

Chapter-II

Man-Eaters of Kumaon

A. An Introduction:

Man-eaters of Kumaon (1944) is Jim Corbett's first book that not only tells stories of high adventure and hunting man-eating tigers in Northern India but also places the reader in the era of post-Victorian colonial India that is little understood today. The book with an introduction by Sir Maurice Hallett, the then Governor of the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh), and a preface by Lord Linlithgow, the then Viceroy of India (1936-43), is a window into the India of Jim Corbett that is rapidly disappearing into an era that is now gone. The whole of the royalty of the first edition is donated by the author to St. Dunstan's Hostel for Indian soldiers blinded during the Second World War. The stories of tracking and killing the seven tigers, among them six man-eaters, along with the descriptions of the desolation of the poor Indian hill people wrought by tigers, who preyed upon them, are much fascinating. The urban life in India or world-wide has nothing to do in these stories. The incredible courage of Corbett to place himself in a grave danger when hunting the marauders of Kumaon proves him to be a sportsman of the highest caliber. His writing also expresses a deep love for India and for her poor helpless villagers, who desperately sought his help, as well as for the tigers which he has been forced to kill.

The very first killing of man-eater is depicted in the story of '**The Champawat man-eater**'. Many efforts to bag the tigress have been failed and Corbett is requested to rid the Kumaoni people of the menace that has

been driven out of Nepal and has preyed four hundred and thirty six human beings. Corbett with the news of the killing of a woman at Pali sets out for the place and spends a night out on the side of the road looking for a man-eater but at the same time its terror is in his mind as he writes, '*I saw a dozen tigers advancing on me*' (P. 3 *M.K.*). He visits the scene of the last human kill to find her clothes and a few pieces of bone. Majority of the victims of the tigress have been the women who were out collecting fodder or dry sticks. Corbett is inexperienced about man-eaters and can not take the advice of anyone for this is the first man-eater that has ever been present in Kumaon. Thinking about the plans, he moves to Champawat as the tigress has left the locality and stays at the Dak Bungalow. One day, when talking to the Tahsildar of Champawat, he learns about the man-eater's next victim, a girl who was collecting dry sticks with a dozen people. Corbett follows the track from the spot of the attack with the help of blood signs and trail of her feet. He finds a leg of the victim on his way but can not go further as the journey has been difficult and dangerous. As it is becoming dark, he retreats after a four hours pursuit thinking about a beat the next day. After returning, he explains his plan to the Tahsildar and asks him to arrange as many men as he can for the beat. The next day, he gives all the necessary instructions to the two hundred and ninety-eight men gathered there and gets success in killing the devil.

The second story '**Robin**' explores the bond between author and his dog, Robin. Corbett recollects of buying three months old Robin for fifteen rupees and after his company of thirteen years is unwilling to part with him. The story gives accounts of Robin's training and his hunting adventures

along with Corbett, ending with a sad tone of his departure to the Happy Hunting Grounds.

‘The Chowgarh Tigers’ gives Corbett’s expedition of killing two tigresses that have been active from 1925 to 1930 establishing a reign of terror over an area of one thousand and five hundred square miles of mountain and vale. These marauders have killed total sixty four human beings from twenty seven villages. As the man-eaters have been most active in the Kala Agar ridge, Corbett sets out for the Kala Agar Forest Bungalow in April, 1929. He visits Dalkania in order to find out the whereabouts of the tigresses and learns about their attack in a village ten miles from Dalkania. He reaches the village after spending a night in the forest and observes keenly the surrounding valley. Not having seen any indication of the presence of the beasts, he again spends a second night sleeping on a tree. Next day, he learns about the killing of a cow. He reaches the spot and follows the trails to find two tigresses feeding themselves. Corbett carefully shoots one of them, a cub, but the other runs away. He spends a third night on tree to find himself cramped, stiff and hungry for he has been without food for sixty-four hours. He returns to Dulkania but during the next ten days he hears nothing about the tigress. He ties four buffaloes as a bait, searches the forests; but in vain. On the eleventh day, he gets the news of a woman having badly injured by the tigress. He ties a goat on the spot and sits on the tree on vigil but gets no success. On the third day, the tigress claims another female victim at Lohali but gives him no chance to shoot. He stays for a week at Dalkania and returns to his home. On his way back, he is followed by tigress that attacks a hill man out for grazing his cattle. In the month of February, he returns to

Dalkania again. Since his departure, many human beings have been killed and wounded. He gets information about the killing of a bullock. This time Corbett kills two tigers by mistaking them to be the man-eater. As he gets further news of the man-eater, he leaves Dalkania after his stay of a few weeks. In March, 1930, he visits the area for the third time. He stays at Kā Agar and spends all the daylight hours in the forest where no one but himself has set foot. Once he is followed by the tigress but unfortunately he cannot see her. On the second occasion, he meets her face to face with the distance of eight feet between them and kills her very skillfully without a single mistake.

The most sought-after big-game trophy during 1920 to 1930 has been '**The Bachelor of Powalgarh**'. Though it is not a man-eater, it has been a threat to the cattle and consequently to the hill people. Corbett calls the tiger by imitating the sound of tigress in his first attempt but can only wound it. Afterwards, he trails him and without any mistake shoots him. It is the biggest animal that he has ever shot measuring ten feet and seven inches.

In Almora district, some eighteen miles from the summer home of Corbett, a girl has been killed by a tiger that later received recognition in Government records as '**The Mohan Man-eater**'. Corbett visits Kartkanoula and stays at the foresters' hut. He ties two young buffaloes as bait, one on the small ridge that the tiger has crossed when carrying his last victim, a woman, and the other at a hairpin bend where he has seen his pug marks. One day he finds the second buffalo killed and follows the trail in order to find out the whereabouts of him. Ultimately, he finds the tiger sleeping soundly after his meal and, so, giving him an easy shot.

‘The Fish of My Dreams’ explores Corbett as an excellent fisherman as well as a lover of nature. For many days, Corbett searches a very wary man-eater, **‘The Kanda Man-Eater’**. One day, he finds fresh pug marks at the edge of a field and the next day learns about the killing of a buffalo. Corbett, very cautiously, finds out the kill but, unfortunately, before his seeing the tiger, the tiger sees him and runs away stealthily. In order to have a second shot, he decides to sit over the kill the following day. After waiting for many hours, the tiger comes to the spot and in the very morning, he shoots him that, in turn, with a roar, comes straight to his tree to get himself killed.

Corbett has known **‘The Pipal Pani Tiger’** when he was a year old. In his early days, Corbett teaches him the danger of carelessly approaching kills in daylight by firing a bullet a little away from him. When he grows up fully, Corbett unsuccessfully tries once to bag him. Three years later he gets wounded by a zamindar’s gun. After that, the wounded animal enters the Inspection Bungalow and stays there for twenty-four hours. After leaving the bungalow, he starts killing cattle as he is unable to prey his natural food. In the succeeding years, his several efforts to bag him have been unsuccessful. Finally, Corbett kills him by calling in a tigress’ voice. Corbett regrets the killing for the wound that he has feared might be dangerous has been healed.

‘The Thak Man-Eater’ has created so much terror that the villagers abandon the village in order to save their lives. As Corbett has promised Donald Stewart of the Forest Department to finish the menace, he visits Sem where a woman has been recently killed in October, 1938 and stays there for several days tying a buffalo. However, the tigress visits the area several

times and does not kill the buffalo. One morning, he gets a news about a man missing from Thak that proves afterwards a victim of the man-eater. Corbett finds out the corpse in the forest and sits over it so as to meet the tigress but she, being clever, leaves her meal. Afterwards she kills cattle and every time Corbett sits on a kill to get disappointment. He leaves Sem in November and within five days, the tigress kills a man at Thak compelling him to visit the village again. On his second visit to Thak, he finds the village completely deserted, still, he keeps tying goats, sitting on tree on vigil at night and searching for the tigress in the day. For many days, he misses the chance to kill her. Ultimately he tries to give her a call and very bravely shoots her face to face.

The researcher has observed the following major perspectives in *M. .*

- A. Wildlife in North India
- B. Socio-Economic and Religious life in the Hilly Region of Kumaon
- C. Human Nature and the Supernatural in Kumaon
- D. Geographical Perspective and the Bondage between Man and Animal

A. Wildlife in North India

Jim Corbett has always been an admirer of nature; as a result, he loves to visit the places that are unspoiled by the hand of Man and also enjoys exceptional opportunities of meeting and studying an infinite variety of wildlife. It is the beauty of nature that draws him back to the nature. As Corbett has spent much of his time in North Indian hills as a hunter, he has first hand knowledge of wildlife in North India. He has great love for nature and he observes several animals, birds, plants found in North India. He has

known various trees such as oak, plum, sal, ringals that is stunted bamboo, almond, walnut, pine, rhododendron, semul also known as bombax malabaricum or the silk cotton and karpal that grow in the Himalayan forests. Making the reader familiar with the karpal, Corbett writes in the footnote, '*Karpal is found on our hills at an elevation of 6,000 feet. The tree grows to a height of about forty feet and produces a small red and very sweet berry, which is greatly fancied by both human beings and bears*'. (P.47, *M.K.*) He has seen different kinds of plant such as clerodendron, bracken, goldenrod, fern, strobilanthus and nettles carpeting the hills of Kumaon. As Corbett pictures it out, the clerodendron plant '*grows in dense patches to a height of five feet, and has widely spread leaves and a big head of flowers not unlike horse-chest nut. It is greatly fancied by tiger, sambhar and pig because of the shade it gives*'. (P.103, *M.K.*) Corbett is fascinated with the open places in the valleys at the bank of rivers that are beautified with amaltas with their two feet long sprays of golden bloom, karaunda and box bushes having star-shaped flowers, filling the air with the most delicate and pleasing of perfumes. The beautiful white butterfly orchids bloom at their greatest profusion in the month of May at the elevation of four thousand to five thousand feet. Some nine thousand feet from the sea level, oat grass grows in the Himalayas. Blackberry, raspberry and plum bushes and scrub like chrysanthemum as well as variety of short soft grass having highly scented roots grow densely in the area. It seems that most of the times, Corbett only names the flora of Kumaon and occasionally describes it.

Regarding the fauna of North India, Jim Corbett speaks a lot. He writes about kingfisher, sambhar, kaker, ghooral, bear, pig, monkey, red monkey,

hyenas, jackals, grey-whiskered boar, chital with horns in velvet and most enthusiastically, about tiger, having a rich tawny red skin with well-defined stripes, and leopard. Leopard, according to Corbett, is '*the most graceful and the most beautiful of all animals in our Indian jungles*', (P.75, *M.K.*) the appreciation with which J. E. Carrington Turner, the then Forest Officer in the Kumaon Himalaya also agrees. It also carries the fame of being the most courageous, strong and clever animal. Its cleverness is proved by the fact that unlike a tiger it never gets porcupine quills stuck in it as it catches them by the head. Corbett writes, with surprise, about the frogs making sounds unlike the falling of stones off a cliff. He deliberately describes the activity of a bird that he has seen for the first time in his life. It is Mountain Crag Martin having uniform ash colour with a slight tinge of pink on its breast and in size a little smaller than Rosy Pastor. Corbett is surprised to see its speed of flying and wonderful eyesight. Therefore, he praises, '*there is nothing in feathers in North India, not excluding our winter visitor the great Tibetan Swallow, that these Martins could not make rings round.*' (P.131, *M.K.*)

Being a hunter, he writes with interest of crows, vultures and Himalayan magpies that help the hunters to find out the kill. Langur that is intelligent monkey, mahseer fish and white capped babbler, a kind of bird, are also found in a large number in the North Indian jungles. Corbett has been fond of wandering in the company of wild life, hence he used to count the animals and birds seen. That is why he writes proudly that one day he has seen so many animals such as sambhar, chital, kaker (barking deer), ghore pig, langur, red monkeys and seventy five varieties of birds including peafowl, red jungle fowl, kaleege pheasants, black partridge and a bush quail

in addition to, five otter, mugger and a python. It has been a feast for his eyes to watch a gaily-coloured kingfisher shedding a shower of diamonds from his wings as it rises with a chirp of delight from the surface of the water holding firmly a silver minnow in his vermilion bill. Hamadryad, also known as king cobra, is plentiful in the Indian jungles and is very aggressive as well as speedy compared to the other species.

Corbett, from top to toe, is an expert hunter. Hence, he writes in detail about the animals, especially, the beasts. There is an exploration of animal habits and human qualities in animals such as curiosity in his shikar stories. Besides, in many of his hunting experiences he has come across several man-eating tendencies among the beasts and animals. All his short stories reveal the essential qualities of a good shikari in Jim Corbett. After a life-long experience of dwelling in the vicinity of forests, he has learnt to be cautious, especially, from the wounded animals and beasts because he knows that a freshly wounded animal is always the most dangerous animal in the world. He observes that bears are very quarrelsome when feeding and bad-tempered at the best of times. Their nose is the keenest of any animal's in the jungle and Corbett describes the Himalayan bear as the animal '*who fears nothing*' (P.188, *M.K.*) as he has seen one snatching away a prey from a tiger by driving it away.

Corbett has not only noticed the alarm calls that the jungle-dwellers such as kaker, chital, sambhar, monkey and all the jungle fowls give in the presence of the beasts but also has learnt to differentiate the various calls of the various beasts. A skilled shikari like Jim Corbett always takes help of these indicators when stalking the beasts. He notices one thing about langurs

that *'all langurs do not call at tigers, but the ones in our (Kumaon) hills certainly do.'* (P.139, *M.K.*) He observes certain habits of animals and bears while studying the wildlife. A leopard, before charging, slowly raises and lowers its tail. When a wounded leopard or tiger makes a headlong charge and fails to attack, it carries on in the same direction and does not return unless he is again disturbed. Tigers do not betray their presence by growling when looking for their dinner. They do not drag but carry their kill and if it is too heavy to be carried, it is left. Corbett has known a tiger carrying a full-grown cow for four miles. He could even know whether the kill is the victim of a tiger or a leopard only by seeing the kill and its position in the jungle for, according to him, a tiger if not disturbed leaves its kill out in the open and lies up close at hand to guard it from vultures and other scavengers. Corbett even studies the quantity of meal needed by the beasts. About tigers, he observes that a full grown tiger can eat a sambhar in two days and a buffalo in three. He also observes that, though, tigers, as a rule, are not carrion eaters, they occasionally do eat. He notices that a tiger, when it uses a road regularly, it invariably leaves signs of its passage by making scratch marks on the side of the road. He generalizes that domestic cats and all other members of the cat family do such marks.

Corbett not only has studied the habits of the beasts but he also uses this knowledge in his hunting expeditions. He has learnt to identify a bear so minutely only by its pug marks and the scratch marks it makes that he could know its sex, age and also the direction, speed and time of its travel. Jim Corbett realizes that animals also possess some human characteristics such as curiosity. He writes that *'Curiosity is not a human monopoly: man*

an animal's life is cut short by indulging in it. A dog leaves the verandah to bark at a shadow, a deer leaves the herd to investigate a tuft of grass that no wind agitated, and the waiting leopard is provided with a meal.' (P.169, **M.K.**)

There are different opinions about the theories regarding man-eaters but Jim Corbett does not point out them in his stories, though, other hunters such as J. A. Taylor do. On the other hand, he writes only about his own experiences and observations and makes out generalizations from them. Still, he refutes the popular belief that the man-eaters do not eat the head, hands and feet of their human victims as he has known them eat everything including the blood-soaked clothes of the victim. Various animals such as tigers, leopards, wolves, hyenas, lions develop man-eating tendencies but Corbett's stories in this collection are only about tigers. 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. Corbett writes profoundly about man-eaters in the Author's Note. Human being is never a natural prey of such a beast but it is compelled to do so '*through stress of circumstances beyond its control, to adopt a diet alien to it. The stress of circumstances is, in nine cases out of ten, wounds, and in the tenth case old age.*' (P.x, **M.K.**) Corbett has seen leopards hunting their human prey only at night but the leopards in African jungles do not follow this rule. Corbett differentiates between man-eating tigers and leopards and writes that '*when a tiger becomes a man-eater it loses all fear of human beings....A leopard on the other hand, even after it has killed scores of human beings, never loses its*

fear of man.' (P.xii-xiii, *M.K.*) Realizing this difference in them, he thinks man-eating tigers are easier to shoot than man-eating leopards.

B. Socio-Economic and Religious Life in the Hilly Region of Kumaon:

Jim Corbett has described the village life in the hill in his *My India*. But his stories of man-eaters also give the picture of village life in the Kumaon region. Kumaon, the land of man-eating tigers, comprises the two districts of Naini Tal and Almora. In July, August and September heavy, continual showers of rain, brings the annual rainfall up to a hundred inches and snow falls during December and January. Exceptionally healthy and refreshing climate along with the friendly and co-operative people makes the region more beautiful. Admiring the region, J. E. Carrington Turner writes, '*In spite of such hungry, roving and terrifying carnivore, there was for me no more delightful country in all the wide world.*' (P.81, Turner, J. E. Carrington, *Man-Eaters and memories*, 1967) Most of the villages are situated high up on the hills. During the four months of winter the Kumaon people leave their mountain homes and with their cattle and migrate to the foot of the hills, known as the Bhabar, to occupy and cultivate their agricultural holdings, and to work in the forests where there is unlimited employment. A cast hierarchy, as usual, exists among the hill people. Corbett mentions when he writes about a female kill of Champawat tigress that she belonged to the high caste. Poor economical conditions, want of facilities and inaccessible geographical regions demand a considerable tax on the man-power of a small community for transportation. Diseases like cholera, fever in epidemic form sweeps through the hills and kill people rapidly. Corbett speaks little of the history but has much to tell about the

then life of the hill people and their different views; he also gives some geographical references in his man-eater stories.

Poor Economical Conditions and Hospitality of the Kumaoni People:

Economical condition of the majority of hill people is poor except a few like the villagers of Thak who, as Corbett observes, have established a very prosperous settlement with the help of their fertile lands and considerable income from the temples. Corbett has noticed that medical treatments are not easily available to the hill people as they do not have a first-aid box in their villages. Hospitals are miles away in a district and they have to reach there on foot. Though any brave man manages to escape from the jaws of the beast, he would die for want of proper treatment in time. Corbett has seen wounded people fighting desperately for breath in the hot fetid atmosphere, as their huts have no ventilation, with the swarm of buzzing flies. This atmosphere along with the unsanitary conditions would make their wounds septic rapidly giving them no chance to live. Though poor, Corbett finds these people to be very generous.

People in the hills, as Corbett observes, are kind and helpful by nature. Whenever he visits them, he is pleased with their hospitality and affection. Once, Corbett visits a hamlet in order to stalk Chowgarh tigers and witnesses this hospitality of poor people. The humble people when learn about his stay in the jungle the previous night, they offer to prepare a meal for him. As he is unwilling to strain their resources, he takes only a drink of fresh milk sweetened with jaggery. Hospitality has been one of the important facets of Indian culture and 'Atithi Devo Bhava', that is, guests should be treated as God, has been the motto of Hindu religion. Corbett has mentioned this

quality of Kumaoni people frequently and consciously in his man-eater stories not unlike Turner who writes, '*Typically hospitable they (Kumaoni people) inquired if I would like some goat's milk.*' (P.163, Turner, J. E. Carrington, *Man-Eaters and memories*, 1967) In the story of Mohan man-eater, Corbett writes another incident of these people's innocence and humbleness. After seeing Corbett using condensed milk, not only the people become upset but the headman feels it an insult to them. The next day Corbett finds '*an array of pots and pans of various shapes and sizes on the verandah, all containing milk.*' (P.128, *M.K.*) The day before, there has been no milk at all and the day after, villagers so as to take good care of him have brought it so much that he can bathe in it.

The Courageous Hill People:

Corbett admires openheartedly the courage of the hill people, living in the vicinity of the jungle. While hunting man-eaters, he has met the brave people including women who have escaped from the awesome jaws of the beasts and lived thereafter. Praising their heroic acts, Corbett writes, '*In remote areas in which long-established man-eaters are operating, many gallant acts of heroism are performed, which the local inhabitants accept as everyday occurrences and the outside world have no means of hearing about.*' (P.161, *M.K.*) He tries to disclose these acts of bravery to the world through his stories. He meets such a brave man in Dalkania who has fought against the man-eater and has survived. He records another incident of an man who has adventurously walked in the area of Kanda man-eater from sunset to sunrise, unarmed and alone, neglecting the presence of any evil spirit that he believed to be existed in. Corbett is much surprised with this

quality of courage that is given to few. He also talks of the courage and bravery of his servants who accompany him on his adventurous tasks of finishing man-eaters. The courage of the men who accompany him in his campaign against the Thak man-eater is worth noticing for him. When Corbett sits on vigil at night, these men travel in order to serve him every morning and evening through the area that is deserted by the people for the fear of the beast. He is fascinated with the courage that they show when he kills the tigress. They have been hearing hair-raising and blood-curdling tales of the horrible beast for seven days and are wide awake for past two nights still they accompany him, at the time of nightfall, unarmed and hearing the furious beast drawing nearer. Corbett, the great shikari, takes his hat off for these men who, he admits, '*had the courage to do what I (Corbett), had I been in their shoes, would not have dreamt of doing.*' (P.220, M.K.)

The Kumaoni Ways of Communication:

Corbett, when speaking with the hill people, minutely observes the peculiarities in their communication. He notes that the humble and the modest people express their gratitude or make request by bending down and touching feet of the respective person. It is also an Indian way to have blessings of the elders. In Lohali, he meets an old man, whose only daughter is attacked and badly wounded by the Chowgarh tigress. He bends down to touch Corbett's feet and with tears running down his cheeks requests him to save the life of his daughter. Another incident that Corbett describes regarding this characteristic of hill people is about a courageous woman who has become dumb after the tragic death of her sister. When Corbett visits her in order to tell his intention of finishing her sister's killer, the Champawat

tigress, unable to speak her emotions, expresses her gratitude by putting her hands together and stooping down to touch his feet. Corbett also pictures an interesting character, a man whose *'legs and tongue cannot function at the same time. When he opened his mouth he stopped dead, and when he started to run his mouth closed.'* (P.16, *M.K.*) Corbett witnesses that in the province of man-eater, inter-village communication is carried out by shouting. Standing on a big rock or the roof of a house, a man cooees to attract the attention of the people in a neighbouring village. When the cooee is answered, the message is shouted across in a high-pitched voice. The message is tossed from village to village and is broadcasted throughout large areas in an incredibly short space of time. Corbett, himself, also has learnt this cooee method of communication.

Corbett not only pictures the situations but also speaks on the peculiarities in Indian communication. He writes,

'When strangers meet in India and wish to glean information on any particular subject from each other, it is customary to refrain from broaching the subject that has brought them together-whether accidentally or of set purpose-until the very last moment, and to fill up the interval by finding out everything concerning each other's domestic and private affairs;.... Questions that would in any other part of the world earn one a thick ear are in India-and especially in our hills-asked so artlessly and universally that no one who has lived among the people dreams of taking offence at them.' (P.122-3, *M.K.*)

A woman from Kartkanoula after getting over her shyness cross-examines an unacquainted person, Corbett, with too many personal

questions and he also, being familiar with the hilly ways of communication and their culture, answers them. The questions that introduce the communication are related to the marital status of children and person, number, sex and age. If the person is not married, its reason is occupation and amount of pay and so on.

The Women in Kumaon:

While depicting the village life, Corbett specifically writes about women in India. He observes that women in the hill collect leaves for cattle, dry sticks for fuel and bring water from the jungle. The distribution of labour in the families residing in the villages scattered over the enormous tract of the lower Himalayas and comprising the districts of Kumaon and Garhwal, was sharply defined and very much in favour of the men. Once, Corbett meets a woman at Kartkanoula who has been feeling a pitcher from a little trickle of water. He is surprised to see the risk she has taken for she is out alone in the area of man-eater. After having a conversation with her, he comes to know that a man in the family is ploughing and '*in any case it was the duty of women to fetch water.*' (P.121, *M.K.*) He is much happy with the information which he gets from the woman about man-eater for he is familiar with the shyness of Indian women. He writes, '*Those of you who know the women of India will realize that I had accomplished a lot...*' (P.121, *M.K.*) Corbett, now and then, admires the courage of hill-women who perform their works heroically in groups or sometimes alone. In the story of Champawat man-eater, he talks about one of such incredible acts of heroism that many people have witnessed. The woman sees her sister being carried off by a man-eater. Then she follows the beast for a hundred yards in order to save her sister. In

the story of Mohan man-eater, he again writes about a sixteen year old courageous girl who accompanies a woman wounded by a man-eater while other women go to the village to take help. Unfortunately, the girl herself falls victim to the beast but the valour shown by her impresses even Corbett. Corbett finds an Indian woman different from other women in every aspect. Even her mourning is typical of her as he points out, '*the wailing of an Indian woman mourning her dead is unmistakable...*' (P.181, **M.K.**)

As Corbett has lived nearly all his life in India, he is familiar with the social status of women in India and regrets the ill-treatment given to an Indian widow. When he finds the mangled body of a man, a victim of man-eater, he feels sorry for his children and wife, who '*was facing –without any illusions- the fate of a widow of India.*' (P.184, **M.K.**) The life of widow is troublesome and hard that no woman wants to have even the signs of widowhood as is the case with the courageous woman badly wounded by Chowgarh tigress. The scalp of her head is hanging in two halves, so Corbett tries to give her treatment. He needs scissors so as to cut off her hair but, somehow, he can not get it. Still, he tries his best and saves her life. After some days, when he visits her, he finds her happy for not having shorn her head as it is the sign of widowhood. In the pre-colonial and colonial India, there had been the tradition of shaving a woman's hair off after the death of her husband. The tradition has been much painful for women as it would make them look ugly. However, harsh the tradition has been, women have followed them sincerely.

The Religious Perspective:

The Kumaoni people are predominantly Hindus; as a result, many views regarding the Hindu religion are reflected in the stories of Jim Corbett. After living much of his life among these people, he has been so impressed by Hindu religion that he wished to be cremated after his death but unfortunately his wish is not fulfilled. As the major theme in his man-eater stories is the conflict between Man and beasts, most of the times events of death occur. Consequently, after-death rites and rituals of Hindu religion are elaborated in these stories. Corbett observes major difference regarding these rituals that Hindus, instead of burying their dead, cremate it invariably on the bank of a stream or river in order that the ashes may be washed down into the Ganges - the river that is sacred to Hindus and is adored as a mother god - and eventually into the sea. When there arises any difficulty to perform these rites, a very simple rite of placing a live coal in the mouth of the dead is performed and then the body is thrown down into the valley from the edge of the hill. According to the religious belief of Kumaon people, these rites are very necessary and should be performed at any cost. Whenever, Corbett sets out to track a human victim, he is requested by the victim's relatives to bring back any portion of the body for cremation even if it be only a few splinters of bone. As Corbett has always respected the religious views of these people, he has always helped them to perform these rites. In one of the cases, he wraps victim's clothes and a few pieces of bone in the clean cloth and gives it to her relatives. Describing the situation, he writes, '*Pitifully little as these remains were, they would suffice for the cremation ceremony which would ensure the ashes of the high caste woman reaching Mother Ganges.*' (P.10,

M.K.) Yet, another incident that exposes Corbett's helpful and religious nature is when he buries the fingers of the victim that have been found while skinning the beast in the Naini Tal lake close to the Nandadevi temple. In his story of Thak man-eater, he very vividly describes the situation:

With Ibbotson came the brother and other relatives of the dead man, who very reverently wrapped the remains in a clean white cloth and, laying it on a cradle made of two saplings and rope which Ibbotson provided, set off for the burning ghat on the banks of the Sarada, repeating under their breath as they went the Hindu hymn of praise 'Ram nam sat hai' with its refrain, ' Satya bol gat hai'. (P.189, M.K.)

C. Human Nature and the Supernatural in Kumaon:

There are many disputes among the people about the existence of supernatural things. Whenever Man fails to understand the cause of any unexpected thing, he attributes it, following his natural tendency, to the supernatural power. Majority of the shikar stories have the theme of supernatural in it to some extent. Kenneth Anderson, besides focusing on Indian Wildlife, also explores the subject of occult in his writing along with his live experiences with unusual phenomena for which he has no explanation. Corbett also depicts this element in his stories as it occurred to him but is unable to give any explanation. At some places, he does not even disclose his own opinion about the supernatural experience such as the scream that he, as well as, a kaker and a sambhar hears of a human being in mortal agony when the possibility of the presence of any

human being in that deserted village at the time of night has been zero. He points out that the scream is exactly the same that his acquaintance has heard of the last human victim of Thak tigress. Wildlife is one of the places where too many such unbelievable things happen. As man knows little of the deep and dense forests, he is sometimes unable to explain the reasons behind these things. A scientific research may find out the reality in the supernatural happenings but hill people are so innocent and ignorant of the things that they gradually develop their own superstitions. Corbett observes that *'the people of our hills, in addition to being very sensitive to their environments, are very superstitious, and every hill-top, valley, and gorge is credited with possessing a spirit in one form or another, all of the evil and malignant kind most to be feared during the hours of darkness.'* (P.166, *M.K.*) Even the hunters are found developing their own superstitions. Consequently, many of the shikar stories have superstitions or the supernatural element in them.

Corbett, like many hunters, has been superstitious and he admits this fact in his writings by sharing his own experiences of the supernatural. One of the best experiences that he gives to convey his superstitious nature concerns the killing of Chowgarh tigress. He gives the credit for his success in killing the tigress to the nightjar eggs that he has been carrying at the time of shooting but at the same time feels guilty of being as superstitious as other hunters. He explains his own point of view: *'For three long periods, extending over a whole year, I had tried-and tried hard-to get a shot at the*

tigress, and had failed; and now within a few minutes of having picked up the eggs my luck had changed.' (P.97, **M.K.**)

Corbett, being familiar with the Kumaoni people, often describes their superstitious nature in his stories. He observes that the children in Kumaon wear lockets made by pieces of flesh and bone, especially of tiger, along with the other potent charms in order to be courageous so as to face hardships and to be safe from the wild beasts. Corbett never mocks at these beliefs; on the other hand, whenever he hunts any beast, he gives its parts to the people. The hill people generally believe man-eaters to be an evil spirit that takes on appearance of a tiger whenever it craves for human flesh. When Corbett would spend days and nights in the province of man-eater without being harmed, they give excuse that he is saved by the spirits that protect sadhus and are more powerful than the evil spirits. Sometimes, things happen co-incidentally and people believe them to be supernatural or magical as in one of the cases, Corbett shoots three ghoorals that somehow rolls down the hill and lay at his feet. But the hill people, who have witnessed the incident, believe the bullets used by him to be magical having the power not only to kill the animal but also to draw it to the hunter's feet. Ignorance is also one of the things responsible for nourishing superstitions in the people. The hill people, in contrast to Corbett, have little knowledge of the wild-life, especially, of man-eaters and so, are surprised with his anticipations about the beast. He speaks the possibility of an injury to one of the legs of Mohan man-eater only from the

information that he gets from the villagers. When this possibility is proved to be true after killing the tiger, villagers make him famous for being gifted with second sight. Not only the forest-dwellers but even Corbett has been superstitious and he, now and then, strengthens his beliefs by giving his own experiences. He writes, *'However little faith we have in the superstitions we share with others-thirteen at a table, the passing of wine at dinner, walking under a ladder, and so on-our own private superstitions, though a source of amusement to our friends, are very real to us.'* (P.153, *M.K.*) He also states that hunters, compared to other people, are more serious about their own superstitions. He gives examples of other sportsmen. One hunter invariably takes five cartridges when out for shooting big game while the other takes seven. Another hunter never started shooting in winter without first killing a mahseer fish. Corbett's own superstition concerns with snakes. He has a deep-rooted conviction that until he has first killed a snake, all his efforts to kill man-eaters will be unsuccessful.

Corbett, not unlike other hunters, also has the sixth sense. Whenever a man-eater follows him quietly or is in the close proximity, he would have its inclination before actually seeing it. He himself admits that every skilled hunter possesses this skill and believes that the sense that warns them of impending danger is a real one. He never tries to give explanations to this sense but proves it by his own experiences.

D. Geographical Perspective and the bondage between Man and animal:

Though Corbett speaks little of the History, he gives geographical information of the region in detail such as Ladhya river flows through Kumaon, the snow lies deep during winter and the valleys are scorching hot in summer. Whenever he goes on his expeditions of killing man-eaters, he describes the area with directions and approximate measurements. He explains the exact place of Kot Kindri and the way to reach there. It is a small village about four miles south-west of Chuka and three miles due west of Thak. A valley lies between Kot Kindri and Thak. One has to reach there by rail up to Tanakpur and from there by foot via Kaldhunga and Chuka, the route being the most deadly malaria belt in north India. Villages of varying sizes, ranging from a population of hundred or more people to only a small family or two, are scattered in the Kumaon hills. Footpaths, sometimes passing through thick forests and beaten hard by bare feet connect the villages. People have to travel on foot from one village to the other through deep ravines and dense forests.

As said earlier, the conflict between Man and beast has been one of the recurring themes in all of the stories of Corbett though his own attitude towards these beasts is not antagonistic. The hill people always refer to the man-eaters as 'shaitan' that is devils. These devils make their life so miserable and dangerous that they always want to take revenge by killing them. Corbett has met a woman who

has been dumb after a shock of her sister being tiger's victim but immediately after seeing the skin of the tiger starts calling her neighbours so as to see her dead enemy. Man-eaters have terrorized the life of Kumaoni people to such an extent that they feared to leave their homes even for answering the call of nature let alone the other work. Many fields have gone out of cultivation. People have been so afraid that, in many of the cases, no attempts are being made to follow the beast or to recover the human kill. The animal carries the humans in front of the people and they can do nothing except to run away. That tigress compelled the villagers to abandon their village. Every person present to see the dead Chowgarh tigress has lost one or more relatives and many have tooth and claw marks made by the man-eater on their bodies. This shows how horrible it has been to live in the province of man-eater.

The beasts make difficult life of permanent as well as temporary inhabitants in addition to the people who pass through the area. A girl badly wounded by a tiger desperately fights for life and the people around her, anticipating her death, plan to carry her corpse back to the scene of the attack and shoot the beast. This is a sign of how the advent of man-eater, sometimes, changes the attitude of people towards life. In the battle of man and beast, man is helpless unless armed with weapons.

After killing a man-eater, Corbett gets satisfaction of saving lives of many people. He says, *'Any task well accomplished gives satisfaction....the kind of satisfaction I imagine an author must feel*

when he writes FINIS to the plot... (P.143, *M.K.*) But, he also regrets the death of the beast as he always has a soft corner for these beasts. He strongly disapproves people characterizing them as cruel and blood-thirsty and accuses the author who first defamed tiger using phrases like 'as cruel as a tiger' or 'as blood-thirsty as a tiger'. He earnestly tries to change this attitude by describing his own childhood experiences. He does not know even a single in which the tiger, without provocation, has killed more than it needs to satisfy its hunger or the hunger of its cubs. Even in the case of many man-eaters, Corbett finds man has been responsible for their inability to kill natural prey because many unskilled hunters only wound them and do not try to finish them. He is, therefore, always careful not to wound but kill the man-eaters and give them less pain. Corbett also shares the memories of his favourite pet dog, Robin who has been so intimate to him that he writes, '*all the gold in India would not buy him*' (P.31, *M.K.*) He also experiences the friendly relationship between the Kumaoni people and their cattle.
