

## **Quadrant I- Transcript**

**Programme:** Bachelor of Education -Year II Semester VII (Integrated B. Ed)

**Subject:** Education

**Paper Code:** Edu 13

**Paper Title:** Environmental Education

**Unit:** 4- Environmental Protection and Conservation Initiatives in India

**Module Name:** Project Tiger, Project Rhino, Project Elephant, achievements and challenges

**Module No.** 24

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### **Project Tiger, Project Rhino, Project Elephant, achievements and challenges**

Welcome to this lecture on environmental education. Today we will learn about the environmental protection and conservation initiatives in India and in particular we will look at the Project Tiger, Project Rhino, Project Elephant- their achievements and their challenges.

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In this lecture we will see about the projects in India the short, the background to each of them, their objectives, their achievements and their challenges.

At the end of this lecture, we should be able to explain briefly the context in which the projects were started, list the achievements of Project Tiger, Project, Rhino and Project Elephant. You also should be able to explain some of the challenges faced by each of these three projects.

Project Tiger.

The objective of the Project Tiger was to protect the Royal Bengal Tigers. We all know that the royal Bengal tiger is a national animal of India, and so since it was facing extinction we had to take some serious measures to protect them.

Now, tigers are considered to be umbrella species. That is because the tiger comes at the end of the food chain, and so if the tiger is healthy, it shows that the food chain is healthy.

Project Tiger was launched in Jim Corbett National Park in Uttarakhand under the leadership of the then Prime Minister of India, Mrs Indira Gandhi in 1973. What were the reasons for the falling number of tigers. First of all, habitat fragmentation and habitat destruction. That's because in the name of development, a lot of their wild habitat was destroyed to build... construct roads, railways and so on. There is incessant poaching. That is because many parts of the tiger, especially the bones, are very valuable in Chinese medicine.

Then we have the invasive species, species that are not indigenous to a place but who compete with the indigenous plants and animals for space as well as for nutrition.

What are the achievements of Project Tiger?

Because of Project Tiger, we were able to conserve large areas of our natural resources.

And we were also able to eliminate tiger poaching. Because of the project tiger, we were able to increase the tiger reserves and so today we have 51 tiger reserves in India.

In 1972 there were only about 1200 tigers in all, but in 2018 the population now stands at

2967. So now India is home to about 70% of the world's tiger population, which is quite an achievement.

The Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, which was amended in 2006. This was helpful because it helped to create the National Tiger Conservation Authority and the other body that is a Tiger and other Endangered Species Crime Control Bureau. Both helped to improve the tiger population and wildlife resources.

India makes conservation and protection efforts by collaborating with other countries as well.

So much so that the government is also willing to donate Tiger Cubs to international communities and also provide assistance in providing development and conservation facilities to improve their tiger population.

What are the challenges that India faces?

First of all, extensive poaching which is actually illegal hunting for trade.

Economic development, which is often at the cost of environment because of unsustainable development.

Conflict with humans. Now land is a very limited resource. Just 3% of our total landmass is protected by forest cover and so we, the citizens need to have a shift in our mindset.

To be fair to the animals so that they have their share of their habitat and also favorable government policies toward sustainable development.

The Foreigners Act of 2006 recognizes the rights of some forest dwelling communities in

forest areas, and so the habitat of the tiger is disturbed. There is also abuse of power by some authorities who should have been safeguarding the tigers, but who sometimes get involved in the unfair trade.

Next we have the Project Elephant or other achievements and challenges of this project?

The project elephant was a central government sponsored scheme which was launched in February 1992. The objectives of project elephant were to ensure the welfare of domesticated elephants. That is because there are many elephants which are domesticated but are exploited. They're made to do a lot of work, but not given enough food and care. Also, to protect elephants, their habitats and elephant corridors. Because of habitat destruction and fragmentation, elephants are not able to move from one habitat to the other, and so they have to be some stretches of land that can enable joining or connecting the two or more habitats so that the elements can move from one habitat to the other.

Thirdly, the prevention of human elephant conflict. Because of habitat destruction and humans encroaching in their wild habitat the elephants have no place to go. And so when they come intruding into human settlements, then very often the elephants get killed.

What are the achievements then of Project Elephant?

First of all elephant reserves in India have increased to about 32. There was also a campaign that was launched by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, which is called Hathi Mere Sathi. This was in partnership with the Wildlife Trust of India at the Elephant Aid Ministerial

meeting held in Delhi in 2011.

Now why was this done?

This campaign mainly aimed at increasing awareness among people and developing friendship, companionship between people and elephants, the eight countries that met were, beside India, Botswana, the Republic of Congo, Indonesia, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Thailand.

In all now we have 88 elephant corridors, which is quite an achievement. The population of the elephants in 2007 was estimated to be 27,682 whereas in 2012 barely five years later it was estimated to be 31,368. But unfortunately in 2017 we see that the number has fallen much below the number that was estimated in 2007.

So what are the challenges that the project faces? Just like the other project tiger, the elephant population is threatened by habitat loss because of road construction, building of resorts and things like that, and also poaching. Because the task of the male elephant which fetches ivory is brings in a lot of money. There's also insufficient area for grazing grounds for the elephants.

Next we have the Indian Rhino Vision, 2020.

The objective of this vision, 2020, was to increase the number of the greater one horned rhinoceros or the Great Indian rhinoceros to at least 3000 in Assam by the year 2020. Now it has to be remembered that most of the rhinoceros population used to be in Assam and Nepal.

Now, it's because they were on the brink of extinction. There were seven protected areas that were identified for the project. They were the Kaziranga National Park, the Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary, the Orange National Park, and so on. The Indian Rhino Vision 2020 was launched in 2005, which was a collaborative effort between various organizations, but in particular, the World Wildlife Fund India and the International Rhino Foundation. They have certain achievements like the population of Indian Rhinos in 1900 and five was barely 75 but today it is much much more. In 2012 they were over 2700 but in 2020 the estimate was the objective was to reach 3000, but went well beyond 3000 to 3600.

Interestingly, it is the only large mammal species in Asia to be down listed from the endangered to the vulnerable list in the IUCN Red List of 2008. Now, the rhino translocations, adopted by the Indian Rhino Vision 2020 program, was the first ever and the biggest conservation successes in India. The translocations required the rhinos to be transported from one habitat to another. And that had to be done very carefully. Now translocations were done because there is a danger in the densely populated habitat of interbreeding, so translocation helped in breeding a healthy population to safeguard from poaching and natural calamities like fire, floods and epidemics.

So what are the challenges the population of rhinos needs to be monitored because of poaching, poaching because, that one on rhino horn has different uses. Most of all it is used for medicine and it is a status symbol. There is also insufficient area for the rhinos to graze.

Besides that, there is habitat loss and human rhino conflicts, as in the other projects. The population density and genetic diversity is a challenge because when they are densely populated then inbreeding takes place and the quality of the offspring decreases.

For your further reading, I have several references for you and online resources. You can check them out.

Thank you.