

# JUNGLE LODGES AND RESORTS - THE BITTER TRUTH

It was on 25<sup>th</sup> of December 2018, the first time I had an experience of staying in the Bhagawathi Nature Camp situated amidst the forest in Kudremukha. It is one of the nature camps that belongs to Jungle Lodges and Resorts in Karnataka. Jungle Lodges and Resorts is a leading private limited state government company. The board of directors include a cabinet



One of the tents at Jungle Lodge, Kudremukha.



The stream on which a check dam was built at Jungle Lodge, Kudremukha.



The location of Jungle Lodge at Kudremukha National Park.

minister, five IAS officers, and two IFS officers. The first jungle lodge was established by the 'Tiger Tops' in the year 1980 at Kabini and later it was handed over to the state government. Jungle Lodges and Resorts are present throughout Karnataka and they provide accommodation, safari, and other services to the visitors.

camp is situated at the edges of the forest and is filled with tourists throughout the year creating light, noise, and air pollution. They also have born fire at the spot which is a sad thing to

happen inside a national park. They also constructed a check dam across a stream to make it look like a visitor's attraction so that the visitors can swim and enjoy in the streams which caused submergence of forest in monsoon, resulting in the death of a few trees.

The interesting fact is that two highways pass through this national park—a national highway connecting Mangalore and Solapur (NH 169) and a state highway that connects Kerekatte and Kottigehara (SH 66). There are two forest check posts at each end of the highway where the details of

Since we were working on documentation of the floral species at the mining area of Kudremukha National Park, we halted at the Bhagawathi Nature Camp. The Nature



Images of the tag provided at the forest check post.

the vehicle and phone number of the driver is noted down and a tag is given, which is linked with the system.

Once the vehicle reaches the other check post they gather the information from that tag such as speed and movement of the vehicle. In the tag it is mentioned that people are not allowed to stop and get out of the vehicle in between the check posts. On one hand the forest department does not allow the people to get down from their vehicles and spend time inside the national park, while on the other hand they have constructed the resort inside the national park where it is filled with tourists almost all the time. This goes against the forest department's own policies; Kudremukha National Park is a UNESCO world heritage site and eco-sensitive zone.

Around 1 am I heard some noise outside my room as if something moving on the leaf litter. Initially, I was scared but was also curious to know what it was. When I turned on my torch

I saw was a group of deer. I was surprised to see these animals very close to the residential place. On discussion of this with my lecturer I learnt that these deer come near the human settlements at night to escape from predators. This struck me because with the establishment of resorts in the core zone it has resulted in behavioural change of these herbivores. So this resort is not only creating pollution and disturbance but also has resulted in behavioural change in animals.

The Jungle Lodges and Resorts have built resorts similarly in many other national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. They have also increased the number of tents and number of jeeps for safaris. The impacts of such lodges in protected areas need to be investigated scientifically and systematically at the earliest so as to take suitable conservation actions.

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