

Education as a Catalyst in the Fight Against Poaching

Jyotika Gandhi*

Reminiscing about my childhood, I vividly remember walking into a grand hotel lobby with my family, to spend my summer vacation. I was mesmerised by the hotel's décor—the high ceiling, the sparkling chandelier and the stained-glass windows made us gasp! But what grabbed everyone's attention was a massive tiger rug spread across the glossy floor. Its glimmering eyes seemed to stare everyone lifelessly in a quiet rage. The wall was also adorned with a stag's antlers, beneath which two crossed guns and a dazzling showcase filled with trophies took centre stage.

At the time, I was too young to understand the gravity of the situation. However, when I recently revisited the same place, I noticed some remarkable changes. The tiger rug had been replaced by a huge handwoven carpet with intricate

designs made by a local artisan. The stag's head had been swapped for the beautiful tribal paintings and wooden carvings inspired by wildlife.

The transformation was striking. What once symbolised dominance over nature had been replaced by the celebration of culture and conservation of nature. The shift was not just about aesthetics—it was the result of a larger movement driven by education, awareness and evolving social values.

Luxury hotels and resorts, once known for showcasing poached items (animal skin rugs, ivory ornaments, etc.), are changing their practices. Not only this, but they are now embracing conservation by promoting local handicrafts or partnering with wildlife organisations.

This transformation has been fueled by growing awareness of wildlife

*Junior Project Fellow, Department of Elementary Education, NCERT, New Delhi-110016

conservation, both through formal education and informal initiatives. Conservation programmes, wildlife documentaries and school curricula have all played a significant role in promoting respect for the nature. Even communities living near wildlife habitats are aware of ecological and economic benefits of conservation.

HOW EDUCATION HAS TRANSFORMED HOSPITALITY PRACTICES

1. *Raising Awareness about Wildlife Conservation*

Education has increased awareness among people about the importance of wildlife. It has sensitised people to the moral and environmental consequences of killing animals for trophies. They have understood that displaying animal horns, carpets, or jewellery made from their skin/body parts symbolises destruction rather than prestige.

2. *Promoting Ethical Tourism*

As education has spread, especially among tourists there has been a shift in their preferences. Many travellers now prioritise eco-conscious and ethical hospitality practices. Hotels and resorts have responded by moving away from using animal decors to locally crafted artwork.

3. *Sensitising Children through Curriculum*

Young learners, who are the future of our society, are quick to

absorb new knowledge. When they read about the concept of ‘extinct’ and ‘endangered’ species in their textbooks, they develop empathy towards the voiceless creatures in need of protection. The awareness that is instilled in the minds of children through education has resulted in a huge decline in such businesses. Zoos are no longer filled with the giggles of children and are no more a favourite spot for school picnics. Even textbooks have strictly removed the content that involves animal torture in any way.

4. *Pressure on the Hospitality Industry*

Educated consumers and conservation groups have pressured the hospitality industry to abandon practices associated with poaching. Social media and review platforms enable guests to publicly criticise the display of poaching ‘trophies’ or ‘guns’, leading to reputational damage. Motivated by awareness, reputation preservation and the avoidance of significant penalties, these entities are now adhering strictly to regulations.

5. *Animals Are No More a Source of Entertainment*

An advancement in education and increased awareness among the public has led to a backlash aimed at industries that earlier profited from abusing animals for entertainment purposes. Furthermore, there are legal

restrictions in place against such organisations. Humans have left no leaf unturned, for even the marine life has come under their radar, where dolphins and orcas were being used for giving performances to entertain people. In recent times, such avenues as these and even circuses have seen a drastic decline in the footfall. The future generation can expect to savour the beauty of nature and wildlife in its truest form, if the measures are in place.

6. ***Understanding Legal and Economic Consequences***

Education has also highlighted the legal repercussions of engaging in or supporting poaching-related activities. Many countries have strengthened their laws against the trade of animal parts, and educated business owners are now aware of the fines, bans and penalties associated with these activities. Strict regulations and global campaigns have reinforced this shift. Laws banning ivory trade, restrictions on trophy hunting and movements like #SavetheTiger have forced big businesses to adopt ethical

practices. As a result, the demand for poached animal décor has plummeted, forcing businesses to adapt to ethical and sustainable alternatives. Interiors that celebrate nature without harming it, such as bamboo furniture, handwoven tapestries and recycled materials are appreciated by the tourists, resulting in good reviews and fame of the place. For example, luxury safari lodges now display intricate beadwork and hand-carved wooden animals made by indigenous artists, replacing outdated hunting relics.

CONCLUSION

As humans, we sometimes fail to understand that freedom is something which is a right for all living creatures in the world, but education and awareness have resulted in a visible transformation in the mindset of the society. The next time I step into a hotel, I won't be surprised if the tiger-skin rug I once saw as a child is replaced by a breathtaking piece of indigenous artwork. This transformation is a testament to how far we've come—sailing through the storm of ignorance in the boat of education.