



## **THE DAWN OF THE TIGERS- Dr. Sandip Sharma**

Dr. Sandip Sharma is a famous tiger conversationalist known for his passion for wildlife photography. Though he is an engineer by profession, he doesn't let his job stop him from visiting the 'RANTHAMBORE RESERVE' every month.

He spoke to the students of class 8 and some of class 9 and 10 about tiger conservation and in particular about the adored 'Machli'. With sheer dedication he has visited Machli every month for the past sixteen years and has come to not only love her, but all of her kind.

Machli, also known as the 'Lake Tigress' of Ranthambore is the oldest tiger to have survived for so long in the wild. Most tigers live up till the age of 12-14 years, Machli however is 18 years old and counting! Dr. Sharma mentioned that even at her age Machli is able to make a natural kill and has managed surviving on her own. In her entire lifetime, she has killed about 12 crocodiles; the first when one tried to attack her cubs and the others out of habit.

Interestingly Machli got her name from her mother, who also shared the same name as she had markings of a fish behind her ear. Dr Sandip Sharma also told us that Machli has faced many hardships in her life, from surviving the poaching season to the numerous fights and disappearance of her daughter Sundari. She is truly an exceptional tigress!

Dr Sharma also expressed his concern for tigers and their habit through his powerful presentation. He urged us to join clubs, broadcast tigers on social media and even take a bigger step by visiting sanctuaries or writing to the government directly to ensure the safety of tigers. In the words of Dr Sandip Sharma, "If we save tigers, we save forests and if we save forests, we in turn save mankind!"

### **INTERESTING FACTS:**

- Tigers mark their territories by urinating on trees or clawing them.
- They swim about 30km everyday and eat 25kgs of meat at one time.
- No tiger has the same set of stripes

**ASHNA SETHI**

8- C



## **TYGER! TYGER! BURNING- NOT AS BRIGHT**

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of December 2013 the students of class 8, Vasant Valley School attended a talk by Dr. Sandip Sharma. An environmentalist who has been tracking a tiger named Machhli for the past 16 years had come to share his experiences. With fascinating power- point presentation and captivating stories filled with facts, tips and wildlife adventure, Dr. Sharma had the audience enthralled right from the beginning till the end. The talk was divided into two halves. The first half of the talk told us about the tigers and Ranthambore. It was filled with intriguing and exciting facts about each individual tiger. He told us about the tiger Fateh Singh first. The tiger was named in the memory of the very man who placed Ranthambore on the map. Then he moved on to the tiger Ustad and his habits and kept moving on to different tigers telling us a number of unusual facts.

The talk however came to real importance only in the second half of Dr. Sharma's visit. It was then that he started talking about the experience of tracking the 18 year old tigress- Machhli. She is the oldest tigress in the wild, and probably one of the strongest of her age. To quote Dr. Sharma- "She has survived against all odds" he said. And indeed, true to his words she has. She has survived against poachers, illness, old age and anything else that could possibly bring her down- including animals like crocodiles. It was probably Dr. Sharma's enthusiasm and energy that had his audience revved up and curious to know how they could do their bit. "It is most important to BE INFORMED. To do your bit you have to know what to do", Dr. Sharma said passionately. And indeed that is the best thing to do is to try and spread awareness- for every small bit is a step forward to making another person aware, until that small action becomes a mass movement. Let us save the tigers together.

**Zoya S. Hassan**

8 -C



## Power of the Stripes

The tiger, an animal like no other. Its ferocious attitude and glamour is renowned all over the world. This magnificent animal has captivated the imagination of scholars, wildlife activists, poets and generations of explorers. These iconic creatures are worth saving. They are guardians of the environment and rain. The great poet William Blake himself wrote in his book 'Songs of Experience' –

“What immortal hand or eye  
Could frame thy fearful symmetry.”

These iconic creatures inspired the engineer by profession Dr. Sandeep Sharma to track these animals for sixteen years at Ranthambore Reserve. On the eleventh of December we were happy to meet him. He told us about Dr Fateh Singh, the man who put Ranthambore on the world map.

We sat there mesmerized as a cascade of tiger facts enveloped us. Now we know how to distinguish a male tiger from a female one – from the size of their pug mark. We now also know that by rubbing their whiskers to trees they don't take whisker manicure but actually mark their territory. Then he introduced us to an iconic animal, with massive proportions, and brilliant strategies -The lady of the lakes, her highness, Machli. At the age of seventeen, she dominates an area of three lakes. Surviving a poaching scheme, all to the credit of her wits, she is also known as the 'crocodile killer'. She has valiantly defended her territory from male tigers, which are generally bigger. All this when she is plagued by age and is a great grandmother! With nine cubs of her own and the ruler of three lakes she does justice to the common Hindi rhyme –  
Machli jaal ki rani hai.

**VARUN BISHT**

8-C



## TIGER TALK

“Tyger! Tyger! Burning bright,  
In the forests of the night.  
What immortal hand or eye,  
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?”  
-William Blake

Being a student of class eight, I got the marvelous opportunity of attending a talk on Wednesday, the 11th of December, about tigers and tiger conservation by Dr. Sandip Sharma. He is an engineer by profession and has been visiting Ranthambhore Reserve every month since last 16 years and as a result, he is familiar with most of the tigers there. The talk began with some information about the history of Ranthambhore and Dr. Sharma told us about the legendary Fateh Singh who brought the sanctuary to the world map. The brawniest tiger is named after him, in order to honour him. We were also familiarized, through pictures and information, with other tigers such as ‘Ustaad,’ who is extremely friendly. But the most important in the sanctuary is inevitably ‘Machli,’ the 18-year-old tigress, who is one of the oldest of her kind, in the world. Dr. Sharma has followed Machli’s life ever since she was 3 years of age.

After being introduced to a few of these tigers, we learnt about the natural habitat, nature and behaviour of tigers in general. Dr. Sharma told us how they mark their territory through a process called ‘Flachem,’ which is when they each leave their unique scent to highlight their lands’ boundaries; how a tiger can register who the land belongs to just by inhaling the scent; and how they each have unique stripe patterns. We also learnt about the eating habits of tigers; they eat up to 25-30kgs of meat at a time and then rest in water to digest the food. The second part of the talk was about the tigers’ world population and about Machli- T-16, (tiger number) and the ‘Lake Tigress’ of Ranthambore. We learnt that tigers are present in various countries such as China, Thailand, and Vietnam etc. however India has the largest population of tigers, which are of the Royal Bengal species. As a part of the presentation, we got a rare insight into Machli’s life and learnt that she is still independent and young in spirit.

To conclude the talk, Dr. Sharma told us how Machli is his single source of inspiration and how she will always be close to his heart.

For me, the talk was an exhilarating experience as it was interactive, and intriguing and it really did leave me with some ‘food for thought’ about tiger conservation.

**Devika Vir**

8 -B