

## **Study of impact of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 on livelihood of Saperas (Snake Charmer) community in Madhya Pradesh.**

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Sapera, Kalbeliya, Nat, Navidgar and Kabutar communities enlisted as Scheduled caste In Madhya Pradesh are known to practice snake charming as their main occupation. Their livelihood has become increasingly precarious and entangled with state regulation. The objectives of the study were to study the impact of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 on the livelihood pattern of the charmer and explore the rehabilitation options; and to study the impact of Saperas' activities on the conservation of snakes.

It was found that most of the Saperas of the study area have not faced any major problem from any law enforcing authority. This profession is gradually dying because of various other factors that include competition from other sophisticated sources of entertainment and fading mystic value of snakes. The commonly held notion that ethnic groups are culturally constrained to carry forward their traditional occupation doesn't hold true for Saperas of Madhya Pradesh. Most of the Saperas desire to switch over to an occupation which is less hazardous and more comfortable, respected and economically beneficial.

The cruel practices of snake charmers are definitely a cause of concern for the conservation of snakes. However, other factors that include habitat destruction caused by urbanization, deforestation, use of pesticides and insecticides; and killing of snakes sighted in human habitation out of fear pose greater challenge to the conservation of snakes than the activities of Saperas. This community has special developmental requirements, which can not be supported by the facilities meant for the scheduled castes. Their level of education is quite low but they do possess other skills, which could provide them livelihood security. The existing policies and programs are not able to help the charmers in providing alternative livelihood options. The community requires support of the government, which needs to be complemented by the civil society organizations.