RANTHAMBORE ADVENTURE
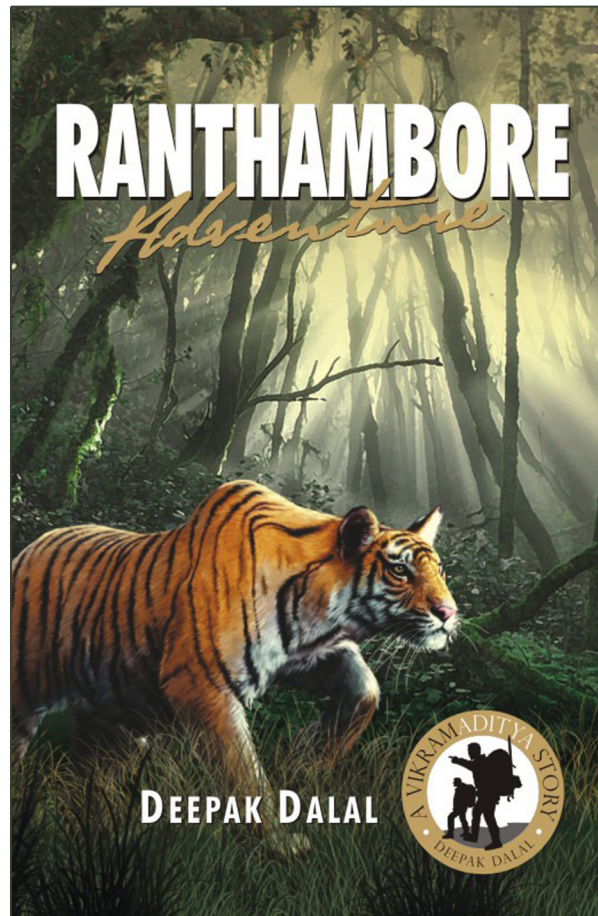
Today most children are born in cities. Insulated from the natural world they live the majority of their lives in urban surroundings. Forests, wilderness and the joy of wildlife are experiences they have little opportunity to discover. The novel 'Ranthambore Adventure' attempts to establish a connection between our children and wildlife. The novel tells the story of wild tigers and their troubled existence. The story generates compassion for wildlife and captivates the reader with the beauty of forests, generating a bond between children and wilderness areas.

This document lists a set of questions that enhance the learning experience from the book. The questions prompt the student to delve deeper into the issues touched upon in the story.

The questions are bifurcated under two groupings: 'Chapter-wise' (pgs 2-11) and 'Project' questions (pgs 11-19). The 'chapter-wise' listing is useful for schools that read the books chapter-by-chapter in class. The 'projects' grouping is for schools that use the book as a holiday reader. The grouping is not hard and fast. Several of the 'chapter-wise' questions can be used as class projects and vice-versa.

Chapter-wise Questions:

Chapter 1 – The Cubs

1. Imagine a grown tiger that has lived its entire life in a zoo and then released one day in the wild. Will this zoo-reared tiger be able to hunt? Will it be

able to survive in the wild? How important is the mother's role in the upbringing of cubs? Explain after referring chapter 1 (The Cubs).

2. The cubs have their first encounter with humans during a walk with their mother. From the cubs' point of view how do they perceive humans during their first encounter?

3. The cubs notice that their mother is comfortable with humans seated in jeeps. But when humans range the forest on foot she is wary of them. Why does the mother tigress perceive humans differently when they are in jeeps and on foot?

Chapter 2 – Delhi

1. The tiger that lives in Chinese forests is called the South China Tiger. The species of tiger found in India is known as the Royal Bengal Tiger. There are several species of tigers found in the world. Name the remaining species of tigers. Which of these species is endangered? Are any of them extinct? (Research your answers on the Internet or through wildlife books)

2. In the story, Vikram's father is the head of an organisation called 'Wilderness Conservation India'. In India there exist several such organisations that work to protect wildlife in India. The two most active organisations are Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) and Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI). Visit the websites of both these organisations and explain in 500 words the work these two organisations do for protecting wildlife in India.

3. Why are tigers being killed in India? Are they being killed for their bones or for their skins, or for other reasons? Explain your answer.

4. Internationally, India is called 'the land of the tiger'. Why is this?

5. Why does Sally not believe Aditya's excuse

for returning late from Ladakh? Why does she tell Aarti that Aditya is a 'scheming fellow'?

6. Aditya's first encounter with a wild tiger is described in this chapter. What does Aditya feel during the encounter? Why does the memory of this encounter remain etched in his memory forever?

7. At the end of the chapter Aditya manages to convince Sukhram to accompany him on a dangerous mission. Sukhram is a simple law-abiding man. What are the arguments Aditya uses to convince Sukhram? Explain.

Chapter 3 – Independence

1. On the African grasslands the Cheetah hunts by sheer speed, overtaking even the most fleet-footed of deer and antelope. The tiger hunts in a different manner. In this chapter there are several hunting episodes. How does a tiger hunt? Does it depend upon stealth or speed? Explain your answer by referring the details of the hunt sequences in the chapter.

2. Several migratory birds visit India in winter. Name at least five migratory birds that come to India. Write a sentence or two on each bird.

3. This chapter is called 'Independence'. The young male tiger in the story seeks an independent life. He breaks away from his mother and his sister to lead a solitary life. All tigers eventually lead solitary lives. Why do tigers like the male cub in this book seek independence? Refer the chapter and answer. Present your own reasoning too.

4. The nouns, 'doe', 'stag', and 'fawn' have been used often in this chapter. What do these words mean? Explain.

5. Chital and sambar are the two species of deer mentioned often in this book. From the In-

ternet download pictures of both these deer. What are the differences between these two deer? Which of the species is larger? What are the physical differences? Name also 3 other deer species found in India.

6. What does the word 'barrage' mean? Use the word in a sentence created by you.

7. What does the word 'pandemonium' mean? Use the word in a sentence created by you.

8. What does the word 'sibling' mean? Use the word in a sentence created by you.

9. The mother tigress and the strange tiger spar at each other during this chapter. What does the word 'spar' mean (in context above)? Use the word in a sentence created by you.

Chapter 4 – Mohini Mahal

1. Aditya effects a raid on Mohini Mahal in this chapter. Aditya's behaviour in this episode reflects his personality. Using examples from this and earlier chapters, provide a character sketch of Aditya.

Chapter 5 – Poachers

1. Why did the tiger attack the buffalo belonging to the humans? Tigers generally feed on wild animals like deer. Yet, in spite of knowing that humans would come after him, the tiger still attacked the buffalo. Explain by referring the chapter. Provide the tiger's point of view.

2. The tiger comes across the remains of his mother during one of his night walks. What are his feelings when he finds her mutilated body?

3. The poet William Blake has written an extraordinary poem on the tiger. The chapters – 'The Cubs', 'Independence', and 'Poachers' – provide a glimpse

on the life and natural history of the tiger. After reading these chapters in class read and discuss Blake's famous poem. Children can then be asked to compose their own poem describing their feelings on the tiger.

4. The livelihoods of villagers often depend on their cattle. Cattle are very important for them, providing them milk, meat, and dung fertiliser. But often, especially in places like Rajasthan where rain is scanty, there is hardly any grass to feed cattle. Things get very bad in the dry season and cattle often die. At times like this villagers look at the forest and see lots of grass there. By law they are not allowed to take their cattle into the forest because this grass is only for wild animals like deer. Yet the villagers, because their cattle are dying, take their animals into the forest. This intrusion into the forest leads to man-animal conflict. The tiger kills cattle that belong to the villagers and the villagers retaliate by killing the tiger.

a.   Imagine yourself to be a poor villager whose cattle are dying because there is no grass. What is your opinion of the forest and the grass available there? Do you believe that this precious grass should be wasted on wild animals? Would you take your animals in to feed? What would you do to a tiger that attacked and killed one of your animals? Answer from the point of view of a villager.

b.   Next, answer the same questions from the point of view of a person who loves wildlife and tigers and believes that all animals have a right to exist.

c.   After explaining both points of view, give your personal opinion on whether villagers should be allowed to take their cattle into the forest. Give reasons to back your point of view.

5.   Genghis is wary of humans on foot. He keeps his distance from humans in the forest, but

on this occasion (after his leg is mauled by the trap) he attacks. Why does he attack?

Chapter 6 – Genghis

1. Mr. Reddy is the Chief Forest Officer of Ranthambore. He is a brave and upright officer. Vikram sees bruises and cuts on the officer's face. It is obvious to Vikram that Mr. Reddy has been beaten up. Why was Mr. Reddy beaten up? Who beat him up and why?

2. In this chapter the officer, Ramveer, says: '...the problem is nobody cares. So what if a few tigers die? So what if cattle graze in a forest? Who cares? The public doesn't; the authorities don't, and the judiciary ignores wildlife. No one is bothered! We forest officers often wonder why we take the trouble...'. Why should Reddy saab risk his life if nobody is concerned? All he has to do is turn a blind eye. If you are a forest officer would you risk your life for bravery that people and the public ignore? Explain, giving reasons.

3. Read the chapter from end-to-end and present a thorough character analysis of Mr. Reddy, describing each of the facets of his personality.

4. What are Mr. Reddy's views on the tiger, especially his feelings for Genghis and his sister, Padmini? What is his opinion on zoos and captive animals?

5. Searching for a wounded tiger in a cave is a dangerous job. Yet Mr. Reddy approaches the cave Genghis is hiding in. Mr. Reddy's brave, life-endangering effort is described in the book. Imagine you are Mr. Reddy. Describe the entire cave encounter from Mr. Reddy's point of view.

Chapter 7 – Aditya...

1. The driver Sukhram is devastated at Aditya's kidnapping. What are the thoughts that

go through his mind? Why does Aarti have no sympathy for him? Present a character analysis of Sukhram, taking into account his behaviour from the start of the book.

Chapter 8 – On the Road

1. Laloo, the cook, displays a chauvinistic attitude to Aarti on the phone – this despite her plea and obvious distress. Give a character sketch of Laloo. What kind of man do you imagine him to be? In your opinion is his behaviour typical of men in India? Give reasons.

2. Aarti displays a high degree of bravery when she jumps into the moving van. She does this so as to not abandon her friend, Aditya. While she sits at the back of the car, she has time for reflection on herself and her parents and her friendship with Aditya. From this chapter and the earlier chapters, present a character analysis of Aarti.

Chapter 9 – Ranthambore

1. Sita helps Aarti blindly, even though she has just met her and doesn't personally know her. When Aarti thanks Sita, Sita is surprised. She says: 'There is no need for you to thank me. You would have done the same for me.' Aarti wonders at this. If a poor, barefoot Rajasthani girl had approached her on Delhi's streets, would she have helped her? Aarti is ashamed at the answer that comes to her. Why is Aarti ashamed? Explain the thoughts Sita's statement stir inside her. Put yourself in Aarti's position. Would you have helped a poor, barefoot Rajasthani girl you met in the streets of your city? Present reasoning for your answer.

2. In your opinion, why does Sita help Aarti so selflessly? This even though she is bound to lose

her job for helping her and even endanger her own life.

3. Why does the cook in the teashop, Gayatriben, remind Aarti of someone she knows? What is it about Gayatriben that stirs this memory in Aarti?

4. Locate Ranthambore and Sawai Madhopur on the map of India. Locate Delhi and Jaipur too on the same map and show the roads that connect Delhi to Ranthambore and Jaipur. Include the Aravalli range on your map. The map cannot be a printout and must be hand-drawn.

5. From the Internet present a brief history of Ranthambore and its fort. When was Ranthambore converted into a game park for tigers? Download and print pictures of Jogi Mahal and lake Padam Talao.

Chapter 10 – Vikram

1. Download and print pictures of the Hanuman langur and of chittal deer. Describe the relationship between deer and langurs in Ranthambore Forest. Why are the two species friendly to one another? Explain in detail. If you had to describe this relationship with just one word, which word would you select?

2. Why is Sita embarrassed to speak to the forest officers? What qualities does Sita display from the time she meets Aarti? Present a brief character sketch.

3. Everyone visits tiger sanctuaries in India with the specific purpose of seeing a tiger. If they don't see a tiger they come away disappointed. Having read this book and this chapter, in your opinion, is spotting a tiger the most important reason for visiting a tiger sanctuary?

4. Vikram has a magical forest experience in this chapter. He enjoys the forest when he is

alone, waiting for the return of Ramveer who has gone to search for Mogia, the poacher. Describe the joy Vikram feels while watching wildlife. If you were to visit Ranthambore, what would you look forward to? How will you enjoy your experience in a forest? Give reasons.

5. What are the things one should not do in a forest? List them and give your reasons.

6. Vikram spots a woodpecker called the flameback woodpecker. From the Internet or from a bird book write a few lines on this bird. Also list 5 other woodpeckers found in India and write a line or two on each of the birds.

7. Vikram finally spots a bird he has heard often but never managed to see. Give two names for this bird – its official name and also the name acquired from its call. Write a few lines on this bird.

Chapter 11 – Shankar Chand.

1. Read the entire chapter and describe Shankar Chand's character. Why does the man hate animals? Why is he drawn into poaching?

Chapter 12 – The Way it Should Be

1. Vikram and his friends spot green pigeons. Aarti had no idea that pigeons could be green. From bird books or the Internet list the different types of pigeons found in our country. Of these, what is the name of the common pigeon that inhabits our cities? Describe each pigeon with a sentence or two.

2. The story ends with a tranquil scene of tiger cubs playing beside a lake without a care in the world. Yet Vikram is not convinced by the peace and happiness

he sees. He wonders about the future of the animals: whether they will be left alone, whether the peace and tranquillity of the forest will remain? Why is Vikram worried about this?

3. In your opinion why is the future of Indian forests in doubt? What is your guess as to the fate of the forest of Ranthambore 10 years from now? Will tigers be around 10 years in the future, or like the cheetah 50 years ago, will they disappear from the face of India? Present your thoughts and arguments for whichever scenario you feel describes the future.

Projects:

In the case of supplementary readers – particularly for holiday reading – the project assigned to students is mostly a book review. The questions listed here are in addition to a book review. They explore the learning aspect of the book and present queries with a point of view of maximising the learning experience.

For the sake of convenience we have grouped the projects under the following categories:

1. Literary

2. Tiger Natural History

3. Geography

Please select a mix of projects as per your requirement.

Projects can be delivered by the student either as a written assignment or as a powerpoint presen-

tation.

As a general rule, for all Internet research sources must be mentioned. Stress must be given more to researched written/printed material and its quality rather than large, glossy pictures.

Map understanding is better when it is hand drawn rather than simply employing cut and paste.

1. Literary

Tips for Character Analysis: (to be shared with students)

i.   Character's Personality: Collect hints from the character's words, actions, reactions, feelings, movements.

ii.   Character's ethics: Does the character make just or unjust choices?

iii.   Decide whether the character's decisions are wise or unwise.

iv.   What is the character's motivation for his actions? Why is the character thinking or acting in a particular way?

v.   Consider the effect of the character's behaviour on other characters.

vi.   Be aware of the character's thought process.

vii.   Character Role: Define the character's role in the story.

viii.   Is the character "flat" or "round"?: A character is considered flat (or static) when he or she does not experience change of any kind, does not grow from beginning to end. Round characters are those who do experience some sort of growth.

ix.   Finally, what does the author think? Look for

any of the author's own judgments about the characters he or she has created.

Questions

1. The poet William Blake has written an extraordinary poem on the tiger (poem reproduced at the end of the document). The chapters – 'The Cubs', 'Independence', and 'Poachers' – provide a glimpse on the life and natural history of the tiger. After reading these chapters and studying Mr. Blake's poem, compose your own poem describing your feelings for the tiger.

2. Sita helps Aarti blindly, even though she has just met her and doesn't personally know her. When Aarti thanks Sita (Chapter – Ranthambore), Sita is surprised. She says: 'There is no need for you to thank me. You would have done the same for me.' Aarti wonders at this. If a barefoot Rajasthani girl had approached her on Delhi's streets, would she have helped her? And Aarti is ashamed at the answer that comes to her. Why is Aarti ashamed? Explain the thoughts Sita's statement stir inside her. Put yourself in Aarti's position. Would you have helped a poor, barefoot Rajasthani girl you met in the streets of your city? Present reasoning for your answer.

3. Searching for a wounded tiger in a cave is a dangerous job. Yet Mr. Reddy approaches the cave Genghis is hiding in. Mr. Reddy's brave, life-endangering effort is described in the book. Imagine you are Mr. Reddy. Describe the entire cave encounter from Mr. Reddy's point of view.

4. Mr. Reddy is a brave, intelligent officer of high integrity who loves his job and all the animals that live in the forests of Ranthambore. Present a character sketch of Mr. Reddy.

5. Genghis's life, from his birth to his emergence as a proud powerful predator, is portrayed in the book. His agony, his humbling, his anger at humans, and his resurgence is also narrated. Just as you would present a character analysis of a human, present a character analysis of Genghis.

6. Referring the book, describe Shankar Chand's character. Why does the man hate animals? Why is he drawn into poaching?

7. Vikram and Aditya are best friends. Yet their personalities are very different. Referring the book, present a complete character analysis of both the boys. Highlight specifically the differences in their personalities.

8. Aarti plays a significant role in the book. It is her bravery that rescues Aditya. Drawing on incidents from the narrative, present a character analysis of Aarti.

2. Tiger Natural History

1. How many species of Tiger are there? List all the species. Where are each of the different species of tigers found? How many of these species are extinct? Provide estimated numbers of each surviving species.

2. Internationally, India is called 'the land of the tiger'. Why is this?

3. Why is the tiger disappearing from our forests? Present all the reasons (from your point of view) as to why the animal is threatened with extinction. What in your opinion must be done to save the tiger? List all the steps you feel should be taken to save the tiger.

4. Your team has taken on itself the task of saving the tiger. As schoolchildren what can you do

to save the tiger? Present all the steps that you will take.

5. Shankar Chand is the king poacher in the novel. His name has been taken from a real life poacher known as Sansar Chand. From the Internet find news reports on Sansar Chand. Sansar Chand is the most wanted of all poachers in India. Describe the crimes he committed and explain why it was so difficult to jail the man in spite of his crimes. Your answer should be 500 words long.

6. Download and print pictures of the Hanuman langur and of chittal deer. Describe the relationship between deer and langurs in Ranthambore Forest. Why are the two species friendly to one another? Explain in detail. If you had to describe this relationship with just one word, which word would you select?

7. In your opinion why is the future of Indian forests in doubt? What is your guess as to the fate of the forest of Ranthambore 10 years from now? Will tigers be around 10 years in the future, or like the cheetah 50 years ago, will they disappear from the face of India? Present your thoughts and arguments for whichever scenario you feel describes the future.

8. Imagine a grown tiger that has lived its entire life in a zoo and then released one day in the wild. Will this zoo-reared tiger be able to hunt? Will it be able to survive in the wild? How important is the mother's role in the upbringing of cubs? Refer chapter 1, 'The Cubs'.

9. On the African grasslands the Cheetah hunts by sheer speed, overtaking even the most fleet-footed of deer and antelope. The tiger hunts in a different manner. In the chapter, 'Independence' and also the final chapter, there are several hunting episodes. How does a tiger hunt? Does it depend upon stealth or speed? Explain your answer.

10. Everyone visits tiger sanctuaries in India

with the specific purpose of seeing a tiger. If they don't see a tiger they come away very disappointed. Having read this book, in your opinion, is spotting a tiger the most important reason for visiting a tiger sanctuary?

11. Vikram has a magical forest experience in the chapter, 'Vikram'. He enjoys the forest when he is alone, waiting for the return of Ramveer who has gone to search for Mogia, the poacher. Describe the joy Vikram feels while watching wildlife. If you were to visit Ranthambore, what would you look forward to? How will you enjoy your experience in a forest? Give reasons.

12. What are the things one should not do in a forest? List them and give your reasons.

13. Vikram spots a woodpecker called the flameback woodpecker. From the Internet or from a bird book write a few lines on this bird. Also list 5 other woodpeckers found in India and write a line or two on each of the birds.

14. Vikram and his friends spot green pigeons. Aarti had no idea that pigeons could be green. From bird books or the Internet list the different types of pigeons found in our country. Of these, what is the name of the common pigeon that inhabits our cities? Describe each pigeon with a sentence or two.

15. Chital and sambar are the two species of deer mentioned often in this book. From the Internet download pictures of both these deer. What are the differences between these two deer? Which of the species is larger? What are the physical differences? Name also 3 other deer species found in India.

16. In the chapter, 'Poachers', the tiger attacks the buffalo belonging to the humans. Why does the tiger do so? Tigers generally feed on wild animals like deer. Yet, in spite of knowing that humans would come

after him, the tiger still attacked the buffalo. Explain by referring the chapter. Provide the tiger's point of view.

17. The livelihoods of villagers often depend on their cattle. Cattle are very important for them, providing them milk, meat, and dung fertiliser. But often, especially in places like Rajasthan where rain is scanty, there is hardly any grass to feed cattle. Things get very bad in the dry season and cattle often die. At times like this villagers look at the forest and see lots of grass there. By law they are not allowed to take their cattle into the forest, because this grass is only for wild animals like deer. Yet the villagers, because their cattle are dying, take their animals into the forest. This intrusion into the forest leads to man-animal conflict. The tiger kills cattle that belong to the villagers and the villagers retaliate by killing the tiger.

a. Imagine yourself to be a poor villager whose cattle are dying because there is no grass. What is your opinion of the forest and the grass available there? Do you believe that this precious grass should be wasted on wild animals? Would you take your animals in to feed? What would you do to a tiger that attacked and killed one of your animals? Answer from the point of view of a villager.

b. Next, answer the same questions from the point of view of a person who loves wild-life and tigers and believes that all animals have a right to exist.

c. After explaining both points of view, give your personal opinion on whether villagers should be allowed to take their cattle into the forest. Give reasons to back your point of view.

18. In the story, Vikram's father is the head of an organisation called 'Wilderness Conservation India'. In India there exist several such organisations that work to protect wildlife in India. The two most ac-

tive organisations are Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) and Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI). Visit the websites of both these organisations and explain in 500 words the work these two organisations do for protecting wildlife in India.

19. What does the term IUCN stand for? What is the IUCN Red List? Is the tiger on the IUCN Red List? If so, why? Name ten Indian animals on the IUCN Red List. Why is the IUCN red list important?

20. What family (Genus) of animals does the tiger belong to? State the biological name of the family (Genus). List some of the other species belonging to the same family (Genus) of animals. State also the species/biological name of the tiger.

21. Traditional Chinese medicine requires tiger bone as one of its important ingredients. Today, at 1.5 billion people, China has the largest population in the world and they require medicines. To meet the demand some people have advocated the idea of having tiger farms in China. At these farms the tiger will be raised in a manner similar to the way domestic animals like chicken are raised. They will be held in coop-like cages till they are a year old and then slaughtered. Their meat will be used as food, and their bones will satisfy the demand for medicines. There are people who support the idea and there are people who are horrified at the thought of raising an animal like the tiger in a manner similar to a chicken. They feel it is cruel, unjust and unbecoming of a proud predator like a tiger. The people who advocate the farms say that not only will the demand for tiger bones be met but also incidents of poaching will decrease as now bones will be obtained from farms. What is your opinion on this? Present detailed reasons for supporting your point of view.

22. Make a poster (full-size) for saving the ti-

ger. Include pictures and make a case for saving the animal.

3. Geography Projects

1. Locate Ranthambore and Sawai Madhopur on the map of India. Locate Delhi and Jaipur too on the same map and show the roads that connect Delhi to Ranthambore and Jaipur. Include the Aravalli range on your map and submit. The map cannot be a printout and must be hand-drawn.

2. List all the sanctuaries that have been set up to save the tiger. Present a map.

3. How important are the monsoons to a forest like Ranthambore? How do the monsoons transform a forest? How do the rains affect the lives of the forest animals?

4. From the Internet present a brief history of Ranthambore and its fort. When was Ranthambore converted into a game park for tigers? Download and print pictures of Jogi Mahal and lake Padam Talao.

The Tiger

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright

In the forest of the night

What immortal hand or eye

Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies

Burnt the fire of thine eyes?

On what wings dare he aspire?

What the hand dare seize the fire?

And What shoulder, and what art,

Could tw ist the sinews of thy heart?

And when thy heart began to beat,

What dread hand? and what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?

In what furnace was thy brain?

What the anvil? what dread grasp

Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,

And watered heaven with their tears,

Did he smile his work to see?

Did he who made the lamb make thee?

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright

In the forests of the night,

What immortal hand or eye

Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

– William Blake

Useful websites:

1. *www.Kidsfortigers.org*   2. *www.IUCN.org*   3. *www.wti.org*

4. *www.wpsi-india.org*   5. *Wikipedia*   6. *www.conservationindia.org*