not easier(particularly because two-wheelers are not allowed and most of the negotiators can’t afford four wheelers which again need permission). Hence, the educated mass feel that residents of the Sanctuary have lost certain freedom, thanks to the restrictions of the protected area. Otherwise, there is no great resentment on their part and it is not true that they live under constant fear of the authorities.

However, to be specific, there has been some negative impact of the restrictions on the life and livelihood the villagers of Similipal as illustrated below:

- Villages like Makabadi, Kukurbhuka and Nigirda19 in Astakumar GP could not have an irrigation project because the stream is inside the forest area that does not

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19 A village inside the core area.
come under the revenue lands and the Forest Department has not allowed diversion of water from the same.

- Beyond Gudgudia, it is almost impossible to find a ration shop or general store (not to speak of a medicine store) where one can get some of the commodities of daily use. So unless tourists take with them the necessary grocery items and vegetables, etc. they would be in great trouble inside Similipal.
- Restriction on Sal seed collection has caused a great loss to the primary collectors.

Case studies at three sites revealed the impact of the restrictions on the forest-dependent tribals as under:

1. Village: Nawna

Here, the Kolha tribes migrated as early as 1818 (as per oral traditions) from erstwhile Bihar more specifically from Singhbhum of Jharkhand today. There was only one household initially which got replicated into 65 HHs in due course of time.

Traditionally they follow different celebrations viz. maghe parab, phulbhangni, dhanmuthi, heraparab, jamunaparab etc.. They also follow other pujas such as Chelabasa, Dasain puja etc..

Chelabasa is a ceremony of vertical transfer of knowledge pertaining to use of medicinal herbs in traditional manner. The teacher, otherwise known as guru, teaches regarding various utility of different medicinal plants available with their proper identification. The number of followers otherwise disciples taking the learning process may vary and there is no upper limit to number of disciples receiving the knowledge. The disciples of older batch may also sort to revise their old wisdom. The teaching process gets started on "rahani" (13 days after Akhaya trutiya) and ends on Bijaya Dasami (on the Dusserah). The "guru" almost takes one hour everyday to teach his disciples. The place of teaching and learning process is purified with cow dung solution and incense sticks are put to fragrance the place in order to get a sense of purity. Purification with the help of cow dung is usually carried out on Sunday evening. The disciples are divided into two categories namely Dad chela (the Dad chela purifies the place with cow dung water) and Path chela (the Path chela worships the God with the help of incense sticks). A pot with the Tulshi water is sprinkled with the help mango twig on self to purify themselves. The Guru is offered with a piece of Dhoti to accept as the fees of the disciples.

In Dasain Puja, all villagers get dressed and collect rice from house to house to make a feast. Along with feast they also drink local country liquor called Handia to celebrate further.

Maghe parab is also the same with the above-mentioned Dasain Puja. It compasses the music, dance with drums and sarangi. The girls sing and the gents dance with the rhythm of the music and songs. The local liquor is distributed among the villagers and surrounding villages as well.
Phulbangni is observed when the Sal trees flower. The village sacred grove of Sal trees are made holy with proper worships and ploughing of agricultural land is restricted during this Puja. However, this Puja is held up during any birth and death within the village. Sal seeds, leaves etc. are not collected unless the Sal tree is worshipped in this Phulbangni puja. The women are not allowed for this puja and also to this place. The Puja starts at mid-day 2 pm with all participants in empty stomach.

The loss of livelihood which these people suffered due to protected area declaration are as follows:

- The number of wild animals before the declaration was more and after it's declaration their number has been declined significantly. These Kolhas were employed during the royal hunting processes which they today claim are loosing their traditional additional income due to protected area declaration.

- The locals also argue that the poaching is basically being carried out by the outside poachers for which the locals are blamed unnecessarily.

- Certain seeds such as Karanj (seeds of *Pongamia pinnata*), Tentuli (seeds of tamarind) etc are not allowed to the gate of the Similipal Tiger Reserve even though these products are collected from their own private lands with the suspicion that these products might have been collected by entering the forests.

- Similarly, there had been greater restriction on collection of certain NTFPs such as kusum seeds, khajuri (wild variety *Phoenix spp*) and its finished products such as mats, phulajhadu (Hill brooms), badhuni (thorn brooms), jhuna (Sal resin), Siali fibres (climbers of the climber *Bauhinia vahlii*) honey, arrowroot. Other agricultural produces such as sorisha (mustard), rashi (sesamum) and sakarkanda (sweet tubers) are also restricted with the view that these are cultivated in the high lands of the protected area.

- These tribes are basically the cultivators of various kinds of agricultural produces and on an average it supplements the subsistence needs of 6 months.

- The Similipal authorities have completely restricted the purchase of chemical fertiliser and normal edible salt with the view that the chemical fertilisers may be used by the local people to toxicate the running water used by the wild animals, and salt may be used to create unauthorised salt pits for attracting wild animals for hunting purpose.

- Due to the restriction made by the STR authorities most of the NTFPs are consumed locally and rarely these produces are sold now which once added some livelihood opportunities to these inhabitants.

- The tubers are also collected for self-consumption only. Jhuna (Sal resin) is collected from the other ancient tribals cohabiting since long. The Kolhas also
many times used to act as the middlemen in trading the Jhuna across the Similipal boundaries which they now feel deprived of. Usually the Jhuna were collected from the interior of the STR and sold at Jashipur. The Jhuna were usually purchased @ Rs. 25 to 30 per Kg which is sold at Jashipur @ Rs. 30 to 35 per Kg. This is transported to Baripada and sold there @ Rs. 80 per Kg. This is the rate for pure Jhuna. But on the other the impure Jhuna is sold @ Rs. 40 per Kg at Baripada.

- The village common lands were used for plantations which hardly benefit the local people.
- Interior villages such as Nawna face the problem of transport as the surplus agricultural produces are not being carried to out of the STR boundaries. Carrying of surplus agricultural produces are restricted to cycle loads only which limits their income opportunities.
- The annual ritual hunting (akhand shikar) has been very much limited due to the establishment of Similipal Tiger Reserve.

2. Village: Durdura (Makdia Colony)

This is a rehabilitated colony of native nomadics known as Makdias who are professional Siali fibre users. They hunt monkeys for their meat for their consumption. These poor people have been affected by the restrictions in the following ways:

- The nomadic attitude of this tribe has been severely restricted after their rehabilitation programmes outside of the Similipal Tiger Reserve.
- The Makdia youths still retain the collection of Siali climbers clandestinely into the STR. Adequate movement is however not allowed restricting their livelihood options.
- The STR authorities have not justified with the amount of landholdings being provided to the Makdias for alternative sources of livelihood opportunities could have been taken up by these nomadics otherwise. Each household has been assigned with only 4 decimal of landholdings which is not adequately fertile.
- After declaration of STR, and inadequate staffs to add with, illegal timber felling still continues and this reduces the number of available Siali climbers within the forest thus reducing the raw materials of the sustenance of these nomadics. People of this colony are painstakingly moving within and around the STR itself and ultimately they may have to move very long distances to collect handful of climbers to process it. The Khadia and Makdia Development Authorities has supplied jutes as the substitute but these tribes say that they are not the proper substitute for the Siali climbers to get the same processed product. The products such as the Pagha is sold at the local market @ Rs. 5.00 per piece (big one) and
Rs. 5.00 per pair (small ones). The selling price of Sika ranges from Rs. 12.00 to Rs. 18.00 at different agricultural periods.

- Goat loans were given to individuals 2-3 years back and some financial support was provided @Rs. 500.00 per member to members of SHG group formed within this colony. This loan was even though provided but it was inadequate to meet any enterprise it was supposed to.

- A pair of bullocks was provided to the colony to take care of their agricultural needs but hardly it could meet the need of alternative income generating sources as these nomadics are not acquainted with agricultural practices and the land provided them was quite inadequate.

- Interestingly, getting no proper options to earn for themselves, few households left the colony and migrated to other industrial sites namely the Joda, Barbil and other cities such as Baripada in search of jobs to work as labourers.

- Even though it seems given the miserable conditions of these tribes at their place, the STR authorities are liberal in collection of Siali climbers unofficially; they try to collect some bribe from these poor fellows in terms of kind i.e. some climbers for their domestic use.

3. Village: Podagarh (Khadia Basti)

The Khadia tribe primarily inhabiting in this colony are primarily dependent on few selected NTFPs such as honey, jhuna (Sal resin), paluo (arrowroot), atha (gums), tassar cocoons, Sal leaves and Siali leaves. They have been rehabilitated in this colony since long. Their rehabilitation has marginalised them from these forest products drastically. Alternatively they were not provided with any landholding for cultivation. They were provided with only the homestead land to live with.

The collection of NTFPs figures out to the following:

- Jhuna : 8-10 kgs / week.(collected for three months)
- Mahu: 10 Kgs / week (collected for three months)
- Paluo: 6-7 kgs (only collected for 15 days in a year)

While the Khadias were within the STR, it was easier for them to collect the forest products in shorter span of time. But after declaration, they have to walk into or around the core zone of the STR which takes even two days time. They have to visit to Nawna, Barehipani, Nigirda. The Khadias have to camp for the nights there to collect the forest products; more specifically, during the collection of arrowroots. The collected NTFPs are sold locally at Jashipur.

Presently other tribes such as Majhis, Kolhas have also taken interest to collect the NTFPs which usually the Kolhas used to collect and sell.
Khadias also used to catch few birds such as myna, parrots, local bird known as *Kochilakhai* and sold them at the local haats. After declaration of the STR, this has come to a halt.

The other implications are:

- Due to loss of significant forest based income sources, and absence of cultivable lands, they are turning to be the agricultural labours for their living options.

- The Khadias after being removed from the STR, they used to continue their livelihood dependency on wage labour. During the summer, there is hardly any wage labour for them. Hence, they try to collect the forest products at this lean period. Restrictions to enter the forest hinder their living opportunities throwing them to the corners.

- The STR authorities seem to be liberal in collecting the forest products unofficially but these tribes get exploited by them by collecting bribes in terms of 0.5 – 1 kg of forest products collected by the Khadias.

- Dried twigs, dead branches and few low valued timber were collected from the forest and sold @ Rs. 30.00/bundle which has been restricted now.

- The Khadias get scared to enter the Similipal forest as the newly trained watching elephant brought from Tamilnadu named Mahendra may catch hold them in the forest.

4. Village: Banabasa

This is a Khadia colony rehabilitated 10 years back near Jashipur. These tribals were evicted from the core zone village Kabataghai. These tribals were made with false promises that they would be given with canal for irrigation, school for education, land upto 5 acres for cultivation, electricity, primary health centre. A permission of one week would be allowed for collection of NTFPs from the forests of STR but it was not fulfilled.

The loss of livelihood due to protected area declaration was as under:

- The verbal permission of NTFP collection did not withstand after the Khadia tribes were out of their village.

- Later, the STR authorities after noticing them within the forest threatened them to put behind the bar.
• Their original landholdings (Patta lands) at Kabataghai were sold to the STR authorities @ Rs. 2000.00 / acre. This amount was deposited at bank account. But it was not substituted duly with proper landholdings at the rehabilitated area.

• The collection of NTFPs viz. jhuna, mahu, malika chera, paluo, kusum seeds which were collected and sold to the middlemen (who used to enter the forest) are now restricted completely.

• False assurances were made and no promises met with. Earlier the Khadia communities were promised with goat loans, fowl loans etc but nothing was fulfilled. People of Khadia tribe claim that the Hill Khadia Makdia Development Agency provided the Makdias with jute as the substitute but no such substitute was given them. The district collector was approached seeking assistance through some income generating schemes like leaf plate stitching, but no requests were listened.

• These Khadia tribes being near to other agricultural villages although learnt how to go for wage labour but for them it is restricted to the agricultural season only.

• The Khadias also treated as the trespassers while collecting the arrowroot.

• The income figures from the NTFPs (during the collection season while within the STR) of these tribes were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NTFPs</th>
<th>Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mahu (honey)</td>
<td>Rs. 200/day (if available)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jhuna (sal resin)</td>
<td>Rs. 300 – 400/ week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paluo (arrowroot)</td>
<td>Rs. 600 per season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>malika chera</td>
<td>Rs. 200 per week</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After their eviction, the income from mahu and paluo has been drastically reduced and absent often. The income from Sal resin is reduced by 75% than before.

• During acute financial crunch, the utensils are mortgaged and govt. authorities never support them during these lean time.

• The land demarcation homestead land not made yet. Whatever land has been “shown” to these tribes, is not fit for paddy cultivation at all. These Khadias cultivate vegetables very infrequently.

• Their existing NTFP based livelihood system is based on stitching of leaf plates and Pali (two leaves stitched together) which are made up of Sal or Siali leaves. Sal leaves are exclusively used by these tribes to prepare Palis and Siali leaves are used by them to prepare leaf plates. Pali is sold @ Rs. 10.00 per 1000 palis and Siali leaf plates are sold @ Rs. 50.00 per 1000 plates. Siali leaves are collected far off from their homestead lands. As per them, they have to walk
down to almost 12 kms to get some Siali leaves. Their restricted access to the STR and depletion of the resources adds further anguish to their life and livelihood system.

- During the collection of honey the Khadias have to trespass into the core zone. They have the fear that at any time they may be caught by the authorities and hence they do it secretly.

- The Khadias are of the perception that the number of wild animals were abundant (they used to see at least 3-4 wild animals a day) which has been reduced now. Hence, they are of the opinion that the forest can best be managed only when it would be given to them for management.

5. Village: Uthani Sahi Makdia Colony, Baliposhi (Udala Block)

This colony rehabilitates some Makdia families who have suffered in the following ways:

- The houses being made by the govt. authorities have been made with low grade materials which after few years are broken. The Makdias do not have any financial capacity to repair. They in this regard have met with their respective authorities to make a repair of their broken houses but their request went in vain. Hence, finding no other way, they are planning to go back to their old traditional practice. This would lead them confrontations with STR authorities.

- There has been no permission from the STR authorities to enter to the forest of Similipal. Permission could have assured them some income from traditional means. As per the Makdias’ perception, it could have been better if they could have been rehabilitated within the STR for retaining their traditional income source.

- Selective support by govt agencies to this community in different villages viz. Kendumundi, Bangiriposhi etc. has distressed them further and they feel marginalised among their own groups.

- There has been no water source for this colony. Even though promised before for a colony pond, it is yet to be fulfilled for them. A well dug for them has inadequate to meet the needs of the rehabilitated persons. It gets dried due to inappropriate depth and its position: as the entire colony is in the uplands than surrounding other villages, it becomes easier for the water level to go down during summer.

- One villager of this colony mentioned that they were supplied with the legal license to collect Siali climbers within the forests for their livelihood. Hence, they were able to make free movements within forests including the existing Similipal forests also. It was abolished after it.
The monkey hunting has been banned. But eating of monkey is still preferred as part of their food habit. They also used to collect tuber namely *Pitaalu*. Due to restriction, it has not been collected substantial amount.

The *Makdias* are not provided with govt. loans. Nobody of this colony has been issued with govt.’s consumer card to purchase rice, sugar, kerosene at subsidised rate.

*Makdia* community of this colony has been facing a lot of problems after getting out of the STR. *Makdias* are not acquainted with the alternative options they had to face. They are not agricultural labourers. Change of life style to this mode has not enabled to get their daily minimum income. Further more they are not skilled labour as well. They cannot be hired for this purpose. This community can at best work as the labourers in govt.’s developmental work such as road construction etc.

People of colony feel that no alternative to their traditional forest based livelihood system would help them unless they are suitably taken care of by the government.

6. Ambadiha: people’s perception with a difference

This colony has been established 6 years back at a distance of 2 kms from Udala, Mayurbhanj district. It consists of 31 families out of which 23 were settled 6 years back and 8 other families were made just 6 months back. During the first phase, *Bathudis* and *Khadias* were settled. During the last phase, *Majhi* and *Kolhas* have been settled. The *Bathudis* and *Khadias* of Jenabil village and Majhis and Kolhas from Kabatghai village have been evacuated to settle down here.

The loss to their livelihood due to protected area declaration has been as under:

- The Bathudis were practicing multi-crop system within the STR but evacuating them from the STR has rendered them from this facility. They used to cultivate paddy, mustard, sesameum, ragi, sweet tubers, *Gudulu* (grains collected from native grass, that is eaten as the substitute of paddy during scarcity) and maize etc. The land provided them is not good for these crops and they are only able to cultivate the single crop. Often it is the land supplied to them is not adequately irrigable.

- The amount of paddy harvested is sufficient for 6 months. This was not felt while within the core area.

- People get scared to enter into STR now. The collection of NTFPs is restricted only to religious purpose only. They do it clandestinely.
Interestingly, the Ambadiha settlers also see some advantages of their eviction, as follows:

- Health and education facilities could be accessed at proper time which was lacking within the STR. Given this facility the remaining villagers of these villages are interested to come out of their respective villages to avail these facilities (it is to be noted in contrast to these that some of the villagers of Kabatghai are also rehabilitated at Banabasa – as mentioned earlier, they prefer to go back to the core zone due to inadequate facilities provided them for livelihood support). Providing proper facilities would definitely help them to look into alternative hopeful living options.

- Besides the above, being nearer to the Udala town, they are able to get ample of wage labour which they usually get almost every day. The locals also trust them to provide them grocery whenever necessary.

- Despite inadequate paddy production, the rest of the year is supplemented by wage labour.

- They are no more interested to go back to Jenabil due these facilities.

- The Khadias lost the collection of NTFPs after evacuation, but the wage of Rs. 50.00 / day has helped them to get substituted alternatively and substantially.

**Scope of involving people in the protection & management of biodiversity:**

The authorities have introduced the JFM scheme in certain areas, but as one can see in the Jamuani cluster of villages, this scheme is practically a failure and the reasons are many.

On the other hand, the local tribals (excepting a few groups like the Makdias and the Christians) have a long history of maintaining sacred groves of Sal known under various names in different communities. Although many such groves have been lost or reduced to their minimum due to lack of maintenance and absence of plantation activities, their presence in some villages is a hope to rely on the credibility of the people in the conservation of forests.
**People’s protected area inside the government protected area**

The Sal or Jahira are sacred groves of the tribals of Similipal from which no harvesting is allowed unless for some community religious rituals. No body can take leaves from the trees therein and salvage timber remains virtually untouched. The priest or Dehuri is the authority who directs the community regarding the use of the salvage timber for some special purpose. One is not supposed to enter the Sal with shoes and with an impure body/mind and entry of women is totally restricted. There are no boundary walls, but the tribals observe the rituals with great faith. That is why even the feudal rulers instructed that these traditional rules should not be violated, even though the forests belonged to them.

The tribals were originally very much in harmony with the forest and wild life because forest was every thing for them and their interaction with it was guided by various religious beliefs. For ex., the Khadias see the elephant as their Thakur (god) and explain that the elephant is a great friend of theirs since it creates new paths inside the dense and virtually inaccessible forests. They call it Budha and believe that if they don’t use this term inside the forest and call it by its original name (Haati), then it would certainly hear them talking about itself.

These tribals had a firm belief that unless they hurt any animal, it would not hurt them. Again, they also believed that since their dependency on forests was genuine, hence the gods would protect them from wild beasts. Unfortunately, the tusk-mafias and smugglers of animal skins have motivated some of these brave people to kill the animals even through poisoning.

Some of the local social activists are trying to ensure the involvement of people in the protection of forests and wild life. Sri Surendra Nayak of Gudgudia organised awareness programmes entitled “Jungala Banchile Jana Banchibe” (literally meaning, man’s sustenance depends on the sustenance of the forest itself), but some timber smugglers could not take it easily. Hence, they were advised to restrict their operations to the more interior parts of the forest.

A local NGO CREFTDA is planning to promote the awareness of conservation through the tribal medicine men (known as Raulia) who are very much acquainted with the value of the local bio-diversity and who have influence on the people also.

In 2002, the Director personally took initiative to form what is known as sabuja bahini (green brigade) in some villages of the fringe areas and buffer zone of the STR. Since there was no fund available for this purpose, some money is diverted from the fund received from Govt of India for the Biosphere Reserve.

Initially, 20 such groups have been planned to be formed of which 10 belonged to the Baripada Forest Division and 10 to the Karanjia & Rairangpur Forest Divisions. The number has increased now.
The sabuja bahini was basically formed to help the authorities who faced problem in protecting the resources due to shortage of staff. However, they are not meant to be a protection force exactly though some of them do need arms and ammunitions for better and effective work. The authorities have not encouraged them to be a protection force because they don’t want to get involved into any litigation caused by bloodshed (between the bahini members and the culprits). Their precaution is based on the fact that legal framework does not authorise the bahini members (and even the general staff of the STR) to engage themselves in armed conflict with the poachers/smugglers. The bahini members therefore limit their activities to motivating people, searching suspected people and informing the authorities about any suspicious activity. They are a patrolling party who just spare part of their leisure time for a noble cause.

The sabuja bahinis are still in a primitive stage of their activities and a formal institutionalisation is yet to be done. However, they are covered under the JFM scheme since the authorities believe that a new institution created outside the JMF arrangement would increase difficulties. At the same time, there is almost no scope for benefit sharing. The authorities have avoided giving them any assurance for a financial - or other benefit particularly because the arrangement is not a funded one and secondly, any provocation might create problem in future. The only thing which the members get is food when they go with the authorities for extinguishing forest fire, etc..

The formation of sabuja bahini is said to be quite successful in its mission particularly in areas where they are sincerely active. Cases of timber smuggling have been reduced due to their initiatives and they also help in stopping akhand shikar.

The only thing, which the authorities have given them, is identity card, which helps them get a feeling of being a part of the Forest Department. Giving uniforms to them is not possible due to financial limitations.

Khasadiha and Banianasa are some of the villages where sabjua bahini has been formed. Women are also said to be taking part in the activities of the bahini at some places.²⁰

At Nawna, people say that during the princely period the Sardar (local head) used to take the responsibility of collecting various local taxes for forest management. He used to take the leadership towards protecting forests from forest fires, restricting unlimited hunting and prohibiting the unlimited timber extraction.

As per their perception, if the same forest is allowed to them for protection, they can manage much better manner and they feel assured that the number of wild animals would be definitely increased. They say categorically that while the there was no responsibility bestowed with the FD, wild animals used to come to their habitations.

²⁰ All the information furnished here on sabuja bahini has been gathered from a personal communication with the Director, STR excepting for their need of arms and ammunitions which was sourced from a news telecast on E-TV (Oriya).
Regarding the joint protected area management, they wish to be a part of this joint management strategy but equally prefer to be paid with some remuneration and the legitimacy of the FD.

There exists a very loose informal forest protection committee which was formed without any financial support and proper methods (i.e. with no written approach). This was determined through a cricket match jointly organised 3GPs namely Gudgudia, Barehipani and Astakumar Gram Panchayats.

Emerging issues:

The physical conflict between man and animals in Similipal seems to be a small issue in comparison to the conflict between rights of the people and rules of the Sanctuary/National Park. Some of these major issues are as follows:

- Supreme court decision:
The SC has directed the government to evict all the occupants of forest land (particularly if the occupation is after 1980) and accordingly, those who have not been recorded as pre-'80 occupants are to be evicted from Similipal even if it is in the Buffer Zone.

- Inadequate rehabilitation measures:
The rehabilitation measures have not been satisfactory and many rehabilitated families have been left in lurch either due to lack of adequate and/or timely compensation or due to poor infrastructure facilities at the rehabilitation centres failing to ensure their livelihood.

- Mafia:

There have been organised smuggling of the forest wealth of Similipal and the authorities have not been successful to eliminate the mafia network working behind the same.

- Pressure on resource:

There has been increasing pressure on the local resources due to increase in population and also, increased illegal activities and this has created a kind of mutual distrust among the tribal communities. For ex., the Khadias claim that they were introduced to the Pojo trade by the Kolhas at a time when most of the Pojo trees had already been exploited by the latter. They say that the Kolhas are their major competitors in the collection of honey, jhuna and gum and that, they themselves are lagging behind the Kolhas in this collection due to the dominance of the latter.

- Tenant timber operations:

Unscrupulous timber contractors are reportedly exploiting the timber of trees from tenants’ holdings often underpaying the innocent and ignorant tree owners for the same and this has threatened not only the village resources (of trees) but also there is enough
possibility of timber smuggling from the forests by misusing the permits obtained against tenants’ timber extraction.

**EVICTION:**

As per the Management Plan of 1987-88 to 1996-97, eviction of the villagers residing inside and close to the core area of STR is necessary due to the following reasons:

- To reduce man-animal conflict.
- To release the cultivated – and revenue lands to be added to the wild life habitat.(p.28)

Besides, the objective has also been to eliminate the scope of organised poaching and smuggling by outsiders whom the villages inside the core area allegedly harbour.

Accordingly, eviction process started during the latter half of 1980s; but it has only been partially successful since the agriculturist inhabitants of the villages to be shifted, who had fertile cultivated lands there, were not willing to leave the place (despite assurances for compensation) and the authorities found it quite difficult to persuade all of them. Repeated efforts succeeded in shifting of 30 families from Kabataghai and 11 from Jamunagarh, to the Kapand rehabilitation colony; and 23 families of Jenabil to Ambadiha colony. In early April 2003, 8 more tribal families shifted from Kabataghai, to the Ambadiha colony after which the number of families that remained to be shifted came down to 9 at Kabataghai and 68 in other three villages(Jenabil,Bakua and Jamunagarh). The authorities claimed that the families who shifted to rehabilitation colonies, voluntarily opted for that (after an ‘attractive’ rehabilitation package was declared for them) (*The Times of India*. 7-4-03, p.4).

**REHABILITATION:**

There are various agencies involved in the rehabilitation of the evicted people and also, of the migratory Makdias. The most important of them has been the Hill Khadia and Makdia Development Agency (HKMDA) which often operates independently and among other agencies, ITDA can be named.

The rehabilitation centres are situated in the periphery zone of Similipal. The status of this rehabilitation project is reflected in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of rehabilitation</th>
<th>Number of families rehabilitated</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kapand (near Jashipur)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Khadias from Kabataghai &amp; Jamunagarh villages (2nd Core).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durdura (near Jashipur)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Makdias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Block</td>
<td>Population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambadiha</td>
<td>Udala block</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kendubani</td>
<td>Karanjia block</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattani</td>
<td>Bissoyee block</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, as one can see at Kapand, a number of houses are deserted with the occupant Khadias having left for Similipal almost permanently. And the reason is that these forest-dependent people found it difficult to have access to the products which they used to collect for their livelihood and while some tried to cope with the situation some how (they adopted alternatives like going to the digging grounds of Paluo in groups, camping there for three weeks or more and returning with the processed product), others just abandoned the houses and went back to Similipal. A preliminary estimate shows that by eviction these people suffered 40% loss in their annual income from forest products.

As the authorities themselves confessed, when the Kapand project was started; the Khadias were assured that they would be allotted two acres of cultivable land per family. However, without any such allotment they were rehabilitated and the authorities could not succeeded in fulfilling their assurances because the area where cultivable lands were to be allotted was under encroachment of other people. The situation is same even after 15 years though the process of land acquisition on behalf of the rehabilitated Khadias is said to be nearly complete now.

At Durdura, the first nine families have been allotted 54 decimal land (total) and the other nine families who came later have been allotted 90 decimal land. This difference has reportedly not caused any conflict among the group. These lands are mostly used for Cashew cultivation (facilitated by the govt agencies) and the Makdias get the financial benefit accrued from the annual auction of Cashew. Some people reportedly cultivate crops like Kolatha, Biri and Maka.

Among other livelihood options provided, Khadias in Podagad and Badajhilli etc. have been given bee-keeping boxes free of cost while training for Khali making and sewing have been given in Palguda, Thakurguda etc. in addition to Podagad and Badajhilli.

Similarly, the Makdias have been provided Jute to use as a substitute of Siali fibre. The authorities claim that they provide Jute free of cost through women’s SHG groups and a portion of the income thus generated is deposited in the members’ passbooks. It is not known to what extent the Makdias understand this arrangement because they said that they pay Rs.8 per kg of Jute.
However, one thing is clear that even after rehabilitation the forest-dependant tribes are still depending on the forests for the raw materials although access and availability has been difficult for them.

**Gender and Equity Issues:**

Gender biasness is distinctly observed in a number of cases like:

- **Labour payment:** While the govt rates of daily wage are equal (Rs.50/-) for man and woman, local rates are Rs.25/man and Rs.20 or 22/woman. Payment is also made in kind (paddy) and in that case also the disparity prevails.
- **Worship at Sarna or sacred groves:** The women are not allowed to enter the groves.
- **Collection of forest produce:** Women do not collect gums, resins or honey nor do they go for timber cutting. Similarly, digging the rhizomes of Paluo is not considered as a women’s job.
- **Primary processing:** Certain kinds of primary processing are considered as women’s job. For ex., processing of Paluo rhizomes.

Such biasness evolved through centuries of traditional roles and practices based on local circumstances and difference in physical capabilities. Further, some other factors also add to this like the marriage of Khadia women of the plains (outside Similipal) to the Hill Khadias of Similipal. Having come from the plain areas, these women are less confident in taking part in activities inside forest.

There are some activities in which men and women take part equally. For instance, in Kumbhari village (near Gudgudia) all are involved in the collection and processing of Sal- and Siali leaves for plate-making.

As regards equity, the disparity among the tribals is emerging gradually because communities allege each other of exploiting the forest wealth more. Some Mohantas once worked like middlemen between the tribals and the agencies exploiting timber or other minor forest produce, but now the situation has changed a lot with increasing awareness among the tribals.

**Man-Animal Conflict:**

There have been cases of human deaths by tiger and elephants inside Similipal. Most of the cases of tiger attack happened between 1973 and 1982 when more than six deaths were reported. Similarly, a few persons have been injured or killed by elephant attack also. However, the number of such cases is not high and such kind of conflict inside Similipal is not a regular phenomenon.

There have been reports of elephants coming to the villages around Jashipur and attacking men. The Forest Department took certain measures to divert these elephants to the jungles (The Dharitri, 4-6-02). Some of these elephants were supposed to be coming...
from the forests of the neighbouring state of Jharkhand (which is a regular though temporary phenomenon) (The Prajatantra, 21-5-02).

**CATTLE-LIFTING:**

Although grazing is banned inside the core area, still the domestic cattle occasionally stray into the tiger habitat for grazing, thus causing the major cases of cattle lifting. Between 1974-75 and 1985-86, the total number of cattle killed in such cases was 219.

**CHANGING MINDS:**

The Mohantas were once assimilated within the tribal culture(particularly that of the Santhals since, it is said, these were the people who provided them shelter when the Mohantas entered Orissa as refugees after being tortured by the Muslims) that they were hardly distinguished from the tribals. For instance they had their sacred groves. However, during the early decades of 20th century there was an attempt on their part to revive their original culture and status (they say they are Kurmi Kshytriyas) and with the help and guidance of a Brahmin priest named Radhakanta Acharya they succeeded in this endeavour. Now they refuse to be included in the list of any scheduled caste/tribe and are well distinguished from the tribals in their habits and cultural pattern.

Similarly, the Bathudis have gradually abandoned many of their traditional habits/systems and have tried to become elite tribals.

And now, with the partial success of rehabilitation projects of the government, increased exposure to the outer world and increased pressure on the decreasing natural resources, the Makdias and the Khadias are also showing signs of adopting new lifestyle at a number of places. The Makdias of Durdura appeared interested to permanently settle in that rehabilitation centre. Similarly, some of the Khadias of Gudgudia have decided to move to Chandraposhi for permanent settlement where the authorities have assured them to provide cultivable lands.

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- Sri Gama Singh Khuntia, Balarampur, Astakumar.
- Sri Mohan Sundar Soren, Jamuani-Chirosahi.
- Sri Nalindar Dehuri, Sanjhilli.

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21 Source: *Karanjia Diary*, pp.20-26
22 recently, some of them however demanded this special status.
• Sri Nilamani Swain, Hill Khadia and Makdia Development Agency, Jashipur.
• Sri Sudarshan Mohanty, Barehipani.
• Sri Surendra Nayak, Gudgudia.
• Villagers of Gudgudia, Kumbhari, Durdura

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