

The Kasturirangan Report

Module Objectives

After going through the module, you should be able to

1. appreciate the difference between the approach adopted by the Gadgil and Kasturirangan report
2. assimilate the essential aspects of the Kasturirangan report
3. critically examine the Kasturirangan report

Now that we have gone through the Gadgil report, it is time for us to understand the Kasturirangan report and how it is fundamentally different from the former. There was an opinion from certain sections of the society that the Gadgil report was “harsh” in its contents. The Kasturirangan report therefore looks at Western Ghats conservation from a new perspective. The report tries to achieve a fine balance between environmental conservation and politico-economic expediency. It is no wonder that the report in its prelude states that, “The future lies in working on green growth strategies that build on the natural endowment to create a vibrant economy” (HLWG). The report was aimed at examining the recommendations made by the Gadgil report.

Let us look at some of the salient aspects of this report.

1. Like other reports on the topic, the said report also emphasised on the importance of conserving the rich bio diversity of the ghat
2. The report categorized areas on the basis of their ecological sensitivity and activities that affect the ecology negatively shall be either totally banned or restricted in highly sensitive zones.
3. The report states that the “blanket prescription” approach of the Gadgil committee will be harmful to the economy and a case was made out in favour of the Kodagu coffee planters as an example.
4. The report stresses on giving special incentives for “Green Growth” in the ghat area (RE(ESZ) Division, 2016).
5. Around 60,000 ft area was identified by the report for conservation (RE(ESZ) Division, 2016).
6. The following activities have been banned in the Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESAs) (RE(ESZ) Division, 2016)
 1. Mining
 2. Quarrying

- Sand Mining

1. Thermal Power plants
2. Township and Area Development Projects
3. Building and other construction projects with an area of 20,000sq ft and above

- Hydro-Electric power projects are restricted, subject to certain
- All “Red Industries” shall be

7. Hydro-electric power projects will be based only at those places where there has been a standard ecological flow of 30%. This shall be supported by seasonal collection of data on water (HLWG). In the case of Hydro-electric projects, cumulative impact assessment is to be done.
8. In the case of hydro-electric projects, it must be ensured that not more than 50% of the river is affected by the Wind energy projects can be sanctioned subject to EIA.
9. In the case of industries designated as “orange” (for instance, the food processing industry) there shall be no ban as such, but care shall be taken to ensure that the Process and Production technique adopted is such that it causes least environmental (HLWG)

10. Infrastructure projects including those related to transport shall be approved only after its cumulative impact is (HLWG)
11. Railway transport system has to be carefully planned as they can have serious impacts on wild
12. The provisions of the Environment Protection Act, 1986, the Air Act & the Water Act has to be implemented in letter and in
13. The report cites studies that state that the current tourist impact on the area is beyond its carrying The report emphasises on eco-friendly tourism and through it community ownership and benefit. Further all tourist hotspots will be audited for compliance to certain norms. (HLWG)
14. The report calls for value addition of non-timber products by setting up processing Further, in order to provide reasonable remuneration for such products, adequate transport linking the production centres and markets is to be provided. This has to be done with the support of DST, DBT and CSIR. Individuals and communities will be supported in the income earning concerns through the “viability gap funding mechanism”. (HLWG)
15. The committee recommends that Entry 20 of the Concurrent List (Economic Planning) should be extended to consider environmental concerns as part of the planning
16. New institutions capable of balancing Developmental and Environmental needs and in responding to people’s needs are to be (HLWG)
17. The existing regulatory systems such as the pollution control boards, state forest departments, State Bio diversity Authorities and Environment & Forest Clearance System have to be strengthened to meet and sustain the vitality of the environment without compromising on the developmental needs of the local

Controversies linked to the Report

There are number of controversies associated with this report. Some of these are mentioned below.

1. The heavy incursion of planters, mining and dwellings that the ghats has seen has resulted in extensive loss of bio- diversity. The area proposed for conservation is a miniscule portion of the total ghat area. Infact the Gadgil Report had earmarked an area of 129037 Sq.kms of the Ghat area as requiring urgent conservation. The Kasturirangan panel has brought it down to a mere 59940 Sq.kms, which is 37% of the original area (RE(ESZ) Division, 2016). This is a major area of concern.
2. It has been stated that both the reports weighed in favour of Both considered the ghat area as a homogeneous entity whereas there are numerous micro level differences. Eminent expert Dr.Vijayan calls for “Ground Truthing” to check the reliability of the sensitivity parameters. (KJ Joseph, 2015).
3. The density of population of certain villages selected under ESA is more than 100, which is erroneous even by the parameters set by the working
4. The Working Group has stressed that activities such as cardamom cultivation in the ghat area is eco-friendly. However, research over the years has proved that the high levels of chemical injection into cardamom fields is destroying the (KJ Joseph, 2015)
5. The working group does not lay much emphasis on capacity building among the aboriginals (STs) of the The restrictions on activities in the ghat area could hamper the livelihood of these groups. The cost of development of some could be disproportionately borne by the marginalized sections. (KJ Joseph, 2015)

Let us sum up

The Kasturirangan report has been privy to much controversy, given the nature of its recommendations. The major criticism is that it has substantially watered down the provisions of the Gadgil report. However, the report has generated wide interest both among nature lovers and commercial sections. The policy makers would do well to give a patient hearing to the complainants.

References

HLWG. (n.d.). *Kasturirangan Report*. Retrieved from <http://tvmtalkies.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Kasturirangan-Report-HLWG.pdf>

KJ Joseph, D. N. (2015). *Wrong means for the right ends? Reflections on the Kasturirangan working group report and plausible way forward*. Trivandrum: Centre for Development Studies.

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