

# Monkey menace, its management

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**Abstract-** In India, a third of the world's wild Rhesus macaques (common monkey) live. Drying up of water bodies and non availability of food sources in the forests is the reason for migration of monkeys in to human habitation. The human settlements in and around forests is leading to displacement of animals from their habitat which directly affect the food availability of wild animals. As a result, the struggle of wild animals for food, water and space has expanded beyond forest areas. The life expectancy of monkeys increased because of their proximity to villages and cities due to assured food and safety in villages and towns thereby get more time with them for procreation and better chances of survival. The monkey's damage crops and cause heavy loss of crops. Though the efforts made by different states for control of monkey menace, the success rate is very poor. India needs a combination of strategies, from a new institutional mechanism to adopting new technological solutions. The monkey menace plaguing in the country is unlikely to abate in the foreseeable future and people may well be resigned to sharing space and food with their simian cousins until the issue is addressed in serious manner.

**Key Words:** Monkey menace, *Rhesus macaques* (common monkey), Crop loss, Attempts to fight monkey menace, Protection of crops from monkeys

## INTRODUCTION

*Monkey menace:*

This article I am writing in response to news item on expert committee constituted to find a solution to the monkey menace which appeared in leading Daily news papers on April 3, 18 in Hyderabad Editions.

This article may help in finding causes and solution to the monkey menace in India particularly in Telugu speaking states where farmers could not adopt desired cropping systems due to monkey menace. Monkey menace has reached epic proportions in India. According to a publication of the Centre for Science and Environment, the agriculture sector is suffering due to monkeys in India, besides erratic rainfall.

Monkeys come in groups of 15-20, making life of farmers and residents difficult in villages. The National Institute of Disaster Management stated that between 2007 and 2012, the Himachal Pradesh has lost 2,200 crore worth agriculture produce due to monkeys. Similarly, 250 villages in Jammu region lost farm produce in 15596 ha costing Rs 33 crore every year due to attacks by wild monkeys. In Karnataka, crops worth Rs 5 crore in 2010 were lost because of monkey's attack. In Karkala taluka near Mangalore, close to 800 small farmers gave up cultivation after

monkeys destroyed 75 per cent of crops in the area in 2012. This type of crop damage has been reported from different states of India including telugu speaking states.

In India, a third of the world's wild Rhesus macaques (common monkey) live. During sixties and seventies, agriculture was expanding in India, and that had mixed results for the monkeys as well. The increased food production that resulted from the Indian Green Revolution may have contributed to the recuperation of the monkeys' population in the Eighties.

Most of these monkeys (as many as 85%) live in close proximity to human settlements. Since the late Seventies, India's macaque populations have been growing steadily. The ban on export of Rhesus has resulted in a phenomenal increase in their populations, and being a species that is well adapted to human habitation, this has consequently resulted in an increase in man-monkey conflicts. Monkeys are jungle animals who do not belong in cities, and who might prosper best away from humans.

The monkeys have a higher life expectancy and due to assured food and safety left more time with them for procreation and better chances of survival. Further, people believe their relationship with the god Hanuman. Moreover, in urban areas, irresponsible feeding the monkeys at temples and other places has aggravated the monkey menace..

#### *Monkey menace in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh*

The severe heat wave force the wild animals to leave their habitat for cooler environs and many animals migrate within the forest and to nearby villages in search of water and food. Unavailability of water and absence of water resources in the forest area is the cause for the animals' water woes. Drying up of water bodies and non availability of food sources in the forests is another reason of migration of monkeys in to human habitation. In Medak, Nizamabad, Warangal, Karimnagar, Nalgonda, Mahbubnagar, Kurnool, Prakasam, Chittoor and Vishakhapatnam districts, tackling monkeys near to forests is a major challenge the people in those areas.

Over population of monkeys and their excessive presence in human settlements has become a problem in many TS and AP districts including Hyderabad. Apart from this, monkeys are released into the forests. But there is no guarantee that the monkeys will stay in the forests as humans collect almost everything edible from there.

From the forests, everything is collected for human consumption which create a situation of no food to the monkeys. This forces the monkeys to enter human habitations. Monkeys come in groups and destroy all standing crops by uprooting plants, entering in to houses and snatching food.

The number of monkeys plaguing the cities and towns are not available, a rough estimate say that about two lakh Rhesus Macaques (the most common monkey species in the state) roam freely in Telangana state. In Hyderabad alone, their population is estimated between 1,000 and 2,000.

*Why monkey menace in rural and urban areas:*

The man-animal conflict is mainly because of destruction and disturbances of wildlife habitats .

The human settlements in and around forests is leading to displacement of animals from their habitat which directly affect the food availability of wild animals. As a result, the struggle of wild animals for food, water and space has expanded beyond forest areas.

Decrease in natural vegetation/ water sources (springs and small streams), leading to grim and difficult summers that pushes wild animals into villages close to the dwindling forests. The forests where monkeys live are void of food, leaving the monkeys with no choice but to look for food in human-occupied areas. Even the city dwellers are also struggling to cope with monkey menace. The monkey menace has been reported from almost all cities in India where monkeys encroaching and destroying property and robbing people. Many researchers blame humans for aggressive monkey behavior.

A Rhesus macaque has to spend about 10 to 14 hours in search of food in forests while in dwellings of urban or human settlements in a rural area finding food takes only 10 minutes. According to a 2013 research carried out the Primate Research Laboratory of the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, in south India Rheuses macaques breed at the rate of 36 per cent a year.

The life expectancy of monkeys increased because of their proximity to villages and cities. In the forests, the monkey numbers are kept in check by a limited supply of natural forest foods and water and the wild primates up to 80 per cent die before adulthood. The government's practice of translocation of monkeys from the cities to forest areas near rural areas is the other reason for behavioral shift in monkeys.

*States attempt to fight the menace*

The state governments swung into action for control of monkeys as they are damaging crops. The strategies include, culling and sterilization (Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh) which had limited success and awareness campaigns not to feed monkeys. Some states tried employing ultrasonic guns that can scare monkeys away and create van vatika or small sanctuaries for different troops. Monkeys are territorial; they monitor their neighbour's movements and discover food source, and also left undefended by their rival monkeys. The monkeys live groups and when the population of monkey's increases they another group. New monkeys fill the void and their numbers soon swell to

match the original pest populations. The Telangana state plans to increase tree cover from the present 24 per cent to 33 per cent and increase the food for monkey's in forests.

*How to protect crops from monkeys:*

India needs a combination of strategies, from a new institutional mechanism to adopting new technological solutions.

First, management of monkeys as a species needs to be brought under the Union list of the Constitution, which will enable a national programme to monitor, control their population and plan for effective strategies. The experiences of Hong Kong and Japan combine well-targeted popular methods like sterilisation and culling as well as technological innovations to keep monkeys at bay.

Between 2008 and 2012, the birth rate fell from 68.9 per cent to 30.2 per cent, according to a study by Chinese University of Hong Kong in 2013. Japan gained control over the monkey population with a series of policies that included targeted culling, reviving of natural habitats and employing people to guard crops against attacks.

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), New Delhi, and Via Life, a Bengaluru-based company developed a low-cost acoustic device which repel animals from entering the farms. The Central Zoo Authority of India in collaboration with the National Primate Center in California, developed a strategy with the Wildlife Institute of India to use oral contraceptives, female sterilization and vasectomies, however, this does not help.

The India's Union environment ministry refused a proposal by the Himachal Pradesh government to declare monkeys as vermin in March 2014. On the other hand, the ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) issued a notification in December, 2014, seeking opinion from states on the menace caused by nilgais or blue bulls and wild boars.

Monkeys are known to be scared of Langurs (Black faced monkeys) and won't come anywhere close if Langurs are present. A trained Langur will take care of entire farm. Sealed small packets of boneless dry fish pieces kept around the field, the practice of driving them away by beating drums and using well trained dogs, throughing of bananas and biscuits mixed with red chilli powder in front of them, use loud-speakers to play sound of 4-5 dogs barking, Use Fire crackers (which make huge sound) like rasi bum/ sutli-bum and denying the monkey's acces to food in residential areas and not feeding them are some of the methods adopted for driving away of monkey's.

The fruit trees around the house are a potential food source that could attract monkeys. If this is a consistent problem, consider not to cultivate fruit trees. Similarly growing of vegetables also. It is also needed to monkey-proof all the houses by a mesh covering. Education and awareness raising are essential for long-term solutions to be successful. Repelling monkeys by human scaring, deploying an electronic sound repellent.

The sounds cause stress and discomfort for monkeys in the area, who will move away and avoid the sound. Growing of Monkey Puzzle Tree (*Araucaria araucana*) a slow growing tree with unique foliage and one of the hardiest of the conifer family, originally found on the lower slopes of the Chilean Andes which grow to a height of 40 metres scares the monkeys.

The main approach in resolving human-monkey conflict is to forcibly trans-locate monkeys to a reserve. However, unless proper care is taken in providing food and water for the monkeys in that area, this creates problem in the new area.

### CONCLUSION

The monkey menace plaguing rural and urban areas of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh which is unlikely to abate in the foreseeable future and people may well be resigned to sharing space and food with their simian cousins until the government decides to address the issue in serious manner.

The adoption of alternate crops depends on the effective management of monkeys and wild boars menace in endemic areas.

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