

## Chapter-V

### Conclusions

Jim Corbett has been a successful hunter-turned conservationist and a renowned story writer. Admiring Corbett's work Giri writes, '*It is in the light of such people that the depravity of British actions in India may seem, if at all, a bit more tolerable.*' ([www.giriathrey.com](http://www.giriathrey.com)) A man of great modesty, morality and courage not less than a tiger has impressed many a budding naturalists. His books are hailed as classics of jungle lore. His style of writing is unassuming, descriptive and engaging as he talks about his adventures with many wild animals particularly those that have turned man-eaters. As a matter of fact, these stories disclose his myriad personality and make the readers appreciate the writer. Many facets of his personality such as superb hunting skills, love for nature, compassion towards animals as well as the hill folk are seen in his man-eater stories.

As infotainment is one of the characteristics of modern short stories the stories by Corbett also play the role of infotainment. The reader comes to know the hidden philosopher in him through his various statements scattered in such as '*No matter how full of happiness our life may have been, there are periods in it that we look back to with special pleasure.*' (P.72, **T.T.T.**) Admiring the philosopher in him Martin Booth writes, '*From Jim Corbett's books I obtained or was educated in a way of thinking, of natural philosophy, that has never left me.*' (P.14, **Carpet Sahib**) Corbett's writings contain various accounts of tiger and occasionally leopard hunts, descriptions of the Himalayan mountains and portraits of innocent village people with whom he

has established warm and friendly relations. At the same time, he also pictures the India with its beautiful wild life and high snowy mountains. He has impressed so many people that several books have been written about his life and adventures over the years such as *Jim Corbett of Kumaon* by D.C. Kala, *Carpet Sahib* by Martin Booth, *Under the Shadow of Man-Eaters* by Jerry A. Jaleel, *Jim Corbett: Master of the Jungle* by Tim Werh and *Jim Corbett: the Hunter-Conservationist* by Reeta Dutta Gupta.

1. Jim Corbett's stories of the man-eaters hunting give first-hand knowledge of the exceptional natural beauty in North Indian hills. This knowledge can be useful for studying wild life and its various denizens. Wild life in North India as reflected in his shikar stories is teeming with a variety of animal and bird life. Though, on his mission to kill man-eaters, Corbett never fails to notice the most beautiful scenes in the wild. He writes '*If I were asked what had contributed most to my pleasure during all the years that I have spent in Indian jungles, I would unhesitatingly say that I had derived most pleasure from a knowledge of the language, and the habits of the jungle-folk.*' (P.144, *M.L.R.*) Several animals, birds and plants are found in the enchanting forests of pine, sal, plum, and oak. These forests have the greatest profusion of beautiful flowers. Corbett only names the flowers in these forests and occasionally describes it. But, he writes in detail of the various animals. As a matter of fact, he always admires and respects these dangerous varieties of the cat family. There is an exploration of animal habits and several man-eating tendencies among the beasts. Human qualities in animals such as curiosity are also discussed in his shikar stories.

Like a nature poet, Corbett sings the beauty of wild life almost in all his stories. The fact that the world created by him and the adventures described in it is a real one, gives the readers more pleasure and increases their knowledge of the wilds. Corbett's knowledge of the wild life scattered in his stories has helped and inspired even the students of the natural sciences. He mentions the bird-life, animal-life and various trees and plants that are found in the hills of the Himalayas. Sometimes, he points out different habits of these jungle-dwellers particularly tigers and leopards. The world of India and its wild life reflected in his stories is unique and very sadly, gone from the face of the earth.

Jim Corbett writes only about his own experiences and observations and makes out generalizations from them. He writes a lot about the alarm calls of various jungle denizens. He also writes about the abilities and senses of various animals and birds. His descriptions of the animals' training their young and various methods of approaching their prey are very interesting and increase the knowledge of the readers. Corbett reveals the beauty and mystery that lies outside the material life through his man-eater stories. He also writes about the laws of Nature and the language of the jungle denizens and how human beings can communicate with them. The explanations that he gives for the development of man-eating tendencies in the beasts are based purely on his own experiences in the North Indian jungles but he refrains himself from attributing them universality.

2. The readers who are against hunting, but love adventures and different cultures, Corbett's stories can be a right choice for he pays as much attention

to the lands and people as his own ventures. In the three collections of Jim Corbett that have been taken up for the present study Jim Corbett presents problem of man-eaters along with various other problems in the human habitation of Kumaon and Garhwal hills. In addition, the stories focus on the hunting experiences of Corbett and the hill-life that he has observed in his stay in the area. All his stories display his deep understanding of the North Indian life.

Corbett gives the valuable insights into the various problems that the local inhabitants of the North Indian hills have to contend with such as poor quality roads, poor communication and health facilities, poverty, various diseases and man-eaters. He describes how hill people fight desperately against nature and wild animals in order to keep a grass roof above their head. Kumaoni people have to face many calamities such as malaria, leprosy and man-eaters in those days. Diseases in epidemic form sweep through the hills and kill people rapidly. One of the causes that Corbett finds for these diseases is unsanitary conditions and lack of ventilation in their houses. He is so much anxious to keep away from the contagious diseases like leprosy, regarded then as the most dreaded disease, that when once, he spends unknowingly a night in a leper's room, his first action on leaving the village was to order his men to wash his bedding out and spread it in the hot sunlight whilst he stripped naked in the first stream they came to and thoroughly scrubbed himself and his clothing with carbolic soap. He reveals the desperate conditions of hill people and points out that many people have died for want of proper medical treatment in time.

Corbett speaks earnestly of the problems of the hill people. He notices that inaccessible geographical regions demand a considerable tax on the manpower of a small community for transportation. He finds that the terror of man-eaters changes the attitude of people towards life and death. He is touched with the pathos, grievances and tragedies in the lives of poor hill folk when he observes them struggling desperately for the living. As the majority of hill people are poor, disasters in the form of wild animals, deathly diseases and the like make their living miserable and difficult. Corbett depicts their struggle against all odds and ends in nearly all his stories. He sympathizes with the poor economical and health conditions in the hills. He also feels sympathy for the victims of man-eaters and their relatives. As a matter of fact, he has helped these poor people now and then with money and land.

Various aspects of human life in North Indian hills such as religion, superstitions, hospitality and courage are discussed minutely in the shikar stories of Jim Corbett. While hunting man-eaters, he visits various villages and makes himself acquainted with the rural life. While writing about the life of hill people, he gives information about the hill-songs, a cast hierarchy, the signs that these people use while travelling and their different views. He also points out various qualities of the hill people such as courage, loyalty and hospitality. The hill people are very loyal to their soil for, at any rate, they desire to die where they have been born. On occasions, he also portrays some humorous characters depicting their innocence.

The selected stories give Corbett's unrivalled experience of the countryside, their culture and his understanding of the local mind along with a fair appreciation of their courage and heroic acts. One of the characteristics

of Jim Corbett is that he never underestimates the poor hill folk. On the other hand, he always praises them and their attitudes. In fact, he is much surprised with their kind and innocent behaviour. In his stay in Kumaon and Garhwal he finds these people very generous and helpful. He is very much pleased with their hospitality, co-operation and affection. He also finds that these people are very honest and humble. Corbett marvels at the courage of these people living in an area in which there is danger of man-eaters. He is fascinated with the gratitude that the hill folk show towards him. He is also interested in their ways of expressing gratitude or making requests. He praises the loyalty, courage and caring nature of his servants who accompany him on his adventurous tasks. He minutely observes the peculiarities and ways of communication in the hills such as the cooe method used for inter-village communication.

Corbett describes women in the hills and their place in the society. The theme of women in the hills is not discussed at length except for occasional attention like Turner who says of Himalayan people, '*It was in accordance with their traditions and customs for husbands to look upon their wives as mere servants. There was a common saying amongst them: 'the more wives the more servants'*'. (P.151, Turner, J. E. Carrington, *Man-Eaters and memories*) Though Corbett speaks little of the status of women in the social structure, he is surprised with the courage that they show on occasions and admires it through his writings. He sometimes finds that women are given an inferior place compared to men in the social status. He also observes that women in North Indian hills are shy by nature. He feels sorry for the maltreatment that is given to widows in the hills.

As North Indian people are predominantly Hindus, Corbett writes about the Hindu religion. He writes of temples, gods, goddesses and sacred rivers. He writes in detail about the cremation and the difficulties in accomplishing these rites in the hills. He also gives details of the sacred places in Hindu religion: Badrinath, Kedarnath, Hardwar and Rishikesh. Corbett is much familiar with the religious views and superstitions of hill people. Corbett was a theist. There is hardly any story which lacks a reference to religion or destiny. Occasionally, he mentions the hierarchy in caste system but never speaks in detail. His stories overall give a window to the North Indian life: both the human and the wild.

3. In the three collections viz., *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*, *The Temple Tiger* and *The Man-Eating Leopard of Rudraprayag*, Jim Corbett treats the supernatural with an intention to strengthen the belief that the supernatural powers exist in the world. Though he does not speak openly of his own views, he tries to set forth what he has experienced in his expeditions of hunting such as the Thak tigress. As a matter of fact, he himself firmly believes in these powers and he has had his own superstitions. At the same time, he respects the superstitions of other people though he does not believe in them. Nearly all the shikar stories deal with the theme of supernatural. Corbett, like many hunters, has been superstitious and his shikar stories have the supernatural element in them. He describes the supernatural experiences as they occurred to him but is unable to give any explanations or reasons to them. He does not disclose his own opinion about those experiences such as the scream heard by him in Thak. But he admits them by sharing his own

experiences such as Bala Singh's death, the effect of Baram's shrine and mysterious lights of Purnagiri. Corbett explores the supernatural element effectively through his writing.

Corbett's life has been based upon reality and fact; still, he gives credence to the occult. Like many other hunters, he is fatalist and believes the destiny or luck. Most of the times, he attributes his failures to the bad luck. When he meets any person who has faced many difficulties and disasters one after another, he sympathies with him and thinks, '*of the man, incomprehensible things one meets with in life, the hardest to assign any reason for is the way in which misfortune dogs an individual or a family*' (P.77, *M.K.*) He strongly believes that there is an intangible force that sets period of one's life and this force is called by many as a fate or destiny. He writes, '*When Atropos who snips the threads of life misses one thread she cuts another, and we who do not know why one thread is missed and another cut, call it Fate, Kismet, or what we will.*' (P.74, *M.K.*) When he gets failure after failures in killing the leopard of Rudraprayag, he feels that he is not destined to kill it.

The superstitions of Corbett, his servants and the hill people are reflected throughout his man-eater stories. His superstitions concern with snakes. The best experience that he gives to convey his superstitious nature is about the nightjar eggs to which he credits his success in killing the Chowgarh tigress. Sometimes, he admits that he is superstitious but feels guilty of being so. He also describes the superstitious nature of the hill people and his servants in his stories. He states that hunters, compared to other people, are more serious about their own superstitions and gives



examples of other sportsmen. Corbett believes that superstition is a mental complaint. The hill people and Corbett also have been superstitious about starting any work on a particular day or time. Whenever the hill people face difficulties or disasters, they tend to believe it the effect of any supernatural, evil spirit or the destiny. They also credit Corbett with supernatural powers.

4. Though Corbett's stories are about hunting they particularly explore the theme of the bondage between human beings and animals. He has been humane not only towards human beings but also towards animals. He never gives the impression that tigers and leopards are savage and evilly-disposed towards human beings. Corbett points out the intimate relationship between human beings and their pets. The story of Robin is the best example of this relationship. He has also noticed that cattle in the hills are loyal to their owners and may endanger their life to save them. Corbett's own attitude towards all animals, not excluding the man-eaters, has never been of hatred. On the other hand, he finds them to be noble creatures, beautiful, graceful and clever. He regrets from the bottom of his heart even the killing of man-eaters for he believes that in eating human beings they have '*committed no crime against the laws of Nature.*' (P.174, *T.T.T.*) He respected the jungle creatures and merely killed when no alternative was available. His Compassion towards animals is seen in nearly all his stories. He never forgets his childhood lesson that wild animals rarely harm human beings without reason. He appreciates even the man-eaters for their intelligence and cunningness.

Whenever Corbett writes about hunting, he tries to give the most exact and accurate way of killing the animals. He has always felt sympathy for the hunt and so, he tries to give as less pains as possible while killing it. Therefore, regarding tigers, he prefers a shot at chest instead of a head-shot for the latter might not kill the hunt immediately. It appears that if he has had any better way to rid the poor hill people off the man-eaters, he would have definitely used it for whenever he kills them, he feels very much guilty.

5. All Corbett's short stories reveal the essential qualities of a good shikari in him. Various merits of him as a skilled shikari can be seen in his man-eater stories. The descriptions of his campaigns against the man-eater of North Indian hills show the qualities-that are exhibited by Corbett himself that a successful shikari needs. The qualities such as physical strength, infinite patience, great power of observation, power to notice small signs and draw right inference from them are seen in his expeditions. He has many thrilling and sometimes amusing exploits to record of successful hunting of the dangerous cats and occasionally of bear and ghooral. His deep knowledge of the wild has been his plus point while hunting. He always takes help of every living and lifeless part of the jungle such as the current wind, alarm of the birds and animals, signs on the ground and so on in order to find a hunt or a kill. His experience of long years in the forest has made him as efficient as a gundog that follows scent. In addition, he gives various tips for the sportsmen for hunting. Though not useful in the modern world today, these tips show Corbett's capacity of observing minute things.

Most of the times, Corbett has to sit up on a tree watching a kill in order to kill man-eaters as, he believes, this is the best method to get greatest success. Beating is, yet, another method that he has used to kill the Champawat man-eater. One of the unbelieving skills that Corbett possessed is that he could imitate the calls of various animals such as leopards and tigers. His fluency in animal language is amazing. He could not only differentiate between a male and a female call but also copy them with perfection. He has also used this skill successfully while hunting the Thak tigress. Jim Corbett was every inch a shikari. He was well aware of the fact that hunting includes many hardships without necessarily winning prizes. He has spent many nights alone and out in the cold hills of the Himalayas from sunset to sunrise. Cold wind would chill him to the bone and sometimes ropes that he sits on would cut into him. He would track man-eaters for days and nights without rest. He has sat on vigil at night alone even in the storms and lightning thunder and deluge of rain. He was strong, fit and able to endure hardships. Still, there is limit to a human being to endure the mental and physical strain. There were twenty-four hours in every day of the many weeks he has spent in Garhwal and time and time again after sitting up all night he has walked endless miles next day visiting distant villages from which reports had come of unsuccessful attacks by the man-eater. On many moonlit nights, when sitting in an uncomfortable position, physical endurance has reached its limit. Tired out in mind and in body when he leaves for Naini Tal, he is adversely criticized in the press. But, he has always felt himself rewarded if his hunting has resulted in saving one human life.

6. It is very strange that though Jim Corbett has written shikar stories, they expose him as a lover of nature. As a matter of fact, he has always been an ardent lover of Nature. He admires the beauty of wild life even in the stories of man-eaters. His descriptions of the wild life and of the Himalayas are so fascinating and marvellous that readers eager to visit and see through their own eyes the places mentioned in his stories. Corbett has been much interested in the wild life surrounding his home from his childhood. Even after he left for Kenya and has been occasionally ill, he has kept himself in touch with the wild life. Forests and its denizens have been his soul. Therefore, this interest has been kept alive till his death in Kenya. Corbett was not a person who relished in bloodshed. On the other hand, he loved to see and enjoy the beauty of the wild and the animals. Corbett writes of the beautiful landing of a king vulture: '*he...landed as lightly as a feather on the dead branch of a pine tree.*' (P.173, *T.T.T.*) Like Wordsworth, he delighted to see the beauty of nature.

7. Corbett also gives accurate and authentic geographical descriptions of the region in which he hunts. This characteristic of him enables his readers to imagine the story happening in front of their eyes. His writing in all the three collections is so picturesque that a reader himself follows Corbett in the dense forests. Nearly always he gives the description of the position of the kill in order to enable the reader to follow his movements and the subsequent happenings. Occasionally, the descriptions of the lands and the regions are so vivid that a good painter may draw the scenes or events exactly how they would have been. It also makes the readers familiar with the difficulties that

Corbett and the hill people has to face while travelling on the steep hills and deep ravines.

8. Jim Corbett will undoubtedly be remembered for his fantastic tales of hunting man-eating tigers and leopards. But he was also a naturalist and above all a humanitarian. He has been a real Humanist in a true sense. Not a single scene or description in his stories shows any hatred towards any living being whether it be a human being, an animal, a bird or any plant. He has always loved, helped and respected the local Indians. In his stories he mentions these people as '*our people*' and believes India to be his own country. He has never felt like Rudyard Kipling-who finds Indians to be uncivilized and primal-any difference between him and local hill people. On the other hand, his love for India and her people is very evident in all his books. Whenever he finds it difficult to hunt man-eaters or gets failures, the first feeling that comes to his mind is about the poor hill people who are suffering from the beast. He writes, '*Had my failures only concerned myself they would not have mattered, but in the task I had undertaken those failures concerned others more than they concerned me.*'(P.171, *M.L.R.*) Being a big-hearted gentleman, throughout his stories he gives credit for others and never to himself. Although he hunts all alone and on foot, he never claims himself to be the great white hunter.

Though India has not been his country, Corbett has been more of an Indian than he was an Irishman. Unlike the most other Englishmen, he mixed with the local people. He has had the first-hand knowledge of the hill-life and its people. From a very young age, Jim has been close to the local

Indians. His contacts were not made simply through the intermediaries of servants but also through those whom he met in the forests- the woodcutter and timber workers, charcoal burners, farmers, poachers, dak runners, travellers and pilgrims. He knew how to act with them, how to behave. Not only his servants held a close friendship with Corbett, but the local Indians in many positions from low caste members to zemindars (land owners), tahsildars (local tax collectors and men in positions of trust), choukidars (guards), patwaris (village headmen ), lawyers, teachers, doctors and priests. Indeed, his friendships cut across race, creed and caste.

9. By the mid-1930s in later years of his life he became a staunch proponent and supporter of conservation and remained so until his death. He hunted only the man-eaters, that, too, on the pleas of harassed villagers. Corbett is completely against the indiscriminate slaughter of game. He has been very well aware that the heavy and unrestricted shooting of jungle denizens inevitably results in disturbing the balance in nature. Today, people have become aware of the importance of wild life as it is very necessary to maintain the eco balance in nature for the existence of the universe. Corbett has been very well aware of this conservation in the period when hunting was a favourite pastime for all the people and no one has thought the necessity of protecting the animals. An ample proof of this unawareness is that Corbett has fought a single-man war for making a sanctuary. Tigers and leopard, not getting their natural prey, are forced to live on the village cattle and occasionally human beings. The presence of man-eaters in human habitations can be one of the effects of this disturbance in the balance.

Though Corbett's writings give various accounts of killing the animals, ultimately, he suggests the principle of 'Live and let live'. He appeals to villagers who damage the fauna by shooting over water that '*God had given water free for all, and that it was a shameful thing for man to sit over the water God provided and shoot His creatures when they came to drink.*' (P.150, '**Wild Life in the Village**' English for Communication)

Corbett gives many causes to the extermination of natural wealth in the forests such as: shooting over water, shooting over salt-licks, shooting in the breeding season, fencing off of large areas of forest and extermination by the Forest Department of all game within these areas, making unnecessary motor tracks and shooting from motor-cars, absence of sanctuaries and the burning of forests at a time when they are full of young life. He has understood the importance of game sanctuaries and so, initiated in making the first one in India. He strongly believes that much of the destruction to nature will cease if earnest appeals are made. He believes that a country's fauna is a sacred trust and therefore, countrymen should betray this trust. As a matter of fact, Jim Corbett as a conservationist is much criticized even by his biographers like Martin Booth who writes, '*He was heavily critical of those who shot for sport (particularly tigers) and yet he himself continued to organize tiger drives until the Second World War. He collected birds' eggs yet wanted to preserve the birdlife.*' (P.161, **Carpet Sahib**) Many a people strongly opposed the decision by the Govt. of India to name the National Park as Jim Corbett National Park. Still, it should not be ignored that today, the Corbett National Park in Uttaranchal, initiated by him as a tiger reserve is a haven for tigers and for the other fauna of the wild. The man who pioneered the effort

to preserve India's wildlife in the early 1930s will always remain in the hearts of Indians for his modesty, perseverance, adventures and love for the natives.

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