
Review Article

Reviving the Sacred Balance: Biodiversity Conservation and Ecosystem Restoration through Mission LiFE

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Abstract: India is recognized as a megadiverse nation that harbours a vast range of ecosystems and species that are increasingly threatened by factors including habitat loss, pollution, and exploitation. This excerpt talks about how important it is to protect India's rich biodiversity and bring damaged ecosystems back to life. It highlights the Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment) campaign launched by the Government of India, which encourages people to live in ways that are kinder to nature and more sustainable. Therefore, present study has been designed to highlights the Mission LiFE. The discussion connects this initiative to national policies, especially the updated version of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), showing how India is working to combine everyday actions with long-term environmental planning. It also highlights India's leadership in species-specific conservation programs and international collaborations. It focuses on the role of local communities and spiritual traditions in fostering grassroots conservation efforts. It suggests culturally rooted, community-driven strategies such as eco-fasting, biodiversity micro-sanctuaries, and sacred ecosystem adoption to associate ecological responsibility with moral and spiritual values. Aligning national initiatives with citizen engagement and cultural values can help India restore its sacred balance between development and conservation. The present study highlights the aims and significance of Mission LiFE, drawing the attention of students, researchers, and intellectuals.

Keywords: Biodiversity Conservation, Community Stewardship, Ecosystem Restoration, India, Mission LiFE, Spiritual Ecology

Introduction

Biodiversity comprises of the variety of all species of different lifeforms and their ecosystems found on Earth in a particular geographical area like India (Bawa et al., 2020; Keck et al., 2025). It plays a vital role in maintaining the ecological balance of the nature (Zhang et al., 2024). India is a megadiverse country which boasts 7.7% of world's genetic resources spread across 10 biogeographic zones and diverse ecosystems inclusive of forests, wetlands, deserts, and coastal areas (Kumar, 2019). Despite being a nation gifted by nature with such a rich biodiversity, India is far from perfect when it comes to conservation of its biological and natural resources. This is due to the threats posed by habitat destruction, hunting/poaching, overexploitation & pollution (Das et al., 2025). The pressing need to establish a mindful control over activities that contribute to the endangerment of biodiversity and spread awareness about the severity and urgency of the issue Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment) was launched by the Government of India and introduced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at COP26 in Glasgow in 2021. It is a global initiative aimed at promoting sustainability of biodiversity by encouraging lifestyle changes that focus on mindful choices (such as reducing single use plastics, conserving water etc) that reduce the ecological pressure and foster a culture of respect and responsibility toward all living beings. Thus, Mission LiFE empowers citizens to become active stewards of nature (Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, 2025). India harbours 7–8% of the world's species diversity, including over 45,000 plant species and 91,000 animal species, distributed across terrestrial, marine, and freshwater ecosystems throughout the country. India has 4 of the 34 global biodiversity hotspots that are rich in endemic species. India's diverse geography supports forests, grasslands, wetlands, deserts, coastal and marine ecosystems (Mittal, 2019). In the past few years, India has implemented multiple policy measures and programs aimed at conserving its rich biodiversity. Prime Minister Narendra Modi introduced Mission LiFE at COP26 in Glasgow in 2021 that encourages citizens to become active stewards of nature by making mindful choices that reduce the ecological pressure (Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, 2025). On 31st October 2024, India submitted its revised National Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan (NBSAP) in Cali, Colombia during CBD COP16. This strategy is fully aligned with the global goals of biodiversity conservation (as per Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework-KMGBF) and tailored to India's national priorities, capabilities and circumstances. This focuses on conservation of terrestrial and marine ecosystems as well as restoration of degraded habitats. It also promotes pollution control and species conservation (Press Information Bureau, 2024). On the occasion of World Wildlife Day March 3, 2025, PM Narendra Modi chaired the 7th National Board for Wildlife meeting at Gir National Park, emphasising India's leadership in biodiversity conservation. The meeting covered various aspects of wildlife conservation such as expansion of protected areas, flagship conservation programs (Project Tiger, Project Elephant and Project Snow Leopard), species specific initiatives (Project Dolphin, Project Lion, Project Cheetah and One-horned Rhinoceros), international collaboration (International Big Cat Alliance) along with budget and policy frameworks (Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, 2025). Some of the major challenges faced by India in the domain of biodiversity conservation include habitat loss, climate change, pollution, unsustainable exploitation of species, conflicting development priorities, weak policy implementation & limited stakeholder engagement (Mathur and Varma, 2021). Local communities are

increasingly contributing to biodiversity conservation through community-based resource management and encouraging wildlife protection and tourism. Certain ecologically sensitive regions are protected by local community as Community Conserved Areas with the support of government policies such as Forest Rights Act (2006). However, certain factors like conflicting interests & political barriers make conservation a very difficult task for the local communities despite their best efforts (Scientia Tutorials, 2025).

Recommendations of present study

1. Local groups rooted in spiritual traditions can adopt nearby ecosystems and treat them as sacred spaces. Organising cleaning drives and inspecting these ecosystems must be made a periodic ritual and adhered to religiously and dutifully. This will create an emotional as well as spiritual connection to nature establishing a sense of duty towards conservation of these ecosystems among the citizens.
2. Artisans must be encouraged by government supported corporations to use sustainable materials and traditional knowledge for creating their products to reduce overexploitation of natural resources.
3. Villages must be assigned small plots as biodiversity micro-sanctuaries to promote native plant restoration and ecological literacy.
4. It should be made mandatory for temples, schools, colleges and government buildings to maintain small gardens or seed banks that showcase the local biodiversity with proper labelling and educate the visitors about the local flora and its roles emphasizing the need to conserve it.
5. Corridors should be created across culturally significant zones that aim at reducing human-animal conflicts promote coexistence through respecting local beliefs associated with the surrounding wildlife.
6. Voluntary eco-fasting campaigns must be promoted among citizens that focus on discouraging the use of ecologically harmful products and substances (e.g. plastics) during certain festivals and sacred periods (discouraging kite flying during Sankranti) thereby, establishing the need to protect ecosystem as a moral duty and religious order aiming towards spiritual growth by being protective of mother nature irrespective of the individual beliefs of the people.
7. A community-based rating system can be established that would encourage people to engage in conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem through eco-guardianship by establishing selfless service towards nature as an important indicator of the moral status of a community or individual.

Conclusion

India's rich biodiversity is both a natural treasure and a sacred responsibility. Through Mission LiFE and aligned national strategies, the country is taking meaningful steps toward conservation and restoration. However, true transformation lies in integrating ecological stewardship with cultural and spiritual values. By empowering local communities, promoting mindful lifestyles, and treating nature as sacred, India can revive the balance between development and preservation. This holistic approach not only protects

biodiversity but also nurtures a deeper moral and spiritual connection to the Earth—ensuring that conservation becomes a collective and enduring way of life.

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