

## Chapter-IV

### *The Man-Eating Leopard of Rudraprayag*

#### **Introduction:**

*The Man-Eating Leopard of Rudraprayag* is a story of the successful hunting of the most famous man-eating leopard that has terrorized the people of Garhwal. The leopard started to kill human beings on the Kedarnath pilgrim route in 1918 when epidemic influenza swept through the country and then extended its area up to five hundred square miles. Each kill of the man-eater has its own tragic story but Corbett gives a few in order to give some idea of what the real terror meant to the people of Garhwal. No other man-eater would have given so much attention as the Rudraprayag leopard for the Government has offered many rewards. The rules in the area were relaxed to great extent. Shikaris were employed on liberal wages and were promised special rewards. After some twenty innocent leopards have been killed in the gin traps, the man-eater was caught but escaped because of the lapse of time in taking quick decision. Once, it was closed in the cave but again escaped because a man of influence denied the possibility of any leopard there. Corbett tries to hunt the beast for ten weeks, sometimes alone and at other times with Ibbotson. But Corbett's first visit has been unsuccessful. In his attempts, he himself is closely followed by the beast at night many times. He visits Rudraprayag for the second time after three months to find that the leopard has killed ten human beings meanwhile. Corbett tries to lessen his work by closing the two suspension bridges on the river at night. He tries every means to kill the beast such as a gun-trap, gin-

trap, cyanide: the best poison for the cat family, and imitating the sound of a female leopard. Nowhere else he has endangered his life so much as in Rudraprayag. Ultimately, for ten nights he sits in wait for the leopard on a mango tree and on the eleventh day, he finds the opportunity to kill his favourite man-eater.

The basic theme of the story is the same a mammal turns man-eater kills a number of human beings completely terrorizing the entire population in the surrounding villages. Corbett is called upon to track and kill the beast and he, using his amazing knowledge of the jungle and the jungle denizens along with his unbelievable courage and determination, rids the people of the menace. As a matter of fact, the researcher also finds some other perspectives in *M.L.R.*:

- A. Wildlife in Garhwal
- B. North India and its hill life
- C. Human Nature and the Supernatural
- D. Geographical Perspective and the Bondage between Man and Animal

**A. Wild life in Garhwal:**

Forests and their fauna have been the paradise of Jim Corbett. Watching the wildlife is an intensely interesting pastime for him. He has always derived most pleasure from the knowledge of the language, and the habits, of the jungle-folk. He points out that there is no universal language in the jungles as each species has its own language. Though, some jungle dwellers like porcupines and vultures have limited vocabulary, the language of each species is understood by all the other species. The language of one species differs according to its mood or the function of its conversation.

Corbett believes that the vocal chords of human beings are more adaptable than the vocal chords of any of the jungle-folk, with the one exception of the crested wire-tailed drongo, and hence, they can communicate with the other species as he himself does. This communication not only gives one pleasure but also can be useful while travelling in the jungles. Corbett recollects his travelling in the Vale of Kashmir where he has seen for the first time a herd of six much-famed red Kashmir deer and an albino musk-deer which he mistook for a white goat in the forest of giant fir-trees. Oak and pine forests are found in Garhwal district. Along with these trees mango, walnut, medlar and giant prickly-pear-trees also grow in the area. Rhododendron trees are found to be grown above fifteen feet from the ground. Emerald-green grass, rose bushes, maidenhair fern, luxuriant beds of vivid green watercress and sky-blue strobilanthes increase the beauty of the forests. According to Corbett, the most beautiful of all wild flowers in the Himalayas are blue mountain poppies.

A wide variety of birdlife inhabited these forests and the most common are kaleege pheasants. Mahseer fishes are in abundance in Kumaon and Garhwal and are liked very much by the people. They vary in sizes from five to fifty pounds. The one caught by Corbett in Garhwal was a little over thirty pounds. Corbett finds good fishing in Gahrwal in the spring before the snow-water comes down in both, the Alaknanda and the Mandakini. Another species of fish that is goonch is also found in Garhwal. These species take a spoon or dead bait very readily but Corbett finds that *these fishes are responsible for 90 per cent of the tackle lost in our hill rivers through its annoying habit of diving to the bottom of the pool when hooked and getting*

*its head under a rock from where it is always difficult, and often impossible to dislodge it. (P.99, M.L.R.)* Corbett finds the tracks of kakar, ghooral, pig and a solitary serow in the forests of Garhwal. Bears, especially, Himalayan bears are commonplace. Pigs, the wild variety, are exceptionally good swimmers and Corbett finds the general belief that they cut their throats with their hooves while swimming to be wrong. He praises the animal as bigger hearted of all animals. At higher altitudes are found ghooral, a form of mountain goat. Corbett finds pine-marten, a small animal that sometimes eats other animal's kills. Cold-blooded creatures are not immune from snake poison for Corbett has seen a frog bitten by a cobra die in a few minutes.

Corbett leads his readers to the beauty and mystery that lies outside the material life. The fine climate and exceptional natural beauty of the amphitheatre of mountains has always attracted him. It is very pleasing to see the beauty of wild life at different times. Many beautiful and peaceful scenes are seen in the wilds of North India. Corbett though on his mission to kill man-eaters never fails to notice the most beautiful events of his life in the wild. He calls the sun a fiery red ball and it has been a feast to his eyes to see it a hand's breadth from the snow-mountains above Kedarnath. He admires the sunsets in the Himalayas which are mostly red, pink or gold. The event that Corbett has experienced in the Vale of Kashmir is extremely pleasing. He has been wandering in the forests when suddenly stormy rain of hailstones starts. He shelters under a small tree with rounded top and dense foliage as he has seen both human and animals killed by hail and the lightning that invariably accompanies hail-storm. For an hour the hail lashed down with the thunder and Corbett sits safe and warm as he has built a fire

under the tree meanwhile. He writes about the amazing beauty that he witnesses afterwards: *'the moment the hail stopped the sun came out, and from the shelter of the tree I stepped into fairyland, for the hail that carpeted the ground gave off a million points of light to which every glistening leaf and blade of grass added its quota.'*(P.145, *M.L.R.*)

Corbett is of the opinion that when shooting or photographing tigers and leopards, the best way of knowing the exact position of them is to take the help of birds or animals. The birds most suitable for this purpose, according to him, are red jungle fowl, peafowl, and white-capped babblers, and of animals the most suitable are kakars and langurs. According to Corbett, where carnivores are concerned, the scimitar babblers are among the most reliable informants in the jungle. Their clear and ringing alarm call can be heard in the hills for a distance of half a mile. They feed on grubs. As a matter of fact, Corbett has been so skilled hunter that he takes help even of the species having no any alarm call. Once, he was waiting for a tiger, when a pair of bronze-wing doves rises out of the jungle and a little later, a small flight of upland pipits rises off the ground giving indication that the tiger is on move. Neither of these two species of birds has any alarm call but he knows from their behaviour the presence of the tiger. Langur monkeys also show alarm at big cats and by knowing their voices as well as their actions, it is possible to not only know what the monkey, from his high vantage point, has seen but also how far away the unseen object is and what it is doing. Langur always faces the cats. Other animals such as jackal, chital and sambhar also give alarm calls. The sambhar is a big deer about as large as a small-sized cow. On the other hand, the chital, or spotted deer, is smaller and

dainty, looking a little like a European fallow deer, with short horns and a brown coat mottled with white flecks, the belly and innermost side of the t and legs being off-white. Its forest camouflage is perfect and it can remain unseen until within a few feet. Both graze largely by night and in the early and late day, resting up in the hot hours. The shy and delicate kakar or barking deer incongruously nicknamed the 'jungle sheep' call to each other or show alarm by barking like a dog.

Corbett is always anxious to know how an animal alarms the other members in the herd. Once, he gives the call of a leopard and observes the reaction of a red Kashmir deer. A hind strikes the ground with her fore-feet in order to warn her companions to be on the alert. When Corbett exposes his brown shoulder, the hind, mistaking it to be a leopard, takes a few steps forward and starts to call continuously giving the indication that the danger is in sight. Immediately, the other members gather round her and stand perfectly still with ears alternately held rigid or feeling forward and backward for sound. As soon as Corbett exposes his hide, the six deer vanish out of sight.

A leopard has been in abundance in Garhwal before Independence. Corbett mentions that about fifty leopards inhabited in the area operated by the Rudraprayag man-eater. Of all man-eaters the leopard is the most audacious because it enters into the houses in its quest for human flesh very gently without anyone's noticing it. This characteristic audacity, combined with exceptional cunning, puts them in a separate class. There is no more graceful and interesting animal to watch in the jungles than a leopard. Leopards like tigers have no sense of smell.

Corbett discusses various methods of killing leopards. If they are to be killed for sport, they are tracked down, located, stalked and then shot down. This method is exciting and interesting for leopards keep to the tracks or footpaths and every bird and animal assists the hunter. Leopards tend to keep to pathways because, being tree climbers, the pads on their feet are softer than a tiger, which can walk over any reasonable terrain. According to Corbett, the most easy and cruel method is to insert a small and very highly explosive bomb in the flesh of the kill. Corbett strongly disapproves this method for sometimes the animal is only wounded and dies a lingering and very painful death because the people have not the courage to follow the animal. But, the most common method of killing leopards is to sit up for them, either over a kill or over a live bait in the form of a goat or a sheep. When a leopard or a tiger leaves of his own accord a kill in the open, in an exposed spot, it is an indication that the animal has no further interest in the kill. Leopards have protective colouring that makes them invisible in the dark. They are very fond of basking on the rocks in the early morning sun in a cold climate. Therefore, Corbett thinks that they can be hunted very easily when basking in the sun if the hunter has a little patience and accuracy of aim. Leopards can climb the tree but tigers, unlike all the other cats, are unable to climb trees. Male leopards are very resentful of intrusion of others of their kind in the area they consider to be their own. Carnivores invariably keep to their own areas, and if, by chance, two of a sex happen to meet, they size up each other's capabilities at a glance, and the weaker gives way to the stronger. According to Corbett, the leopards and tigers when courting are very easy to shoot. Leopards do not like rain and invariably seek shelter.

Generally when an animal is caught in the gin-trap, it roars and growls continuously. The hearing and sight of wild animals, and especially of those animals that depend exclusively on these senses not only for food but also self-preservation, are on a plane far and away above that of civilized human beings. Though human beings do not see or hear any movement, the animals may know them. For explaining the acute sense of hearing of a carnivore, Corbett gives a wonderful experience of photographing a tiger. In actual contact with an unwounded leopard or tiger it is not possible to use firearm. A lot can be learnt from the pug marks of a carnivore, as for instance the sex, age and size of the animal. When a leopard or tiger is walking at its normal pace only the imprints of the hind feet are seen, but when the normal pace for any reason exceeded, the hind feet are placed on the ground in advance of the forefeet, and thus the imprints of all four feet are seen. From the distance between the imprints of the fore and the hind feet it is possible to determine the speed at which an animal of the cat tribe was travelling.

Corbett also gives some characteristics of the big, black and powerful dogs that are used by packmen throughout Kumaon and in Garhwal. He finds that these dogs are not accredited sheep-dogs in the same sense that sheep-dogs in Great Britain and in Europe are. On the march, the dogs keep close to heel, and their duties only start when camp is made. At night they guard the camp against all intruders. A case is on record of one of these dogs having killed a man who was attempting to steal. Praising his dogs, a packman and an acquaintance of Corbett tells him, '*My dogs have the courage of tigers, and are the best dogs in all Garhwal.*' (P.137, *M.L.R.*) If these words are very true for he draws Corbett's attention towards the wounds that



they have made in their efforts to save his goat. When the leopard killed the goat he has tied them with chains and their collars have bitten deep into their neck while they tried to be free.

### **Man-eaters and Their Habits:**

Man-eating leopards are of rare occurrence in Kumaon and so very little is known about them to Corbett. Still, he observes that they hunt only at night. But Taylor's experience of the African man-eating leopards is different as he finds them attacking human beings irrespective of the day or night. Corbett discusses various reasons for the carnivores acquiring the habit of killing human beings in his other man-eater stories. In the story of Rudraprayag man-eater, he writes about leopards. According to him, '*Leopards do not become man-eaters for the same reasons that tigers do.*' (P.5, *M.L.R.*) As leopards are scavengers, they eat any dead thing if driven by hunger like African lions. When it finds human dead body, it soon acquires a taste for human flesh and becomes man-eater.

Corbett's opinion is not different from that of Turner's who writes, '*As a rule man-eaters are great travellers.*' (P.11, Turner, J. E. Carrington, *Man-Eaters and memories*) The ability of a carnivore to carry their kills to a place where they can feed undisturbed determines to a great extent the place they choose to do their killing. The Rudraprayag leopard was capable of carrying the heaviest of his human victims for distances up to four miles and the steep slope of a well-wooded hill or a dense scrub jungle does not matter for it. Man-eating leopards approach their prey as silently as a shadow. They catch their prey by the throat and hence, prevent any sound from the victim. Corbett has heard incidents after incidents about the leopard killing human

beings so silently that even if any person is accompanying him/her in the day the killing is not noticed. In one of the cases, the Rudraprayag leopard carries away a friend from the house and the man who was sitting only an arm's length from him never hears even the intake of a breath let alone any sound from the friend. They become unafraid of human beings to such an extent that the leopard of Rudraprayag has killed even the people who were sitting up to shoot it. Being a man-eater for eight years, it has learnt to take precautions to great extent. It has been so fearless of human beings that it tried to break open the door of many houses. Telling the boldness of the leopard a villager says, '*the Shaitan has become so bold that sometimes when he has not been able to break down the door of a house, he has dug a hole through the mud wall, and got at his victims in that way.*' (P.155, *M.L.R.*)

As man-eating leopards operate at night, the presence or absence of cover makes no difference. If man-eaters are unable to find any human prey then they kill cattle. Carnivores change their habits after becoming man-eaters and live in close association with human beings over a long period of years. They may kill occasionally other preys than human being without the intention of eating them and this, Corbett observes, is completely opposite what an ordinary animal does. While attempting to kill the Rudraprayag leopard, Corbett comes to know that cyanide is not the right poison for an animal that has not responded to arsenic and strychnine.

### **B. Garhwal and its Hill life:**

Corbett proves wrong Kipling's saying that '*East is east and west is west and never the twins shall meet*'. (P.665, *A History of English Literature*) Though a foreigner by origin he has always been one with the

Indians. In his stories, he not only talks of the animals but also of the people in the forests. He pays as much attention to the lands and people as his own ventures. He has a command of local languages and an understanding of the local mind along with a fair appreciation of their culture. It has been characteristics of Jim to form such an alliance for he felt at home in the company of Indians. Indians also have accepted him more readily than they might have other Europeans. His unrivalled experience of the countryside is considerable.

Corbett gives the valuable insights into the various problems that the local inhabitants have to contend with such as poor quality roads, poor communication and health facilities and various diseases. Fatal diseases were rife in North India. Typhoid and cholera visited the north of India with seasonal regularity; rabies was endemic and leprosy widespread. In the summer months, cholera would ravage the indigenous. Malaria was the scourge of hill people as it killed hundreds of thousands a year until well into the middle of the twentieth century. Leprosy is one of the problems throughout North India. At Hardwar, lepers sit in line at the narrowest part of road above the sacred pool. Corbett suggests the pilgrims to toss a coin towards them so as to avoid curses. He also discloses that these lepers have collected much wealth secretly in the rock caves where they live. Epidemic diseases like influenza have caused Garhwal much suffering. The hill people also suffer from rheumatism.

Along with the many problems, the hill folk have to endure man-eaters. Wherever tigers or leopards and human beings have lived side by side, man-eating has been a possibility and, on occasion, a reality. People of Garhwal

have been too much afraid of the leopard that '*no curfew order has ever been more strictly enforced and more implicitly obeyed, than the curfew imposed by the man-eating leopard of Rundraprayag.*' (P.9, *M.L.R.*) As the leopard generally has been active at night, all the work in day would go on as usual but at the sunset the entire scene would change and all the people hurry to their homes at any cost. And at night an ominous silence would brood over the whole area. No one has dared to leave the shelter of his home between the hours of sunset and sunrise. Many people have taken precaution to protect them by building additional doors. The example is the ample proof how much scaring and dangerous it has been for the people of Garhwal, and others who faced the same problem, to live in the province of man-eaters. Untouchability, yet another social problem has been present throughout India at the time of Corbett. One of the victims of the leopard that he writes about has been an orphan boy from the depressed-untouchable-class. As a matter of fact, except mentioning the class, Corbett does not write about the social barriers or his attitudes towards it.

Corbett finds that the terror of man-eaters changes the attitude of people towards life. Once, the leopard carries off a wife when out at night. The husband hearing the clattering sound of the utensils-that she has been washing-calls her urgently but having no reply shuts the door immediately. Corbett does not accuse the husband for his logic, though heartless, has been sound. There would have been no use in risking his own life to recover a dead body. No surprise, if their neighbours, on hearing the sounds of pots and the urgent call of the husband, instantaneously shut their doors. At another similar instance, a woman when out is carried away by the leopard

and her father-in-law, receiving no answer to his call, gets up hurriedly and closes the door. Yet another instance is very awesome. The people have heard a woman's screams as she was being dragged along the ground and was struggling for her life with the leopard but have been too frightened to help her.

There are no sanitary conveniences in the houses of the hill-folk. Therefore, the majority of the kills have been taken place at night when people go out in order to answer the call of nature. Villages in Garhwal and also throughout North India are dotted about on the hills, some with only a single thatched hut, and others with long rows of slate-roofed houses. These rows of buildings are in fact individual homesteads, built one against the other to save expense and to economize space, for the people are poor, and every foot of workable land in Garhwal is needed for agriculture. These homesteads are double-storied, the low-ceilinged ground floor being used for the storage of grain and fuel, and the first floor for residences. The buildings invariably have verandas with short flights of stone flanked with walls. Most of the rooms do not provide ventilation at all. Turner writes about the houses in Kumaon that is similar to what Corbett observes: *'In the Kumaon hills the village houses are constructed in barrack-like formation, the upper rooms occupied by the families and the ground floor by their cattle. The roofs are built of heavy timbers on which are laid massive rough-hewn slates. The effect is one of compactness and security.'* (P.47, Turner, J. E. Carrington, *Man-Eaters and memories*)

Corbett's stories also delve into the habits of the hill people. Mealtimes in India vary according to the season of the year and individual

tastes. In most establishments the recognized times for the three principal meals that Corbett observes are: breakfast 8 to 9, lunch 1 to 2, and dinner 8 to 9. Corbett observes that hill people enjoy taking part in a *tamasha* (an amusing performance). When a Christian magician visits Rudraprayag in order to get rid of the evil spirit, over a hundred men help him with full enthusiasm. Corbett likes the attitude of these Hindus who without getting any information speak of him as holy. He writes of the generosity of India. *'In India, where there are no passports or identity discs, and where religion counts for so much, I believe, that a man wearing a saffron robe, or carrying a beggar's bowl, or with silver crosses on his headgear and chest, could walk from the Khyber Pass to Cape Comorin without once being questioned about his destination, or the object of his journey.'* (P.59, *M.L.R.*) Corbett is also fascinated with the gratitude that the hill folk show after he has killed man-eaters. When Corbett tells the pundit that the evil spirit has been killed, he feels very grateful and conveys his emotions by putting his hands together and attempting to put his head on his feet. After Corbett has killed the man-eater, the hill people visit him and offer him flowers on his feet. He writes

*When the people of our hills visit an individual for any particular purpose, as for instance to show their gratitude or to express their thanks, it is customary for them not to go on their mission empty-handed. A rose, a marigold, or a few petals of either flower, suffices, and the gift is proffered in hands cupped together. When the recipient has touched the gift with the tips of the fingers of his right hand, the person proffering the gift goes through the motion of pouring the gift*

*of to the recipient's feet, in the same manner as if his cupped hands contained water. (P.189, M.L.R.)*

Corbett has been remembered throughout Garhwal for his brave deed of finishing the man-eater. The man-eater was killed in 1926, and in 1942, after too many years, he meets a boy from Garhwal at a party. The boy though handicapped in a war, attempts to put his head on Corbett's feet. He tells Corbett that he has been a small boy when he killed the leopard and he has wished to meet him then but could not. He is so pleased to meet Corbett that he declares that after going back to home with great joy in his heart, he will tell his father about the meeting with Corbett. Instead of telling his brave deeds in the war, he is only eager to tell his father and his friends that he has seen and spoken with Corbett. These simple hill folk have impressed Corbett too much with their love and kind nature.

### **Religious Perspective:**

Corbett has acquired the native knowledge of Indian life from religion to superstition. Although he has come from a devoutly Christian background, Jim Corbett was not at all averse to the Hindu religion. He has been far more familiar with and sympathetic to Hinduism than to Christianity. In 'The Pilgrim Road', he writes about the sacred places in Hindu religion: Badrinath, Kedarnath, Hardwar and Rishikesh. Every Hindu desires to perform the pilgrimage to the age-old shrines of Kedarnath and Badrinath. Many pilgrims visit these shrines annually. Corbett suggests the pilgrims to walk bare foot from Hardwar to Kedarnath and then to Badrinath in order to get full merit of the long and hard pilgrimage. People take holy bath in Har-ki-pauri pool at Hardwar to purify them and do *darshan* at the many shrines and

temples. The devotees also present their mite for the coffer of these temples. After Hardwar, the next sacred place is Rishikesh where the shrines and temples are looked after by Kalakamli Wallahs who are known for their good deeds. They have built and maintained hospitals, dispensaries, pilgrim shelters and they also help the poor with the help of the offerings that pilgrims make at the temples. The sacred river that all Hindus worship as Ganga Mai flows through the area. The pilgrimage up to Kedarnath is very tough and difficult. But Corbett thinks that '*merit is not gained without suffering, and the greater the suffering in this world, the greater the reward in the next.*' (P.4, *M.L.R.*)

People of Garhwal are Hindus and cremate their dead. As in his other stories, Corbett writes in detail about the cremation and the difficulties in accomplishing these rites in the hills. The pilgrimage to Kedarnath and Badrinath is seasonal, and the commencement of the pilgrimage and its duration depends in the one case on the melting, and in the other, on the falling, of snow in the upper reaches of the high mountains in which these two shrines are situated. Hindus eagerly wait for this pilgrimage throughout the length and the breadth of India. He observes the people and their culture minutely such as some Hindus put sandalwood-paste on their foreheads as their caste-marks. Corbett has made acquainted himself with the Hindu philosophy that is seen sometimes in his stories. He praises the attitude of hill people, '*Their boundless faith in their philosophy, a faith strong enough to remove mountains, and very soothing to depressed feelings, that no human beings and no animals can die before their appointed time, and that the me*



*eater's time had not yet come, called for no explanation, and admitted of no argument.'* (P.171, *M.L.R.*)

### **Hospitality and Helpful Nature of the People of Garhwal:**

Corbett always finds the hill people very generous. One night Corbett camps in the man-eater's territory. A very kind man, after seeing their camp in the open, takes a great risk to warn them of the danger. The incident discloses the helpful nature of the hill people. Corbett is also aware of his own servants, also hill folk, who care and respect him very much. When Ibbotson arrives, Corbett leaves the Inspection Bungalow for him and erects his tent in the open. He asks his men to live with the men of Ibbotson but they strongly refuse to do so by saying that there was no more danger for them than there was for Corbett in the open tent. This incident proves their loyalty. Corbett's servants have been very caring. When they hear the shot by him, they can not sleep for the whole night and as soon as the day rises, they light the lantern and leave for him with a pole and a rope. After coming to the tree and not finding Corbett, they become anxious for they see blood on a rock and the goat tied as a bait unhurt. Not knowing what to do, they call to him in desperation.

Corbett has always been impressed by the hospitality of hill people. In the every village he visits, he is offered tea or milk hurriedly with love and respect. When Corbett visits a village in order to see the kill of the leopard, the headman sees him across the valley and keeps *a steaming dish of tea brewed in fresh milk and sweetened with jaggery* ready for him as soon as he arrives. Corbett admires the tea given to him as *the rich and over-sweetened liquid*. (P.84, *M.L.R.*) Corbett always finds these people very helpful

towards him. While attempting to kill the leopard, he has closed the bridge on the Alaknanda in order to confine the leopard only to one side and hence to lessen his work. But while doing so he has endangered the lives of people at the left bank. Corbett pays his tribute to these thousands of people who never object his decision or never have removed the barriers themselves. On the other hand, everywhere he went, he has been offered hospitality and given blessings. Both men and women have encouraged him even after his repeated failures to kill the leopard. Corbett's experiences of the local people are very much different from others. The hill people have always voluntarily helped him. Once, Corbett meets two hill men on their way to a bazaar. They inform him of the calling of the leopard and offer to bring him a goat from their village and help him.

### **Courageous Hill People:**

Corbett talks about the courage of the victims of man-eater but never once writes about his own courage. Courage can be of two types: a real courage and the pretension. Corbett comes to know the story of a sadhu, the latter type, who believes that he would take the leopard by the mouth and tear it in half. But, unfortunately, he himself falls victim to the beast the same night. Corbett is of the opinion that the hill people are very brave and strong. Many of the times he witnesses exceptionally adventurous deeds. Corbett, one night, has been watching a kill from a machan in order to kill the leopard when he sees a lantern being carried towards the village. A man was bringing the electric night-shooting light that the Government has promised to Corbett. Corbett admires the courage of the man who '*so gallantly braved both the leopard and the storm*' (P.48, *M.L.R.*) and travelled over thirty miles.

at night. Corbett even admires the courage of Ibbotson who accompanies him holding a lamp and depending for safety on his bullet in the hunt of a pain-maddened leopard caught in the gin-trap that was hold only by a thin strip of skin. He also meets the people who have been unwilling even to open the door of their house a little time ago, after knowing that it is Corbett, offer him to show the way at night. Corbett knew that it would have been murder to let them return to their homes alone. So he denies the offer.

Among two human beings who resisted the leopard was pundit. He has survived an encounter with the man-eater very adventurously. One hot night, he comes out in order to have some night air when the leopard catches him by the throat. But he kicks it away and hurls down the steps. The beast attacks for the second time and buries its claws in his left forearm. It tears the arm up to the wrist. Immediately, the pilgrims who were sleeping inside the room drag him into the room and the leopard growls and claws at the door throughout the night. For the rest of that long hot night the pundit lays gasping for breath and bleeding profusely. Badly mauled, he is taken to the cottage hospital the next day in Rudraprayag and survives later on. Corbett always admires this courageous nature of his hill friends.

### **Women in Garhwal:**

Corbett finds that women are inferior to men in the social status in Garhwal and Kumaon. When a wife was carried away by the leopard, Corbett observes that '*the grief her husband showed was occasioned not so much by the loss of his wife, as by the loss of that son and heir whom he had expected to see born within the next few days.*' (P.44, *M.L.R.*) Yet, Corbett finds women in the hills very brave. In one of the villages the leopard opens

the door by force where a woman and her baby were sleeping. It seizes her arm and attempts to drag her out of the room. But the brave woman does not faint and skillfully manages to shut the door when the animal backs out of the room. Corbett admires another hill woman: the only human being who resisted the Rudraprayag man-eater. The woman was sleeping in the room when the leopard enters stealthily and drags her holding her left leg. Fortunately, her hand comes in contact with a domestic weapon and she gives it a blow. As the leopard backs out of the room still holding her leg, she pushes the door. She has saved her life but the beast exerted its great strength and tore her leg from the body. Corbett observes that in eight long years of this woman has resisted the leopard.

### **C. The Human Nature and the Supernatural:**

As a matter of fact, Jim, a man whose life has been based upon reality and fact, gives credence to the occult. Corbett himself has been superstitious and his superstitions concern with snakes. He believes the killing of a snake auspicious for the immediate future. If he was to have a successful hunt, especially if he was after a man-eater, he believed quite sincerely that he would not make a kill until he has first shot a snake. He gets failure after failure in killing the man-eater. So he leaves for Naini Tal when a rat snake crosses the path. Corbett's men have been very well aware of his beliefs also, one of them, Madho Singh, says, '*There goes the evil spirit that has been responsible for your (Corbett's) failure.*' (P.88, *M.L.R.*) Still, Corbett attributes his failure to sheer bad luck and explains that bad luck has prevented his receiving the electric light in time, has given Ibbotson cramp in both legs, has made the leopard eat an overdose of cyanide, has made th

men drop the gin-trap and break the one tooth that mattered. Corbett has always believed in one's luck or fate. He writes, '*The working of the intangible force which sets a period to life, which one man calls Fate and another calls Kismet, is incomprehensible.*' (P.167, *M.L.R.*) Another incident that occurs before his killing the man-eater strengthens his superstition. For ten days, he sits on vigil and hears nothing of the beast. On the eleventh day, Ibbotson accompanies him and kills a snake. At the same night, Corbett succeeds in killing the man-eater. The killing of a snake, even though not by Jim, has turned the magical tables.

Corbett maintains that Garhwalis are intensely superstitious. Whenever hill people face difficulties or disasters, they tend to believe it the effect of any supernatural or the destiny. A man's daughter has been killed by the man-eater and his brother gives its cause that he was born under an unlucky star. They fear the supernatural more than man-eaters. The man-eater of Rudraprayag has been believed to be an evil spirit. Therefore, a hill man thinks Corbett's visit to the area a fruitless errand and tells him, '*The evil spirit that is responsible for all human deaths in this area is not an animal...that can be killed by ball or shot.*' (P.18, *M.L.R.*) He also tells him a story of his father's time that a sadhu would assume the semblance of a leopard whenever he craved for human flesh and blood. He further tells him that the killing has started at the time the sadhu arrived in the village and after the day he was killed the killing stopped. The villagers have mercilessly fired him in his hut. Regarding the Rudraprayag leopard he wishes if a sadhu is found out the same method should be adopted to rid the people of Garhwal off the evil spirit. However, one incident that Corbett tells about a sadhu is

an example of how under the influence of blind beliefs people blame the innocent. The sadhu was accused of human killings and seized. Fortunately Philip Mason, the then Deputy Commissioner of Garhwal suggested his arrest instead of the killing. After seven days a man was carried off and the people released the sadhu by saying that '*on this occasion the wrong man had been apprehended, but the next time no mistake would be made*'. (P.22, *M.L.R.*) Corbett concludes that in Garhwal all kills by man-eaters are attributed to sadhus, and in the Naini Tal and Almora districts all such kills are attributed to the Bokhsars who live at the foot of Terai hills. As a matter of fact, for Corbett also once the animal appeared to be the one with the body of a leopard and the head of a fiend. The people of Garhwal think that the leopard is an evil spirit that can be finished only by fire. Though a pundit had himself had an encounter with the beast, he also refers to it as an evil spirit when talking with Corbett and assumes that it can take material form.

The hill people credit Corbett with supernatural powers where man-eaters are concerned. Corbett tells a story of a Christian magician who visited Rudraprayag with the intention to free the people of Garhwal from the evil spirit that, he believed, was tormenting them. In order to fulfil his wish, he makes an effigy of a tiger, induces the evil spirit to enter it and then throws it into the Ganges. Corbett knows that this is a futile effort but he wholeheartedly admires his faith and his industry. On one of the occasions, Corbett and Ibbotson are followed by the leopard and they have no proper lamps with them. Therefore, they ask the help of the first house they find. But the inhabitants have been very much frightened of the leopard and so hesitate to open the door. But afterwards they apologize to them and explain their story

that *'they had lived so long in terror of the man-eater that their courage had gone. Not knowing what form the man-eater might take, they suspected every sound they heard at night.'* (P.78, *M.L.R.*) The people of the hills are renowned for their courage and have won the highest awards in the battles but are helpless in front of the man-eaters. As a matter of fact, their fear of the supernatural makes them coward and they do not resist the leopard to enter into the house. The local Hindus were afraid to kill the Rudraprayag leopard for fear that, in doing so, the evil spirit that dwelt in the leopard would escape and enter into them.

### **C. Geographical Perspectives and the Bondage between man and animal:**

Corbett, very accurately, describes the way for the sacred pilgrimage. One has to reach Rishikesh from Hardwar. There onwards pilgrims cross the suspension bridge called Lachman Jhula on the sacred river Ganges. On this bridge the troublesome red monkeys make their journey very difficult and painful. After crossing the bridge and having walked for three days, the capital and the ancient city of Garhwal, Shreenagar, is reached. Corbett admires the city as *'an historic, religious and trading centre of considerable importance and of great beauty, nestling in a wide, open valley surrounded by high mountains'*. (P.2-3, *M.L.R.*) From Shreenagar onwards there is a stiff climb to Chatikhal that gives the magnificent views of the Ganges valley and of the eternal snows above Kedarnath. Golabrai is the next place with its rows of grass-thatched pilgrim shelters that can be reached after a day's march. Seventy-five miles north-west of Naini Tal and in the neighbouring region of Garhwal, next to Kumaon and two miles from Golabrai, is the town

of Rudraprayag, at the point where the routes to Kedarnath and Badrinath divide and the Alaknanda River is joined to the Mandakini. Rudraprayag is in the mountainous and rugged area. It is of immense importance to the Hindus and their religion for at this town the holy Ganges River proper begins. For many centuries, Rudraprayag has been a centre for pilgrimage and, even today, it is the last outpost of civilization before the long trek to Kedarnath. There is confluence of two rivers, the Mandakini coming down from Kedarnath and the Alaknanda from Badrinath. Then onwards the river is known as the Ganges. After crossing the Alaknanda river, an excessively steep and incredibly rough way goes up the left bank of the Mandakini river to Kedarnath. The pilgrims have to walk over rough rocks, sharp shale and frozen ground. From Rudraprayag, another way goes over the mountains to Naini Tal. It takes fifteen days to travel on foot from Rudraprayag to Naini Tal.

The most of the villages in Garhwal are situated high up on the hills and the streams or rivers flow down in the valleys. From Naini Tal, Corbett travels for ten days via Ranikhet, Adbadri and Karanprayag and reaches to Nagrasu. There are no roads in many of the hills, only goat and cattle tracks. Therefore, people have to travel on foot. Before starting the story, Corbett gives the geographical account of the man-eater's territory that can be seen from the hill to the east of Rudraprayag. The area is divided in two parts by the Alaknanda river. The river after passing Karanprayag, flows south to Rudraprayag and meets the Mandakini coming down from the north-west. The triangular bit of country between the two rivers is less steep than the country along the left bank of the Alaknanda. In this area more villages are



situated compared to the other. The terraced fields vary from a yard to fifty or more yards. The village buildings are invariably set at the upper end of the cultivated land with the object of overlooking and protecting the cultivation from stray cattle and wild animals, for except in very rare cases there are no hedges or fences round the fields. Some of the villages are entirely surrounded by grasslands, while others are entirely surrounded by forests. The whole area is cut up by innumerable deep ravines and rock cliffs. In the area there are only two roads, one starting from Rudraprayag and going up to Kedarnath and the other the main pilgrim road to Badrinath. Both roads were narrow and rough and had never had a wheel of any kind on them at the time of Corbett. The river Alaknanda has two suspension bridges that Corbett closes in order to confine the leopard to one side of the river. All the rivers in Himalayas in Garhwal flow from north to south, and in the valleys through which they flow blows a wind which changes direction with the rising and the setting of the sun. It is hot in day and cold at night in Garhwal. During daylight hours the wind blows from the south and during the hours of night it blows from the north. In his second visit he travels from Naini Tal to Kotdwara and then onwards by foot to Pauri. People have to travel from one village to the other on steep hill after hill with deep valleys between.

The hill people have learnt to live along with the jungle denizens. But, sometimes, man-eaters disturb the whole life of the people. Where an established man-eater is operating, everyone suspects their own shadows, and every sound heard at night is attributed to the man-eater. Corbett always has had compassion for the people he was trying to save and the animals he was trying to hunt. After killing the best-hated and the most feared animal in all

India, Corbett does not feel happy though he has spent many nights and many days in Garhwal bearing mental and physical torture only to kill the beast. He thinks that the only crime of the animal '*-not against the laws of nature but against the laws of man-was that he had shed human blood, with no object of terrorizing man, but only in order that he might live*'.(P.185, *M.L.R.*) Corbett always feels sympathy for even the man-eaters and regrets their death. Living in the vicinity of forests, hill people have acquired the knowledge of the wild. They have developed their own communication with their pets. From the long experience they know the sounds that indicate the presence of carnivore such as the frightened alarm of cattle.

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