



# Impact Of Kasturirangan Report On Malenadu - A Case Study

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**Abstract:** Kasturirangan report is one of the most debating issue in western ghat region of Karnataka. A committee headed by ISRO scientist Kasturirangan prepared a report and submit to Government of India in order to identify and protect Eco Sensitive Region in western ghat region of India. But now many states in India including the state of Karnataka strongly opposing this claiming that it is anti-developmental report and the people of this western ghat region also strongly opposing this report. Hence, this study made an attempt to study the impact of this report on Malenadu region of Karnataka in India.

**Keywords:** Eco Sensitive Region, Malenadu, Western ghats, HLWG.

## Introduction

Kasturirangan report is one of the most debating issue in western ghat region of Karnataka. A committee headed by ISRO scientist Kasturirangan, prepared a report and submit to Government of India in order to identify and protect eco sensitive region in western ghat region of India. The lush green Western Ghats ranges from Gujarat, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. These Ghats are the habitat of the various species of animals and birds. It also has a range of valuable trees. The central environment and forest ministry continues to focus on the richness of the Western Ghats in the ecosystem, environmental conservation, environmental unity and all round development. About 60,000 sq. km of natural landscape (approximately 37% of the total geographical area of Western Ghats Region) has been identified as Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA) by HLWG (High Level Working Group), which represents more or less a contiguous band of vegetation extending over a distance of 1500 km across 6 States of Western Ghats region and includes Protected Areas and World Heritage Sites. The demarcation unit of ESA is the village.

The Ministry of Environment & Forests (MoEF), Government of India, has been concerned with degradation of Western Ghats in the past due to increasing population pressure. Keeping in view of the ecological sensitivity and significance of the region, complex interstate nature of its geography and also possible impacts of climate change, the MoEF constituted a 14- member Western Ghats Ecology Experts Panel (WGEEP), with Professor Madhav Gadgil as its Chairman, on 4th March 2010. The Panel submitted its report on 30th August 2011.

Due to many contradictory views, Dr. Kasturirangan an eminent scientist and faculty of the planning commission, was entrusted with the responsibility of heading the High Level Working Group in 2012. The team assigned the responsibility of study the sensitivity of western Ghat area and giving the report to protect the Western Ghats. The team studied the Western Ghats area by satellite and submitted its report in April 2013. The report identified different areas as sensitive and recommended for proper action to protect the forest. However, in many notified areas we had settlement of people for centuries and they are not a part of forest area. Hence people living in this area have strongly opposed this report.

This is a dilemma for people in the foothills of the Western Ghats that have been exposed to modern times. If this report is implemented, then these people may be in a position to suffer a great deal. We are aware of such a problem. Hence we took up the research work.

### Members of the Kasturirangan Committee

Sl. No.	Name of Experts
1.	Dr. K. Kasturirangan Member (Science), Planning Commission, New Delhi, <b>Chairman</b>
2.	Professor C.R. Babu Professor Emeritus, University of Delhi & Ex Pro-Vice Chancellor, University of Delhi, Delhi. Member
3.	Shri J.M. Mauskar Ex-Special Secretary Ministry of Environment and Forests Government of India, New Delhi Member
4.	Prof. Kanchan Chopra Ex-Director, Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi. Member
5.	Dr. Jagdish Kishwan In his personal capacity and posted at present as Additional Director General of Forests (Wildlife) Ministry of Environment and Forests Government of India, New Delhi. Member
6.	Shri Darshan Shankar Chairman, Institute of Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine, Bengaluru. Member
7.	.Ms. Sunita Narain Director General Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi Member
8.	Dr. P.S. Roy Director Indian Institute of Remote Sensing, Dehradun Member

9. Shri Ajay Tyagi, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests Government of India,

New Delhi Member Convenor

### **Proposed areas of Malenadu under the Kasturi rangan report**

For the present study the researcher covers only Malenadu region of Chikkamagalore district. As many as 27 villages each in Chikkamagaluru and Mudigere taluks, 35 in N R Pura, 32 in Koppa and 26 villages in Sringeri taluks are covered for the implementation of Kasturirangan report.

### **Major Recommendations Kasturirangan report**

- The Kasturirangan committee report proposes 37 per cent of the total area of Western Ghats, which is roughly 60,000 square kilometres, to be declared as eco-sensitive area (ESA). Out of this, 20,668 sq km of the area falls in Karnataka covering 1,573 villages.
- The report recommended a blanket ban on mining, quarrying, setting up of red category industries and thermal power projects.
- It also stated that the impact of infrastructural projects on the forest and wildlife should be studied before permission is given for these activities.
- It also stated that the UNESCO Heritage tag is an opportunity to build global and domestic recognition of the enormous natural wealth that exists in the Western Ghats.
- The 39 sites are located across the Western Ghats and distributed across the states Kerala (19), Karnataka (10), Tamil Nadu (6) and Maharashtra (4).
- The state of Karnataka has the highest percentage of the ESA- 46.50 per cent.
- The boundary of the sites, are in most cases, boundaries of the legally demarcated national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, tiger reserves and forest divisions and therefore, already accorded with high level of protection. Hence, the state governments should view this development and build a plan to protect, conserve and value the resources and opportunities of the region.

### **Development Restrictions in proposed Ecologically sensitive areas**

1. HLWG is recommending a prohibitory and regulatory regime in ESA for those activities with maximum interventionist and destructive impact on the ecosystem. All other infrastructure development activities, necessary for the region, will be carefully scrutinized and assessed for cumulative impact and development needs, before clearance.
2. There should be a complete ban on mining, quarrying and sand mining in ESA. All current mining areas should be phased out within the next 5 years, or at the time of expiry of mining lease, whichever is earlier.

3. No thermal power projects should be allowed in ESA. Hydropower projects may be allowed but subject to following conditions:
- (a) Uninterrupted ecological flow at least 30 per cent level of the rivers flow in lean season till a comprehensive study establishes individual baselines.
  - (b) After a cumulative study which assesses the impact of each project on the flow pattern of the rivers and forest and biodiversity loss.
  - (c) Ensuring that the minimum distance between projects is maintained at 3 km and that not more than 50 per cent of the river basin is affected at any time.
4. HLWG recommends that wind energy should be included in EIA notification and brought under purview of assessment and clearance.
5. All 'Red' category industries should be strictly banned. As the list of industries categorized as 'orange' includes many activities like food and fruit processing, there will not be a complete prohibition on this category. But all efforts should be made to promote industries with low environmental impacts.
6. Building and construction projects of 20,000 m<sup>2</sup> and above should not be allowed. Townships and area development projects should be prohibited.
7. All other infrastructure and development projects/ schemes should be subject to environment clearance under Category 'A' projects under EIA Notification 2006.
8. Additional safeguard for forest diversion in ESA should be introduced. In cases of forest clearance required in ESA, all information of the project, from application stage to approval should be placed in the public domain on the website of MoEF and of the forest department of the respective States.
9. All development projects, located within 10 km of the Western Ghats ESA and requiring Environment Clearance (EC), shall be regulated as per the provisions of the EIA Notification 2006.
10. HLWG recommends a framework for governance and regulation of ESA, which draws on current regulatory institutions for decision-making, but simultaneously, strengthens the data monitoring systems and the participation and involvement of local communities in decision-making.
11. Existing regulatory institutions and processes for environment and forest clearances and project monitoring would need to be greatly strengthened for the governance framework to be enforced and monitored effectively.
12. The villages falling under ESA will be involved in decision making on the future projects. All projects will require prior-informed consent and no objection from the Gram Sabha of the village. The provision for prior informed consent under the Forest Rights Act will also be strictly enforced.

13. The State Governments should also ensure consultation with local communities while planning for protection of wildlife corridors.

14. State Governments should immediately put in place structures for effective enforcement of development restrictions and ensuring sustainable development in ESA.

## Statement of the Problem

The report given by the Kasturirangan for the protection of western ghat is good for the safe guard of the environment. But it is complained that the area identified by the committee is based on some unscientific methods. So unfortunately it includes rubber plantation, coconut tree plantation, areca nut plantation, small industries and residential areas. So the people residing in these area strongly opposed for the implementation of the report. Hence, the study made an attempt to reveal the impact of Kasturirangan report on Malenadu.

## Objectives of the Study

For the present study following objectives are fixed

1. To study the Kasturirangan report on eco sensitive environment.
2. To study the development restrictions in proposed ecologically sensitive areas.
3. To study the impact of Kasturirangan report on Malenadu region.
4. To find out solution for the problems arising from implementation of the report.

## Research Methodology

For the purpose of this study information has been collected from Kasturiranganreport submitted to the government and various stakeholders of the report. Data has been collected from environmentalists, farmers, people representatives, industrialists and other persons who are concerned with this report.

## Scope of the study

This study is confined to the geographical area of Malenedu in Karnataka state, which is mainly cover Mudigere, Koppa, Narasimharajapura,Chickamagalore and Sringeri taluks in Chickamagalore district. ESZ includes 27 villages in Chickamagalore, 32 villages in Koppa, 27 villages in Mudigere, 35 villages in Narasimharajapura and 26 villages in Sringeri.

## Brief profile of Chikmagalur District

Chikmagalur is a district in the Western Ghats region of Karnataka. The rivers Tunga and Bhadra originate from this district. The first coffee plantations in the country were established in this district. The Kudremukh National Park and Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary are located in the area. The District is divided into seven talukas grouped into two Revenue Sub-Divisions viz., Chikmagalur and Tarikere. Out of seven talukas, five talukas Chikmagalur, Koppa, Mudigere, Narasimharajpura and Sringeri are part of the Western Ghats region delineated. The forests in the taluka are of evergreen, semi evergreen, sholas and moist deciduous types.

## Findings of the Study

1. From the survey it is found that majority of the people are aware about Kasturirangan report but they have no clear about what are all the recommendations of the report and its impact on their livelihood.
2. Many were complained that the boundaries fixed for eco sensitive zone is unscientific. Because it covers agriculture lands and residential areas.
3. The people of Malenadu feared that the arecanut plantations were facing critical diseases like yellow leaf and leaf dot. If this report implemented they cannot able to use any pesticides for controlling such diseases.
4. It is found that 70 percent income of the people in Malenadu is from arecanut cultivation. If recommendations of Kasturirangan report is implemented, they cannot able to protect their arecanut plantation from Mahakali and some other diseases. Because the report recommends for prohibition for the use of chemicals and pesticides in the Eco sensitive areas.
5. Many people opined that, already youths are migrating from Malenadu to city areas in search of jobs. If industries and developments are restrict by the report this tendency will further worsen the situation.
6. The People of Malenadu are apprehensive about implementation of Dr.Kasturirangan report. The people belonging to this area have to give up their own land and their sources of livelihood etc.
7. Kasturirangan and his team have unscientifically earmarked the boundaries. It has included the villages having house, arecanut plantations and rice growing areas. The people in these villages have been involved in agriculture and horticulture for generations. The report does not permit the use of chemical, fertilizers and it is not possible to survive by just organic farming.
8. The report had been prepared merely on the basis of satellite images. While preparing the report, they had not visited the villages or taken opinions of the people. So they fix unscientific border for eco sensitive zone.
9. There are many rice mills and small mining's in the region. These will have to be closed as these villages had been marked under the eco sensitive zone. This will throw employment opportunity to the people in this region. The input will have a catastrophic impact on the local economy.

10. Activist Kalkuli Vittala Hegde has said that the implementation of recommendations of the Kasturirangan report is conspired at destroying habitations in Malnad. The unrealistic points from the recommendations should be argued strongly in the Supreme Court.
11. The recommendations of Kasturirangan report are now hanging like the Sword of Damocles over the residents of Malnad. Environmentalist Mr. Hegde said the recommendations have put forth a few restrictions for farmers in Malnad. It has prohibited the use of chemical fertilizers. The coffee pulping units are categorised in the red industry list. The report is unrealistic, he alleged.
12. The recommendations restrict the use of kerosene, electricity and fertilisers in the ecologically sensitive areas identified in the Kasturirangan report. Without the use of Bordeaux mixture, the farmers cannot save arecanut and coffee crops.
13. Yathiraj, an environmental activist from Tumkur, says the Western Ghats affects more than six states as 54 peninsular rivers originate from the range, providing water for nearly 25 crore people. "Sadly, water from irrigation dams is being diverted to quench the thirst of expanding urban spaces and industries. Check dams at hill streams and use of pesticides by tea and coffee plantations are polluting the flow downstream.

### **Suggestions**

1. It is required to give proper information about contents of Kasturirangan report to the people of Malenadu in order to avoid misconception and confusion regarding the report.
2. The area fixed for eco sensitive zone must be revised and it is required to exclude agriculture land and residential areas.
3. The Government should ensure that the economic development of the region will not affect due to implementation of the report.
4. State government should urge the union ministry of forest and environment to revise or modify the recommendation of the Kasturirangan panel report on conservation of Western Ghats.
5. The report should exclude areas which have thick population and major commercial and agricultural activities. Only specific areas where human population is very less, there they can implement preservation or protective, eco-friendly ideas.
6. The Political leaders of different parties must try to resolve the issue by taking in to account interest of the farmers in this region as well as the need of protecting the precious western ghats.
7. Restrictions on the use of pesticides, chemicals and fertilizers must be relaxed as much as required.
8. Eco- friendly industries and eco-friendly tourism must be encouraged in order to increase employment opportunity and development of the region.

## Conclusion

Our study and interaction with people highlighted the need for taking people into confidence while implementing policies and plans. In the case of Kasturirangan report, people have shown their collective displeasure against implementing the findings of the report. In the first place, the report is not the outcome of scientific and empirical research. The government should take into account the wisdom of environmentalists, activists and general public and a solution can be easily arrived at. We feel that in the modern world, there are plenty of options to incorporate public will in governmental policies. These inclusive policies humanise otherwise insensitive rules and policies.

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### Western ghat region images

