

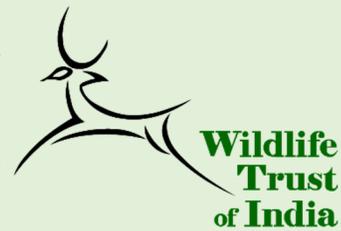


<https://www.theuniversejournal.com/index.php>
<https://www.theuniversejournal.com/edboard.php>
https://www.theuniversejournal.com/current_issue.php
https://www.theuniversejournal.com/join_us.php



Wildlife Crime Control Enforcement Files

*A case diary based on real events of wildlife crime control
undercover operations to bust illegal wildlife trade nexus across
the country*



‘A MYTHICAL SHOWER OF BLOOD MONEY’

(BLIND BELIEF IN DHAN VARSHA)

CASE 1

Monesh Singh Tomar,
Field Officer, Wildlife Trust of India
po2.wccd@wti.org.in

25/11/2019

Today I arrived in Chhattisgarh, the ancient land of 36 forts. One of the field contacts informed me about the presence of a gang of poachers in the area. They were supposedly possessing a big cat skin and looking for a buyer.

I roamed in the nearby villages in pursuit of more information and any possible strong leads.
I found none.

26/11/2019

It was an uneventful day. I've been waiting to hear from my informers. I'd asked them to share the contact details of the dealer (middleman) eager to sell the big cat skin. I'm still in the dark about whether it's a tiger or leopard skin.

Waiting....

27/11/2019

Again a somewhat dull day. I've received no further information from my informers. Let's see how things turn out to be.

Still Waiting....

28/11/2019

Today, I finally got the phone number from one of my informers.

I called up the dealer, who revealed that the skin was of a poached tiger, and that it was not for sale. They were instead looking for a pandit to perform a black magic ritual of “**Dhan Varsha**” believed to bring wealth and prosperity. Imagine my shock upon hearing this!

Tactfully, I convinced him to share a video of the tiger skin by assuring that I personally know a Guruji from Haridwar. Later in the evening, he shared a video on WhatsApp, and I sadly confirmed that it was the real skin of an adult tiger.

How can the bare skin of a dead animal bring wealth and fortune to anyone!?! It infuriates me to think about how such a majestic apex predator freely roaming in the wild, was hunted down by a group of criminals and reduced to a mere article for potential monetary gain. How ridiculous is it that the tiger, the wild guardian of our forests and India’s National Animal protected under Schedule 1 of Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, is still poached for such stupid superstitious beliefs?

29/11/2019

Today morning, I forwarded the WhatsApp video to my senior officials and members of the state forest department to confirm an active case and further discuss the action plan.

Later in the evening, I phoned the dealer and informed him that the so-called “Guruji” would perform the Dhan Varsha Pooja on 8th December between 12:00 pm to 3:00 pm (auspicious time decided by us), to which he readily agreed. As I’ll be unavailable for the next few days due to a work - related trip, I pre-cautiously mentioned that I’d be accompanying “Guruji” for a Pooja to be held in Kolkata and would be available after 4th December.

Also requested informers to keep the suspects engaged in my absence, so as to maintain a hold on the case. I’m yet to finish packing, have an early morning flight to catch tomorrow from Delhi airport.

01/12/2019

Yesterday was hectic. After missing all the alarms I’d set, I woke up to my ringtone with a start, and rushed to the airport in a cab. I’d just barely made it to the airport, when I heard my name being announced on the mic. Phew...arrived in the nick of time just as the plane was preparing to take off, much to the relief of my colleagues accompanying me.

I am in Ladakh right now, in the beautiful city of Leh. It feels like frozen heaven on earth; the temperature dips as low as -22°C at night. We’ve been busy with making arrangements for organizing an official workshop.

However, I can’t stop thinking about the tiger skin case.

I tried contacting my informers, but couldn’t reach through due to network issues. I still had a lot to plan and discuss. For now though, I need to keep my hopes up and wait patiently.

Patience is a virtue, and essential for people like me working in crime control. Yes, I need to stay cool, and keep my fingers crossed!

04/12/2019

Finally back in Delhi. The trip to Ladakh was excellent, and I had enough free time to think and rethink my strategy.

I called up the Chhattisgarh FD team and discussed the details of the plan, which they agreed to.

I’ve decided to call the dealer tomorrow. If everything goes according to plan, hopefully, we can crack this.

05/12/2019

I tried calling the dealer several times today. Alas, his number was not reachable. I informed the team about the current situation.

I am leaving for Chhattisgarh day after tomorrow.

I will again try to call the dealer tomorrow. Don't know what's going on. Did he somehow get a hint about my true identity? I'm feeling anxious and worried.

06/12/2019

Yes! I finally received a call from the dealer this afternoon. My mind's back on track now.

He mentioned that all necessary arrangements for the ritual were ready, and that the tiger skin had been shifted to the final location. They'd wait for us at a nearby village located beside main road.

The tiger skin is apparently massive, approx. 8.5 feet in length. Such a magnificent animal it must have been.

I have an early morning flight tomorrow. Hope to catch at least this one on time!

07/12/2019

I'm back in Chhattisgarh, reached at 10:30 am.

Today was a momentous day. I met with the FD team to finalize the operation plan. I will be enacting the role of Guruji tomorrow. I will be accompanied by two forest staff; one will be my driver, while the other will act as my Munshi (cashier). The backup team will await my signal while positioned in the nearest forest office.

Banking on my limited knowledge about black magic, I bought miscellaneous items required for performing a Hindu ritual (Pooja): hawan samagri, camphor, incense sticks, coconut, idols, vermilion, etc. etc. And of course, special saintly clothes for the occasion. Hope my childhood fascination for mantra-tantra pays off tomorrow, and helps me put on a convincing act.

Overcome with mixed feelings; feeling extremely excited and anxious. I've lost count of the cigarettes smoked while pondering over various aspects and possibilities of the multi-layered operation plan. May be a sleepless night ahead.

Hoping for the best! Jai Mata Di.

08/12/2019

It was a day full of action.

The site of operation was situated approx. 140 km from my current location.

In the morning before leaving base, I called the trader to check the arrival time and confirm location details. We were supposed to meet at a spot near the main road and then enter the village via a side road for the ritual.

(7:30am) - And the D-day begins

My team and I set off from the base location after discussing every detail of the action plan. Even one small mistake could cost lives.

We were headed towards the meeting location. I couldn't stop thinking; how far would the ritual place be from the main road? Will the backup team be able to arrive on time?

And then an idea struck me. I would tell the dealer that Bade (Senior) Guru Ji was on the way after meeting with a relative in a neighbouring city. Meanwhile, me being the Chhote (Junior) Guruji, would complete the puja preparations, after which I'd send my driver to the main road to pick up Bade Guruji. (10:00am) - On the way to the given location

I'd have to convincingly pose as the pujari and perform a few black magic tricks, to avoid any suspicion on the dealer's side. So in preparation, I bought 12 lemons, a syringe, and red ink on the way. I then injected red ink in 6 lemons to turn them blood red inside.

We were a few kilometers away from the meetup location, and it was time to change clothes for our disguises. I dressed in a white dhoti-kurta, wrung a tulsi-mala around my neck and wore stone rings on my fingers. The final touch was a chandan tika on my forehead, and my look was complete; that of a younger, leaner Sai Baba. I'd never imagined that I'd be doing any of this as part of my job, but was loving it. I gazed at my reflection, and let out a short nervous laugh. My Munshi and driver were also dressed. Now it was time for the act.

(10:45am) - About to reach the location

Our team split in two. Travelling in a car devoid of number plate, the Munshi, driver and I were the decoy team. The other team members were supposed to follow us in a backup vehicle. I called up the dealer to check if he had reached the location, and he said that he was close. I was gradually getting anxious.

(11:20am) - At the location

Upon reaching the location, I called the dealer again. After four rings, he picked up my call and asked, "*Kidhar ho, Guruji?*" In response, I told him that I was waiting at the given location in a white car. The dealer then confirmed having spotted our car.

Six people on three bikes were approaching us. I didn't expect such a big group to receive us. One of them approached our car, whom I greeted saying, "Jai Mahakali! We are getting late for the pooja. We'll miss the Muhurat (auspicious time) if we delay any further. How far is the ritual place?" I asked. He said, "The village is just a few kilometers from here. Please follow us."

(11:50am) - On the dealer's trail

Following the motorbikes, we took a narrow dust road leading to a village. I instructed my partner (Munshi) to update the backup team about every single move via WhatsApp and to share important details such as bike numbers, village names, and landmarks throughout the route.

We followed them for half an hour, clueless about the exact whereabouts. On the way, we'd crossed many villages having similar narrow lanes, making the entire area look like a maze.

The bikes finally stopped in front of a small house. Upon entering the house, I saw 10-12 people standing in the hall, waiting for me. They gave me a place to sit, and strangely started talking amongst themselves. I sensed something fishy, they were either scared or suspicious.

At that moment, my mind froze with panic. This was my fate – being lynched to death on my last seizure operation. I could see the blows coming; I'd feebly dodge a few, but one would hit me in the head, and I'd be left on the ground, bleeding to death. Fear gripped me, and blocked rational thinking. And in those few fast-paced moments, I calmed myself down, gathered some courage and opened my mouth to speak.

"We've missed the Muhurat, it's already 12:35 pm. We should hurry up." I said. The dealer then asked me whether I wanted to check if the tiger skin was appropriate for the *Dhan Varsha* ritual. I replied quickly, "Yes, Bade Guruji gave me a few lemons, and has instructed me to check if the skin is appropriate for the ritual."

After hearing this, one of them said, "The ritual will be performed somewhere else." Accompanying us in the car, he led us to the actual site (his house). Along the way, I spoke to him and

gained more information about his contacts, the whereabouts of the ritual site and villages nearby. The dealer had apparently requested him to have the pooja done at his house, promising him some money in return.

I was surprised to know that the dealer with whom I'd been speaking to all this while, was a Constable from the police department. Now the situation was even more dangerous, as on top of naxal threats, this man could be carrying a gun. The case had already taken a few unexpected turns, and a single wrong move could cost us our lives.

I rang the dealer, asking him to not invite too many people for the puja in order to avoid unwanted from the villagers. He agreed.

(12:55pm) - At the Target Location

After 20 minutes, we finally reached his house. It was newly constructed, located at the center of a village. Three of us followed him indoors, towards a basement down the stairs. This room seemed like the perfect spot for carrying out such shady business. Now it was time for my act, and I started the puja preparations.

There were five people from the dealer's side inside the house. Two were with me in the basement room, and the other three outside. I asked one of them to go and bring Bade Guruji. This was the most crucial part of the plan – to guide the backup team to our location.

I cautiously rang up our backup team to update them about the situation. They were at a distance of approx. 30 km from the target location, and it would take them 1 ½ hours to reach us. As the dirt roads were narrow and crossed through many villages, they wouldn't be able to speed up.

Meanwhile, I was busy enacting the fake ritual.

Upon my request, one of them took the tiger skin out of a plastic bag and placed it on the ground. I was amazed to see the tiger skin lying in front of me. It was massive, covering about half the room space.

Careful to not let my reaction escape, I focused on placing ritual items on the skin. Placing four lemons on each of the paws, I halved them and blood (red ink) oozed out. Looking at their shocked faces, I almost burst out laughing.

I assured them by saying, "This tiger skin will surely bring wealth and prosperity to you."

However, the main concern worrying me was that there were three others positioned outside, watching for suspicious movement. What if they saw 3-4 vehicles approaching? They would flee and alert others as well, and the operation would fail.

After a few minutes, I received a call from Bade Guruji. He informed me that they'd reach our location in half an hour.

I had to keep the group occupied for some more time. To bring the others inside, I said, "At the end of the ritual, you will have to hold a limb each and lift the tiger skin for the final money shower. So, any four of you can come forward and start with the preparations."

One of them was skeptical; he didn't seem convinced and insisted on staying outside to keep an eye out for danger. However, I persuaded him that it was important for everyone to stay in the room premises. I even convinced them to switch off mobile phones to prevent any disturbance during the ritual, which they duly did.

(02:10pm) - Still in the basement

I received a worrying call from Bade Guruji saying that they were stuck; it would take them 15 more minutes or so to reach us.

It was getting difficult for me to keep these men engaged; I was running out of the miscellaneous items I'd carried with me as puja offerings, and I knew they'd get suspicious before long. I was eagerly waiting for the backup team to arrive.

(02:35pm) - Backup team arrives

And finally, the team arrived. Manoj, the one leading the backup team, entered the house disguised as Bade Guruji. Seeing his demeanour, doubts rose within me about whether all the team

-
- We need to always keep in mind that we have not only inherited the Earth from our antecedents, but we have also borrowed it from our children, hence, it is our individual and collective duty to safeguard it. Therefore, development should take place without harming the environment.
-
-

Author's Information

- Name- Riya Gulati
- Designation- Paralegal at Law Offices of Caro Kinsella & Youth Ambassador for the ONE Campaign, Ireland.
- Qualifications- LL.M (Intellectual Property & Information Technology) from University College Dublin+ BA.LLB from Bharati Vidyapeeth Deemed University, Pune.
-
-
-

members had reached as yet. Hence, I continued the ritual ceremony and greeted Bade Guruji. Following him, the rest of the team entered the house.

When I went outside to call others from the backup team, a man said to me, “Chalo Baba ho gaya aapka, ab jail chalo” (Come Baba, let’s go. Your game’s over. You will now go to jail.). I laughed and asked him if he was with the forest staff. When he said yes, I revealed my undercover identity and asked him instead to go inside and arrest the fugitives. Lol.

(02:40pm) - Operation Successfully executed

We arrested nine people and confiscated the tiger skin. Five were arrested from the house and four others from a nearby tea shop. Among them, two were police constables, one was a driver from the Health Department, and the others were villagers involved in the transportation of the skin. Finally, after a long chase and numerous twists and turns in the plan, the enforcement operation by our special decoy team and local forest department was successful.

The tiger skin instead of showering wealth on the traders, surely did land them in big trouble.

12/12/2019

(10:00am) - On a train bound to next destination

Three days later, while heading towards my next destination, I was still thinking about my first tiger skin seizure, recalling every instance of the operation plan. During the interrogation, it was surprising to know that none of them had any actual idea about the sum of money they would receive after the completion of “*Dhan Varsha*”. And yet, they risked their lives by getting involved in illegal wildlife trade. They landed behind bars, all because of their blind belief in a myth.

Such is human greed. We lost one of our last freely roaming tigers in the wild, to an absurd demand fueled by blind superstitious beliefs.

The End