

*Sahibs and Shikar: Colonial Hunting and Wildlife in British India, 1800-1935*  
by

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12.03.2009  
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John Thompson

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of Doctor  
of Philosophy in the Department of  
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ABSTRACT

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation explores the colonization of wildlife in nineteenth and early twentieth century British India. It discusses hunting and colonial policies on wildlife to explore the political, social and cultural concerns that influenced British interactions with Indian wildlife, with their compatriots and with natives. Hunting, I argue was deeply implicated in the exercise of power in all these interactions.

British policies on wildlife in the nineteenth century favored a neat categorization of wild animals as “vermin and “game.” By the beginning of the twentieth century however, with decreasing numbers of carnivores and native opposition, the perceived complementarity between game preservation and vermin extermination was shattered. While the colonial administration continued both these policies, they also actively sought to formulate policies to protect all animals in areas designated as sanctuaries and national parks.

Colonial hunting as it emerged from the late nineteenth century reflects the changing nature of the colonial state and a new imperial ideology of dominance. I also argue racial differences between the colonialists and colonized were articulated in the domain of hunting. While hunting represented domination of nature and natives, the “colonial hunt” also came to signify a paternal benevolent British rule. The importance given to hunting and to the notion of fair play in their hunting served to “identify” the

moral and physical superiority of British rulers. The new ideology of paternalism was realized in the figure of the hunter-officer, the *Sahib* who in hunting dangerous carnivores was seen to act as a protector of the native.

The changing nature of the colonial state and creation of racial differences also had a profound impact on colonial society which became increasingly self-conscious of its own identity and image. Given the metropolitan engagement with social Darwinism and their location on the fringes of civilization as it were, colonialists became the center of metropolitan preoccupation with racial contamination. The emphasis on fair play, I argue reflects the efforts of the colonial elite to enforce a model code of conduct on its members and reassure an anxious metropole of the racial distance with the native.

Policing behavior of their own, through categories like fair play was therefore essential to the agenda of creating racial differences. Due to a perceived connection between hunting, power and privilege, hunting also played an important role in social relations in colonial society. As hunting came to be regulated by laws by late nineteenth century, it often became the focal point of tensions in class and power within the colonial elite on the question of access to animals.

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## Introduction

This dissertation explores the colonization of wildlife in nineteenth and early twentieth century British India. Through an analysis of the various forms of hunting, preservation and conservation, I explore the social and cultural imperatives that shaped British interactions with the animal world in the wild. In addition to exercising power through institutions like the army and the bureaucracy, the British Raj in India attempted to extend its control through seemingly apolitical arenas of life. Hunting, I argue was a performance staged for the benefit of colonized as well the colonizer and one in which colonial power was reproduced and resisted. Hunting displayed the power of the colonial state and its domination over nature and natives. As military annexation of new territories largely ceased after the Revolt of 1857, hunting greatly aided in showcasing the military potential of the civil administration and its capacity for violence. Hunting and killing of ferocious carnivores also enabled colonialists to appropriate the role of paternal rulers who protected natives from being consumed by India's ferocious wilderness. I also argue that hunting contributed to the construction of colonial identity in the subcontinent, and an imperial self at home in Britain. Hunting became an important marker of class relations among the colonizers and communicated notions of privilege, status and honor, received largely from the metropole. As ruling

elite, colonialists argued that they too, like aristocrats at home, had a “natural” right to the hunt. As hunting came to be restricted by the late nineteenth century, tensions on the question of access to game exposed the fissures within colonial society and colonial administration. The diverse attempts to grapple with wildlife in the Indian countryside and its jungles, far from being at the “untamed frontiers” of the empire as professed by colonial hunters, were in fact reflections of its core principles and its core conflicts.

I intend this study to lead to a more complex understanding of the cult of hunting that so preoccupied the British, and of the issues that shaped colonial policies on wildlife in their Raj in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the specific context of the larger colonial world, practices and policies directed toward wildlife provide an interesting entry point to explore both the formal and the informal manner in which disaggregated forms of state power confronted, negotiated and governed agrarian and forest communities. While British interactions with Indian wildlife were generated primarily in the colonial encounter, this dissertation will show that these were also an extension of attitudes towards wildlife characteristic of the Victorian home front.

Initially conceived as a project rooted in the field of environmental history, I have broadened the focus of this study to include the political, social and cultural contexts that influenced colonial wildlife policies. One of my goals is to highlight the ways in which environmental histories are enriched by considering political culture. I also

suggest the converse, that we gain a more nuanced understanding of British colonial rule in India when we broaden the colonial encounter to include the natural environment. Mastery over nature was critical to British economic and political mastery over the Indian subcontinent.

## **Sources and Methodology**

The primary sources that inform this study include the records of the Legislative, Judicial, Home, Public and Forest Departments of the colonial government housed in the National Archives of India, New Delhi; Uttar Pradesh State Archives, Lucknow; and the records of the Nilgiri Collectorate, Tamil Nadu. For answers to the above concerns, I have also explored records of prominent game preservation societies such as the Nilgiri Game Association, Association for Preservation of Fauna in United Provinces, and Society for the Preservation of Fauna in the Empire. In addition, my arguments have been formulated by a reading of a rich array of British hunting memoirs; and articles and letters published in newspapers and journals such as the *Indian Forester*, *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* and *Journal of the Society for the Preservation of Game in the Empire*.

This dissertation argues that the discourse on colonial hunting was closely linked to the social and cultural worlds that the British in India inhabited, negotiated and



appropriated. It is also concerned with the quotidian impact of hunting interests on the formulation and implementation of colonial policies on wildlife management. In pursuing this research project, I have also benefited enormously from a variety of historiographies on South Asia, British imperial history, colonial anthropology and colonial Africa. These readings have revealed that the colonial archive is multi-layered, multiply-located and complex. This is particularly important because the narrative, however fictive, of the confident state tends to subsume other stories. My aim, therefore, is to look beyond the self-professed homogeneity of the archive, to read against the grain and pay close attention to ambiguities and tensions in the “truth” that the colonial archive represents.

While this project will be in constant conversation with these theoretical concerns on the question of imperial ideology and colonial rhetoric, I will also take into consideration the scholarly intervention of historians like Sumit Sarkar in *Writing Social History* who has argued that the Saidian turn in South Asian historiography has privileged discourse and does not give adequate attention to practice.<sup>1</sup> Sarkar insists that much of post-colonial studies have remained trapped in debates concerning colonial rhetoric and constructions of power. Sarkar’s suggestions have influenced my research

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<sup>1</sup> Sumit Sarkar, *Writing Social History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 42.

agenda. In addition to exploring the elaborate strategies of cultural legitimization of colonial rule and the impact of this legitimization on metropolitan and colonial cultures, this dissertation will focus on the material relations and impacts of colonial rhetoric and the influence of this “legitimacy” on material relations and institutions. My reading of the literature on hunting and wildlife management therefore will be concerned with the rhetoric apparent in these sources and with the exercise of power that this rhetoric enabled.

For the purposes of this project, I discuss hunting as a “sport,” without the expectation of meat or material profit accruing directly to the hunter and whose importance, as noted by Matt Cartmill, “lies in its symbolism, not its economics.”<sup>2</sup> In his discussion of the ritualization of fox hunting in nineteenth-century Britain, James Howe has identified the variety of strategies used to make fox hunting important and desirable as *tradition* in the British countryside.<sup>3</sup> The separation of fox hunting from more quotidian activities was heavily dependent on a process of ritualization. This process included for instance, the increasing use of esoteric jargon to describe common materials

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<sup>2</sup> Matt Cartmill, *A View to a Death in the Morning: Hunting and Nature through History* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993), 28.

<sup>3</sup> James Howe, "Fox Hunting as Ritual," *American Ethnologist* Vol. 8, no. No. 2 (May, 1981).

and routine activities and evolving practices (like dress codes) which did not directly have any relation to the activity of hunting foxes. As we shall see from the chapters that follow, hunting similarly was an important symbolic assertion of British territorial control of India.

The symbolic importance of hunting of course had to be crafted and popularized for it to be culturally and politically relevant. The British colonialists invested enormous time and energy in hunting and in memorializing their hunts in writing, photographs and in game trophies. In doing so, they elaborated rules and norms of behavior that defined a unique British tradition of big game hunting in the colonies. The memorialization of British hunting from the late nineteenth century invoked a particular sense of moral ethic that became closely associated with the colonial hunt. The emphasis on fair play, description of the native, of Indian jungles, of ferocious beasts and brave white hunters were carefully formulated to “manufacture” a sense of a distinct colonial hunt. This recasting of hunting from a routine activity into a glorified platform displaying British dominance and their right to rule, is what I allude to as “ritualization.” Unlike fox hunters in Britain, colonial hunters never succeeded in defining a clear set of practices. Rather, ritualization of the colonial hunt in India involved defining the moral aesthetic of the colonial hunt. This was done so successfully

that despite the many interpretations of fair play and diverse modes of hunting, the moral appeal of colonial hunt remained immutable till the end days of the Raj.

In this work, I explore two broad themes related to colonial hunting. The first deals with British imperial ideology, colonial identity and the culture of the hunt in India. The second is an exploration of the nature of “hunting” encounters between man and beast in the Indian countryside and the relations of power between colonizers and colonized that these encounters reveal.<sup>4</sup> A closer look at interactions around the hunt is also a good way to evaluate how the precepts of fair play were enacted in practice. The principal human protagonists of my work are the men who were part of the colonial officialdom in India. These men contributed to the formation of imperial identity in Britain and represented this identity in the colonies. I explore how their experiences as hunters and administrators, as documented in memoirs and policy debates, reveal social, cultural and political influences on their identity formation and on the exercise of power in British India. British discourses on the native cannot be understood without understanding their attitudes towards wildlife. As I discuss in this dissertation, natives,

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<sup>4</sup> This study is limited to exploring the colonial hunt in India, as practiced by expatriate Britons serving in India. The diverse traditions of hunting by natives including hunting for sport by villagers and rulers are currently out of the scope of this dissertation and a comprehensive study on native forms of hunt during the colonial periods is still awaited.

native knowledge and native forms of hunt were deeply implicated in the construction of the myth of “British” big game hunting and its practice in Indian jungles. In addition, I also show that experience of these *hunters of animals* shaped their work as *administrators* over natives and natural resources.

While I draw upon examples from various regions of colonial India, the focus of this dissertation is on the Nilgiri Hills in southern India, and the United Provinces in the Gangetic heartland. Both of these areas are geographically and culturally distinct. The United Provinces is important to this study because it was the site for the first national park in the subcontinent, the Hailey National Park, whose founding I discuss in Chapter Five. The area that was converted into the National Park in 1935 was a timber forest under the control of foresters for several decades before it was closed for hunting. The Nilgiris, with their mild climate, had a large concentration of British people settled in and around the many hill stations in the area. Comprising resident officials, families of non-resident officers as well as planters, each of these groups competed to play the role of land managers of vast stretches of game- rich Nilgiris. Organizing the project around these two sites allows me to locate connections between the culture of hunting and wildlife legislation and to identify the manner in which ideologies of rule came to determine the fate of Indian wildlife, native populations, and colonial society.

## Issues and Themes

### The idea of Fair Play

Strangely enough, despite moral validation that fair play endowed on colonial hunting, the idea was never really defined anywhere in the hunting genre or in the official colonial archive. The drawing of differences between native hunting and colonial hunting in the memorialization of the hunt however, is heavily dependent on the idea of fair play. The memoirs employ several words that embrace the idea of fairplay like "sporting," "sportsmanship," "fairplay" and "hunting etiquette." A close reading of the literature reveals that similar sounding terms like "sport" and sportsmanship' meant very different things. "Sport," conveys the elements of thrill, adventure and courage. "Sportsmanship" on the other hand, tempers these elements with restraint and control. I have identified 'fairplay' as the difference between "sport" and "sportsmanship." In addition to the immediate feelings of excitement, thrill and adventure, and the display of courage that accompanied "sport", the colonial hunter's conduct was dictated by the idea of fairplay. Fairplay allowed the hunter to transcend the immediacy of the moment to connect with a broader ideological framework that made the moment nobler. The idea of controlled aggression that fair play idealized was expressed in practice only in broad terms: that game be given a chance to flee, that

clemency be demonstrated to pregnant females and immature animals, and that courage and skill be displayed and correct hunting etiquette observed. While the *idea* of fair play remained important, *what* constituted fair play seems malleable to change in response to changing technologies, social interactions within the colonial society and interactions with natives. I argue that fair play continued to be a relevant idea and ideal during the colonial period because of this capacity to absorb social, cultural and technological change and accommodate new challenges.

Many of the challenges to prevalent notions of fair play and hunting practices came from the colonial society. Research on the intersection of race and class in colonial cultures has shown that rather than a cohesive unit, the expatriate British community in India was deeply divided along status and class.<sup>5</sup> Hunting was an important social arena for negotiating notions of prestige and power in a deeply hierarchical colonial society. This dissertation does not discuss “subaltern poor whites,” but restricts itself to the class that had leisure and resources to hunt. Yet, even for this group, curtailing opportunities

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<sup>5</sup> Teresa Hubel, “In Search of the British Indian in British India: White Orphans, Kipling’s Kim, and Class in Colonial India” *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Feb., 2004): 227-251; Harald Fischer-Tiné, “Britain’s other Civilising Mission: Class Prejudice, European “loaferism” and the Workhouse-System in Colonial India,” *Indian Economic Social History Review* (2005):42; 295; David Arnold, “European Orphans and Vagrants in India in the Nineteenth century,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Volume 7, Issue 2 January (1979): 104 – 127 and Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire Families : Britons and Latte Imperial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

to hunt through game rules introduced from the 1890s brought into the open social tensions based on class, status and privilege that were embedded in colonial society. Despite claims of uniting British against native, the colonial hunt at the “high noon” of the empire also jeopardized the assumption of solidarity within the colonizing elite. Hunting as a site for managing and regulating colonial social interactions fractured the unified image of the imperial hunter popularized in colonial literature on hunting. The ambiguous yet powerful notion of fair play, I argue, was one of the ways in which these internal social tensions were accommodated in colonial society.

### **Imperial Identity and the Colonial Hunt**

Colonial literature on hunting from the late nineteenth century reveals an increasing preoccupation with the formulation of a correct etiquette associated with hunting. Articulated in the idea of fair play, this set of values came to define the “British” tradition of hunting as it emerged from late nineteenth century onwards. I argue that the changing nature of the state, and new and self-conscious imperial ideology of paternalism that the British sought to portray after the revolt of 1857, had a strong impact on the ritualization of colonial hunting. While there has been extensive work on the development of imperial ideology after 1857, this kind of a study involving



around the question of the “Hunt” in India, will take the field ahead. <sup>6</sup> This dissertation will reveal that hunting was at core of the new ideology of dominance and that hunting by *Sahibs* was one of the most prominent faces of colonial paternalism. The colonial hunt therefore is one of the best examples of the new ideology of rule.

While the actual practice of the hunt was meant to make an impression upon the governed, the memorialization of the ritualized colonial hunt reassured home audiences of the superiority of British rule in India; it also served as a reminder to the colonialists to adhere to behavior accepted from India’s colonial rulers. Well before the emergence of post-colonial studies, Benita Parry argued in her *Delusions and Discoveries* that British writing on India was meant for two distinct publics: one resident in the imperial metropole and for the most part ignorant of Indian realities; and the other, the Britons who lived and worked in the subcontinent and posed as the rightful and natural rulers of its indigenous inhabitants.<sup>7</sup> Maintenance of the Raj, she claimed, required not only the relative quiescence among the ruled; it equally demanded that the rulers believe in the

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<sup>6</sup> Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Francis Hutchins, *Illusion of Permanence* (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1967); Bernard Cohn, “Representing Authority in Victorian India”, in *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. E. Hobsbawn and T. Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>7</sup> Benita Parry, *Delusions and Discoveries: India in the British Imagination, 1880-1930* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1972).

justice and necessity of their mission, affirming its high minded purpose and legitimizing colonial rule as one that was sanctioned by a moral right. Parry does not discuss the significance of discursive representations to the everyday exercise of colonial power or recognize that rather than ignorant, the metropolitan audiences in were in fact, attentive to the deeds and conduct of Britain colonialists. Her work is important in drawing attention to the question of the “home audience” and the colonial’s need for reassurance. As this dissertation will show, the figure of the hunter in the colony was a reassuring one, a proof of the resilience of frontier men capable of upholding the empire.<sup>8</sup> Governed by notions of fair play, colonial hunting perpetuated the idea of the gentleman-ruler, an idea as I will demonstrate in Chapter One, important to British imperial identity. Hunting, the British insisted, was their exclusive right as rulers of India, just as it was the sign of ruling nobility in Britain. And as the Ilbert Bill controversy revealed in the 1880s, hunting was held as a proof that marked the difference between whites and Indian, however “westernized” and “educated” the latter might aspire to be.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth M Collingham, *Imperial Bodies: the Physical Experience of the Raj, c. 1800-1947*, (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 2001).

<sup>9</sup> See Mrinalini Sinha’s discussion of the effeminate Bengali as incapable of understanding British sensibilities on hunting as an argument against native judges trying Europeans. in her *Colonial*

## Recreation and Power

In this study, I also explore the complicated relationship between “recreation” and power in agrarian areas. While this project is in constant conversation with theoretical concerns on the question of ideology and rhetoric influencing practice, I also pay attention to the impact of wildlife policies on wildlife, the British community and native populations of India.

The hunting memoirs of British officials consistently reiterate the idea that hunting gave them the opportunity to “know” the countryside better and enabled them to maintain the necessary health and skills needed by an Indian administrator in carrying out his duties. Hunting was also deemed important to the constitution of British power in the rural districts of their Indian empire. Hunting was one of the practices that validated the colonial state’s claims to a powerful, pervasive and paternal presence in the Indian countryside. The colonial agenda of ridding the Indian countryside of carnivores complemented the cultural investment in hunting, and the

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*Masculinity : The “Manly Englishman” and the “Effeminate Bengali” in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 42. Introduced by Lord Ripon in 1883, The Ilbert Bill proposed an amendment that would allow Indian judges and magistrates to try British offenders in criminal cases at the District level. The Bill was created great deal of controversy in Britain as well as in India. In India, the bill deepened racial antagonism between British and Indians.

Indian wilderness became a site for the competition for space between the “barbaric” forces of nature and the Raj. The idea of exterminating “vermin” (the term Raj officials applied to carnivores) was important to policies of game preservation and protecting livestock in nineteenth-century Britain.<sup>10</sup> In the subcontinent, however, the rhetoric of protecting the native became the overwhelming principle informing colonial hunting that strengthened the connection between hunting and governance. The officer-hunter’s simultaneous claims to quell dangerous beasts and protect natives, allowed the colonial ruler to position himself as the paternal *sahib*; the *ma-baap* (mother-father).<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the idealization of the British administrator as *ma-baap* was central to the identity of the *sahib*, the archetype of British imperial identity. And in turn, as I argue in Chapters Three and Four, hunting was critical to the constitution of British man as colonial *sahib*.

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<sup>10</sup> Stonehenge, *Manual of British Rural Sports* (London: Fredrick Warne and Company, 1867) and Duke of Benfort (ed.) *The Badminton Library of sports and Pastimes: Hunting* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1889). See also Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), Douglas Hay, *Albion’s Fatal Tree* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975) and Matt Cartmill, *A View to a Death in the Morning : Hunting and Nature through History* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993).

<sup>11</sup> This term is also defined in the Colonial Indian dictionary Hobson Jobson as “MA-BAP, s. “Ap ma-bap hai khudawand!” “You, my Lord, are my mother and father!” This is an address from a native, seeking assistance, or begging release from a penalty, or reluctant to obey an order, which the young *sahib* hears at first with astonishment, but soon as a matter of course.” Henry Yule, C .Burnell and William Crooke, *Hobson-jobson : A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words and Phrases* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal 1968).

The image of the *sahib* as good administrator and skillful hunter was heavily dependent on the figure of the native. British hunting memoirs, like much of colonial writing, present static images of the helpless native in need of British intervention. As I show however in Chapter Four, while hunting, the *sahib* extensively relied on natives for material support in the form of labor and rations and on their skills and knowledge of local game animals. The practice of the hunt was carefully crafted to diminish the importance of native agency in the successful hunts of the *sahib*. Extraction of native labor was a matter of asserting colonial privilege and the skill of native trackers was explained away as auxiliary of the hunt, performing the same functions as horses and hunting dogs that brought the hunter close to the prey and allowed it to be killed by the hunter. Despite the emphasis hunters placed on the entire experience of the hunt (learning to read nature –“woodcraft,” perfecting skills in tracking, showing patience and resilience) rather than the end result of the hunt, the difference with the native was only successfully manufactured during the end moments of the hunt---- the death of the quarry. Just as during pig sticking, horses carried the rider to the pig, and the rider affected the kill by spearing the pig *himself*, so too the role of native trackers was minimized at the moment of death. The agency of the colonial hunter was all-important; he inflicted direct violence, using the “right” tools. Successful memorialization of the

hunt rested on establishing the *initiative* and the *independence* of the hunter in effecting a kill.

In this work, I also explore the manner in which notions of fair play, governance, and attitudes toward particular animals influenced wildlife policies in colonial India. Manifest in policies for extermination of vermin and the preservation of game, these ideas placed carnivores in a domain of destruction, and animals categorized as game in a domain of “mercy.” In the early nineteenth century, themes of aggression, confrontation and conquest characterize accounts of hunting adventures in the Indian forests in tandem with policies of extermination. From the late nineteenth century, however, hunting adventures follow the template of sporting behavior set by the idea of fair play at a time that also saw local governments implementing policies to preserve game. Metropolitan practices (also evolving in nineteenth-century Britain) influenced game preservation in colonial India.<sup>12</sup> While the colonial state had already exercised its authority over forest and forest produce through the Forest Act of 1878, from the last decade of the nineteenth century the move towards policies specific to preserving game

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<sup>12</sup> F.M.L. Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century*, Routledge and Kegan, London, 1963; Raymond Carr, *English fox hunting : A History* ( London : Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976); James Hawker and Garth Christian, *A Victorian poacher; James Hawker's journal* (London: New York: Oxford University Press 1962); P. B Munsche, “*The Gamekeeper and the English Rural Society 1600-1830.*” *Journal of British Studies* 20(2) ( 1981): 82-105 ; P.B Munsche, *Gentlemen and poachers : the English Game Laws, 1671-1831* (New York : Cambridge University Press, 1981)

gained momentum. From the 1890s, the state extended its claim over “game” animals not only within protected forests but also outside them. This categorization was to shape different relationships between hunters and Indian wildlife. While in theory, hunting “game” was a right available to all Britons, license fees and hunting permits ensured that hunting was to become a prerogative of the elite among them. If preservation regimes were largely derived from metropolitan experiences, conservation, translated into formation of sanctuaries and national parks, owed its popularity to the colonial encounter. It is interesting to note that more than wildlife at home, the exotic wildlife in the colonies encouraged the metropolitan urge towards conserving all species. From the 1920s, hunters, ecologists and naturalists were among the enthusiasts who flocked to associations like the Society for Protection of Fauna in the Empire that took upon themselves to conserve fauna in the colonies by exerting influence on the Colonial Office and through sister associations in the subcontinent. Conservation in the subcontinent is a good example of the systematic and sustained exchanges between the colony and the metropole, and of the influences they exerted on each other. The metropolitan influence on conservation in the colony came at a time when, British officers in India felt besieged by growing nationalist protests, and by increasing numbers of natives in colonial administration. The impetus to conserve wildlife in dedicated areas meant for their protection reveals a desire to protect in perpetuity the self-image of themselves as

intrepid frontier men that the British had cultivated early in their rule in India. At the same time, British opinion considered protection of wildlife as another part of imperial identity and imperial duty. Reserves and national parks did not allow animals to remain “free,” but manipulated the colonial landscape in a way that restricted them to fragmented and isolated habitats. With the creation of such areas, the colonial state was not only able to assert its right to rule native populations and forests, but in confining wild animals to a few fragmented protected areas, extended its control over India’s wild animals as well.

## Existing Scholarship on Hunting

Most of the existing work on British hunting and wildlife focuses on Africa. John Mackenzie, William Storey, Jane Carruthers, E. I. Steinhart, Jacob Tropp and William Beinart are among the historians whose work sheds important light on the world of hunters, policy makers, colonial culture and the impact of the colonial state on indigenous wildlife and resident populations.<sup>13</sup> I am particularly interested in John

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<sup>13</sup> Studies on Africa have also explored the impact of colonialism and colonial hunting on the daily life, livelihoods, nutrition and culture of natives. See William Beinart, “Empire, Hunting and Ecological Change in Southern and Central Africa,” *Past and Present*, No. 128 (Aug., 1990):162-186; Jacob Tropp, “Dogs, Poison and the Meaning of Colonial Intervention in the Transkei, South Africa” *The Journal of African History*, Volume 43, No. 3 (2002): 451-472; Edward I. Steinhart, “Elephant Hunting in 19th-Century Kenya: Kamba Society and Ecology in Transformation” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Volume 33, No. 2 (2000): 335- 349.



Mackenzie and in William Storey's discussions of the cultural importance of the colonial hunt for colonial society and in the exercise of power over natives in Africa and in north India. William Storey, for example, has drawn our attention to how British expatriate culture used hunting to enable social advancement.<sup>14</sup> He argues that the cultural importance of hunting lay in the upward mobility that the acquisition of sporting lands provided to expatriates in Kenya. John Mackenzie's *Empire of Nature* continues to remain the most authoritative work on the question of colonial power and its interactions with wildlife.<sup>15</sup> Mackenzie argues that the changing forms of hunting reflected the evolution and consolidation of imperial rule in Africa during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He suggests:

In an era of conquest and settlement, animals sometimes constituted a vital subsidy to an often precarious imperial enterprise, while in the high noon of empire hunting became a ritualized and occasional display of white dominance.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> William K. Storey, "Big Cats and Imperialism: Lion and Tiger Hunting In Kenya and Northern India, 1898-1930." *Journal of World History* 2 (2) (1991): 135-173.

<sup>15</sup> John M Mackenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, conservation and British Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

<sup>16</sup> John M Mackenzie, *The Empire of Nature*, 24.

The hunt as a highly ritualized and exclusive activity pursued as sport by the colonial elite became a sign of their dominance in Africa and India. Dominance was manifested by a stringent system of licenses and rules that prohibited native forms of hunting and meted out harsh punishments to those caught violating the rules.

The scholarly work on British hunting in India is mostly available in essays and occasional chapters in works that primarily focus on Africa.<sup>17</sup> In M.S.S. Pandian's study of the Nilgiris, hunting is treated as an exercise through which unequal gender relations were extended to varied areas of social life and defined power relations in colonial India.<sup>18</sup> This discourse contrasted the "manly" Briton with the "effeminate" native and enabled the appropriation of the former as colonial identity. J. A. Mangan and Callum Mackenzie talk about the importance of militarization in the hunting practice known as

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<sup>17</sup> John Mackenzie, for example has a chapter on Indian hunting in his book, *The Empire of Nature*.

<sup>18</sup> M.S.S. Pandian, "Hunting and Colonialism in the Nineteenth century in the Nilgiri Hills in South India" in *Nature and the Orient: Essays on the Environmental History of South and Southeast Asia* ed. Richard Grove, Vinita Damodran and Satpal Sangawan, (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1998). Also see his revised essay "Gendered Negotiations: Hunting and Colonialism in the late C19<sup>th</sup> Century Nilgiris" in Patricia Uberoi ed. *Social Reform, Sexuality, and the State* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1996), 239-264.

“pig-sticking,” unique to the Indian subcontinent.<sup>19</sup> According to them, pig sticking was crucial to British efforts to regain their martial image after the revolt of 1857.<sup>20</sup>

These studies, which have been critical to my own understanding of the colonial hunt in India, however, also throw up further questions that need to be addressed.

Pandian’s work on colonial discourse, for example, reveals that the boundaries between the self and the other were often rendered fuzzy due to the challenges from the native and the British community alike. I am not persuaded, however, by the gendered binary on which his works turns. Given the complexities of the social interactions within the colonial world, it is possible that the challenges that blurred boundaries may have had their origins in larger and perhaps more ambiguous notions of power and a more varied image of the “self” and the “other” than suggested by Pandian. Challenges from

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<sup>19</sup> J A Mangan and Callum McKenzie, "Pig-Sticking Is the Greatest Fun: Martial Conditioning on the Hunting Fields of Empire," *European Sports History Review*, 5 (2003). Publisher: Cass.

<sup>20</sup> Pig sticking was particularly effective in conjuring a theatre of war: Britons riding hard over great distances, spear in hand, chasing after a pig and working together towards a common goal—the spearing of the pig. It was a masculine and bloody affair and pig stickers claimed only the fittest men and accomplished horse riders could hope to become good pig stickers. As a form of sport, pig-sticking was most commonly found in cantonment areas and despite many pig sticking clubs of the twentieth century which were patronized by civilians, it remained to be associated with and popular among military men. Polo gave a close competition to pig sticking, particularly because of its popularity with the British elite and Indian princes, but in absence of a kill, it was considered a tamer sport.

within the British community, for example, could arise from conflicts internal to class and race hierarchies that had little to do with gender. I am also not sure if all the natives were always the gendered “other” in an identical manner. I do not doubt that gendered notions of “self” and “other” influenced hunting. However, there are some key questions to which we must attend: First, we must recognize the ambiguities that characterized the notions of “self and “other”; second, we must place ideas like “gendering” in actual social relations; and third, we must inquire as to what extent gendered notions were translated into specific hunting practices. We know from studies on colonial society, there were many “selves” that were based on class and status. As discussions in Chapters Two and Four will reveal, civilian administrators often regarded British soldiers as “others” while recognizing that they were necessary and intrinsic part of the British Empire. Similarly, while many native trackers or *shikaris* were described as craven and effeminate, they could also be described as hyper masculine and bestial. As in the description of the native *shikaris* Kamah and Bhurmah in Campbell’s *Old Forest Ranger* discussed in Chapter Four, the idea of the independent and noble savage often placed the *shikari* much closer to the manly white hunter than a purely gendered understanding of native- colonial relations would have us allow. Storey’s emphasis on colonial culture also needs more work. One is left wondering about the political and cultural contexts within which hunting and acquisition of sporting lands became

important. Moreover, Storey makes a mistake in assuming that the British social structure in India and Kenya were similar. India never saw the kind of settler population that is central to Storey's argument. Therefore, while acquisition of sporting lands was a crucial in ensuring upward mobility in Kenya, this was not so in the subcontinent. In the subcontinent, entrenched notions based on status, honor and privilege played an important role in social advancement in the small world of the colonial elite. The changing cultural and political milieu determined the avenues for social advancement within the colonizing elite. The sharpening of racial difference as one not just based on physical superiority but also *moral* superiority, also defined the parameters of desired behavior within colonial society. This change, I argue, resulted in greater moral policing in the colonial society to ensure perpetuation of the idea of the *sahib*. From the late nineteenth century, official privilege regulated access to game, and social tensions around the question of access to game were common. A subaltern officer, however, could earn prestige among compatriots by hunting like a *sahib*. Honor and status was a matter of adhering to expected patterns of behavior that reflected the capacity to rule Indian masses. The space for social advancement was defined along this template.

While Mangan and Callum Mackenzie's emphasis on militarization might be a handy theme to understand certain hunting practices, the emphasis on regaining martial identity remains underexplored in their work. They do not explain where the martial

image is constructed and for whom. How did this martial image change after 1857? On the question of pig sticking, their analysis is restricted to a discussion of its perceived utility to the military's cavalrymen. While it is true that some of the men who indulged in pig sticking were certainly military men, a large number were administrative officers often in conflict with military men. It would be useful to discuss the idea of a martial identity in a broader context, that of martial conditioning of non-military Britons, *including women* who shared the same ideological commitments to the Raj as their male counterparts.<sup>21</sup> This conditioning was particular to the imperial identity, culture and ideology in the post-1857 era when overt military action to annex regions had largely ceased

John Mackenzie's work is also fraught with critical gaps. Mackenzie's notion of ritualization by means of which colonial hunting was transformed into the "Hunt" is an important one and it is surprising to find that he does not elaborate more on it. We

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<sup>21</sup> See Mary A. Procida discussion on colonial women's affinity to firearms, "Good Sports and Right Sorts: Guns, Gender, and Imperialism in British India," *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 4, (Oct., 2001): 454-488 Colonial women were also encouraged to take part in riding and other physical sport. Violet Greville, who was particularly fond of riding in India assured young girls, they could take part in sport without losing their femininity. She notes of India, "ladies of all ages ride there, and no doubt, is so doing, preserve their health and their looks... Women who prefer exercise and liberty... who are afraid neither of a little fatigue nor of a little exertion, are the better, the truer and the healthier and can yet remain essentially feminine in their thoughts and manner," The Lady Greville, *Ladies in the Field, Sketches of Sport* (London: Ward and Downey Ltd., 1894), 4 -26.

neither know what he means by ritualization or what informs this process of ritualization; and for whose gratification this ritualization took place. His use of the word ritualization is further complicated by the description:

In this study general and utilitarian aspects will be covered by the words, "hunting," "shooting" and the "chase" while the strongly ritualized will be identified by the term "the Hunt." "Sport" can be a component throughout the hunting spectrum, through increasing emphasis upon it marks the shift from the practical to the pleasurable. Sport and ritual overlap at many points, but they also diverge according to the degree of risk involved. *Sport often seeks risk, while ritual can attempt to avoid it.*<sup>22</sup>

I read the ritualization the colonial hunt in India differently. Danger was essential to the aesthetics of the Indian colonial hunt. The appeal of hunting memoirs lay in their communicating a sense of moral and physical danger; colonial hunters gained moral validity by displaying moral and physical courage in the face of this danger. Mackenzie also fails to make a distinction between discourse and practice. As I have argued earlier and will demonstrate in this dissertation, hunting practices varied across time and space in India, but the *idea* of the colonial hunt and its importance to the ideology of dominance remained largely unquestioned by the British. It then becomes important to identify what comprised the moral framework the defined colonial

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 3. Emphasis mine.

hunting. We know from his description of the “nineteenth century hunting world” that Mackenzie is well aware of the morality of the hunt:

Hunting required all the most virile attributes of the imperial male—courage, endurance, individualism (adaptable to national ends), sportsmanship (combining the moral etiquette of the sportsman with horsemanship and marksmanship), resourcefulness, and a mastery of environmental signs and knowledge of natural history.<sup>23</sup>

However, he fails to identify the prevailing moral concerns that allowed courage and endurance shown on the hunting field to be argued as fulfilling national goals of nineteenth century Britain. After all courage and endurance have been celebrated virtues through the course of human history. What then was different about nineteenth century hunting or colonial hunting? The idea of “moral etiquette” that informed sportsmanship remains unexplored in this otherwise seminal work. In his discussion on the hunt, one only sees the brutal force of the state at work rather than its newly established conceit as a paternal benefactor. I argue that fair play was central to the idea of sportsmanship in late nineteenth India and that the language of fair play enabled the transformation of British hunting practices into the aesthetic colonial hunt.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 50-51.



Indeed, in this dissertation, I propose that while brutality does go hand in hand with the language of dominance, fair play signified a new kind of dominance; domination that was legitimated as necessary in fulfilling the British *sahib's* role as a paternal figure. The notion of clemency was an important element of fair play. According to Jim Corbett, a "part of growing up for instance was learning how to use a catapult and putting it away in the closed season for at that time the birds were nesting and it was cruel to kill them while they were sitting on their eggs."<sup>24</sup> Mackenzie fails to appreciate that the notion of clemency was critical to the idea of sportsmanship in the same way that paternalism was central to colonial governance and domination. Hunting and colonial wildlife policies were therefore central to claims of a firm and just colonial state dedicated to the welfare of the people it governed.

Mackenzie ultimately assumes that the cultural meanings of the colonial hunt were simply imported from Victorian Britain into British India. He also assumes that the meanings of the hunt did not vary from colony to colony. While Mackenzie's work has helped me be attentive to metropolitan influences on British hunters, native influences were equally important in lending symbolic meaning to colonial hunting. The colonial encounter in India produced its own language of sportsmanship, hunting

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<sup>24</sup> Jim Corbett, *Jungle Lore* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1953), 21.

and dominance. For instance, the neat metropolitan classification between “vermin” and “game” became increasingly difficult to maintain in the subcontinent. While the British in India followed the British practice of designating herbivores as “game” animals, it was the “vermin” tiger, that caught British imagination. While hunting deer marked the aristocratic privilege in Britain, hunting tigers was a sign of ruler’s privilege in the subcontinent.

Scholarly work on the charting of a wildlife policy in colonial India is also scarce. Mahesh Rangarajan’s brief discussion on wildlife in *Fencing the Forest* reveals the co-existence of a variety of conflicting strategies in the management of fauna.<sup>25</sup> Rangarajan traces the development of the notion of sport as a conscious strategy of the colonial power to establish a distinct identity vis-à-vis the natives, a theme discussed by Pandian and Mackenzie as well. Rangarajan however also points out that hunting, coupled with a growing preservationist agenda in the later years, led to conflicts on the question of limited access to game. He is also concerned with the impact of these policies on wildlife

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<sup>25</sup> Mahesh Rangarajan, *Fencing the Forest: Conservation and Ecological Change in India’s Central Provinces, 1860-1914* (Delhi : Oxford University Press, 1996). Mention must be made here of the important work done on the history of India’s elephants by R. Sukumar and by Divyabhanusinh on the story of the Indian cheetah and the Asiatic lion. These important works however are not concerned with broader historical debates on the state or culture. R Sukumar, *The Asian Elephant: Ecology and Management* (Cambridge ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 1989); Divyabhanusinh, *The End of a Trail : the Cheetah in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002); and *The Story of Asia’s Lions* (Mumbai : Marg Publications , 2005).

and resident communities. According to him, native populations dependent on hunting were either forced to change their livelihood patterns or entered into the profitable trade in animal products. He also contends that in terms of loss of animal populations, the colonial period marked a watershed and the decrease of the mammalian carnivore population was an important feature of British rule in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The only prominent scholarly attempt so far to understand the impact of colonial wildlife policies on native populations and wildlife, this work offers valuable insight into the lives of resident communities. Rangarajan, however, pays little attention to cultural contexts that produced the conflicts among colonial administrators. He also fails to recognize that these conflicts often went far beyond the administrators and included competing interests of those Britons who were outside the official hierarchy. Rangarajan however does not discuss those native hunters, the *shikaris*, who served as trackers for British hunters. Who were these *shikaris*? And what happened to this community once game laws denied them the right to kill any protected species for the purposes of trade? I argue that the availability of the native tracker depended on the colonial state's ability to close all other avenues for native *shikaris* to exercise their skills. In places like the Nilgiris, where trade in wildlife was made illegal by 1870s, native *shikaris* had little choice but to serve as auxiliaries in the imperial hunting adventure.

K. Sivaramakrishnan's *Modern Forests* is of particular interest to me. He describes forests as "zones of anomaly" which the British set out to reduce to surveyed and protected areas of knowledge as part of their great information-gathering project. In attempting to do this, they aimed to extend their processes of "statemaking" into those regions that might have been most resistant. Rather than just viewing the forests as economic entities to be exploited, Sivaramakrishnan asserts that they were at the same time disorderly places that seemed to resist neat administrative practice, and also immensely attractive romantic environments, "untouched" by humans, where the British could pursue their great obsession with hunting. He sets out to explore what he calls "statemaking," which he defines as the formation, modification and maintenance of multiple regimes of governments, by focussing on the emergence of modern forest management in Bengal. He reveals the ways in which these theoretical constructs are made real in social life through spacemaking and statemaking. State and society, therefore, are not conceived as a given; the distinction between the two is achieved in the process of statemaking. He argues that, "if we think of the central state as the master magician, forests were the place where this prestidigitator par excellence put on the greatest show."<sup>26</sup> He views the hunting of wild animals as part of the broader agenda of

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<sup>26</sup> K. Sivaramakrishnan, *Modern Forests: Statemaking and Environmental Change in Colonial Eastern India* (Stanford University Press, 2000), 274.

management of landscape and reclaiming areas for arable use, which formed one of the strands in the complex and multi-layered process of statemaking.

It is in this broader idea of “making of the state” and making of the relations between the coloniser and the colonised where I locate my work on hunting and colonial wildlife policy. I take this argument further in also suggesting that memorialization of hunting validated the myth of the omniscient British presence in the countryside.

My discussion on hunting encounters in the countryside also reveals that while hunting was indeed an important part of display of colonial power that contributed to the colonial discourse on governance, it can also suggest some of the ways in which natives perceived colonial hunting and their responses based on this understanding. I argue that native villagers did not perceive all Britons hunting alike or viewed the colonial state as one entity. They differentiated between the various arms of the state and identified Britons who had the power to impact their lives. Villagers seemed to be more willing to provide information and support to resident officers, especially those with power, than to those passing through on hunting expeditions, like British soldiers. Villagers and native trackers resorted to “everyday forms of protest” like non-cooperation, delaying and withholding information or misinformation, in opposition to

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the demands made by colonial hunters.<sup>27</sup> Villagers in these instances, understood the power that information on game afforded and held out for better returns from those whose official powers would benefit (or adversely affect) them most.

In the nineteenth century, violent clashes in the countryside were common due to demands made on villagers for labor and rations, or the accidental shooting of natives and the killing of animals held sacred. Civilian officers resident in the districts recognized that native cooperation was essential to the success of the hunt, and learned to respect local beliefs and avoid seemingly arbitrary demands for labor. The itinerant hunter, particularly soldiers, on the other hand viewed themselves and the villagers differently. Their continued expectation of native compliance with their demands resulted in rural conflicts until the close of British rule in India.

## **Relation to Broader Historiography**

### **Understanding Colonial Power**

This study contributes to deepening our understanding of the nature of the colonial state at the so-called zenith of its presence in India. Historians such as Radhika

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<sup>27</sup> James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak : Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

Singha have pointed out that the Company state, in the early eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century, was tentative, prone to retreats and accommodations in imperial policy and practice when pressured by different sections (mostly the privileged sections) of the colonized.<sup>28</sup> This space of negotiation, as Thomas Metcalf points out, in his influential *Ideologies of the Raj*, was to change after the revolt of 1857 when the British began to see Indian society in more racialized terms.<sup>29</sup> This notion of “colonial difference,” as Partha Chatterjee has famously called it in his *Nation and its Fragments*, was to influence all aspects of British interaction with Indians.<sup>30</sup> Recent work has claimed that this period, in fact, has been formative for the “creation” of the categories of Indian “culture.”

In recent decades, the idea that colonial policies emanated from categories of “knowing” has become increasingly commonsensical, particularly with the publication in 1978 of Edward Said’s path-breaking work *Orientalism*. South Asian historiography

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<sup>28</sup> Radhika Singha, *A Despotism of Law: Crime and Justice in Early Colonial India*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000)

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997)

<sup>30</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, (Princeton University Press, 1993). See also Bernard. S. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996).

has been deeply influenced by this work and as a result, there have been particular fruitful results of this line of questioning. Nicholas Dirks, for example, in his *Castes of Mind* develops the idea of caste as central to British understanding, categorization and re-structuring of Indian society. The success of the British enterprise was to be able to assert pre-colonial authority as a specifically colonial form of power and representation. Dirks also effectively shows that, though unstable in the initial period, “colonial knowledge” was used effectively to produce highly racialized discourses in the decades following the uprising of 1857. The number of studies focusing on the colonial production of knowledge in India has greatly proliferated in the last decade. Gloria Raheja’s study on the compilation of Punjabi proverbs shows how handy these were in creating an “administratively useful illusion on Punjabi peasant capitulation to “invariant” custom and colonial rule.”<sup>31</sup> Legitimizing colonial rule as one based on Indian tradition, was particularly useful during the violent suppression of the Meo rebellion which was justified by turning to local proverbs that “proved” that the Meos were a “turbulent” race and that even other natives dealt with them harshly. In turn, Rosane Rocher’s essay “British Orientalism in the Eighteenth Century: The Dialectics of

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<sup>31</sup> Gloria Goodwin Raheja, “The Illusion of Consent” in *Colonial Subjects Essays on the Practical History of Anthropology*, ed. Peter Pels and Oscar Salemink (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 118.



Knowledge and Government," points to the dispersed and disaggregated face of British presence in India that allowed for a variety of interactions between the British and Indians as well amongst themselves. Her essay explores the influence of "the dialectical relationship" between policy issues at home and in the colonies in contributing to the development of knowledge about the subcontinent.<sup>32</sup>

Christopher Bayly's intervention in this debate on knowledge making on India has drawn attention to the importance of received knowledge in the making of empire.<sup>33</sup> According to him, scholarly investigation of colonial discourse must also pay attention to Indian agency. He argues that the British relied heavily upon the prevalent native techniques of information gathering and while the colonial desire might have been to control through knowledge, the changing social, economic and political contexts produced knowledge about India. Bayly's arguments are important to understand the changing contexts of knowledge on India and the different channels along with information was sought and knowledge gained. However, it must also be borne in

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<sup>32</sup> Rosane Rocher "British Orientalism in the Eighteenth Century: The Dialectics of Knowledge and Government in *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament*, ed. Carol Breckenridge & Peter van der Veer (Philadelphia:University of Pennsylvania Press,1993) 215-250.

<sup>33</sup> C A Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870*, (Cambridge ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 1996).

mind when reading colonial literature that the colonialists also justified their *views* as *knowledge* based on information provided by natives.

Memorialization of the hunt was keenly tuned into the process of knowledge making on India. Hunting memoirs were influenced by and shaped the pseudo-scientific racial discourse on innate qualities of so-called Orientals. The hunters' claims that they were truthfully reporting from the "the field," endowed their writings with a sense of "empiricism" popular in Victorian period. Hunting memoirs therefore also reveal the processes by which such categories of Indian culture were made. The prominent themes of colonial writing---Asiatic despots, dependant natives, the "real India," the native's incapability to help himself, "eastern fatalism," the exotic yet dangerous Indian jungles— are common in memorialization of the hunt in such narratives. These narratives legitimated the need of benevolent British intervention in India. Equally important, the act of asserting superiority was legitimized on the basis that this assertion was expected of the *sahib*.

### **Colonial Bureaucracy**

The period after the Great Revolt becomes particularly interesting because it marks the end of the ideological reign of liberals like Macaulay and Mill in thinking about reform and progress in India. These "liberal" men had swept away the idea,

propounded by earlier administrators like Hastings, that India needed to be ruled through its own institutions and laws, and instead claimed that (European) law, education and free trade were key to the so-called “civilizing mission.” The “civilizing mission” came under pressure after 1857, with the Crown’s conviction that the revolt was a result of the state’s interference with religious and social practices of the people. Influential jurists like Henry Maine rearticulated the idea of upholding of local customs. However, as historian Neeladri Bhattacharya has pointed out, these assumptions were still invariably patriarchal and hierarchical. Bhattacharya’s study points to changing political contexts where the notion of custom and tolerance towards the native became most important in rhetoric of governance. The point is not that the British indeed ruled India through custom, but that in professing to be doing so, they were seeking to articulate an ideology that stressed paternalism and clemency.<sup>34</sup> This is an important argument that I use in developing my analysis of how the notion of “fair play” comes to define hunting in the colonial context. While John Mackenzie has attempted to discuss the connection between hunting and imperial ideology, he fails to recognize the importance of the notion of fair play (clemency to young and females) or paternalism

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<sup>34</sup> Neeladri Bhattacharya, “Remaking Custom: the Discourse and Practice of Colonial Codification” in *Tradition, Dissent and Ideology: Essays in Honour of Romila Thapar* ed. R. Champakalakshmi and S. Gopal (Delhi: OUP India, 2000)

(protecting the native against wild animals) in articulating a ideology of dominance. As I show over the course of this work, this was ideology that sought to ground itself on notions of paternalism, tolerance and clemency whose elements are most visible in the domain of colonial hunting.

The change in ideology of course was also reflected in the change of personnel responsible for colonial administration. Until the 1750s or so, the Company's servants were predominantly merchants and traders who came to India in search of a fortune. But as the Company came to concern itself with government from the 1760s, merchants gave way to diplomats, administrators and judges.<sup>35</sup> The introduction of the coveted covenant service from 1793 also meant that those nominated to the high level of administrative service had to abandon notions of individual private profit. This formal change from a trading Company to one exercising territorial rule as well was important in the evolution of self identity of Englishmen serving in India, and was to provide the template for the image of the *pukka sahib* that touched its zenith in the decades following the revolt of 1857. The assumption of power by the British crown in 1858 and the proclamation of Victoria as the "Empress of India" in 1876 was another factor that was

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<sup>35</sup> Philip J. Stern has recently challenged the view that the EIC was merely a commercial body before the 1750s and has argued that the EIC's actions and ambitions reveal that it was already a state-in-the-making before the Battle of Plassey and subsequent acquisition of territories. Philip J. Stern, "A Politie of Civill & Military Power": Political Thought and the Late Seventeenth-Century Foundations of the East India Company-State," *Journal of British Studies* 47 (April 2008): 253–283.

to shape the worldview of the British officer in India. The attempt to elevate the monarchy after the 1870s into the great unifying force of a global empire has been discussed by many historians. Chandrika Kaul, for instance, has highlighted the importance of royal tours in British attempts to forge a connection between the Indian populations and their English sovereigns.<sup>36</sup> David Cannadine, coining the term “Ornamentalism” to suggest a range of symbolic activities, suggests that “chivalry and ceremony, monarchy and majesty” were the means by which empire was brought together. He goes further to argue that “British officialdom generally” was committed to conservative ideals of cherishing tradition and hierarchy throughout the empire.<sup>37</sup> Other studies on the Indian Civil Service (henceforward, ICS) confirm that during the high noon of empire, its members (who were generally drawn from genteel rural or semi-rural backgrounds), were particularly keen to be seen upholding *British* traditions. A “philosopher sportsman” contributing to the *Indian Sporting Review* in 1850, summed it up neatly:

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<sup>36</sup> Chandrika Kaul, “Monarchical Display and the Politics of Empire: Princes of Wales and India 1870–1920s,” *Twentieth Century British History*, 17, no. 4 (2006): 464–488.

<sup>37</sup> David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism : How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 148.

A sportsman is a noble character, the glory are blessing of his country...their manly exercise, their freedom of thought, their exemption from carping cares and gloomy thinking, and their breathing fresh air on hills, vallies, plains, woods and grove, purify their bodies and minds.. As their offspring partake of those effects, they grow up able men, proper for the defence of their country by sea or land... the sportsman may be viewed not only as the improver of his species, but the preserver and supporter of the English character, honesty, sincerity and hardiness and of good old English hospitality.<sup>38</sup>

In fact, even early in the nineteenth century, contributors to sporting journals were at pains to stress that hunting was a distinctly “English” or “British” habit.<sup>39</sup>

Describing his hunting experiences with the Calcutta Tent Club in the 1830s, Harry Shaftoe was careful to remark that “this description of sport can scarcely be called Indian. We have imported it from the “island of the West,” with others of our English feelings and habits.”<sup>40</sup> This desire to uphold British tradition is important to understanding the importance of colonial hunting in colonial society in the late

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<sup>38</sup> “Philosophical Sportsman” *Indian Sporting Review*- Volume XI (January –June 1850): 250.

<sup>39</sup> The difference between “British” and “English” of course is significant given the historiography on formation of British identity. Colonialists themselves however, do not make this distinction themselves and use “English” and “British” interchangeably. As a future course of study, I will examine if there was a change in the way colonial hunters used these words over nineteenth and twentieth century.

<sup>40</sup> To the editor of *Helter Skelter Magazine* by Harry Shaftoe., reprinted in the *Bengal Sporting Magazine*, Volume 1,14, (1845)

nineteenth century. The metropole received it as evidence of the resilience of British men and British traditions in far flung corners of the empire. And as my discussion in Chapter Two reveal, colonialists invoked British traditions in an attempt to bridge class differences by advertising their aristocratic habits.

This racialized discourse was further fuelled by the opening of the civil services to Indians, and the Ilbert Bill controversy that ensued in the last decades of the nineteenth century. While the threat that the Briton might be judged by a native judge was successfully thwarted by the British, the success of western education enabled Indians of a certain class to continue to successfully compete with the British. And while this number was low, due to the small number of British officers in India the threat of the English-speaking “babu” became larger than life.<sup>41</sup>

Kenneth Ballhatchet points out that as opportunities to claim power on grounds of superior knowledge or intellect shrunk, the British officer turned to arguments of racial superiority and a right to rule because of the possession of inherent “masterful

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<sup>41</sup> Zareer Masani has estimated the total population of British at its peak at 100,000 at the turn of the century and declined till 1947. Native population at the same time exceeded 300 million. Zareer Masani, *Indian Tales of the Raj* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1988), 7.

qualities."<sup>42</sup> Graham Dawson has also suggested that generations of British schoolboys inculcated a sense of imperial culture, defined by the writers like Kipling, as an ideal of imperial identity: firmness of character, strength of will, fortitude, a sense of duty and a self-restraint grounded on racial superiority.<sup>43</sup> This was the plank on which moral differences between the races was increasingly constructed from the 1860s onward.

### **The Sporting Man and the Imperial Ethos**

Since a significant part of this study involves the men serving in various branches of the colonial bureaucracy, understanding how they were acculturated in the imperial ethos can provide a good entry point to understanding their behavior in the subcontinent. Clive Dewey discusses how the ICS examinations were manipulated in favor of public school men that perpetuated the idea of "gentlemanliness." Weightage for classics and mathematics were increased while science and modern languages were introduced; and oral exams and the riding tests were made compulsory.<sup>44</sup> Among the people headed to India in the mid-nineteenth century, a large majority who would serve

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<sup>42</sup> Kenneth Balhatchett, *Race, Sex and Class under the British Raj* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1980).

<sup>43</sup> Graham Dawson *Soldier Heroes: British adventure, Empire and the imagining of Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>44</sup> Clive Dewey, *Indian Civil Service* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 215.



as administrators and military men had been educated in public schools; some of them were younger sons of the “gentlemanly class” or were from higher middle class who aspired to the gentlemanly ideal. According to J. A. Mangan, not only were public schools the primary site for developing the sporting ethos in Britain, but the origins of the current “global sporting revolution” lie in the transformations in the English schools in the Victorian period. Mangan emphasizes the importance of schools and training colleges for the transmission of athleticism which he characterizes as an ideology that gave coherence to the relationship between the playing field and the battlefield, masculinity, militarism and imperialism.<sup>45</sup> In turn, Brian Stoddart has argued that sport and games served as means for reinforcing British culture abroad: “The perceived power of British imperialism lay outside simple bureaucratic and military force.”<sup>46</sup> According to him, “cultural power” was realized by imposing British ideals and sports and games on natives. The emphasis placed by Callum Mackenzie and Mangan on militarization in their discussion of pig sticking perhaps makes better sense in this broader context. In his

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<sup>45</sup> J. A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian public school : the Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology* (Cambridge: University Press, 1981) and *The Cultural Bond : Sport, Empire, Society* ( London : F. Cass, 1992.)

<sup>46</sup> Brian Stoddart, ‘sport, Cultural Imperialism, and Colonial Response in the British Empire,’ *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Volume 30, No. 4 (Oct., 1988): 650.

study of British sport, John Lowerson has emphasized the role of print culture that the values of athleticism and sportsmanship and fair play were constructed for “a constituency whose creation has been well charted... the burgeoning schools and colleges of the late Victorian middle classes. More importantly, they were also diffused among a metropolitan and imperial clientele which embraced schools, colleges and clubs.”<sup>47</sup> Militarization and athleticism, however, were tempered with the idea of fair play. In an essay on the emergence of the notion of fair play, Jeffrey Richards points out that “ became the motto of a nation whose ideology and religious faith were subsumed under Imperialism, with its belief in the British as the elect who had a God-given duty to govern and civilize the world. In the wake of imperialism the public schools in particular their game fields became “mints for turning out Empire-builders.”<sup>48</sup> According to Mangan and Richards, “” was transformed from a utilitarian instrument of private control into a moralistic public virtue largely peculiar to the upper- and middle-class English schoolboy. And as Britain’s imperial success grew, came to be seen as an

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<sup>47</sup> John Lowerson, *Sport and the English Middle Classes* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 70-73.

<sup>48</sup> Jeffrey Richards, “Passing the Love of Women: Manly love and Victorian Society” in *Manliness and Morality: Middle-class masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940*, ed J.A.Mangan and James Walvin (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987), 104

exclusive British property as well as a moral source for imperial success. While the idea of cultural power is important to understand how the empire shaped British notions of self in the metropole, it is also instructive in understanding race relations in India and how the question of race undermined metropole confidence of its cultural power.

From the early years of the nineteenth century, the British in India had attempted to portray the native male as effete and “unmanly.” By the end of nineteenth century, this criticism was directed almost exclusively at the English-educated Bengali middle class male in the widely-caricatured figure of “the babu.”<sup>49</sup> Indeed, many among the British saw it as part of their imperial duty to help Indians to “improve” themselves and deliberately set about encouraging Bengalis, men in particular, to engage in games.<sup>50</sup> Sports historian Boria Majumdar has argued that Bengalis embraced colonial sports as a means to challenge colonial cultural hegemony:

The realization that the cultivation of masculine strength by participating in indigenous sports such as wrestling and bodybuilding were not enough prompted the shift to cricket and football. The futility of the physical culture movement, in evidence during the age of consent

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<sup>49</sup> Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The “Manly Englishman” and the “Effeminate Bengali”* (Kali for Women, 1997).

<sup>50</sup> Paul Dimeo, “Football and Politics in Bengal: Colonialism, Nationalism, Communalism.” *Soccer and Society* 2 (2001), 62

controversy, in establishing the Bengali's physical strength vis-à-vis the British had made it imperative for the educated Bengali middle classes to practice manly colonial sports such as cricket, football and tennis.<sup>51</sup>

In 1911, the Bengali football club Mohun Bagan defeated the more experienced British club, East York, in the Indian Football Association final played that year. Patrick McDevitt has noted that the open physical competition in the early years of the twentieth century between men of different nations undermined the status quo of gender, race, class and metropole-colony relations as frequently as it reinforced it.<sup>52</sup> While the British press hailed the Mohun Bagan victory as a sign of the success of the imperial civilizing mission, vernacular reports in India clearly looked upon it as a triumph of Bengali and Indian nationalism. Bengalis and Indians had beaten the British at their "own" game. Native successful participation in sports like cricket reduced the canvas that sport had provided for asserting cultural superiority.

Hunting however, remained one sport which the British could still call their own. During the Ilbert Bill controversy of the 1880s and 1890s, colonialists had argued that the

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<sup>51</sup> Boria Majumdar, "Imperial Tool "for" Nationalist Resistance: The Games Ethic in Indian History" in *Sport in South Asian Society: Past and Present*, ed. Boria Majumdar, and J. A. Mangan, (New York: Routledge, 2005), 53.

<sup>52</sup> Patrick F McDevitt, *May the Best Man Win : Sport, Masculinity, and Nationalism in Great Britain and the Empire, 1880-1935* (New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

Bengali's disinterest in hunting was proof of the native's lack of ability to stand in judgment over Europeans in a courtroom. With natives taking to playing games like cricket and football in the opening years of the twentieth century, hunting still seemed to remain the sole prerogative of the British *sahib*. While native princes enthusiastically hunted and were often part of joint expeditions with Britons, the "babu" failed to take to the hunt.<sup>53</sup> The "native indifference" to hunting, therefore, remained critical to the idea of racial difference and marked the difference between British *sahibs* and the proliferating numbers of native civil servants. The urgency expressed by colonial administrators and metropolitan enthusiasts to create sanctuaries to protect wildlife was an extension of this racial prejudice, as I argue in Chapter Five. British officers claimed that the Indian in the officialdom was entirely indifferent to the question of wildlife and it was up to the British to make provisions for the protection of wildlife.

The literature on sport also reveals another debate useful for my project. The idea of "social control" continues to exercise a strong influence on the scholarly

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<sup>53</sup> I do not suggest that Indians in colonial administration did not hunt at all, but that hunting was not a prominent preoccupation for them as it was for white administrators. The native officials who might have hunted did not memorialize their experiences.

discussion on Victorian sport.<sup>54</sup> Historians like Richard Holt and Neil Tranter have opened the idea of “social control” to deeper questioning. They employ ideas of negotiation and contestation in their analysis of cultural relations of sport. According to them, sport was an arena of social and cultural struggle, where sporting practices and experiences are made and re-made.<sup>55</sup> Neil Tranter in fact argues that this contestation also involved “subordinate” and subaltern groups who sought to “re-define” sport according to popular visions, practices and traditions.<sup>56</sup> It is a little difficult to place hunting within the purview of discussions about popular forms of sport. Hunting was an exclusive activity in Britain, and subaltern groups there had little chance to participate in it. In the subcontinent, however, all Britons regardless of class difference could hunt- even in the age of game preservation. Hunting therefore can be brought to this wider discussion on sport as a site for social and cultural contestation. As my

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<sup>54</sup> Sports historians have argued that the development of Victorian sport was an attempt by the elite to maintain social harmony at a time of great changes in British society and culture. Sport was seen as unifying activity, a means to channel excess energy and obviate class distinctions by enabling greater participation of the masses as spectators.

<sup>55</sup> See for example, Richard Holt, *Sport and the British: A Modern History* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 1989).

<sup>56</sup> Neil Tranter, *Sport, Economy and Society in Britain, 1750 -1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Also See Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978).

discussion on the Calcutta Tent Club in Chapter Two reveals, hunting was often the domain in which social mobility was negotiated. The club's members challenged prevalent notions of fair play to justify their actions on the field. At other times, they manipulated notions of fair play in disagreements on club rules and regulations. Depending on their wealth and privilege, hunters engaged in passionate debates on correct etiquettes, forms and modes of the hunt. Hunting as a sport for the colonialists, therefore can be taken as an activity that lends itself to the kind of questions raised by Tranter.

### **Colonial Identity and Colonial Society**

The creation of a hunting elite and the desire to subscribe to an unwritten notion of sportsmanship was also important in the larger context of maintaining and or transcending social distances within the British community in India. In her work on families of the expatriate British community in India, Elizabeth Buettner discusses how sending young children to be educated at "home" served to maintain a distinct imperial identity.<sup>57</sup> She asserts:

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<sup>57</sup> Elizabeth. Buettner *Empire Familie : Britons and Late Imperial India*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

Ancestry and physical appearance were never enough to connote whiteness: in the context of late imperial India, this was constructed along gendered line and as much by culture, education, class, occupation, and geography as by biology. Whiteness in India reflected empowered status...<sup>58</sup>

This attention to notions of class and status is important to understand the culture of the colonial hunt. The creation of an imperial identity was not only an assertion of a difference between the colonizer and the colonized, but also a way of fashioning of cultural criteria that upheld some members of the colonizing elite as true custodians of imperial worth, “a class and race apart” from other Britons.<sup>59</sup> Given the importance of class, race and rank within the expatriate community, that Buettner’s work reveals, it is surprising to see the absence of a discussion on the fluidity of class and rank within the colonizers. It also seems that schooling at home was the only touchstone of an imperial class, and that it was accepted by all. How did the “country born” receive this discourse? What other criterion did they use in absence of the facility to go “home” in their formative years? These questions are particularly important to raise in the context of the development of the “cult” of big hunters like Jim Corbett about

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<sup>58</sup> Buettner, 10

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 109.



whom I write in Chapters Three and Four. His fame as a destroyer of man-eaters during the 1920s and 1930s, earned him number of awards like the *Kaiser-I-Hind* Gold Medal, the Order of the British Empire, and the Star of India. This is one example where we see how personal prestige built around hunting was used to negotiate with official and social hierarchy of British India.

Mrinalini Sinha has used the idea of “clubbability” and the concept of “colonial public sphere” to highlight the role of British associations in defining the criterion of imperial identity and shaping Imperial culture in India.<sup>60</sup> According to her, “the model concept of clubbability was always the “manly independent individual” whose social identity was defined in relation to the dependent and the subjected; women, children, servants, employees, slaves and the colonized.”<sup>61</sup> Hunting was particularly suited to showcasing a particular model of colonial masculinity based on a display of firmness of character, strength of will, fortitude, a sense of duty and self, and was one of the factors that rendered those inhabiting the colonial cultural world “clubbable” and distinguished all those who hunted from real sportsmen. These clubs with restricted memberships

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<sup>60</sup> Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The “Manly Englishman” and the “Effeminate Bengali”* (Kali for Women, 1997)

<sup>61</sup> Mrinalini Sinha, “Britishness, clubbability, and the Colonial Public Sphere: The genealogy of an Imperial Institution in Colonial India” *The Journal of British Studies*, Volume 40, 4, (2001),497.

sought to reinforce the idea of a closed elite enclave. In her work, Jan Morris has also pointed out that the lifestyle institutionalized by the clubs was a subtle and yet potent part of colonial society; it formed an enclave of power and privilege that made the right people feel more important and the wrong people small.<sup>62</sup> Hunting as a cultural practice is best understood as a theatre where a specific notion of imperial masculinity (white, independent, masculine and paternal) was fashioned, enacted and upheld. Colonial writing on the colonial hunt and colonial clubs was a part of the public sphere that enabled the ritualization of the colonial hunt. The power vested in these institutions encouraged colonial society to aspire to their membership and in doing so, adhere to socially desired public behavior. I also argue that British imperial identity was closely bound with notions of class and was therefore largely dependent on the colonial elite: the officers of the Raj. The *sahibs* who hunted and memorialized their hunts were important to the construction of imperial identities. As the officers of the Raj recreated themselves as aristocratic *sahibs*, their social status in colonial society found resonance in the reinvention of Britain as an imperial power.

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<sup>62</sup> Jan Morris, *The Spectacle of the Empire- Style, Effect and Pax Britannica*, (London: Faber and Faber 1982), 203.

## Metropole and Periphery in the Construction of Imperial Identities

In recent years, a number of studies have argued that the colony was central to the construction of imperial identities in Britain. These studies have rejected the idea that the metropole was the center of cultural production, while the periphery only develops a derivative, imitative culture. Historians like Ronald Inden, Julie Codell and Antoinette Burton have argued that the nineteenth century witnessed both the expansion of British over the world and the creation of an imperial culture in Britain.<sup>63</sup> Linda Colley has even argued that the creation of the idea of Britain as one nation was made possible in the colonial encounter. According to Colley, the British “defined themselves, in short, not just through an internal and domestic dialogue but in conscious opposition to the Other beyond their shores.”<sup>64</sup> Colley’s work, along with those of

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<sup>63</sup> Ronald Inden, *Imagining India* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); Antoinette Burton: *At the Heart of the Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in late Victorian Britain*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Julie Codell (ed.) *Imperial Co-Histories: National Identities and the British and Colonial Press* (Madison, N.J. : Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003).

<sup>64</sup> Linda Colley, “Britishness and Otherness: An Argument,” *The Journal of British Studies*, Volume 31, No. 4, (Oct., 1992): 316.

others, reveals that colonies were deeply implicated in the evolution of national identity in Britain.<sup>65</sup>

In her influential work *Civilizing Subjects*, Catherine Hall analyzes how Britons of all backgrounds defined themselves in relation to subject peoples in the colonies. Class, race, and ethnicity are central to her narrative.<sup>66</sup> She sets out to find, “what provincial men and women knew of the empire and how they knew it...What representations of empire circulated in a mid nineteenth century town and in what ways, did the associated knowledge shaped political and other discourses?”<sup>67</sup> Hunting memoirs, trophies and photographs were critical tools through which provincial men and women came to “know” “their” empire. In his study of imperial masculinity, Graham Dawson had drawn attention to the narrative of adventure and the construction of the masculine that characterize the biographies of prominent Victorian heroes. His case studies are Sir

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<sup>65</sup> Even prior to this recent spate of scholarship, others like Sidney Mintz, Eric Wolf and Louis Tilly had already argued for the recognition of the importance of the empire in formation of British economy, politics and culture. These scholars have explored the role of traders and/or mercantilists in the evolution of new structures for organizing capital, credit, production, labor, markets, as well as in fashioning producers and consumers in Britain and the empire. Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York, N.Y.: Viking, 1985); Wolf, Eric R. *Europe and the people without history* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); Louise Tilly, "Connections." *American Historical Review* 99, no. 1 (1994): 1-20.

<sup>66</sup> Catherine Hall, *Civilizing Subjects* (University of Chicago Press, 2002).

<sup>67</sup> Catherine Hall, *Civilizing Subjects*, 10-11.

Henry Havelock, the “hero” of the Indian Rebellion of 1857, and Colonel T. E. Lawrence. Dawson demonstrates that the narratives surrounding both men built upon and contributed to the wider concerns of empire, masculinity and “race.” The mid-nineteenth-century revolution in the public media of communication, especially newspaper and book publishing, strengthened the British preoccupation with the figure of the frontier man as a representative of imperial identity in the colony. He was one of the main conduits for the formation of imperial identities in Britain and its performance in the colonies. In his essay on British masculinity, Francis Martin has shown that even as the contours of British masculinity in nineteenth and twentieth centuries changed in response to domestic and international events, the image of the robust frontier man continued to be important to the self-identity of British men by exercising a powerful hold in their imagination as imperial men.<sup>68</sup>

Thomas Richards’s study of the “commodity culture” of Victorian Britain draws attention to the importance of public media and advertising. The Great Exhibition of 1851, and others that followed in its wake, produced new images that not only promoted capitalism and industry, but created amongst the masses an “autonomous iconography

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<sup>68</sup> See Martin Francis, “The Domestication of the Male? Recent Research on Nineteenth and Twentieth Century British Masculinity,” *The Historical Journal*, 45 no. 3 (2002): 637-652

of the manufactured object."<sup>69</sup> Advertisers became "minstrels of capitalism," blending commodities of commerce (brought in from the colonies) with national images. Richards skillfully demonstrates that the Great Exhibition proved "a monument to consumption, the first of its kind" and that the process of economic mythology grew from a targeted middle-class consumer to a mass market based on the idea of marketing English nationalism and colonial products at home.<sup>70</sup> A similar insight also informs Richard Grove's seminal work *Green Imperialism* in which he discusses how botanists and surgeon-naturalists working on the "imperial periphery" contributed to the growth of conservation as a scientific ideology in Britain.<sup>71</sup>

The cultural currency enjoyed by colonial hunting was in large part influenced by the dominant ideologies popular in Victorian Britain. The nineteenth century saw the coexistence of contradictory ideologies such as the Darwinian argument regarding natural selection, and strands of Romanticism still seen in poetry, literature and

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<sup>69</sup> Thomas Richards, *Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (Stanford University Press, 1991), 251.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* 8.

<sup>71</sup> Richard Grove *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

painting. The post-Enlightenment view in Britain, that nature should be brought under the control of humans, gained support in Darwin's evolutionary theory. The idea of natural selection justified the dominion of white men as masters of primitive races and big game. Matt Cartmill has argued that this view of imperialism as natural expression of white supremacy is closely linked to big game hunting in the colonies: "The analogy between man's dominion over the beasts and Europe's supremacy over the savage races was reflected in the symbolism of big game hunting in the tropics."<sup>72</sup> The rise of science and technology, as Michael Adas has demonstrated in *Machines as the Measure of Men*, further legitimized the domination of foreign lands as "White man's burden." Colonial rule, Adas points out, was meant not just for the extraction of natural resources and for the brutal exploitation of those colonized, but also for the "civilizing" of "barbarians."<sup>73</sup> This project would require centuries of "tutoring," a period in which colonizers would rule other cultures and fundamentally transform those societies. The emergence in nineteenth century of the new mythic stereotype of the great white hunter popularized

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<sup>72</sup> Matt Cartmill, *A View to a Death in the Morning*, 135

<sup>73</sup> Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men : Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca : Cornell University Press, 1989)

in literature and photographs found resonance in Victorian conviction in rationality and natural selection.

The idea of hunting and game preservation in the colonies, were also in a sense indicative of an ongoing conversation about hunting in Britain. Raymond Carr's study of fox hunting suggests that the nineteenth century for the first time saw active induction of the urban metropolitan bourgeoisie into fox hunts.<sup>74</sup> Britain's Game Act of 1831 allowed landowners to open their lands to beneficiaries of the Industrial Revolution. Hunting became more inclusive in terms of allowing non-aristocrats to hunt, but the idea of the hunt still belonged to the world of the elite. Hunting ambitions in modern Britain were rooted in the social and economic power of a new social class in the countryside seeking to legitimize their position around existing meanings of authority.

The colonialists in India seemed to be following a similar pattern of signifying authority in colonial India. As I discuss in Chapter One, the colonial hunt in India also built upon preexisting symbols and practices of authority. Hunting as a means to signify authority was also a great Mughal tradition and after its fall, successor states were quick to pick on Mughal traditions as well. During the days of the Company and the succeeding period of the British Crown, the Rajputana states and other prominent

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<sup>74</sup> Raymond Carr. *English Fox Hunting : A History* (London : Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976)



princely states continued many ceremonies of the Mughals including the elephant borne hunt. The success of the hunt in signifying the authority of the Raj lay in the successful appropriation by the British of native forms of the hunt as an extension of the aristocratic tradition at home.<sup>75</sup>

Just as the British adapted the hunt to legitimate their rule of India, they also incorporated the “new science” of conservation as a new tool of imperialism. Unable to cope with the politics of human-animal conflicts, colonialists claimed that Indian wildlife belonged to the empire, and that the British government must involve itself in the protection of wildlife in its empire. For example, one of the strongest advocates for the formation of the national parks in Africa, Stevenson-Hamilton claimed, “the fauna of an empire is the property of that empire as a whole, and not of the small portion of it where the animals may happen to exist.”<sup>76</sup> The Society for the Protection of Fauna in the Empire and its sister associations in India made a similar argument in their advocacy for the national parks model. The Hailey National Park in the United Provinces (whose

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<sup>75</sup> See Sujit Sivasundaram’s excellent discussion on the appropriation of native knowledge and practices on elephant domestication as modern, rational knowledge generated by British. Sujit Sivasundaram, “Trading Knowledge: The East India Company’s Elephants in India and Britain,” *The Historical Journal*, 48, 1 (2005): 27–63.

<sup>76</sup> Quoted in Jane Carruthers, *The Kruger National Park : A Social and Political History* (Pietermaritzburg : University of Natal Press, 1995), 36-37.

formation in 1935 amidst lack of consensus amongst administrators I discuss in Chapter Five) is a good example of the manner in which metropolitan concerns influenced wildlife management in India and how wildlife in the colonies came to represent imperial identity in a new way ---- one that prided itself on their trusteeship of wild animals in the empire.

### ***Sahibs and Shikar: Colonial Hunting and Wildlife in British India, 1800-1935***

This dissertation consists of five chapters. The first chapter, "British Fair play in the Indian Jungle: The Evolution of the Colonial Hunter," explores the contribution of hunting to the idea of the gentleman-ruler in the Indian subcontinent. Based mostly on hunting memoirs, I trace the changes in the nature of colonial hunting over the course of the nineteenth and first three decades of the twentieth centuries. I argue that the changing nature of the state after the revolt of 1857 had a strong impact on colonial hunting. Demonstration of fair play and sportsmanship was central to the discourse of the colonial hunt from the late nineteenth century. As technology and natural sciences grew, the aesthetics of the material remains of dead animals also became important. A good clean trophy with few bullet marks and carefully preserved skin, advertised the hunter's knowledge of his weapons and the natural sciences. Associated with courage, aggression and adventure even during Company rule, the colonial hunt was informed

by a sense of moral and material aesthetic of hunting that resonated with a new ideology of domination based on racial superiority and paternalism.

The second chapter, "Hunting and Social Relations," is an exploration of colonial culture as it develops around the evolving culture of the hunt. Recent historiography on colonial culture has made us sensitive to the social divisions embedded in expatriate British society in India. This chapter is based on hunting memoirs, records of hunting association and clubs, and the official records of the Forest Department of the colonial administration. I argue that hunting and notions of fair play were important social tools, while they helped negotiate notions of prestige and power in a deeply hierarchical colonial society. Attempts to restrict hunting as a preservation measure brought to the surface many tensions embedded in the formal administrative apparatus.

The third chapter, "Nature and the Exercise of Dominance" is an analysis of the quotidian impacts of hunting as a colonial practice on the Indian landscape and on wildlife. This chapter is largely based on official records from the East India Company and the Home and Forest Departments of Government of India. I discuss the processes by which notions of fair play, governance, and attitudes toward particular animals came to inform wildlife policies in colonial India. British policies encouraged the destruction of carnivores as a policy of governance even in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Along with a heightened emphasis on fair play, the colonial government also

sought to preserve animals defined as “game” from the 1870s. By the early decades of the twentieth century, the neat organization of wild animals as “game” and “vermin” fell apart and made the task of wildlife management difficult.

In Chapter Four, “The *Sahib* in the District: Hunting, Recreation and Power,” I evaluate the role of hunting in the constitution of British power in the rural India and illustrate its importance for the complex and multi-layered process of “statemaking.” This chapter identifies the processes by which the official-hunter was “transformed” into a hunter-protector, the paternal benefactor, and also the archetypal *Sahib*. Based on hunting memoirs as well as official records from the days of the Company and the rule by the Crown, this chapter also attempts to understand the ways in which natives coped with the hunting *sahib* in their midst.

In the final chapter called “Wildlife and British Trusteeship,” I discuss preservation regimes and the idea of conservation as it first emerged in 1920s. Based on memoirs, records of preservation societies and official records, this chapter traces the process by which accepted means of hunting were institutionalized and formalized as law and the difficulties faced by administrators in making these policies. By the 1920s, the growth in natural sciences had sensitized metropolitan opinion on the importance of all species for the survival of mankind itself, and also alerted the government to the danger of extermination of species. I argue that conservation in the form of sanctuaries

and national parks was largely the result of metropolitan influence coming to exert pressure on colonial interests in India.

## Chapter 1: British Fair Play in the Indian Jungle: The Evolution of the Colonial Hunter

Never forget the gentleman in the sportsman but rather try to get a more accurate and higher conception of what *real sportsman* should be. That word does not designate any man with skill to sit a horse, with pluck to spear a boar or with an eye that will help to fill a bag quickly. Many low-bred low minded fellow, many a thorough snob can do all these; they are not real sportsman on that account...(a real sportsman) takes pleasure in something beyond the death of the brute beast he slays, a taste which enables him to season the sports of the field by the knowledge acquired in the closet....where others would see but flesh, bone and death, he will perceive power, design and execution. His mind will rise from the creature to the Creator, and sport with him, instead of brutalizing will raise and ennoble his nature.<sup>1</sup>

The best in field were English *sahibs* coming from cavalry regiments stationed in Africa and India and others were planters, sisal growers and colonial administrators. Almost invariably they were tall, good looking fellow who smoked pipes, drank vast quantities of double pegs with apparent effect, dressed well and impressed Americans...They took so readily to big game hunting and remained so amazingly cool, it seemed as if this was their natural calling. I think they were and still are, I presume, highly polished Cro-Magnon man.

American big game hunters in Africa and India were usually young members of very rich families or retired successful business men...few of these appeared to be calm nerved, self confident Cro -Magnon type of sportsman. They were *burra* (big) *Sahibs* but not *pukka* (correct and confident) *Sahibs*.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Hints from a Sporting Father to a Sporting Son" "F.G", *India Sporting Review* Volume VIII, July-December, (1848): 130

<sup>2</sup> Edison Marshall, *Shikar and Safari, Reminiscence of Jungle Hunting* (London: Museum Press limited, 1950), 9-10.

This chapter explores the place of hunting in perpetuating a particular image of the colonial ruler in Indian subcontinent. Colonial hunting, governed by normative values and prescribed codes of behavior was, one of the crucial identifiers of differences between natives and Britons. Articulated in the idea of fair play and sportsmanship and celebrated as the dominating theme in the hunting adventure, this set of values became the central informing principle that defined an evolving British tradition of hunting as it emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth century India. I argue that the idea of fair play and sportsmanship addressed three primary concerns. First, they catered to a desire to evolve a tradition of hunting that *seemed* distinct from Indian traditions (whether princely or that of the native *shikari*) in order to create and maintain racial distance between the rulers and the ruled. Second, these values served as an index of prestige and power that enabled negotiation with class hierarchies within the colonial society. Finally, they show a preoccupation with communicating a particular image of the Briton in India---one that appealed to Victorian expectation of frontier men and upholders of Empire. This preoccupation was important in an age where threats of racial contamination had grown proportionally with the growth of the British Empire. The figure of the gentlemanly *pukka sahib* was not only important to reassure the home audience and the colonialists of their distance to the native race; this particular ideal

type also built upon the existing social and cultural framework that made notions of power and prestige visible and sensible in Victorian Britain. The Victorian ideal type of a ruler ----the aristocratic gentleman ruler---- was therefore also reflected in the image of the *sahib* in the subcontinent.

Private letters from the early nineteenth century clearly indicate that hunting was a popular past time for the young Briton working in India.<sup>3</sup> Full of vivid and detailed descriptions of Indian jungles and hunting adventures, these letters had already inspired an image of India as a hunter's paradise at home. By the last decades of the nineteenth century, a keen interest in hunting adventures in India had resulted in an explosion of hunting memoirs and hunting journals. While keeping up with the theme of exciting hunting adventures in India, this proliferating literature also exhibits, from the mid-nineteenth century, an increasing concern with notions of fair play and correct [correct?] etiquette. Linking hunting to an evolving sense of morality came at a time when the colonial state was reinventing itself, and can be seen in the changing profile of people who chose to publish their hunting experiences.

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<sup>3</sup> See for instance, letter of Capt Francis Gresley, Bengal Army, Nizam of Hyderabad's service 1826-44, describing his travels and events in India; with a few other papers, B120, India Office Select Materials, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library.



The period between 1820-1850 had witnessed the emergence of sporting journals like *The Bengal Sporting Review*, *The Oriental Sporting Magazine* and *The India Sporting Review*. A variety of Britons in India, including soldiers and merchants of the East India Company and private individuals, shared their hunting exploits with fellow men in the subcontinent in these journals. By the 1860s, however, the literature on hunting saw a new genre---- the hunting memoir, published largely by men serving in the higher echelons of the colonial administration. These were largely civil servants or men who had retired as high-ranking officers of the army. I argue that the emphasis on right etiquette in the colonial hunt is indicative of the self-image of the official elite. As the nature of the British presence in India changed from that of a trading company to one responsible for administration and governance, hunting as a form of recreation of the colonialists became deeply imbued with moral overtones. This chapter therefore will also focus on the self-professed morality of the hunting adventure, the dominant theme apparent in this literature. Though the rhetoric of fair play was central to the morality of the colonial hunt, this chapter will also show that the idea of fair play was not static. Fair play (also described as sportsmanship or the hunter's code) was flexible and the fact that it was never quite fully developed into a formal system enabled it to incorporate, negotiate and accommodate new elements.<sup>4</sup> The elements that came to signify fair play

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<sup>4</sup> As I argue in this chapter, fair play was notoriously difficult to define. Its premise was that

differed greatly in response to interactions by the primary protagonists----the native population, Indian wildlife and the British expatriates.

## **British Character in the Land of Extremes**

Scholars like Partha Chatterjee, Thomas Metcalf and Kenneth Ballhatchet have regarded the period after the revolt of 1857 as marking a definite change in the way British sought to articulate the difference between natives and themselves.<sup>5</sup> The early decades of the nineteenth century had witnessed claims of differences in physical superiority and knowledge of the British. After 1857, in addition to claims of superior

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hunters should exert themselves and overcome “challenges” during their hunt. Walter Campbell, author of one of the most popular semi-fictional hunting memoirs in the 1850s, was careful to clarify that it wasn’t a “thirst for blood” which inspired sportsman. Instead, repeating a similar argument made in the defense of fox hunting at home, he elaborated that it was a “far nobler feeling; - a species of ambition- a love for enterprise; the pleasure arising from which depends entirely on the *difficulties to be surmounted* in the attainment of our object.” Walter Campbell, *Old Forest Ranger*, 26. Emphasis mine. In 1911, fair play was just as ambiguous as it had been half a century earlier. The famous hunter F.C. Hicks tried to explain that a reasonable definition should include ‘some element of risk (even if only the risk of being found out) a certain amount of physical exertion, and the exercise of some skill in jungle-craft and with the rifle; while the object should be to kill as painlessly as possible, and not to fire at dangerous game unless prepared to face the risks in a possible follow up.’ F.C.Hicks *Forty Years Among the Wild Animals of India from Mysore to the Himalayas* (Allahabad: Pioneer Press, 1910), 685.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, (Princeton University Press, 1993); Kenneth Ballhatchet, *Race, Sex and Class under the Raj: Imperial Attitudes and Policies and their Critics, 1793-1905* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1980).

knowledge and physical strength, colonialists also highlighted “moral” differences between themselves and the natives. The anxiety of racial contamination and degeneration of the frontier man, however, accompanied claims of moral superiority. In the Indian context, as the penetration of forested tracts and needs of administration reduced the physical distance between wilderness and civilization, the colonized and the colonizer and the fear of the “primitive” cultures overwhelming a minority colonial population grew, administrators stepped up their efforts to maintain and broadcast their social distance from India and its negative influences.

India, with its hot tropical climate, forests and wild animals, evoked a variety of complex feelings in the British ranging from desire to anxiety. In a period when social Darwinism and scientific racism provided easy validation to claims of European superiority and of the Caucasian race, sundry climatic theories sought to explain and reinforce the image of the lazy, indolent native Indian population. The literature on hunting exhibits an obsession with sun protection; it is obvious that the writers harbored great anxiety regarding the impact on heat and sun on the white man. These concerns, evident in the letters of young men from the early nineteenth century, persisted until the end of British rule in India. A common myth was that Europeans had thinner skin on the

skull that made them particularly prone to sunstroke.<sup>6</sup> The British resident in India also had their own peculiar ideas about diseases. It was commonly accepted that malaria or “jungle fever” was contracted through breathing the unwholesome air that arose from the damp ground.<sup>7</sup> Fear about diseases reigned even in later years of the British Raj. According to Iris Portal, who was encouraged by her husband to participate in excursions to the jungles during the 1930s: “Sport was an obsession in Old India, an obsession that had its roots in the dread unless one kept fit one would catch” some dreadful disease or other.”<sup>8</sup> The British obsession with physical activity, especially hunting, was an act of defiance in the face of a hostile Indian physical environment.

By the late nineteenth century, the moral effects of heat on the character of Europeans heavily underlined concerns regarding the impact of heat. Hot climates produced “great lassitude and weariness” which the British perceived in all classes of the native population. Early accounts of Daniel Johnson in his *Field Sports of India* had

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<sup>6</sup> See James Inglis, *Tent Life in Tigerland and Sport and Work on the Nepaul Frontier* (Sydney: A. Hutchinson and Son, 1888), 665.

<sup>7</sup> Major- General J.G. Elliot, *Field Sports In India 1800-1947* (London: Gentry Books, 1973), 56.

<sup>8</sup> Louis Portal in Charles Allen (ed.) *Plain Tales from the Raj, Images of British India in the Twentieth Century* (London: Andre Deutch and BBC, 1975), 29.

already concluded that, “The native gentlemen of India are rarely ever expert at any active sport; they consider beneath them, to use any exertion to which they are not compelled.”<sup>9</sup> The late nineteenth century British retreat into the club and hill stations is an example of this anxiety.<sup>10</sup> The fear of inertia and lethargy overwhelming and debasing English bodies and souls urged the colonizer to pursue frenzied physical activity as a shield against such *moral* corruption. Hunting was seen as insurance against the moral degeneration of young recruits to India who had just graduated from British colleges. John Lowth, a young recruit stationed in Calcutta in 1839, in his description of hunting adventures near the barracks, noted that due to easy availability of cheap liquor, large numbers of recruits fell into “habits of intemperate drinking.”<sup>11</sup> While eager to describe hunting adventures, victory over ferocious beasts, leisure and oriental splendor to his family, he was also mindful to clarify that there was no danger of their

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<sup>9</sup> Johnson, Daniel. *Sketches of Field Sports as Followed by the Natives on India* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1822),48

<sup>10</sup> Metcalf , *Ideologies of the Raj*, 160-161; Judith T. Kenny, “ Climate, Race, and Imperial Authority: The Symbolic Landscape of the British Hill Station in India,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Volume 85, No. 4 (Dec.1995): 694-714; Kennedy, Dane. *The Magic Mountains: Hill Stations and the British Raj* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

falling prey to the ways of the earlier *nabobs* and that the barracks retained their English morality:

When the fruit, &c. is set on the table, the hookahs are brought; some resting upon tiger, others upon leopard-skins or upon richly colored small carpets. Altogether, the scene is so dissimilar to any thing English that one almost fancies and Arabian nights entertainment realised. Neither gambling nor drunkenness is allowed; nor, in short, anything that would offend the most polished European society.<sup>12</sup>

Fear regarding the moral and physical “degeneration” of those who served in India, especially the soldier, continued well into the twentieth century. Concerned over the preference of some of the younger men for dancing and other such “unmanly” pursuits, Major General Woodyatt commented, “Boys will be boys, especially when there are girls about. But when the motor bicycle is preferred to the pony, and the dancing – pump to the shot-gun or rifle, then the question becomes serious, and it is a subject of inquiry.”<sup>13</sup> He hoped his memoirs would create “that *longing* for the chase, the pursuit of which will advance so greatly the boy’s character, his moral strength, his knowledge of India and the Indian and his health,” and would encourage the young

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<sup>12</sup> John B. Lowth, *A Letter from India* (Oakham : George Snodin Cunnington, 1841).

<sup>13</sup> Nigel Woodyatt , *My Sporting Memories* (London: Herbert Jenkins Limited, 1923), 292.

man's desire to lead a jungle life.<sup>14</sup> Hunting in India, therefore, was more than a noble pastime; it was also a defense against diseases, laziness, and against moral degradation and degeneration.

The overwhelming stress on fair play and sportsmanship loaded colonial hunting with a unique sense of morality that not only safeguarded British character but also displayed it to a world audience. As we will see in the next section, the effort to ensure the prestige of the hunt by emphasizing fair play and proper etiquette was also a concern in Victorian Britain. The stress on fair play in India mirrors the prevailing discourse in Victorian Britain in a period that also saw a heightened awareness of the image of an imperial masculine self. The evolving concept of sportsmanship in India, allowed for the cooption into the larger framework of rules, regulations, customs and practices that provided a broader blueprint of imperial identity both in the colony and at home.

### **Tradition, Power and Privilege: Hunting in Victorian England**

Despite the social, political and economic changes in rural England in the eighteenth century, hunting in Victorian England continued to enjoy the high prestige it

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 291.

had commanded since the Norman Conquest. Writing on “Festivals, Amusements and Leisure,” one commentator summarized the Victorian understanding of hunting:

At the outset of the world...when the few inhabitants of the earth were too much occupied in providing for their subsistence to have made even the rudest attempt at civilization, we can hardly imagine them to have indulged in any other diversion than field – sport, if it be not a misnomer to apply that term to the painful and precarious toil of naked savages, urged to the chase by the cravings of hunger...By comparing the world as it then existed, with the happiness and widely diffused civilization with which it is now blessed, and above all, by contrasting the hourly-improving intellectual eminence, we may form some conceptions, of the glorious destiny which a beneficent providence has reserved for mankind. When mankind had partially advanced ... we find that their most distinguished heroes and demigods were sportsmen and hunters... Every nation has its Nimrod, nor need one doubt that there must have been some foundation for the marvellous adventures recorded of Orion, Apollo, Hercules and other monster destroyers.<sup>15</sup>

The hunter, as a hero embodied all the essential ideas dear to a nation that prided itself on its tradition and progress alike. Hunting was central to the aristocratic tradition of England. A marker of privilege, it implied leisure, not necessity, and prosperity as opposed to subsistence. Hunting conjured up conflicting images in a most flattering way ---- that of a primitive life, and savage like physical strength on one hand, and honor,

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<sup>15</sup> Author unknown, “*Festivals, Games and Amusements (according to time and civilisation)*” *Indian Sporting Review* (henceforth ISR) Volume II (1842): 345.



dignity, chivalry on the other. Hunting was thus imbued with deep moral worth; it provided a framework that defined masculine strength with humanity.<sup>16</sup>

Defending the tradition of hunting against increasing urban opposition in the late nineteenth century, Henry Alken in his *The National Sports of Great Britain* writes that hunting was a “natural impulse of man” and asserted that “the arguments for its high gratification to those who possess leisure and wealth, more especially in land, and for its conduciveness to health and hilarity, will ever prove decisive.”<sup>17</sup> Despite the long history of social unrest accompanying them, hunting in England— deer stalking, fox hunting and small game shooting remained activities that were secured exclusively for the landed elite by the state.<sup>18</sup> According to historian Keith Thomas, laws reserving game

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<sup>16</sup> F.M.L. Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century*, Routledge and Kegan, London, 1963, 15-16.

<sup>17</sup> No pagination, see Chapter on coursing, Henry Alken, *The National Sports of Great Britain* (London: Methuen & Co., 1903).

<sup>18</sup> Dan Beaver, “The Great Deer Massacre: Animals, Honor, and Communication in Early Modern England,” *The Journal of British Studies*, Volume 38, No. 2 (1999):187-216 Raymond Carr, *English Fox Hunting : A History* ( London : Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976);James Hawker and Garth Christian, *A Victorian Poacher; James Hawker’s journal* (London, New York: Oxford University Press 1962); P. B Munsche, “*The Gamekeeper and the English Rural Society 1600-1830.*” *Journal of British Studies* 20(2) (1981): 82-105 ; P.B Munsche, *Gentlemen and Poachers : the English Game Laws, 1671-1831* (New York : Cambridge University Press, 1981) for detailed discussions on social and political relations around the question of the hunt.

to the upper classes had not been designed merely to secure material privileges; they persisted “because the symbolism of hunting was military and aristocratic; like riding the great horse, the sport was an assertion of social superiority.”<sup>19</sup> Game laws and statutes asserted a strict control over access to deer, pheasants, partridges and hares because these animals were currency of rank and honor. The circulation of venison, for instance, was an important and noble gift that only a few could bestow. The restrictive laws of the hunt increased the value and prestige of this flow of gifts to aristocrats and commoners alike.

### **Making the Rural Hunt “Noble”**

In his study of hunting in early modern Britain, Dan Beaver has discussed the performative importance of the hunt and argues that as a performance, the hunt demanded specific forms of knowledge, comportment and ritual action. A gentleman’s world consisted of many performances, described in terms of courtliness, sociability or martial valor. Every successful performance rebounded to the gentleman in the potent form of honor.<sup>20</sup> While hunting practices changed in response to changing political

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<sup>19</sup> Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), 164,183.

<sup>20</sup> Dan Beaver, “The Great Deer Massacre: Animals, Honor and communication in Early Modern England”. *The Journal of British Studies* 38, No. 2 (1999): 187-216, .192.

cultures, economy and technology, notions of courage, knowledge and etiquette continued to inform hunting by the elite in Victorian Britain. In his study of the evolution of fox hunting in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Britain, James Howe has argued that fox hunting can be seen as a ritual of a social class, one that dramatized themes and images about the gentry and aristocracy, and about rural society as a whole. Fox hunting was made “special” through a conscious process of ritualization that included formalizing of codes of dressing, prescribed behavior, and esoteric language for common practices of the hunt. In his study of leisure hunting, Matt Cartmill has similarly concluded, “a successful hunt ends in the killing of an animal, but it must be a special sort of animal that is killed in a specific way for a particular reason.”<sup>21</sup> In Europe, deer emerged as the noblest of all game in the Middle Ages, and a highly specialized lexicon emerged around the age, sex and habits of the deer family. This obsession with deer expressed in the figure of the noble stag continued well into the twentieth century alongside the increasing popularity of fox hunting. The power of the hunting elite and its social standing supported the belief that hunting was a sport of

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<sup>21</sup> Cartmill, *A View to Death in the Morning*, 29, 61-65.

gentlemen who obeyed a “civilized” set of rules while pursuing an adventurous and dangerous pastime.

The gentleman-hunter was also man of physical and mental fortitude who remained unshaken by any adversity and who intuitively “knew” the difference between the fair and the unfair. This sense of fairness translated to confronting the animal in its own domain that made the hunt a duel between equals, of persevering and to kill an injured animal to grant *coup de grace* and show clemency to pregnant females and the young (this last consideration ensured a steady stock of trophy worthy game.) The knowledge of the animal’s physique and habitat, perseverance to effect the kill by targeting specific spots (to ensure keen cleans and a clean trophy) contributed to the idea of gentlemanly play. It was said that the honorable virtues of the hunt enriched both the person and the body politic.<sup>22</sup> In his “Manual of British Rural Sports,” Stonehenge wrote “it will be manifest that these amusements not only improve the health of the people individually, but collectively they enable them by giving them vigour, courage and power of endurance.”<sup>23</sup> Legalized hunting in rural Britain symbolized a glorious royal

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<sup>22</sup> Beaver, 190.

<sup>23</sup> Stonehenge, *Manual of British Rural Sports* (London: Fredrick Warne and Company, 1867), .xviii. Hunting in this period was not without opposition. In the introduction to hunting in the series of leisure and pastimes, the Duke of Benfort wrote, “In these days of change, alarm,

past and used to evoke an ancient mythical charter of British polity. After the social, economic and political upheaval of the Glorious Revolution, Agricultural Revolution and Industrial Revolution, hunting, it was argued, promoted unity, stability, harmony and devotion to tradition, deferential values. This role was used to justify not only the enormous amounts of time, energy, and money expended on the sport, but also the extraordinary demands that hunting made on all those who lived within the boundaries of a hunting country.<sup>24</sup> According to Keith Thomas, the rural gentry self-consciously designed a rural landscape, which could provide for both material profit and recreation. The symbolic importance of hunting was maintained even with the intrusion of “new money” into the countryside in the nineteenth century.

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surprise, the brutality of field sports is being denounced with so much eloquence and energy that one can but wonder how the world remained unconvinced through so many years...a sort of melancholy pleasure has therefore attended our research into which our studies have led us. When that race of “harmless vegetarians” for whom the mastery of the world is anticipated, shall have come into their kingdom, then Nimrod will no doubt be dead as Pan and the sport of the field be much as old-world story as the “bloody laws” of the Roman circle. Those days however are not yet. The pious crusade against sport is after all, no new thing.” Duke of Benfort ed, *The Badminton Library of sports and Pastimes: Hunting*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co. 1889), 2. For urban opposition to hunting in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Antony Taylor “Pig-Sticking Princes”: Royal Hunting, Moral Outrage, and the Republican Opposition to Animal Abuse in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Britain,” *History*, 89, no. 293 (2004): 30-48.

<sup>24</sup> David C. Izkowitz, *Peculiar Privilege. A Social History of English Fox hunting, 1753-1885* (Hassocks: The Harvester Press, 1977), 1.

## **Fair Play and Etiquette: Keeping Tradition Intact in a Time of Change**

The Game Act of 1831 fundamentally changed the social relations of the hunt. The Act put an end to property in game and tied it as property attached to land owned. It benefited landholders who wished to supplement their incomes by allowing people to buy an annual game certificate to hunt. This Act also benefited the urban wealthy, who could now participate in the rural hunt and who now had easy access to venison, fur and feather in cities. Raymond Carr's study of fox hunting suggests that the nineteenth century for the first time saw the active induction of the urban bourgeoisie for foxhunts.<sup>25</sup> However, for the large majority of the rural masses ---- dispossessed farmers, small artisans and wage laborers ---- there was no relief. In fact, with smaller landholders zealous about their game, it made the poor more vulnerable to the law of trespass. With the inclusion of the urban moneyed class into rural hunting, game preservation became a priority for landholders who employed a battery of bailiffs, game keepers and "watchers" to keep a close eye on poaching. In addition, the Night Poaching Act of 1844 and the Poaching Prevention Act of 1862 increased police powers of search and confiscation.

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<sup>25</sup> Raymond Carr. *English Fox Hunting : A History* ( London : Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976).

While the Game Act of 1831 was said to have opened up hunting in allowing people from cities to hunt in the countryside, hunting remained an exclusive privilege of the rural elite. Hunting ambitions in nineteenth-century Britain were rooted in the social and economic power of a new social class in the countryside seeking to legitimize their position and to deploy power around existing meanings of prestige and authority.

By the mid nineteenth century, amidst concerns that hunting was being corrupted by city folks uneducated on the ways of the hunt, sporting journals and books intending to guide the new hunting public on the right etiquette to hunt became popular. *The Field*, which began in 1853, soon became the largest newspaper in England. In his foreword to the centenary volume of *The Field*, the Duke of Beaufort praises the newspaper and its founding members for using the paper, “as their medium for gathering supporters and proclaiming their views and exercising their authority. They and their successors were enabled not only to legislate but also to propound a *moral code of true sportsmanship*, not the least feature of which was the elimination of cruel practices.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> R. N. Rose, *The Field 1853-1953 A centenary Volume*, Foreword by The Duke of Beaufort, (London: Michael Joseph, 1953),9. Emphasis mine.

The notion of cruelty in hunting was deeply rooted in class prejudice and privileges. Indeed, commentators often remarked that poachers were a cruel and singularly unrepentant lot. In his study of the Black Act of 1723, E. P. Thompson notes poachers were at times at the forefront of the battle over custom, rights and law that characterized a period of rapid transformation of the countryside with agrarian commercialization and consolidation of lands under the enclosure movement.<sup>27</sup> For the rural population, however, poachers as symbols of defiance to landed authority were often popular heroes. James Hawker, a famous poacher of the Victorian era, claimed that he poached more for revenge than gain and drew his legitimacy from the popular support he enjoyed. Poachers often got their tools of the trade like wires, nets, traps, ferret, dogs and guns from local villagers. In addition to poaching, Hawker also encouraged villagers to hunt and collect fruits from hunting reserves on the eve of festivals and holidays.<sup>28</sup> For Hawker, taking game was an extension of a traditional and independent way of life when village commons and wastelands had been used by rural communities for food, fuel and as pastures and wild animals. This right had been taken away from rural communities with the Game Act of 1831 and the enclosure movement

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<sup>27</sup> E. P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters: The Origins of the Black Act* (New York: Pantheon, 1975).

<sup>28</sup> Christian , *A Victorian Poacher*, 20.



which encouraged proprietors to exercise their ownership over game and fishing. By the early nineteenth century, trapping and snaring (which did not allow animals a sporting chance to escape) had been condemned as cruel and illegal. The practice of maiming gentry's dogs and deer by poachers gave credibility to the image of the cruel poacher. It is no surprise that a large number of illegal killing involved maiming the gentry's dogs and deer. According to Keith Thomas, these animals were seen as symbols of aristocratic privilege, threats to their customary rights and were mutilated as protest.<sup>29</sup> The increase in poaching in nineteenth century was a result of protest against poverty and alienation brought on by absentee landlordism, enclosures, the Poor Law of 1834, and evictions. Victorian contempt of poachers and regarding poaching as cruel and immoral (and not just illegal) is a reflection of a rapidly changing attitude to rural poverty.

The concern to purge hunting of cruelty therefore was an exercise in maintaining and asserting the class difference in the countryside.<sup>30</sup> The various guides

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<sup>29</sup> Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World* (London: Allen Lane, 1983).

<sup>30</sup> It is interesting to note the response of B. M. Malabari, who famously wrote three travel accounts of his experiences in Britain. He was intrigued by the British obsession with preventing cruelty on one hand and the preponderance of killing (for food and sport) on the other. He sought to explain this apparent contradiction by ascribing an inherent blood lust and early training that led the British people "to mistake the destruction of harmless creatures for sport; to mistake cruelty for manliness..." Extending the notions of cruelty, employed by the British to

on hunting etiquettes and game keeping of the nineteenth century were intended to educate new entrants to the world of the aristocratic hunt. The preoccupation with right etiquette was an attempt to ensure that hunting by the elite did not resemble hunting by the rural poor in any manner.

The Victorian aversion to the hunting methods of the rural poor is important to understand the views of early British in India. The legitimizing of colonial rule in India was based on familiar symbols that signified authority and privilege and colonial hunting practices were deeply influenced prevalent hunting conditions at home. The British community in India asserted its right to hunt as part of the larger ideological framework that gave legitimacy to its rule. Though British hunters and administrators alike were preoccupied with the *manner* in which hunting was carried out, the *idea* of the hunt was rarely criticized. David Cannadine has argued that the British transferred their

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distance themselves from natives, he observed, "Of all the expletives I have heard in London streets this "b-----y" [bloody] seems to be the most commonest...I cannot possibly make out for myself- where does the British rough get this hideous expletive from, and why does he use it so often? Has he got it from the soldier whose business is with blood? Or, has he got it from the butcher? Or, does he owe it to his own instincts? Our terms of abuse or reproach in India are bad enough, many of them aimed at the female relatives of the party abused or reproached. That shows the Oriental's respect for the sex. Here, In England, the aggrieved seems to thirst for blood..." Notions of fair play and sportsmanship seem to have done little to convince him of the essentially "blood thirsty" nature of the British and their sport. B.M.Malabari, *Indian Eye on English Life or Rambles of a Pilgrim Reformer* (Bombay: Apollo Printing Works, Bombay, 1895), 244.

class prejudices to the Indian social landscape.<sup>31</sup> It is true that by late nineteenth century, British in India regarded netting and trapping by natives with the same contempt as rural elite regarded the poacher in Britain. However, as I reveal in the course of this chapter, this prejudice was not a simple matter of transplanting class biases but was also heavily underscored by an overarching discourse on racial superiority.

## **Masculinity, Sport and Fair Play: The New Imperial Man**

While the British in India always considered physical exercise important to maintain health in the extreme weather in India, by mid-nineteenth century, the morality of “athleticism” had become an integral part of Victorian imperial identities.

Studies on British sport and education in Victorian England have revealed a growing emphasis on physical activity in schools.<sup>32</sup> Historian J. A. Mangan has stressed

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<sup>31</sup> Cannadine, David. *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

<sup>32</sup> The literature on sport has been devoted little space to a discussion on the difference between the idea of play, game and sport. Keith Sandiford summarizes the conclusion that “most sociologists agree with: “Play”, is the basis for all sport. It is voluntary meant for fun with minimal rules established and interpreted by participants themselves. “Game” contains element of play but is more structured and governed by more rigid rules where the emphasis is more on team rather than individuals and the end values beyond the activity itself. ‘sport’ is even more highly structured and is thoroughly institutionalized through a network of clubs, leagues,

the importance of schools and colleges in the evolution of the sporting man in Britain, an ideal-type that gave coherence to the relationship between the playing field and the battlefield, masculinity, militarism and imperialism.<sup>33</sup>

He argues that “collective consciousness” imparted through sports was articulated as set of virtues that were often framed as rules. Bound by these rules, sport became an activity fraught with moral purpose. The cultural stress on contest, strength, skill and fair play was so synonymous with sport that being “sporting” elevated an individual as a moral being.<sup>34</sup> Sport was used persistently in the propaganda of English

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governing bodies and managers and spectators. All three function as forms of socialization and sport particularly contributes to social cohesion by reinforcing social and cultural values.” Keith Sandiford, “The Victorians at Play: Problems in Historiographical methodology” *Journal of Social History* 15,2: (1981): 271-288. My interest in hunting activity focuses on the forms of hunting which were classified as a ‘sport’ by contemporary hunters and authors. It is indeed the process of standardization and ritualization which is at the heart of this study.

<sup>33</sup> J. A. Mangan and Walvin(eds). *Manliness and Morality: Middle-class masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (New York: Y, St. Martin’s Press, 1987) 104; J A Mangan, *The Cultural Bond : Sport, Empire, Society* (London: F. Cass, 1992); J. A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian public school : the Emergence and Consolidation of anEeducational Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

<sup>34</sup> See J. A Mangan and J Walvin, (Eds.). *Manliness and morality: Middle-class masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987); Newsome David *Godliness and Good Learning: Four Studies on a Victorian Ideal* (London: Cassel, 1961); Haley Bruce, *The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1978).

physical, moral and military superiority, and was internalized by many a native.<sup>35</sup>

Touring England in the early 1880s, B.M. Malabari wrote in his famous travelogue, *Indian Eye on English Life*: “The Indian student cannot mix with his English companions on equal terms. He is ill prepared for it by early training at home. For one thing, he is so backward in the sports and games that enter so largely into the formation of character and friendship at an English college.”<sup>36</sup>

Along with stress on athleticism and militarism, the idea of “fair play” was equally important to British sporting ideology. According to Mangan, the notion of fair play was an invention by middle and upper class educational institutes in nineteenth-century Britain. The notion of fair play was a carefully cultivated practical tool to ensure controlled confrontation in the physical struggles on the new playing fields: “Manliness, a substantive widely favoured by prelates on speech days and headmasters on Sundays, embraced antithetical values- success, aggression and ruthlessness, yet victory within

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<sup>35</sup> See Alan Penn, *Targeting the Schools: Militarism, Elementary School and Drill, 1870-1914* (London: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>36</sup> B.M.Malabari, *Indian Eye on English Life or Rambles of a Pilgrim Reformer* (Bombay: Apollo Printing Works, Bombay, 1895), 64.

the rules, courtesy in triumph, compassion for the defeated.”<sup>37</sup> The idea of manliness as manifest in sport provided a controlled outlet for negative energies, and for gaining physical and moral robustness in a controlled and predetermined manner. Mangan further argues that this image of the controlled and confident winner took the western world by storm and was responsible for creating the myth of the English gentleman.<sup>38</sup>

Concurring with this view, Jeffrey Richards states:

Became the motto of a nation whose ideology and religious faith were subsumed under Imperialism, with its belief in the British as the elect who had a God-given duty to govern and civilize the world. In the wake of imperialism, the public schools in particular their game fields became “mints for turning out Empire-builders.”<sup>39</sup>

For Mangan and Richards, fair play was transformed from a utilitarian instrument of private control into a moralistic public virtue largely peculiar to the upper

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<sup>37</sup> J A Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public Schools: the Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981),135.

<sup>38</sup> J.A. Mangan and Meinander Henrik (eds), *The Nordic World: Sport in Society* (London: F. Cass, 1998), 182.

<sup>39</sup> Jeffery Richards, “Passing the love of Women: Manly love and Victorian Society” in Mangan and Walvin(eds). *Manliness and Morality*. 104.

and middle class English schoolboy.<sup>40</sup> And as Britain's imperial success grew, fair play was claimed as an exclusive property of the British and moral source for imperial success. It is through such propaganda that the British were able to include sport in defining themselves as unique people of superior moral persuasion duty bound to improve the world's backward races.

The notion of fair play was deeply class-coded. Derek Birley has argued that notion of fair play found resonance in the pragmatic distinction between amateurs and professionals. Amateurs, mostly drawn from the elite, were supposed to reflect sport in its idealized, pure form and were hailed custodians of British morality.<sup>41</sup> Amateurs played purely for pleasure and owed allegiance to exclusive clubs that excluded the working class. Professionals played for money, and while they enjoyed the patronage of

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<sup>40</sup> It would be wrong however to presume that Victorians had managed to purge their pastimes of the licentiousness that they associated with the Georgian period. Dennis Brailsford has pointed out that while activities like bull and bear-baiting and cock-throwing, show evidence of decline, others like cock-fighting, dog-fighting and folk football, either continued to thrive. Along with new ideologies, older attitudes and practices of the Georgian period continued to influence sport in the Victorian era. Dennis Brailsford, *A Taste for Diversions: Sport in Georgian England* Cambridge (Cambridge, Lutterworth Press 1999).

<sup>41</sup> Derek Birley, *Land of sport and glory : sport and British society, 1887-1910* (Manchester : Manchester University Press 1995); Derek Birley, *Playing the Game : Sport and British society, 1910-45* (New York : Manchester University , 1995).

gentlemen-amateurs, they were excluded from most clubs. Fair play emerged as a prerogative of the elite who had leisure and the means to pursue a sporting activity for its own sake. This distinction echoes the differences between hunters and poachers: true sportsmen hunted for pleasure, as opposed to the poacher who killed for material profit.

The class-coded Victorian notions of masculinity, physical fitness and capacity to rule heavily influenced the idea of the colonial *sahib*. The idea of the sporting masculine man as an emblem of imperial Britain also gained importance at a time when the new system of recruitment, “the open competition,” introduced in 1853, opened the door for new classes of Britons to emerge as the ruling elite in the empire. The image of the colonial *sahib* is particularly pertinent in the changing class relations in Britain. Even before the sharpening of racial differences after 1857, British administrators were already under pressure to perform the role of ruling elite recognizable as such at home. The “competition *wallahs*” came under severe criticism on a perceived lack of physical fitness and a proper (prestigious) public school education. Compared to the rugged masculinity of former colonialists trained at Haileybury, “competition *wallahs*” were derided for succeeding in the competition due to intensive cramming. While public school culture with its importance on athleticism and fair play informed the evolution of the Victorian imperial identities, Elizabeth M Collingham’s study on colonial administration reveals that although in 1874, the eligible age for taking the examination



was lowered to attract students from the old (and prestigious) public schools, the numbers of candidates from these schools fell.<sup>42</sup> According to her, the attack on the “weedy” physique of the competition *wallah*, was a masked attack on the social class of the new recruits. This attack revealed metropolitan anxieties regarding the capacity of Britain’s middle classes, to fulfill the role of rulers. Given the broader milieu of social Darwinism and the belief that climate could influence *character*, colonialists became the center of metropolitan preoccupation with racial contamination. This concern with racial contamination arose from a mistrust of the middle and “trading” classes at home and a heightened anxiety that this class, due to their more precarious location in the very habitats that produced racially inferior peoples, would fall prey to its contaminating effects.

The question of race, class and physical capacity that informed colonial discourse on racial differentiation in the late nineteenth century did not just highlight difference from native, but also emphasized similarities with aristocratic traditions at home. While the new cadre of ICS might not have come from the prestigious public schools, they aspired to the public school ethos of the sporting, masculine and physically fit man. In

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<sup>42</sup> Elizabeth M Collingham, *Imperial Bodies : the Physical Experience of the Raj, c. 1800-1947*, (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers,2001) 118-119.

his study on the Indian Civil Service, Clive Dewey has drawn attention to the manipulation in selection criterion of the examination in favor of public schools. By increasing the marks for classics and mathematics and penalizing science and modern languages (taught badly in public schools), introducing oral exams, and making the riding test compulsory. He concludes: "It was surprising how often Bengalis and grammar school boys fell at the last fence."<sup>43</sup> Colonial administrators were groomed to display the ideal of gentleman-ruler which was understood and valued in Victorian Britain. The idea of the *sahib* (if not the *sahibs* themselves) was acceptable to metropolitan audiences because it found resonance with prevailing cultural engagement with Darwinism, scientific racism, a preoccupation with keeping British tradition intact in an age of rapid socio- cultural change, and scientific progress, and with preserving an essential "British" character in a rapidly expanding empire.

The colonial hunt provided an excellent platform for *sahibs* from the late nineteenth century to display physical fitness, uphold British tradition in asserting the aristocratic privilege to hunt, and delineate racial differences from the natives. In doing so, the *sahibs* also emphasized their devotion of duty in improving the lot of natives despite harsh circumstances. They battled heat, quelled wild beasts, and protected

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<sup>43</sup> Clive Dewey, *Indian Civil Service* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 216.

helpless natives in their endeavor to improve their lives. In a place like India, the abundance of game and the nature of duties made sport, hunting and work virtually synonymous. The hunter-administrator greatly contributed to popularizing the theme of “white man’s burden,” essential to British imperial identity.

## **Colonial Hunting and Fair Play: The Evolution of the *Sahib***

According to Lieut. Col. Burton:

All sport is governed by unwritten laws, and the general tendency is to give the animal a sporting chance of escape, also to make the sport as great a test as possible consistent with the view – the death of the quarry. It may also be defined as measured by difficulty in achieving success.<sup>44</sup>

The ethos of fair play is said to have been inculcated in British boys from an early age. For instance, fair play demanded that boys not disturb birds while they were nesting. In showing mercy when “vulnerable,” the hunter gained legitimacy to hunt prey at a later stage when it could have a chance to “escape.” Similarly, shooting game at a water hole was consider unsporting, but following the trails of the animal from the water hole rendered it more sportsmanlike.

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<sup>44</sup> Lieut. Col. Burton, “A History of Shikar in India”, *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society*, Volume 50, (1951): 846.

The concept of sportsmanship however, does not seem to have been very prominent in the early nineteenth century. A panoply of merchants and travelers, military officers and civilian officers, sportsmen and collectors hunted with the help of native *shikaris* according to convenience. One of the earliest writers of the genre, Captain Daniel Johnson, writing of his hunting exploits in the late 1790s, displayed no qualms when he wrote: "I usually took my gun with me; my servants carrying a chair and my hookah, and I sat down near the nets or nooses and fired at all that flew over or passed on the sides."<sup>45</sup> During the early decades of nineteenth century, a young staff member, while highly conscious of the pomp and prestige surrounding Lord Amherst's diplomatic tour in 1828-29, did not see anything wrong in throwing stones randomly at flocks of birds "out of curiosity" to see if he could knock them down. While he managed to kill one, he injured several without any thought of tracking injured birds to grant them *coup de grace*.<sup>46</sup> This sort of candor is rarely seen in the second half of the nineteenth century when hunters did not take chance shots and diligently followed up injured animals to put them out of their misery.

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<sup>45</sup> Jim Corbett, *Jungle Lore* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1953), 21.

<sup>46</sup> "The Log of a Griffin": manuscript journal by Edward Ward Walter Raleigh, Bengal Medical Service 1826-46, describing a tour by the Governor-General Lord Amherst, from Barrackpore through the Upper Provinces of Bengal, Mss Eur D786/2 of Mss Eur D786, India Office Select Materials, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library.

While methods of hunt in the subcontinent continued to vary according to landscape and geography, by the late nineteenth century, the *norm* for each region was established firmly. Along with regional *norms*, each form of hunting came to represent particular moral virtues: the chase (as in pig sticking or fox hunting) was associated with aggression, control and excellent riding; the stalk (shooting on foot) demonstrated exceptional courage and skill over weapons; and “sitting up” or waiting for a chance to shoot from *machans* or elephant back bore testimony to patience and perseverance of hunters. We will see in Chapter Two that given the varied landscape and emphasis on the morality of hunting, hunters from varied region carried on a lively debate with their peers about the toughest, bravest and most noble of these forms.

In the earlier decades of the nineteenth century, however, there was a great diversity of modes and methods of hunting. While it became the general norm later to shoot bears, it was acceptable in the early and mid nineteenth century to go bear sticking or deer sticking (using a spear) with dogs and to leave the prey to a linger on with broken parts of spears embedded in them. The idea of *coup de grace* or rendering the kill “clean,” and less painful –the defining characteristics of colonial hunting by the late nineteenth century---- also seem to be missing from these descriptions. Even as Walter Campbell, the author of the widely popular *The Old Forest Ranger* published in 1844, had sought to crystallize notions of ideal hunting behavior, a contributor to the *Indian*

*Sporting Review*, by the name of "Exile," drew a stark contrast to increasing game legislation at home: "with game laws and restraints, we, in India, have nothing to do. It is an offshoot of excessive civilization and here we are all pure, pastoral and primitive."<sup>47</sup> Some early hunters also participated in the snaring and netting of animals with Indians, practices that became associated with native hunting, anathematized and made illegal by late nineteenth century.

### **Game and Fair Play**

The idea of fair play---- to convert killing of animals into a contest and to show mercy to females and the young was extended to animals classified as game. Carnivores like the tiger found no place in the scheme of fair play. Poisoning carnivores, tying baits to lure big cats or tiger shooting from elephants---- practices which otherwise may seem "break every canon of British regard for " were necessary aberrations in the larger project of ridding the countryside of dangerous animals.<sup>48</sup> As we will see in Chapter Three, in actual practice. notions of "game," and "sport," "fair play," and "sportsmanship" were not only ambiguous but often contradictory.

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<sup>47</sup> Exile, "Indian Sporting", *Indian Sporting Review*, Volume IV, (1845):165.

<sup>48</sup> J.G Elliot, *Field Sports In India 1800-1947* ( London: Gentry Books, 1973), 95

In addition to the categorization of wildlife as game or vermin, colonial hunters also identified according to the “quality” of sport they provided; carnivores were often said to provide the best sport. For instance, it was generally accepted that the best sport is given by a half grown young cub “who has never experienced a reverse, and who will come down at the charge, roaring like a fiend, whenever his royal privacy is intruded upon.”<sup>49</sup> The young cub, though not as dangerous or formidable as a full grown tiger, reacted in a more flattering manner----it roared, charged and attacked sportsmen making the encounter infinitely more dramatic. Adult tigers often escaped or attacked more silently: less dramatic but much more dangerous than a tiger charging in full view. The danger posed by retaliatory carnivores justified the otherwise unsporting practices of game hunting.

For game animals, fair play defined the contours of a legitimate kill. As the degree of danger decreased, as was the case when hunting gentle herbivores like the deer, hunting practices needed to made more “fair.” Hunters needed to show kindness to the young and females and to heighten the difficulty of the hunt.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> James Inglis, *Tent Life in Tigerland : Being sporting reminiscences of a pioneer planter in an Indian frontier district*, (London : Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1888),110.

<sup>50</sup> Not all herbivores were gentle. Sportsmen were quick to note that wild elephants, wild buffalo and *gaur* were as dangerous as tigers due to the extreme force of the charge of the animal when

The manifestation of concerns of fair play reflects Victorian attitudes to wild animals. Britain was renowned not only for its stock of deer in aristocratic game reserves, but also claimed the distinction of destroying all wolves in their country. According to Oliver St. John, protection by law was given to hares and deer because they were “beasts of compassion never accounted with either cruelty or foul play.” But it was acceptable to “knock foxes and wolves over the head as they can be found because they are beasts of prey.”<sup>51</sup> Carnivores represented the barbaric forces of nature and had to be quelled, while herbivores deemed gentle and unthreatening deserved protection. Deer in particular found supporters to appeal their cause. General Hamilton or “Hawkeye,” the most renowned hunter in the Nilgiris, wrote an article titled “An Appeal from the Old Stag of the Hills,” where he assumed the voice of a stag in asking the editor of the “Pioneer” to carry his campaign for protection of deer:

While in soft horn, I am obliged to avoid the woods as much as possible, for it does hurt so if I hit the growing horn against a tree, besides I am likely to spoil their shape and then the hinds have nothing to say to me...Mr. Editor, your paper is read by everybody on the hills and I want you to insert a few lines on my behalf, appealing to all sportsman to spare

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wounded. It was deemed acceptable to shoot these animals from elephants’ backs or other vantage points.

<sup>51</sup> Duke of Beaufort ed., *The Badminton Library of Rural Sports and Pastimes* (London: Longman, Green and Company, 1889), 26-27.



us when in velvet, call them sportsmen, it may flatter the shooters and induce them to hold their hands. You know as well as I do that we are utterly useless as a trophy, if you with your strong pen could only tell them strong enough, we should soon have these shooters shamed to own that they had killed a soft horn. I offer my head, when fit, to any stalker who can take it, and my spirit will rest in peace if it knows that my large, wide spreading massive antlers decorate the walls of a true sportsman.<sup>52</sup>

He ends by saying "It will be observed how ready he is to yield up the handsome trophy he bears provided it is taken legitimately."<sup>53</sup> The contours of a legitimate kill were decided by influential people like General Hamilton who owed their reputation as "sportsmen" by demonstrating forbearance and restraint in comparison to the indiscriminate "shooter." According to the notion of fair play, it was unsportsmanlike to kill deer in velvet, to shoot during the breeding season or to kill females or young. True sportsmen hunted only for the experience of the hunt and consequently killed only adult trophy-worthy stags. Hawkeye complained against the sportsmen who killed does among deer and antelope, "These people who are not ashamed to confess their sin, excuse themselves by saying "but I wanted meat, you know." I say far better live forever on the "eternal mutton and murchi" than destroy game in that reckless and selfish

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<sup>52</sup> Hawkeye, Major-General R. Hamilton, "*Game*" (Madras: Higginbotham & Co., 1881), Preface.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

manner.”<sup>54</sup> Social disapproval, regularized by the late nineteenth century in various local legislation on hunting of deer during the breeding season not only embodied notions of mercy to the young and the females but in practice, ensured ready stock of animals sufficiently large enough to provide good trophies once the breeding season was over.

### **Kindness in Killing**

With advances in technology, the idea of “clean” kills became important. Earlier when smooth bore muskets, lead balls, and muzzle loading made accuracy and penetration difficult, hunters showed little concern for clean kills. It was common to find descriptions of wildlife, including deer, killed by a “volley of shots” from a number of sportsmen or burning portions of forests to flush out tigers. Memoirs of the later period, however, describe the hunt as a battle between one hunter and his quarry---- a duel between equals. This notion of “equal contest” was heavily predicated on access to new firepower and by ignoring the role of the *shikari* and rest of the hunter’s retinue of enablers. New weapons such as rifles with conical bullets assured greater accuracy and quick kill; and they did so without “excessive” bloodshed. The idea of prolonged suffering became especially repugnant by late nineteenth century. By this time rifles that loaded more quickly and shoot more accurately could be employed to put an end to an

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<sup>54</sup> Extract from “Lion Shooting In India” Field, 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 1871. Hawkeye, *Game*, 243.

animal's suffering by affecting a quick kill. The idea of suffering became one of the markers of the difference between natives and the English:

The native's ideas of cruelty are peculiar. They differ widely from ours. They think nothing of letting a domestic animal, with broken limbs or sores swarming with maggots, linger to death rather than raise a finger to put it out of it's [sic] misery. They would consider taking its life under any circumstances cruel. Humanity as understood by us is a feeling of which they have no conception.<sup>55</sup>

The aversion to suffering and lingering death was also manifested in the vigorous extermination drive that was launched against wild dogs. According to Wilmot:

The wild dog is a spoiler of the jungle and a cruel fiend. He alone proceeds to eat an animal before life is extinct...and though it may be said in his excuse that he has no means of otherwise killing the larger deer, yet the long drawn anguish which surely in some degree, in spite of appearances, precedes the capture and the lingering death which follows it, seems to jar on the sportsman's desire that a sudden, painless death should conclude the triumph over the fleetness, cunning, or ferocity, of an opponent.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Sanderson, *Thirteen Years among the Wild beasts of India: their Haunts and Habits from Personal Observations; with an Account of the Modes of Capturing and Taming Elephants*. (London: W. H. Allen, 1878), 24.

<sup>56</sup> S. Eardley-Wilmot, *Forest Life and Sport in India* (London: Edward Arnold, 1910), 51.

In their own hunting, the British embraced technology that guaranteed quick kills, not just as illustrative of the hunter's code but also as mark of difference between civilized British and brutish natives.

The idea of *coup de grace* as a moral obligation, beyond the material gain of a trophy, took time to develop. Describing his hunting adventures in the 1820s, Captain Oakenen shows no preoccupation with prolonged suffering. Like many other hunters of the time, Oakenen liked to capture young cubs of bears and tigers and seems oblivious to their suffering. One of his captives for instance was a young tiger cub which was caught and tied on elephant back "where he made a tremendous row. He had received a shot in the scuffle and died before we reached the tents."<sup>57</sup> In his next adventure, Oakenen injured a bear but instead of following him to deliver the *coup de grace*, he let her "hobble away" in pursuit of a tigress. He remarks lackadaisically, "having killed her (the tigress), I returned for the bear he had hid himself somewhere, I then knocked over four deer and went on to camp."<sup>58</sup> The obsession with *coup de grace* or concern over injured animals and suffering was to emerge later in the nineteenth century as part of a

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<sup>57</sup> Oakenen, *Hunting Diary*, 85

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* 115.

new language of imperial dominance in which paternalism and kindness held a special place.

### **The Ruler as British Hunter**

The hunting field was regarded as a training ground for the young recruit and his progress from a griffin (a term implying a white new-comer to India, in common usage in nineteenth century) to an accomplished hunter implied knowledge and experience gained to survive and flourish in India. While I discuss in greater detail the relationship of governance and hunting in chapters Three and Four, I briefly flag it here as contributing to the image of the gentleman-hunter.

From the 1830s, sportsmen had started drawing the link between hunting and administration in sporting journals like *The Bengal Sporting Review*, *The Oriental Sporting Magazine* and *the India Sporting Review* from the 1830s. In his 1844 publication, *The Old Forest Ranger*, Walter Campbell clearly articulated the idea of the hunting gentleman-ruler. Compare, for example the description of a fresh young recruit on his first hunting trip to the image of Mansfield, a master hunter:

(The young recruit) had all the appearance of a gentlemanlike young man, who had but lately arrived from England, and was still in all the happy ignorance of early *griffinage*. His glossy new hat, fashionably cut green hunting coat, breeches of virgin white, and well polished top-boots, were sufficient to convince the most casual observer that he belonged to the unhappy race of mortals who, for twelve months after their arrival are

considered fair game both by Europeans and Natives, and are accordingly quizzed and plundered without mercy, for the very good reason that they are only *griffins*.<sup>59</sup>

Mansfield, on the other hand, is a man of power, strength, conquest and consciously cultivated restraint:

His legs were cased in long leggings of deer –skin...his head was covered by a small cap of Astracan fur, and an ammunition pouch of dressed bear-skin was tightly buckled around his waist...into which was thrust a hunting knife of unusual size, with buck horn handle handsomely mounted in silver. His accoutrements altogether were those of a half reclaimed savage; but the aristocratic cast of his features, the proud glance of his eye, and his erect military carriage, declared at once the gentleman, the soldier and the daring sportsman...A keen observer of the human nature might have detected in the occasional flash of his dark eye, evident tokens of a fiery and restless spirit, well disciplined indeed, but ready to burst forth, if occasion required, like the sudden irruption of a volcano.<sup>60</sup>

The deer-skin leggings, fur cap, and bear skin pouch bear testimony to Mansfield's conquest of wild beasts. The impression of wildness created by these trophies that he chose to adorn himself with is off-set by his features and demeanor that conjure up the "the gentleman, the soldier and the daring sportsman"----- the widely

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<sup>59</sup> W.Campbell, *The Old Forest Range*, 7.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

acknowledged heroes of the imperial world. The final glamorous touch given to this hero is the indication of awesome power that is subject to the will of the hero. Mansfield's composure and discipline served as a perfect foil to a place like India seen a place of extremes. Restraint, self-possession and temperance were celebrated, and the author's comment that "Mansfield like all good sportsmen, was temperate himself and the cause of temperance in others"<sup>61</sup> is an obvious call for emulation.

The image of the robust Briton blessed with a physical aptitude that only the cooler temperatures of Britain could naturally endow, also helped justify colonial rule in India. Embedded in this image was the idea of indefatigable endurance that enabled administrative efficacy and the power to deal with vast amounts of work. It was widely held that "the labour of *one* Englishman is equal to that of *three* ordinary Indians."<sup>62</sup> A taste for sporting exercise and the outdoor life was considered a necessity for a British officer and reveals remarkable continuity through the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries. Sir Richard Temple, the Chief Commissioner of Central Provinces

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid. 83.

<sup>62</sup> *India: Geographical, Statistical, and Historical*, Compiled from McCulloch and Others, *London Times Correspondence* (London: George Watts, 1858), 81-82. cited in Francis Hutchins, *Illusion of Permanence*, 67.

claimed, “a forest officer, who is not fond of shooting, is not worth his salt.”<sup>63</sup> In India, the crucial boundary between work and play was blurred and in a period where campaigns were launched to exterminate carnivores and reclaim forested tracts for agriculture, play sometimes became work.

Hunting provided an ideal arena for the British man to display, affirm and broadcast the particularly British ideal of the gentleman-ruler,- the *sahib*. Hunting in the deep interiors was perceived to usher in civilization to these areas.

Animal symbolism increasingly became important as images of British dignitaries hunting in the colonies gained popularity and perpetuated the figure of the white, paternalistic hunter-ruler. Images of high British dignitaries hunting in remote corners of the Empire captured through the camera affirmed the image of British dominance over nature and the success in the extension of empire for the home audience.<sup>64</sup> The inclusion of the idea of sportsmanship in British hunting served a dual

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<sup>63</sup> F. C. Hicks *Forty Years Among the Wild Animals of India from Mysore to the Himalayas* (Allahabad: Pioneer Press, 1910), 613.

<sup>64</sup> See Chandrika Kaul, “Monarchical Display and the Politics of Empire: Princes of Wales and India 1870–1920s,” *Twentieth Century British History*, 17, no. 4 (2006): 464-488.



purpose: it defined the contours of the crucial differences between British and Indian, even while it rationalized the British as rulers.

## **British Hunter versus the Indian Hunter: Creation of Difference**

The British commemorated the colonial hunt as distinct and different from native methods. The evolution of their own tradition however was influenced by the hunting traditions of royal Indian courts, the methods of the native *shikaris* and a continued dependence on the skills of the latter during their hunting expeditions. The success of the rhetoric of the colonial hunt lay in the appropriation of native practices as distinctly colonial inventions. In fact by the late nineteenth century, colonial hunters dominated hunting in the subcontinent to such an extent that many of them even called themselves *shikaris* and claimed the term “*shikar*” as their own.

## **The British Hunter and the Princely Hunter**

Animals were important in diplomatic interactions between the Company’s officials and Indian princes from the early eighteenth century. In addition to hunting, princely courts also invited the Company’s officials to view animal fights. The account of Daniel Johnson and private letters of officials however suggest that the British regarded these fights with great disdain describing them as “unsporting.” Contrary to

the morality laden term it was to become by late nineteenth century, “sport” during this period was used very differently. The criticism of animal fights as “unsporting” speaks more of the authors-hunter’s disappointment at not having witnessed an exciting contest between animals rather objection to the concept itself. The young Captain Gresley of Bengal Army who had the occasion to be present during Lord Amherst’s visit to Lucknow (Oudhe) wrote to his father describing his excitement at the prospect of watching “all kinds of fights- elephants together with tigers and buffalo and rhinoceros and bear with crocodile, which I dare say will be highly amusing and terrific.”<sup>65</sup> Members of the personal staff of the Lord’s retinue too looked forward to “the grand display of animal fighting for which the King is so renowned,” and that “every person who could get invited was in expectation of the grandest display of *brutal ferocity that could be imagined and on an unusually magnificent scale.*”<sup>66</sup> His palpable disappointment at four tigers killed by buffaloes in a “very quick time” without resistance is obvious. He concluded: “So far the fights were disappointing...we had quite enough to satisfy us,

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<sup>65</sup> Letter books of Capt Francis Gresley, Bengal Army, Nizam of Hyderabad’s service 1826-44, describing his travels and events in India; with a few other papers, B120, India Office Select Materials, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library.

<sup>66</sup> *The Log of a Griffin*, Emphasis mine.

that there was neither sport or amusement in these so much praised exhibitions.”<sup>67</sup> In other instances of such contests as well, criticism seems to be centered around a seeming lack of “contest” between the animals. Over the course of nineteenth century, the idea of fair play and sporting came to inform the notion of “sporting” behavior and by close of the century had become deeply entrenched in the British psyche. Stanley Reed, the chronicler to the Royal Tour of 1906-06, was able to sum up succinctly the British aversion to animal fights as lacking “every element which goes to provide sport in the English sense of that much abused term—the element of personal skill, address, courage and perhaps risk...”<sup>68</sup> Descriptions of gladiatorial animal combats and hunting by natives in early nineteenth century fed into the construction of Oriental Despotism; by the late nineteenth century, these accounts together with descriptions of “unsporting” practices of contemporary princes defined hunting by Indian aristocracy. The idea of being mere spectators---- of sitting back and watching the contest ----was said to be a uniquely oriental phenomenon, characteristic of the indolence and passivity which

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Stanley Reed, *The Royal Tour of India- A Record of the Tour of T.R.H., the prince of Wales in India and China from November 1905 to March 1906* (Bombay: Bennett Coleman and Company, 1906), 98. It is also important to remember that despite claims to the contrary, cock fighting, bull baiting or dog fights continued to be popular in England and remained a source of embarrassment for anti-cruelty campaigners and the upper and middle classes.

gripped even rulers of the subject race. The British on the other hand showed initiative and courage by involving themselves in the middle of the action. According to the British sportsman-hunter, indolence was an inherent trait of the Indian prince. It was generally held that the Indian rajah "does everything vicariously."<sup>69</sup> In his hunting memoirs, James Inglis, a planter in Assam, himself struggling to gain social respectability in British social circles, was at pains to highlight "how different are their ideas from ours" by repeating an old story of a native magnate:

Who, on seeing a ball-room for the first time, expressed his astonishment the "*sahib logue*" took the trouble to dance themselves, when they could so easily procure hirelings to do the dancing for them. In the pursuit of field sports, the difference is not less marked.<sup>70</sup>

Similarly, descriptions of princely hunts helped distance Britons from native rulers. The participation of hundreds of beaters during princely hunts, and the use of the *machan*, towers and elephants were seen to give the hunt a decidedly unfair character, and the sympathy of the European lay with the prey. Louis Roussette, a French traveler visiting India during 1864 to 1870, describes princely hunts where hunters (including Roussette) shot animals from a tower commenting, "for my own part, I have always felt

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<sup>69</sup> Sir Edward Braddon, *Thirty years of Shikar* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1895), 66.

<sup>70</sup> James Inglis, 341

a sort of remorse in making one of the eight to assassinate a tiger from behind a wall two feet in thickness."<sup>71</sup> Somehow Roussette did not feel any sympathy with tigers when the British shot them on elephant backs or perched high above the ground on a *machan* with a bait to lure them. These methods were rationalized as sportsmanly by scaling down the hunt. The smaller numbers of beaters and hunters was argued to make the hunt more difficult and more of a contest between hunters and the hunted.

While colonial hunters also found it convenient to accept hunting invitations from local nawabs and rajas, in memorializing their experiences, they used this shared experience as a point of difference between them and the native elites. Colonel Larking, for example, hunted successfully for several weeks on the reserves of a local Nawab in the Deccan pointed to the cruel hunting habits of the nawab:

If there is one thing more than another which makes my blood boil it is wanton cruelty to animals...The young nawab worried a pig since no wild boar was available. The poor beast got two fearful wounds, and was making off, pelted and otherwise ill-treated by the natives, whilst the Nawab came to breakfast rather pleased with himself. I could not stand the sight (and) went to put the poor creature out of its misery. The plucky animal, although so seriously wounded, no sooner saw (us) approach than he turned around and charged.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Louis Roussette, , *India and it's Native princes: Travels in Central India and in the Presidencies of Bombay and Bengal*, reprint (Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1983.), 394.

<sup>72</sup> Colonel Cuthbert Larking, *Bandobast and Khabar* (London: Hurst and Blackett Limited, 1888), 168.

The nawab is clearly seen lacking in pluck, responsibility or sensibility. The pig on the other hand shows better character in confronting Britons who take the responsibility to end his suffering.

While material on the Indian view of British hunting practices is comparatively scarce throughout colonial period, it is interesting to consider the Maharaja of Bobilli's advice to his fellow "aristocrats" in 1905: "Generally Europeans are more reckless in sports than Indians. But you are not an ordinary person; on your safety depends the welfare of many hundreds."<sup>73</sup> He claimed that the safety of the Raja was paramount, that bearers with the extra rifle, spear or dagger were a must and that tiger shooting should be conducted only from a *machan*. His justification was that "if a shikari accompanying you happens to lose his life ... you will surely protect his family. If, on the other hand, anything were to happen to you, several hundreds of families would be deprived their protector."<sup>74</sup> The Maharaja had drawn attention to what he perceived to be the difference between colonialists and native aristocrats. The traditional aristocrat

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<sup>73</sup> Maharaja of Bobilli, *Advice to the Indian Aristocracy* (Madras: Addison and Company, 1905), 44.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

was sovereign with deep ties to his people. He was irreplaceable. Colonialists had no such bonds with people; they were *ordinary* people who could be replaced easily. British officials though recruited from middle classes in Britain by the late nineteenth century had come to see themselves as an aristocratic ruling elite. The Maharaja found it necessary to remind them (under the pretext of advising Indian aristocracy) that despite the claims to power and privilege befitting aristocrats, colonial administrators were in fact dispensable officers of the state and therefore could afford to be “reckless.”

However, even though the broader British discourse dismissed princely traditions, hunting expeditions with the involvement of British dignitaries continued as an important part of the ceremonial exchanges between the two. The conquest of recalcitrant powers was reinforced in the appropriation of the symbolic world of animals through which the monarchical heads of these kingdoms had celebrated their identity and sovereignty. The British need for ceremonial display of traditional power has been explored by many historians.<sup>75</sup> Colonial hunting, despite claims to British

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<sup>75</sup> See Bernard Cohn, “Representing Authority in Victorian India”, in *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. E. Hobsbawn and T. Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

tradition was in reality a hybrid Indo-British hunting tradition, a result of the fusion of incoming British practices, and existing and evolving princely practices.<sup>76</sup>

Even as early as 1827, Lord Amherst sought to hold durbars in the style of Indian princes. Ceremonial gifts to the Governor- General included several elephants, Bengal tigers, horses, deer and hare, birds and trays of shawls, jewels and sweetmeats of raisins, torts etc.<sup>77</sup> Hunting, animal fights and menageries were all important symbols of Indian sovereignty, so the defeat of each power was accompanied by disbanding its hunting establishment and the menageries. John Fayerer writes of Wajid Ali's (the last ruler of the important state of Awadh, who was exiled after the revolt of 1857) passion for menageries, and recounted that the monarch's removal was accompanied by the auction of his tiger, lions, cheetahs elephants, rhinos and giraffes and other animals: "Lucknow is no more as she was. The tiger throne of Hyder Ali, the tiger of Mysore and his toy tiger devouring an English soldier in which he is said to have delighted are gone likewise."<sup>78</sup> Tipu Sultan, the son of Hyder Ali, in particular commanded a lingering and

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<sup>76</sup> It is important to remember that after the collapse of Mughal Empire, many princely rulers themselves adopted Mughal traditions, especially in hunting practices.

<sup>77</sup> The Log of a Griffin.

<sup>78</sup> J. Fayerer, *The Royal Tiger of Bengal: His Life and Death* (London: J and A Churchill, 1875),19.



perverse fascination for the British. Tipu who was finally defeated in 1799, used the symbolism of tiger highly efficiently, and as I argue in Chapter Three, the highly ambivalent attitude towards the tiger even in the heyday of conservation in the twentieth century reflects the memory of Tipu and his symbol of the tiger in British imagination. Immediately after the sacking of Seringapatam, there was an obsessive focus on his tiger throne, the royal insignia of the tiger and on his hunting estates, and hunting techniques. A large consignment of Tipu's treasures was shipped as a gift to the Crown and the Board of Directors thought that the tiger toy emblematic of the "arrogance and barbaric cruelty of Tipoo may be thought deserving of the place in the Tower of London."<sup>79</sup> In addition, they also appointed a committee to explore the symbolic importance of the repertoire of Tipu's animal motifs. The committee spent considerable effort researching his hunting establishment, favorite hunting practices, favorite game and his use of the tiger as his insignia and in his throne. The detailed correspondence during 1799- 1802 between the Commander in Chief at Seringapatnam, the Office of the Governor General in Calcutta, and the Board of Directors in London is proof to the efforts made by the senior Company officials to trace and confiscate the

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<sup>79</sup> Memo relating to the Tyger found at Seringapatam, IOR/H/255, Records of the Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India: Board's Collections, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library.

throne. Unlike the tiger “toy” however, the throne continued to elude the authorities and the obsessive hunt for it abated only after investigations concluded that it had been destroyed, parts of it sold by British soldiers following the siege.<sup>80</sup>

A similar process of conquest and appropriation was underway in the evolution of Indo-British colonial hunt. Daniel Johnson describes in 1822, the hunt organized by the Awadh court where nearly half of the town population accompanied the king: dancing girls, singers, temporary markets, and huge amounts of artillery formed important parts of the party.<sup>81</sup> The British continued this custom of displaying the monarch in his most glorious self. Royal tours included elaborate, carnivalesque hunting expeditions, and a photographer to chronicle their victories over ferocious animals. In addition, the elephant-borne tiger shoot was appropriated as a part of *British* colonial tradition. British sportsmen endorsed this practice: “It is fitting that the Kings of England, as Emperors of India and heirs of Mughal Emperors of Delhi, should in this respect have followed in the footsteps of Babar, of Akbar the Great, Jehangir and

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<sup>80</sup> Extract off a letter dated 19<sup>th</sup> July 1799, from Capt Macaulay, Private Secretary to the Commander in Chief to the Right Hon. Governor-General, IOR/H/255, Records of the Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India: Board’s Collections, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library.

<sup>81</sup> Daniel Johnson, *Sketches of Field Sports as Followed by Natives of India*. (London : Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1822), 169.

Aurengzeb.”<sup>82</sup> In addition to the elephant borne shoot, shooting from *machans* with live baits was also adopted by the British. When the British adopted this form of hunt, in keeping with Victorian sensibilities, they eliminated singing and dancing, markets and weaponry not directly used in hunting. They retained, however the huge number of caparisoned elephants, horses, trackers and beaters and plenty of rifles, spears and guns used in the hunt. Viceroys, Governors and officers in the higher echelons of the administration patronized the big organized shoots. The hunt as it unraveled through the day followed the protocol of the Mughal or Rajputana hunt. The most flattering trophy---- the biggest tiger, the largest number of birds or the largest buffalo head---- was reserved for the highest-ranking Briton----the royal personage, the Viceroy or the Governor or senior official. If the event was hosted by a prominent Indian princely house, like the Scindhias, the Rajputs or the Nizam of Hyderabad, the second best catch was afforded to them followed by others in the hunting party. The native protocol of providing the best trophy to the visiting dignitary is another reflection of the continuities and discontinuities between Mughal traditions and hybrid Indo-British hunting habits.

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<sup>82</sup> R.G.Burton, *The Book of the Indian Tiger* (Dehra Dun: Natraj Publishers, 1989),177.

## The Village *Shikari* in the Colonial Hunt

The village *shikari* served an important function as a tracker and guide for the British hunter. Without his skill and services, few British could go on a hunt. In addition to appropriating Mughal forms of the hunt, the British were also dependent on the lowly village *shikari* to prove their masculine prowess in the Indian countryside. A highly ambivalent figure in hunting literature, the skills of the *shikari* in the jungle was explained as a necessity of primitive people incapable to confronting wild animals. One of the most famous hunters of the late nineteenth century G. P Sanderson ascribed the *shikari's* efficiency in tracking prey and skills as marksmen: "Native *shikaris* will do many things from their acquaintance with wild animals that they may do so without risk but which to the uninitiated sportsman appear venturesome."<sup>83</sup> He concluded that the native's knowledge of jungle and game arose from insecurity from wild animals since they "neither have the means nor the stomach to oppose them. They thus become preternaturally quick at noting sights and sounds."<sup>84</sup> Rather than a learned skill, the native's abilities were almost a physical compulsion. His alertness was explained as akin

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<sup>83</sup> G.P. Sanderson, *The Wild Beasts of India*, first Indian publication (Delhi Mittal Publications, 1983), 30.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* 29.

to the nervous alertness seen deer and other animals of prey. The native acquired these skills in their constant worried vigil to read signs of possible attacks from a predator. The same skills when acquired by colonial hunters on the other hand came to be celebrated as “woodcraft.”

In spite of his importance to the British or perhaps because of it, the local *shikari* was treated with great suspicion and disdain. The Nilgiri Game Association, for instance, suggested in 1878 that European hunters reduce their dependence on the *shikari* and published self-help maps and guides for its patrons.<sup>85</sup> Establishing a social distance from the native *shikari* was necessary in a racialized environment when such differences between colonizer and colonized were critical to establishing the physical and moral superiority of the colonial hunter. *Shikaris* were dehumanized as mere auxiliaries of the hunting enterprise and their skills attributed to their “primitiveness,” and even bestiality. Campbell’s description, of the “motionless figure of the native, perched like some huge bird of prey, and watching with eagle glance to prevent the possibility of any animal stealing away unobserved” acknowledges the skills of the

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<sup>85</sup> Minutes of the Nilgiri Game Association, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 1878, The Nilgiri Environment and Wildlife Association (formerly the Nilgiri Game Association), Ootacamund.

*shikari* by describing him as almost animal-like.<sup>86</sup> John Lowth, writing in the early nineteenth century about the use of hounds, remarked, "Pointers are not generally used, in hunting for game, in this country, Coolies (laborers) perform this office and generally find plenty of game. A sportsman is accompanied by about twenty of them."<sup>87</sup> And in the early twentieth century, Wilmot identified without discrimination, "man or beast, orderly and mahout, of elephant, of horse, or dogs as auxiliaries in the hunt without which neither the forester nor the solitary sportsman could hope to be successful."<sup>88</sup> Clearly, in the colonial hunter's perception, there was little to distinguish between man (that is the village *shikari*) and beast or between native orderlies, mahouts, horses, dogs as subsidiary accoutrements of the hunt.

The crucial factor in successful British appropriation of the hunt lay in the moment of death. The *shikari* who tracked the game and carried guns for the imperial sportsman, was denied agency at this moment. Relinquishing the weapon and retreating into the background (sometimes literally to seek protection in trees from possible attacks

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<sup>86</sup> Campbell, *Old Forest Ranger*, 31.

<sup>87</sup> John B. Lowth, "A Letter from India" (Oakham : George Snodin Cunnington, 1841),62.

<sup>88</sup> S. Eardley-Wilmot, *Forest Life and Sport in India* (London: Edward Arnold, 1910), 40.

injured animals), the *shikaris* enabled the sportsman to execute his prey. The hunter who wielded the gun was able to make death instant and less bloody as compared to the snares and traps used by the natives. More importantly, the capacity to make a legal and a morally legitimate kill lay firmly in the hands of sportsmen. Colonial hunters constantly invoked woodcraft, etiquette and fair play to highlight the *process* of hunt as being morally uplifting. Death of the quarry, or the “end” was regarded as a “natural” culmination of the hunter’s endeavors. However, despite this emphasis on the *process* of the hunt rather than the end, in practice, the difference between the *shikari* and the British sportsman actually lay in the moment of death. The process of the hunt relied heavily on native skill, the death of the quarry being the sole prerogative of the white hunter.

The colonial hunt therefore was predicated on the skill of the village *shikari*. In order to maintain the independence of the colonial hunt, great masters of the hunt like F.W. Fletcher and Hicks urged fellow colonialists to master the skills of the “primitive” *shikari*. According to Fletcher, “a man who allows his success to depend entirely on the skill of an army of native *shikaris*... knows nothing of the true delight of sport...”<sup>89</sup> A more indignant Hicks wrote:

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<sup>89</sup> F.W.F.Fletcher, *Sport on the Nilgiris and Wynaad* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1911), 279.

Science and system are being introduced into every branch of human pastimes. But, strange to say, the methods employed in the sport of tiger—shooting is in the main the same now as in time immemorial. It were as if the glamour of the Indian jungles, the mysteries which surround its inhabitants, their unreasoning fidelity to time honoured customs and their bigoted aversion to all change had cast a spell over and hypnotized European sportsmen, with the result that for over a hundred years they have been content to subordinate in this matter their own intellect and intelligence...(it is) deplorable when one considers the fact that an important factor (in hunting is) self reliance and woodcraft.... we find the Briton, otherwise a born leader of men, abdicating his birthright.<sup>90</sup>

He advised his colleagues:

By all means make use of a native's local knowledge, but the sportsman should use it only in the same way as Army officer would in the time of war, namely, as a subsidiary to his own plan of campaign and not leave the planning of his campaign to an uneducated subordinate.<sup>91</sup>

Sport therefore also came to imply mastery over native skill and labor, by acquiring a thorough knowledge of the Indian jungles and the habits of its inhabitants.

While mastering the skills of woodcraft (or in absence of being able to master them) sportsmen were also told to learn to manage their *shikaris*. Managing the *shikaris*

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<sup>90</sup> F.C. Hicks, *Forty Years among the Wild Animals*, 19.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* 20.



and keeping them under control enabled hunters to appropriate the skill of the *shikari* as a comment on their leadership. According to Sanderson, “men who serve a judicious master...gain great confidence, and behave with a courage which the sportsman cannot but feel complimentary to himself, as reflecting their reliance on his coolness and skill.”<sup>92</sup> The discourse of self-sufficiency was not just important for knowledge and control of jungles but to establish leadership of the British hunter; and *independence* of the colonial hunt.

The idea of fair play was also used to differentiate between the village *shikari* and the *sahib's shikar*. As one writer noted, “In Hindu parlance all are sportsmen who in any way pursue game. The word poacher is not to be found in their vocabulary.”<sup>93</sup> Like his British counterpart, the native hunter was perceived as cruel, who hunted for the pot and without any discretion. Of his trackers, Sanderson said:

None of my men ever thought of sparing the youngest animal we might find in the jungle. If permitted to so, they would consign fawn or leveret, whose helplessness might have been expected to excite even their compassion, to game bag without a regret, except at it's size.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Sanderson, *The Wild Beasts of India*, 30.

<sup>93</sup> Author Unknown, “Hints on Shikar”, *I.S.R.*, Volume xii, 1850.

<sup>94</sup> Sanderson, *The Wild Beasts of India*, 24.

The notion that Indians were cruel to animals while the British were fair and kinder was an outcome of and contributed to the colonial ideology of difference. With the evolution of a distinct British form of hunt, the native *shikari* came to be seen as predatory and loathsome as his notion of the hunt lacked any sense of an ethical code of conduct. His methods of hunt were said to be primitive and cruel, his aim was utilitarian and he hunted without reservation, killing game even when it was nesting, feeding its young or drinking from a water hole. By the time the forests were enclosed as reserves these activities had been identified as poaching and liable for penalty. While the idea of killing for consumption was a trope familiar to the figure of the desperate poacher in Britain as well, the notion of cruelty was not couched as an inherent trait of the British poacher but as an *aberration*, a corruption of public morality. In India, however, the image of the cruel poacher was hailed as an expression of the inherent racial inferiority of the native population.

Moral differences on the question of the hunt were also used to establish British conduct and character. The emphasis on the hard working hunter-protector *sahib* with a paternal concern for the native villager's welfare was said to distinguish colonial hunting from hunting by Indian princes, or from the cruel practices of the village *shikari*.

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Documenting the attitudes of the villagers, one official wrote, “the natives appear to look on their losses in the light of a tax, or as their fate, that must be endured.”<sup>95</sup> It seems that the apparent disinclination of the villager to interfere with the natural world reinforced the idea of a weak populace, incapable of ruling or defending itself in need of a protector. *Sahibs* claimed a large part of their hunting involved killing dangerous and ferocious beasts in an effort to protect villagers’ life and property. Native *shikaris*, they claimed were more interested in meat (and lacking in courage) and did not hunt dangerous animals. Indian princes on the other hand, often *preserved* dangerous beasts in their hunting preserves without concern for the safety of the neighboring and hunted these animals only at their own convenience. The *sahibs* on the other hand were always willing to destroy “noxious” animals as part of their duty to guard the helpless villager. The British by their capacity (especially after prolonged period of native disarmament) and inclination assumed leadership in quelling dark forces of nature.

Records of the East India Company reveal that even in the early decades of nineteenth century, control of “noxious” animals and wildlife was important to the administration and extension of cultivation. However, colonial hunters of this period do

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<sup>95</sup> J.H. Baldwin, *The Large and Small game of Bengal and North Western provinces of India* (London: Publisher Unknown, 1883), 15.

not seem to have realized their role as protectors just yet. In the post 1858 period, hunting was glorified as a means of delivering the native from depredations of wild beasts. While destruction of their habitat brought wild animals in closer contact with the villagers, the Arms Act of 1878 made it impossible for the villager to defend himself. This enabled the white hunter to play out the role of the imperial protector, harbinger of progress and increase the prestige of the *sahib* and British Crown. Though I intend to discuss British interaction with natives in the countryside in subsequent chapters, I would like to briefly mention here the importance of hunting in contributing to the image of the *sahib*.

The growth in technology also complemented the emerging ideas of fair play. Better firearms enabled evolution of value laden notions of “quick, bloodless and painless” death. British sportsmen also considered themselves amateur naturalists who contributed to the growth of natural sciences at home. Photography and taxidermy both served as real and material evidence of the successes of the white hunters in the colonies.

## Science, Technology and the Colonial Hunt

Asserting masculinity and physical prowess was also important in an age where technology had introduced new weapons of destruction that made killing (humans and animals) easier. Hunting reassured Britons that they were managing to embrace civilization, technology, and progress without sacrificing their masculinity. Colonial hunting protected Britons in India and in the metropole from fear that technological progress might rob them of manhood and that it thereby protects claims to national and racial superiority from contradictions between all these criteria.

Articulation of sportsmanly behavior also reflected growth in natural sciences and of technology. The emphasis on reducing suffering for instance, was possible only with improvements in shooting paraphernalia. Sportsmen also considered themselves as contributing to natural sciences and showed how closely they followed the discipline by defining sportsmanly skill in targeting areas of their prey that affect the quickest kill. In keeping with the “scientific” temper of the times, they also used photography and taxidermy as material witnesses to their hunting exploits in the subcontinent.

It was no coincidence that improved guns and rifles, weapons of destruction were claimed as instruments of kindness in the discourse on colonial hunting. Colonial hunting contained many such conflicting ideas. Just as colonialists claimed it was

sportsmanly to give an animal a chance to escape and hunt it relentlessly at the same time (with the aid of beaters and guides), they also claimed that firepower allowed clean and quick kills. In an age of disarmament, colonial hunters enjoyed access to this technology and firepower was a powerful symbol of progress and western science in the Indian wilds. European hunters reveled in the “delightful feel” of a modern sporting rifle” with the sense of its “wonderful powers and the scientific skills.”<sup>96</sup> Jim Corbett summed up the feeling of empowerment in owning a modern rifle that gave him the confidence to penetrate deeper into the forest:

The bow and the arrow had enabled me to penetrate farther into the jungles than the catapult, and the muzzle-loader had enabled me to penetrate farther than the bow and arrow; and now, armed with a rifle, the jungles were open to me to wander in wherever I chose to go.<sup>97</sup>

Firepower tamed the most formidable quarry with assured precision and detachment. Modern firepower was integral to the portrayals of intrepid white hunter---a picture of control and restraint against the savage emotion of the animal, and the native leading one sportsman to exclaim, “Hurra! For the wild woods, Hurra! For the

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<sup>96</sup> *India and the Durbar* : a reprint of the Indian articles in the "Empire Day" Ed. of THE TIMES, May 24th, 1911, (London: Macmillan, 1911), 295.

<sup>97</sup> Jim Corbett, *Jungle Lore* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), 25.

headlong charge of the mighty bull! And thrice hurra! For the deadly grooved barrel before which he bows his proud head to the dust!"<sup>98</sup> In addition to enabling penetration into wilderness and conquering its most ferocious animals, control over arms also contributed to the idea of the cruel native who with his snares and traps or at the most a muzzle-loading rifle was seen to perpetuate unnecessary cruelty on animals.

Knowledge of animal behavior and physique was important in being able to conform to the idea of sporting behavior. With popularization of natural sciences, colonial hunters also took immense pride identifying and targeting the parts of an animal's body that would affect a quick and efficient kill. Ridiculing his native tracker's attempts to shoot an animal on sight, G. P. Sanderson was to remark, "...the difference between successful and unsuccessful sportsmen... is the knowledge of these points and to self control than to their attainments as marksmen."<sup>99</sup> The science of killing was the unique privilege of the ruler. In fact, most British sportsmen also considered themselves to be keen naturalists and saw their hunting expeditions as contributing to the growth of the natural sciences such as botany and zoology.

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<sup>98</sup> Campbell, *Old Forest Ranger*, 4.

<sup>99</sup> Sanderson, *The Wild Beasts of India*, 87.

## Colonial Hunter as an Amateur Naturalist

In its earlier days, the Asiatic Society was largely dependent on hunters for specimens. In 1908, the natural history branch of the Indian Museum published a catalogue of horns and antlers in the hope that it would help sportsmen in the field. N. Annandale, the superintendent of the Museum also hoped the catalogue would inspire more sportsmen to donate their trophies to it. He admitted that the Museum often found itself in “the somewhat ridiculous position of being unable to answer inquiries about some common animal, simply because we cannot refer to specimens.”<sup>100</sup> Although a fully equipped Zoological Survey was established in 1916, sportsmen remained important contributors to their collections. Colonial hunters prided in contributing to the growth of a scientific temper in a savage and wild land.

As early as 1847, an author lauded the effort to narrow the gap between formal and informal “science.” In an article titled “Sporting in jest made Science in earnest,” he challenged that the view that the valuable part of natural history consists merely in the knowledge of the manners and forms of animals:

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<sup>100</sup> T. Bentham, *An Illustrated Catalogue of the Asiatic Horns and Antlers in the collection of the Indian Museum*, Calcutta (Calcutta : Indian Museum, Natural History Section, 1908), Preface.



That this knowledge is, apart from the hard words, a very simple matter; that the pursuits of sportsmen necessarily put them in possession of a larger portion of substance of it than the bookman, shut up in cities can possibly possess; and desires accordingly to see the substantial knowledge of the former substituted for those wordy conceits of synonymy and of system mongering which constitute the whole stock in trade of the latter. The closet men have access to what? To parcels of dried skins eked out, now and then; by drier bones and supplemented by such a very limited observation of living animals as may be gleamed from menageries.<sup>101</sup>

Almost a century later, F W Champion, the famous wildlife photographer in the Indian Forest Services, echoed similar sentiments:

Fireside naturalists who, having discovered a law of nature which undoubtedly hold true with certain animals in certain set conditions, have let their enthusiasm run away with them, and have made claims which the man who lives in the wilds and does not spend his time within four walls of a museum realizes at once to be ridiculous.<sup>102</sup>

Amateur naturalists enjoyed the same legitimacy the hunter-sportsman enjoyed *vis a vis* the poacher and the amateur sportsman enjoyed *vis a vis* the professional sportsman. Amateur hunters, sportsmen and naturalists were all noble individuals who

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<sup>101</sup> Author Unknown, 'Sporting in Jest made Science in Earnest', *I.S.R.* Volume VI. (1847): 55.

<sup>102</sup> F. W. Champion, *The Jungle in Sunlight and Shadow* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1934), 151.

did not care for material gain but pursued their activities to improve themselves, build character and contribute to science.

This moral superiority of natural sciences created a hunger for specimen-trophies that often led to large-scale butchering of the fauna. Even in the age of preservation in the twentieth century, excessive killing for specimens did not violate any codes of hunting. The specimen-collector William Hornaday on an expedition to collect specimens of the Nilgiri *langur*, shot a large number of monkeys of which less than half could be preserved as specimens and celebrated his success:

From the day we entered the forest we began to collect specimens of black langurs..., which actually swarmed in the treetops wherever we went. I shot 45 langurs, out of which I got 20 skeletons and skins. The tree tops were so lofty I was obliged to shoot them all with my rifle and in order to get a skeleton leaving no broken bones, I had to shoot one monkey through the head and take it's body and legs and shoot another of same size through the body for the sake of it's skull...the black langur is a very handsome monkey.<sup>103</sup>

For the hunter-naturalist, bagging the right specimen contained all the essential thrills of chase, of classification and of possession. Accurate observation, classification and recording became essential requisites for sportsmen of the early twentieth century.

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<sup>103</sup> William T. Hornaday, quoted in F.E. Poirer, "The Non- Human Primates of Nilgiris", in Paul Hockings eds. *Blue Mountains* ( Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989).

The collaboration between natural scientists and the amateur hunter-naturalists was beneficial to both. Sportsmen published their observations of animal behavior in various sporting journals and provided specimens for further study. Natural sciences complemented their activities by providing information on animal habitats, habits and anatomy enabling the hunter to manufacture superiority of the colonial hunt as one based on scientific principles.

### **Photography, Taxidermy and the Art of “Truthful” Representation**

The British expatriate in India was equally concerned with sustaining the image of brave frontiersmen for the home audience. Amidst growing cynicism of untruthful “tiger stories” emanating from India, it was often said in defense that in the context of Indian hunting, truth was stranger than fiction. According to Inglis, “To the ordinary reader in an English town, to anyone who has not lived in India, the bare recital of many of the most common incidents of a day’s shooting in that land of glowing color, teeming life, and romantic association seems exaggerated, strained and unnatural.”<sup>104</sup> Sportsmen claimed to have maintained accurate diaries and journals recording their hunting activities, which they claimed, could corroborate facts. Inglis hoped that these records provided an answer to the “sneering unbelieving critics, who have twitted me with

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<sup>104</sup> Inglis, *Tent Life in Tigerland*, 2.

“drawing a long bow” in my hunting adventures.”<sup>105</sup> True sportsmen in the twentieth century drew a distinction between themselves and others by maintaining “scientifically” accurate records and logbooks.

The self-help books on hunting from the mid nineteenth century also offered advice on best way to preserve trophies. Trophies had become increasingly from the late nineteenth century, and carrying back of the material souvenirs of hunting adventures became one of the more tangible benefits of *shikar* in the subcontinent. Wilmot confessed that seeing a good trophy worthy animal made his blood “tingle with the lust of possession.”<sup>106</sup> Trophies could be measured and provided tangible proof to the hunter’s prowess to his peers. While the hunt endowed nobility on the hunter in far flung corners of the empire, material remains of animals in the form of trophies ensured that this nobility extended long after the thrill of the chase had abated. Describing his sentiments on his first tiger shoot in 1845, a young hunter in Bengal recalled, “Bright visions floated across my brain of tiger-teeth on mantel pieces- a grinning tiger skull to grace the village museum, tiger claws for the Lilliputian handles of ladies riding whips

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.* 95.

<sup>106</sup> Wilmot, *Forest Life and Sport in India*, 45.

and a tiger skin for the drawing room hearth.”<sup>107</sup> Trophies were also used effectively in official buildings in India (and also at home) to highlight the prestige and tradition of British rule. Walking into the Police Officer’s Mess in the United Provinces in the 1930s, Charles Blunden, a recent recruit to the service was immediately struck with “admiration at the trophies, weapons, bearded photographs which filled every wall in the ante room and dining room.”<sup>108</sup> This form of decoration in training institutes and colonial offices was highly effective in identifying and upholding the conduct expected of the ideal imperial ruler.

Photography perfectly complemented taxidermy in potent display of imperial power in the subcontinent. James Ryan has argued that despite claims of accuracy, photographs did not so much record the real as signify and construct it.<sup>109</sup> Photographs were part of the rhetorical devices that fed the themes of nature, empire and races that were already a part of the Victorian understanding of the world. The prevalent popularity of positivist thought led to acceptance of photographs as natural processes

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<sup>107</sup> -----B, *The Bengal Sporting Review* Volume1. March no. 3(1845): 209.

<sup>108</sup> *Memoirs of Charles Blunden*, 118.

<sup>109</sup> James Ryan, *Picturing the Empire: Photography and Visualisation of the British Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

that allowed the subject matter of the image to represent itself. Photographs featuring the Viceroy, royal hunting expeditions and of British hunters were popular in Britain as evidence of dominance and the need for dominance in taming dangerous nature.

According to historian Jan Morris:

The tiger hunts in India were imperial occasions, especially if there was a Viceroy or visiting swell, for them all was perfectly arranged, hundreds of wild beasts were assured...the subsequent group photograph showed the flushed sportsmen surrounded by heaps of dead Leo-tigris teeth still bared in perfect defiance and a very figure of order over savagery or British and the Beast.<sup>110</sup>

This flattering imagery was important to idealization of British imperialism and to the formation an archive of textual and visual images of the non-European world through which British saw themselves. A.I.R. Glasfurd, one of the more famous hunters in India commented that “Few subjects have elicited more literature than has Indian sport.”<sup>111</sup> Photography coupled with the literature produced by the hunters, and describing predatory slaughter of animals in foreign lands, gained popularity as truthful

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<sup>110</sup> Morris Jan, *The Spectacle of the Empire: Style, Effect and Pax Britannica* (London: Faber and Faber, 1982), 202.

<sup>111</sup> A.I.R. Glasfurd, *Rifle and Romance in the Indian Jungle* (London: J. Lane, 1906).

representations validating British domination and fuelled metropolitan hunger for such accounts.

“Camera stalking” reinforced the continuity between shooting and photography. Talking of his experiences with wildlife photography during the 1930s, Lieut. Col. Burton noted that “the man with a rifle had his difficulties; but at a much closer range and bearing in mind half a hundred things of importance before he can press the camera trigger, a photographer has to be a stalker almost a class apart.”<sup>112</sup> Photography and the practice of taxidermy both enabled the representation of material remains of dead animals to produce the illusion of live and threatening force, now conquered. Hunting and nature photography had become almost analogous by 1920s. They were both adventurous predatory pursuits that required perseverance and innate knowledge of the animal world. Photographs were as important as animal specimens prepared by taxidermists: they were triumphant reminders of the courage and skill of the hunters and of British courage, sportsmanship, mastery of environmental signs and contribution to natural history.

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<sup>112</sup> Lt. Col. Burton, A History of Shikar In India, *Journal of Bombay Natural history Society*, Volume 50, (1951): 859.

## The Dangers of Technology

By the 1920s, the use of automatic weapons, telescopic lenses, motorcars and headlights by European hunters alarmed British sportsmen. Local administrators sought to introduce new regulations to check the corruption of hunting practices. As confusion reigned over proper etiquettes and the quest for trophies, Lt. Col. E. G. Phythian-Adams, a reputed hunter of the early twentieth century, rued the falling standards of the hunt:

Sportsmanship in shooting had certainly reached a very high standard at the time of the outbreak of the First Great War. Since then nowhere there has been a marked deterioration due in part to such factors as improved weapons, increase in motor transport, and lack of senior officers' interests in shooting and capable of passing on the sound ideas of the previous generations.<sup>113</sup>

Of course, in identifying the factors responsible for the degeneration of standards, Phythian-Adams was also making a veiled reference to Indians in administrative services. During the Ilbert Bill controversy in the 1880s, disinterest of educated Indians in hunting was proof of racial differences between the masculine British administrator and the "effeminate" educated native. By 1920s, lack of enthusiasm for hunting by the Indian administrator was held as one of the reasons for the overall

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<sup>113</sup> Lt Col E G Phythian- Adams, 'sportsmanship and the Etiquette in Shooting,' *Journal of Bombay Natural History Society* Volume 47, no. 4 (1949): 684.



decline in hunting practices. Seeking to rectify the failure of “senior officers” to educate young recruits in the etiquette of the hunt, he set out to define correct practices in a rapidly changing world of the colonial hunt. “Sportsmanship and the Etiquette in Shooting” first appeared in the journal *Indian Wildlife* in 1936 and reprinted in the *Journal of Bombay Natural History Society* after a gap of thirteen years. The continued importance of this essay also reveals that the ambiguity that in the earlier century had accommodated social differences and changes in the rationale of colonial rule, could no longer balance the contradictory tensions embedded within the notion of sportsmanship; nor could it accommodate social tensions within colonial society.

One of the most controversial subjects during this time was use of strong artificial lights during night shoots. Until the early decades of twentieth century, hunters rarely sat up in the nights for hunting; with artificial lights, however hunting at night became common. Sportsmen of the old school argued that use of artificial lights that blinded the animals temporarily and reduced the difficulty of the hunt was unsportsmanlike. Pythian-Adams noted that though many shooting rules prohibited use of artificial lights, the ban was unjustified: “The whole object of big game shikar should be to kill as cleanly as possible and any reasonable artificial aid which will help should

surely be used. Objection to it appears to the writer as both selfish and unjustified.”<sup>114</sup>

Here is an interesting illustration of the conflicting strands that comprised fair play.

While Pythian-Adams found the use of artificial lights more “kind,” opponents criticized this practice as unsporting as it made the task of the hunter easier and ruptured the masculine front of the hunt.

As incidents of shooting at game from trains and motorcars increased, sportsmen feared further emasculation of their great hunting tradition. Pythian-Adams argued that shooting at game from motor cars was pure slaughter that violated two cardinal principals of sportsmanship: absence of “risk” and absence of physical exertion. He found both fellow compatriots and wealthy Indians responsible for malpractices that were corrupting sporting traditions: “Europeans and wealthy Indians who indulge in this unsporting practice should know better and not set such a bad example to their humbler fellow sportsmen.”<sup>115</sup> In the late nineteenth century, access to improved technology enabled colonial hunters to draw attention to the kind yet masculine character of colonial hunting. In the twentieth century, greater access to telephoto lenses,

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid. 685.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid. 689.

artificial lights and motor cars created great confusion as to what constituted sportsmanly conduct. In an age where access technology had become more accessible to increasing number of Britons and natives, the ambiguous yet stable template of fair play could no longer be sustained.

This chapter attempts to identify the evolution of the British gentleman-hunter in the subcontinent. The evolution of the hunter-*sahib* was equally influenced by metropolitan preoccupation with gentlemanly conduct, athleticism and sportsmanship as it was by interactions in India with wildlife, native populations as well as with fellow Britons. The position of colonialists as small elite in an “alien” and “corrupting” environs heightened anxieties about racial contamination. Accounts of robust British hunters in the Indian subcontinent enabled both colonialists and metropolitan audiences to derive moral reinforcement from each other.

Colonial hunting was important for maintaining behavior, physical health and *character* in India. The importance of hunting lay in its performative character. It allowed colonialists to demonstrate the professed differences in physical and moral character of rulers and the ruled. Colonial hunting was heavily influenced and built upon native practices. In their memorialization of the hunt, colonialists made it a colonial invention. The emphasis on fair play was critical to this venture and served to illustrate the differences between native hunting and hunting by the *sahib*. The concept of fair play

developed at the same time as racial differences increased after the revolt of 1857 and became a convenient tool to articulate the image of the powerful, manly and benevolent rulers as compared to the effeminate and cruel native.

The articulation of racial and moral superiority also had a profound impact on colonial lives. The emphasis on correct etiquette and behavior was a response to the recognition of the importance of displaying the moral and physical superiority of Britons. As public conduct became increasingly important, colonial society also became vigilant of the behavior of fellow-colonialists. As colonialists tried to regulate the behavior of their compatriots, social tensions embedded within colonial society became pronounced. The rhetoric on hunting and sportsmanship had to balance the competing interests of many groups within the British community. As we will see in Chapter Two, it became increasingly difficult to maintaining a single and stable idea of the British hunter.

## Chapter 2: Hunting and Social Relations in Colonial India

In the previous chapter, I discussed the evolution of the image of the imperial British hunter, characterized by notions of fair play, sportsmanship and mastery of woodcraft. In this chapter, I shift my focus to the *practice* of colonial hunting. I argue that hunting as a site for social interactions fractured the unified image of the imperial hunter popularized in colonial literature on hunting. Despite claims of camaraderie that accompanied the language of sportsmanship, issues surrounding the hunt brought to relief the social tensions based on class, status and privilege within the colonial elite. The ambiguous yet powerful notion of fair play, I argue, was one of the ways in which these internal social tensions were accommodated in colonial society.

Historians of sport, like Richard Holt and Neil Tranter, have highlighted the elements of negotiation and contestation in their analysis of sport as a socio-cultural phenomenon. Sport in the Victorian and Edwardian eras, according to this view, was an arena of social and cultural struggle, where sporting practices and experiences were made and re-made.<sup>1</sup> Hunting, the formation and functioning of hunting clubs, and early

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<sup>1</sup> Neil Tranter, *Sport, Economy and Society in Britain, 1750 -1914* (Cambridge University Press, 1998) and Richard Holt, *Sport and the British: A Modern History* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 1989). Also See Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978).

attempts at game preservation also reveal a similar process of social negotiation around hunting. I will explore the processes whereby the ideology of fair play, the sporting code, and right hunting etiquettes were created, perpetuated, appropriated, contested and reconfigured within the haloed confines of hunting clubs as well as by the formal apparatus of the state.

This chapter will also consider the relationships that existed between two prominent clubs as well as inner dissensions within these institutions, to highlight how social interactions could destabilize even these apparently stable arbiters of sporting behavior. I will subsequently move on to discuss some of the earliest attempts at game preservation. While I discuss policies relating to wild fauna in more detail in subsequent chapters, here I will draw attention to the reactions of the British officials when faced with the curtailment of their rights to hunt. Debates on access to game offer excellent illustrations of the many tensions embedded in the formal administrative apparatus that hunting brought to the surface.

## **British Hunters: Defining Colonial Hunting**

The country all about Bedar abounds with deer and were there but some oak trees, I might have fancied myself riding through a nobleman's park in England.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Francis Gresley April 21 1827 B120

A sporting enthusiast summed up the attraction of India in the 1880s in the following manner: "We will venture to say one of the first ideas, which enter into an Englishman's head on the mention of India, is its capacity of the exercise of the spear, the gun and the rod and the rifle."<sup>3</sup> The description of India's exotic wildlife in the works of Kipling, Flora Annie Steele and Maud Diver further popularized the idea of India as a sportsman's paradise with limitless opportunities to hunt. Talking of his hunting adventures, General James Elliot, who started his career as a junior officer in the Indian infantry, remarked that while such a position was far from prestige and influence, "the point is that as such he had princely pleasure."<sup>4</sup>

The historiography on the formation of the colonial society suggests that Englishmen had mostly come to India to make personal fortunes and consequently improve their social standing both as a ruling class in Empire and at home.<sup>5</sup> And while

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<sup>3</sup> "Exile", *Indian Sporting Review 1850, Volume 5*, 165.

<sup>4</sup> Elliot, *Field Sports in India*, 14.

<sup>5</sup> Francis G Hutchins, *The Illusion of Permanence: British Imperialism in India* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967); Clive Dewey, *Indian Civil Service* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996); Jan Morris, *The Spectacle of the Empire: Style, Effect, and Pax Britannica* (London: Faber and Faber, 1982).

the opportunities to earn big profits decreased by the close of eighteenth century, India still offered opportunities for the common Englishman to live like an aristocrat. According to John Beames, the passion for gentility was prevalent even among “the middle and lower classes of Europeans in India, every one of whom considered himself a “*sahib*” or gentleman.”<sup>6</sup> In aspiring to be the gentleman ruler, the British hunter followed an easily available, clearly identifiable symbol of aristocratic privilege. The frenetic pursuit of the hunt in India, as the privilege of the ruling class, seems to have its roots in the notions of class, power and authority at home. The empire was an opportunity to assert this model of British arcadia in the colonies. Empire builders, in turn, if they were not aristocrats themselves, *lived* like them.

The ability to hunt was seen as a sign of aristocratic privilege that attended the right to rule. However, in a context where almost every member of the expatriate community felt entitled to this “princely pleasure,” what distinguished one Briton from another? This question became increasingly important as the population of British grew in India and differences of class and status became more apparent.

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<sup>6</sup> John Beames, *Memoirs of a Bengal Civilian* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961), 132.



In Chapter One, I have argued that the concept of fair play was part of a broader exercise of articulating and demonstrating the racial differences between the colonizers and the colonized. The growing emphasis on “Britishness” from late nineteenth onwards was a crucial element of the new ideology of dominance where racial differences between the colonizer and colonized were articulated using normative values like fair play. A crucial component in this process of differentiation was the notion of upholding British prestige. The emphasis on upholding prestige, which I explore in detail in Chapter Four, was part of a new self definition of the British ruling class and of British rule. The ruling class viewed itself as embodying the prestige of British Crown and the idealism surrounding the image of the hard working colonial officer further served to highlight racial differences between the ruling and the ruled.

The obsession with the idea of upholding prestige however also created anxiety about fear of failure to uphold the prestige of the Crown. From the late nineteenth century as the articulation of racial difference grew sharper, policing and regulation of behavior of the expatriate Britons in the subcontinent also became common. A decade before the emergence of the new genre of writing in the shape of hunting memoirs from 1860s, commentators were already anxious of the tone of some contributors to the sporting journals. In his “Hints from a Sporting Father to a Sporting Son,” a father advised his son to not only hunt like a gentleman but also to write like one: “I know no

reason why a sportsman should not write like a gentleman. Nimrod's language was always polished and correct."<sup>7</sup> Two decades later, such complaints had become more common with one commentator remarking that many sporting books were:

Dull, stale and unprofitable...chronicled without regards to time, sequence or ... grammar and too frequently degenerate into modern slang. Why this should be the case we have even been at a loss to understand for a thoroughly good sportsman, must be man of comparatively temperate and steady habits, accustomed to the most careful supervision of every article necessary for his sporting tours; mechanical in his tastes and habits and to great extent an ardent student of nature.<sup>8</sup>

Walter Campbell's *Old Forest Ranger* was deemed the "almost solitary example of the way in which such books may be made attractive, but we are sorry to say no other."<sup>9</sup> The period after 1870s saw more successful memorialization of the hunt. Memoirs provided a heady dose of exotic descriptions of wildlife, adventure and model behavior by British hunters, which rendered them attractive and popular.

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<sup>7</sup> "F.G", "Hints from a Sporting Father to a Sporting Son" *India Sporting Review*, volume viii, (1848): 130.

<sup>8</sup> Editorial comment, *Oriental Sporting magazine*. 1867, 63.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

Hunting literature of the late nineteenth century reveals a heightened self awareness of a British hunting ruling class. This genre, along with colonial clubs and associations forming what Mrinalini Sinha has termed “colonial public sphere,” was crucial to the evolution of the myth of the *pukka sahib*.<sup>10</sup> According to Sinha, the “colonial public sphere” and the idea of the “clubbable” *pukka sahib* (following the model of the manly independent individual) were critical in defining the criterion of Imperial identity and shaping Imperial culture in India.

British hunting (mediated by fair play), as I have discussed in Chapter One, not only *displayed* the manly ruler to the world (natives, fellow expatriates and the home audience) but was also argued to *strengthen* character, strength of will, fortitude, a sense of duty and self-restraint – the values on which racial superiority was built. Fair play, in particular encouraged the projection of this model of colonial masculinity and therefore hunting became one of the factors that rendered those inhabiting the colonial cultural world “clubbable” and socially desirable. Indeed some of the earliest clubs in India were pig-sticking clubs with highly militarized dress and clearly defined conduct

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<sup>10</sup> Mrinalini Sinha, “Britishness, Clubbability, and the Colonial Public Sphere: The Genealogy of an Imperial Institution in Colonial India” *The Journal of British Studies*, Volume 40, 4 (2001):497.

for sport. The policing of hunting behavior, based on notions of fair play, were enforced in the realm of the colonial public space, particularly in clubs and in literature.

The records of one of the earliest hunting clubs, the Calcutta Tent Club from the 1880s, also mention that the main object of framing rules was to preserve *uniformity* in the sport. In addition to maintaining the physical establishment---a meeting hall, preserving a stock to ensure the continuity of the hunt and hiring of local peons and *shikaris* to flush out wild pigs--- these clubs also served to maintain the social and political status quo. The tradition set by the early associations was replicated with great success all over India- “hunts” organized by clubs became popular: The Quetta Hunt, the Ootacamund Hunt, the Meerut Tent Club, the Peshawar Vale Hunt and the Calcutta Hunt continued to be popular well into twentieth century. Most of these clubs had been created for the purposes of pig sticking. The Nilgiri Game Association however, founded in the 1870s in Ootacamund was also formed to consolidate the interests of shooting and fishing. These clubs and associations, which were graced by the membership of the administrative and military personnel, not only became focal points for social interaction but also took on the role of arbiters of fair play. In his discussion on colonial society, Jan Morris has also drawn attention to the social power vested in colonial clubs. Their membership and rules which were framed towards attracting the elite formed enclave of power and privilege that made the “right people feel more

important and the wrong people small.”<sup>11</sup> Elite collectives such as these perpetuated the sportsmen’s code and the cult of the hunter. Hunting clubs not only managed the hunt but in effect also managed the hunters’ behavior by exercising a moral authority to enforce a “model” code of conduct. The exclusivity of these receptacles of morality, tradition and status encouraged members of colonial society to aspire to membership and in doing so, adhere to socially desired public behavior.

### **Hunting Clubs**

Enjoying as they did, the patronage of officers in powerful administrative positions, hunting clubs not only became the center of colonial society, but also powerful sites for regulating social behavior. Usually established in places where there was a high concentration of British expatriates, these clubs greatly curbed the ideal of “liberty in sport” and heavily codified and standardized what had hitherto been a “pure, pastoral and primitive” activity.<sup>12</sup> A. E. Wardrop, a pig-sticking enthusiast, noted the transformation of tent clubs in mid-nineteenth century. In Delhi for example, a club was said to have existed in so far as that whenever two or three men had gathered for sport,

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<sup>11</sup>Jan Morris, *The Spectacle of the Empire- Style, Effect and Pax Britanica*, (Faber and Faber London, 1982), 203.

<sup>12</sup> Exile, “Indian Sporting” *Indian Sporting Review*, Volume IV (1845):165.

they elected a secretary whose duty was to arrange for the meet and write a log. The posting of a cavalry regiment to Delhi in 1860, however, changed this informal practice. Pig sticking enthusiasts of the regiment codified unwritten rules and started preserving game (wild pigs) and hunting methodically in order to maintain steady stocks of game. The tradition of establishing formal hunting clubs for pig sticking, fox hunting and shooting was firmly established by the end of nineteenth century.

Along with the process of “formalizing” a loose association of individuals, hunting clubs also grew more exclusive with time. In Munnar, the North Travancore Land Planting and Agricultural Society Limited, gained control over large tracts of lands from the Raja of Travancore in 1879 which it subsequently sold to tea planters. In addition to upholding the terms of concession deed, the company was also responsible for shooting of big game and other wildlife. The company hired special staff to carry out its function. In 1927, planters along with the company administration, decided to form the Game Preservation Association (renamed High Range Game Association in 1930) in Munnar to carry out wild life preservation. Its main job was to put a stop to poaching and indiscriminate slaughter of game by “sportsmen” who disregarded the closed seasons and the laws regarding the killing of immature beasts.<sup>13</sup> The game association

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 89

came to be closely linked with the High Range Club. Soon after this the older members complained of the club “becoming increasingly respectable” and “upcountry” with visitors including officials from outside the area applying for full membership.<sup>14</sup> As its popularity grew, local planters were increasingly edged out in favor of more influential members who not only enjoyed hunting rights in the area but could also regulate the behavior of other sportsmen in the area.

A closer look, however, at the records of three of the most prominent clubs in colonial India reveals that these institutions were not as stable or cohesive as they professed. Tensions based on class and status often undermined claims to social cohesion and normative notions regarding the “right” behavior.

### *The Calcutta Tent Club*

The records of the Calcutta Tent Club are available from the 1870s onwards. While the exact date of its establishment is unclear, these records indicate that the club had been in existence two decades earlier as well. According to the rulebook of the Calcutta Tent Club for the year 1913-14, the founding principle of the club was “to hunt

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<sup>14</sup> Walter Smith Mackay Memoir, dated 1984, describing his career as a manager in the High Range Tea Estates of Travancore; also correspondence with Dr T J Nossiter on the latter’s book “Communism in Kerala” (1982), 40.

hogs together in a sportsmanlike manner with the Bengal Spear and to avoid all jealousy and unfair riding in order to obtain first spear.”<sup>15</sup> The Bengal spear at six feet was shorter than spears used by other clubs, and it was claimed that hunting with a shorter spear was more difficult.<sup>16</sup> As with other clubs, the Calcutta Tent Club with its own dress, rituals and protocol prided itself on a distinct identity and tradition that unified its members in an easily identifiable and visible way. It also defined the moral contours of gentlemanly play: for instance, it prohibited its members from spearing a sow except in self-defense. The rules of the Club perpetuated the idea of exclusivity. Membership the Club was highly limited to twenty hunting members, and only hunting members could introduce new members as honorary or non-hunting members. Neither of the latter two categories could hope to become a hunting member until they had taken a

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<sup>15</sup> Rule no. 8, Rules of the Calcutta Tent Club, 1913-1914, *Rulebooks, dated 1883-1933, of the Calcutta Tent Club*, European Manuscripts, Mss Eur C335, British Library.

<sup>16</sup> Rather than increasing or decreasing the difficulty of the hunt, lengths of the spear and techniques employed by pig stickers of different regions were a mix of opportunities provided by the terrain and a desire to evolve distinct traditions of the hunt that were easily identifiable. The spear of the Calcutta Tent Club became famous as the Bengal spear. The “proper” technique was to carry it pointing downwards. The rider rode close to the pig and speared it at a downward angle. In Madras and Bombay Presidencies the length of the spear was about nine feet and was carried pointing upwards. On reaching the pig, it was angled downwards till it was held parallel to the knee. The momentum of a racing horse carried the spear to the boar and “it generally goes when well directed, like knife into a pat of butter.” J. Murray Brown, *Shikar Sketches, with notes of Indian Field Sports* (London: Hurst and Blackett Publishers, 1887), 73.



first spear at a Tent Club meet. In addition, they also had to ensure that they had at least three-fourths of the votes from hunting members to become hunting members themselves. All hunting, non-hunting and honorary members had to submit to the will of the President/ Captain of the Day (who exercised authority on the field during a meet) in the settlement of disputes, and any challenge to his decision invited heavy fines.<sup>17</sup>

By the time rules for the year 1913-1914 were framed, the Club had become one of the most prominent avenues for social advancement not only in Calcutta, but also for British residents in Bengal. Even visitors from the rest of India to Calcutta desired to be associated (as non hunting members) with it and the Club was flooded with applications for membership. As the influence of the Club grew, it managed to balance its need for greater revenues and patronage of the powerful along with the desire to remain exclusive by formulating new categories of membership. While increasing its hunting members to fifty, it also introduced new categories of members: Mofussil members (members who are posted or residing in rural areas) who consisted of "gentlemen" from the mofussil, with an active interest in hog hunting were incorporated. Honorary membership was extended to former members who though having retired from active

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<sup>17</sup> Rulebook for season 1883-1884, *Rulebooks, dated 1883-1933, of the Calcutta Tent Club*, Mss Eur C335, India Office Select Materials, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library.

hunting wanted to continue their association with the Club, and any “distinguished” members of Calcutta Society whom the Club wished to honor were also welcomed.<sup>18</sup>

While renowned for its tradition and prestige, the minutes of Club meetings point to the tensions that lay embedded in the professed (and perceived) image of this companionable and homogenous cohort. One reason for the Club’s emergence was to contain unsportsmanlike behavior, jealousy and unfair riding. As I will discuss later, due to the competitive nature of the sport, the principle of first blood came into play in all forms of hunting. According to this principle, the spear that drew blood first could claim the kill---and the trophy. The onus of proof lay with the person claiming the spear. Any infringement of this rule or the inability to prove “first blood” after claiming the spear resulted in a disqualification of the “offender” from claiming the trophy.<sup>19</sup> The election of the Secretary of the Club was an important activity and only a person said to be capable of implementing rules “under the most difficult situations” was elected.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Rulebook for the season 1913-1914, *Rulebooks, dated 1883-1933, of the Calcutta Tent Club*, Mss Eur C335, India Office Select Materials, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library.

<sup>19</sup> Rulebook for season 1883-1884, *Rulebooks, dated 1883-1933, of the Calcutta Tent Club*, Mss Eur C335, India Office Select Materials, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

While the chain of authority was established in the Club, the question of balance of power between the Secretary of the Club and the Captain of the Day was left unresolved. This seriously undermined the hierarchy and cohesion of the association.

In 1870, for instance, an acrimonious conflict broke out between members on the question of a penalty of a dozen bottles of champagne levied on Mr. Beebee, a hunting member, who had speared a sow. The Secretary of the Club did not feel that the plea of self-defense was justified as the sow was speared intentionally in an open paddy field. The offending member put up a spirited defense claiming that the decision to penalize him seemed arbitrary and that secretary had made the decision solely on his own authority. He also claimed that as the Captain of the Day, it was *he* who had the authority to decide if the sow was speared in self-defense. Mr. Beebee also challenged the Secretary's decision on grounds of fair play. Explaining that he was hunting with a borrowed horse which had gotten injured by a sow on a previous occasion, he claimed it would be bad form to have the horse injured again. Finally, Mr. Beebee also argued that heavy fines such as the one levied on him had a class bias as they effectually barred the less wealthy members from taking part in the sport. He called for a meeting of members to settle the issue. While the meeting resulted in plenty of bitter exchanges, there was no consensus on a vote as many of the members declined to vote. The matter was allowed

to slip through the cracks and no formal decision was made.<sup>21</sup> The disinclination of the club to resolve the question of power between the two offices of the Secretary and the Captain of the Day certainly seems odd given the emphasis on chain of authority within the Club. It could be that members felt it might be unfair to empower the Secretary (despite his wider jurisdiction) to make decisions on meet when absent. On the other hand, the Captain of the Day, who held authority only temporarily, could not undermine the authority of the Secretary. Given this predicament, it made sense to keep the balance of power between the Secretary and the Captain of the day a little fuzzy.

The Calcutta Tent Club also confronted tension around the cost of hunting, as did other aspiring hunters in India. While British residents in India claimed that the subcontinent offered opportunity for sport to the lowest ranking official, it was also true that as an exercise in conspicuous consumption and indulgence in luxury, organized hunting often involved considerable financial investment. The allegation of class prejudice made by Mr. Beebee had very real relevance throughout the realm of institutionalized hunting. Letters written by young military officers and those contributing to sporting journals during early and mid-nineteenth century often

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<sup>21</sup> Correspondence between Mr Beebee, member Calcutta Tent Club to the Secretary of the Calcutta Tent Club, 7<sup>th</sup> February 1870 to June 1870. Records of the Calcutta Tent Club, Mss 192/2, India Office Select Materials, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library.

mention the expenses required to hunt. Regular pig sticking, for instance, required initial expense of buying Arab horses, "the only species of horse considered fit for hog hunting," and a continuing expense of maintaining horses and buying spears.<sup>22</sup> One young recruit bitterly remarked that his dreams of "oriental pomp and wealth have been rather rudely dispelled, I find the greatest difficulty in living on my pay. In fact I soon found that almost all junior officers were more or less in debt."<sup>23</sup> Many younger officers resorted to making money on the side by breeding dogs and organizing sales of hunting horses, while others sought to share the costs between their colleagues and friends. Others traded hog hunting for shooting and sold their horses to buy guns.

Many of their peers however claimed that the willingness to incur the expense differentiated a true sportsman from others who merely killed animals. A contributor to the *Indian Sporting Review* remarked, "I know there are many men who think that game is to be bagged easily and grudge the slightest expense or trouble. Not so the real sportsman. He well knows that a certain establishment is necessary, that a certain

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<sup>22</sup> "The Sportsman", Untitled, *The Bengal sporting Magazine* Volume 1, New Series April no. 4 (1845): 383

<sup>23</sup> Henry Tyler, "The Reminiscences of an Addsicombe Cadet", 1830-1834, Mss Eur D586, India Office Select Materials, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library.

expense must be incurred."<sup>24</sup> He also added that this expense was still possible with a subaltern's pay. With the formation of clubs and clearer articulation of notions of sportsmanship, overt complaints about expenses gave way to emphasis on woodcraft and skill as true worth of a sportsman; those with large establishments were derided for having money but poor hunting skills. The complicated relationship between expense, access and sportsmanship remained important through the period of British rule in India. Despite the limited membership, even the Calcutta Tent Club had to deal with conflicting ideas about fair play and expense.

In 1875, D. W. Londale, a member of the Calcutta Tent Club, proposed a reversion to an older practice of dividing the expenses of a meet among all the members of the club instead of just the attending members. He claimed that some members who hunted regularly complained that the meets were becoming increasingly more expensive. This issue divided the members once again. T. James, representing those who opposed the move, contended that the older practice was changed "so that men of moderate means could enjoy moderate sport."<sup>25</sup> Londale explained that he had proposed

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<sup>24</sup> J----n, Letter to Editor, *Indian Sporting Review*, Volume X (1849):136.

<sup>25</sup> Correspondence between T James and D W Londale. 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 1875, Records of the Calcutta Tent Club, Mss Eur 192/2 India Office Select Materials, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library.

the change because under the prevailing system, members were reluctant to attend meets where they thought the prospects of sport were not good enough to warrant the expense they would incur. Tapping into the readily available sporting lexicon, James countered that he could not believe “that any true sportsman would shirk the expense of an uncertain Meet. Because the glorious uncertainty of hunting is the chief element in its attraction!”<sup>26</sup> Londale responded in a similar vein that the existing system was unfair, selfish and *unsportsmanlike* and claimed that it favored members who exclusively attended large meets where sport was certain over those who hunted regularly. He argued that the Club should support regular hunters who helped its members gain knowledge of new ground rather than encourage opportunistic hunting. As for the “glorious Uncertainty” of sport, he contended that it acted “more as a deterrent than as an inducement.”<sup>27</sup> Considerably confused by this appeal to correct sporting behavior, members on both sides abstained from voting on the issue. The club did not discuss this

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<sup>26</sup> Correspondence between T James and D W Londale. 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 1875, Records of the Calcutta Tent Club, Mss Eur 192/2 India Office Select Materials, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library.

<sup>27</sup> Correspondence between T James and D W Londale. 28<sup>th</sup> July 1875, Records of the Calcutta Tent Club, Mss Eur 192/2 India Office Select Materials, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library.

issue any further and it seems that no change was made in the Club's practices. While the abstract notion of fair play exercised a strong moral influence on the hunters, it is also clear that in practice, the idea of fair play was only loosely defined and hence flexible. Given this capacity to accommodate varied and sometimes conflicting ideas, the notion of fair play was effective to mediate distinctions in hierarchy, wealth and status. Conversely, as in the case of Calcutta Tent Club, fair play might also maintain the status quo.

Despite these internal dissensions and challenge to existing norms, the Calcutta Tent Club was successful in maintaining its public front as a symbol of tradition and authority. One of the reasons for its continued prestige was the patronage of those in power and their readiness to intervene on its behalf. The Club had a long history of borrowing elephants from the army during the pig-hunting season (autumn to summer). In 1887, however, the Military Establishment sought to levy the official designated fee for the hiring of elephants and to recover past dues for fodder and hiring of elephants. What added insult to the injury was the perception that the Military Establishment was acting at the behest of the "Bengali Commissariat baboos" that had brought this issue in



the open.<sup>28</sup> In a strongly worded letter to the Deputy Assistant to the Quartermaster-General in Fort William, the Secretary of the Club, E.T. Roberts reminded him that:

The club has existed for a great many years, probably since or before the beginning of this century...The club is the only organized body in the county and its neighbourhood for hunting of any kind; it occupies in this part of the country to a certain extent the place taken in England by fox hunting; it has received the patronage of successive Viceroys, one of them late Lord Mayo regularly hunted with it.<sup>29</sup>

The idea of continuing “English” traditions even in far-flung frontiers of the empire was an important one. Colonial institutions like the Calcutta Tent Club used this sentiment effectively to establish their position as powerful and unimpeachable defenders of English traditions. While correspondence between the two establishments was still going on, Lord Beresford, the military secretary to the Viceroy, intervened on

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<sup>28</sup> The British ambivalence for the English educated Bengali baboo has been explored by Mrinalini Sinha in *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly' English and the 'effeminate' Bengali in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995). The fact that the baboo had drawn attention to the unpaid arrears in the age of the Ilbert Bill controversy explains the anger from the Club's members.

<sup>29</sup> Letter from E. T. Roberts to the Deputy Assistant to Quartermaster-Gen. Fort William, 21<sup>st</sup> July 1887. Mss Eur 195/15, India Office Select Materials, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library.

behalf of the Club to resolve the stalemate in its favor.<sup>30</sup> As we shall also see later, the willingness of officers of the Raj to mediate in favor of hunting clubs and associations helped entrench power in these informal institutions and maintain their status as symbols of aristocratic power and tradition. As an avenue for social advancement, the Club conferred status and prestige to its members and was one of the focal points of Calcutta's colonial social society.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Records of the Special Meeting of the Calcutta Tent Club held on 20<sup>th</sup> February, 1889, Mss Eur 195/15, India Office Select Materials, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library.

<sup>31</sup> With the overpowering presence of the Calcutta Tent Club, a small group of men drew a charter for a club they called "The Unceremonials" in 1888. The charter announced that the group had come together for the purposes of indoor and outdoor entertainment (including hunting) with complete freedom from ceremony and conventionality. As a symbolic gesture, it adopted as its crest, the "cap of liberty" for its motto '*sans souci*' and for its colors "red" (with an intention to "paint the whole place red"). There were to be no fixed rules for the conduct of the members, and that each member would have equal rights with every other member. Despite the prevalent penchant for exclusive clubs, "The Unceremonials" became popular, even among those in higher levels of administration who were also members of the Calcutta Tent Club. By 1892, it had increased its membership from fifteen to fifty and was charging a membership fee from the members for the maintenance of the clubhouse. At the same time, it also decided on a dinner dress as a distinctive mark of membership. The Unceremonials remained popular well into the twentieth century. From the continued popularity and desirability of the big clubs, it is unclear if "The Unceremonials" actually symbolized a distinct challenge to the closed and ceremony-ridden coalition of the powerful. Its increasing membership however shows that the ideas of informality, equality and lack of ceremony also became popular in a city where a larger numbers of the expatriates made such alternative avenues of social interactions possible and desirable. See "The Unceremonial", Mss Eur C335, 1883-1967, India Office Select Materials, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library.

### *Clash of the Titans: The Nilgiri Game Association and The Ootacamund Hunt*

In Chapter One, I briefly discussed the role played by the Nilgiri Game Association (NGA) in formulating and formalizing hunting etiquettes in the Nilgiri Hills. The NGA itself was formalized as an association in 1877 but was known as an informal collective of sportsmen advocating game preservation in the Nilgiri Hills. The Nilgiri Game and Fish Preservation Act of 1879 was a direct outcome of the efforts of the Nilgiri Game Association. The sex and size of the game as well as correct “sporting” methods to be employed while killing animals were also fixed. The system of registering *shikaris* and the rule that members could use only registered *shikaris* brought the activities of the native *shikaris* and of the British hunters under its control. The Association also gained the power to grant licenses to sportsmen. All license holders had to keep a record of the number and size of game killed and report these figures to the Nilgiri Game Association; failure to do so could result in the cancellation of their license.<sup>32</sup> The Association also held monopoly over hunting rights in large parts of the Nilgiri Hills and held jurisdiction over large tracts of land to enforce game preservation. As part of its policy of game preservation, it carried out a campaign for the destruction

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<sup>32</sup> Minutes of the Nilgiri Game Association, of meetings held between 1877-1887. The Minutes of the period 1877-1917 are preserved in the offices of Nilgiri Wildlife and Environment Association, Ootacamund.

of animals considered vermin (which included all carnivores), and preservation of the breeding stock of game animals.

An unofficial organization like the Nilgiri Game Association was able to fulfill its agenda of game preservation and was conferred the right to implement it because it was able to integrate successfully important officials into its institutional structure. The Association's committee on wild life protection advised the Collector who was its ex-officio president. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, due to this patronage, the Association could directly influence policies on game preservation in the region. The District Forest Officer was the honorary secretary of the Association, which ensured a close local coordination between official and non-officials in implementing a common agenda. It is remarkable that from its inception in 1877 to 1917, the Association had the cooperation of almost all Collectors and District Forest Officers of the region.<sup>33</sup>

Chronicling the history of the Association, E.R.C. Davidar writes that "as far as the Nilgiris was concerned, it was not the arm of the law, so much as the social stigma attached to the game law violator that was feared. The Association was more of a moral

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<sup>33</sup> Minutes of the Nilgiri Game Association, 1877-1917.

force than a legal weapon.”<sup>34</sup> As a font of morality, the Association gained immense influence on matters concerning hunting, regulation of native *shikaris* and game preservation; it attracted a large number of important government functionaries and their patronage further perpetuated its influence.

The Nilgiri Hills attracted a diverse range of Britons: tea and *cinchona* planters, managers, merchants, military men in Wellington, families of officers serving in the “plains,” officers on leave, and tourists. This diversity and the popularity of the Hills as a salubrious destination also enabled a large numbers of clubs and associations in the area often with competing interests.

Along with the Nilgiri Game Association, the Ootacamund Hunt Club was one of the most prestigious and exclusive clubs in India. Founded in 1845, its endeavor was to replicate the great fox- hunting traditions of the landed elite in England. (Since the Nilgiris did not have any fox, jackals made good substitutes.) There was often a conflict of interest between the two associations. For instance, in 1884 as part of its preservation policy, the Nilgiri Game Association announced rewards for extermination of jackals. According to Mr. Lawley of the Ootacamund Hunt Club, “thanks to the prompt action

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<sup>34</sup> E .R. C. Davidar, “Management of Game by the Association in the Nilgiris” in *Nilgiri Wild Life Association, A Centenary, 1877-1977*, (Ootacamund: Nilgiri Game Association, 1977), 28.

of the government, this was speedily nipped in the bud...and there were some members of the Ootacamund Club on the committee (of Nilgiri Game Association) who saw the error of their ways and so the hatchet was buried."<sup>35</sup> The most enduring source of conflict, however, was a neighborhood of Ootacamund called Wenlock Downs. The Nilgiri Game Association sought to protect game in this area whereas the members of Ootacamund Hunt Club found this area particularly suited to coursing (chasing quarry with dogs) and wanted to reduce the number of animals (other than the jackal) there. Coursing for the jackal needed a country devoid of other animals; the presence of other animals like the *sambhur* (of the deer family) caused the hounds to riot and usually rendered the hunt a complete failure. On the other hand, the members of the Nilgiri Game Association argued that the riders not only disturbed game in the area but also reduced *their* chances of good sport. In 1877, the Commissioner of Nilgiris had issued orders to preserve significant portions of this area as a reserve and recreation grounds for the public recreation that included riding to the hounds in the hunting season. This decision in fact, was intended to attract more English visitors, keen on fox hunting, to the Nilgiris. Whereas many other areas in the subcontinent offered opportunities to shoot, chances for fox hunting were limited, largely because it was extremely hard to

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<sup>35</sup> R.J. Lawley, "Masters of Ootacamund Hunt, 1891-95 in *Ootacamund Hunt: In Memoriam*. Minute book of The Ootacamund Hunt.

maintain kennels or sustainable stock of hunting dogs in the heat of the plains. Fox hunting therefore was projected as a distinctive tradition of the Nilgiri Hills, and in addition to maintaining a big establishment for pursuing this sport, the Ootacamund Club had also acquired popularity and the patronage of powerful residents. The Club also allowed visitors on the recommendation of its members and attracted a large numbers of powerful visitors who wished to take part in fox hunting and other social activities of the club. In 1895, the area in which fox hunting could be carried out was extended much against the wishes of the Nilgiri Game Association. Stung by this move, the Nilgiri Game Association recorded its opposition to the extension. Its members claimed that the description of Wenlock Downs as “the happy hunting grounds...that bring so many of our visitors to us and that provide the means of healthy recreation at cheap cost to visitors and residents, European and natives, rich and poor and old and young alike” in the municipal order notifying the increase in area, was proof that the interests of the Ootacamund Hunt Club had influenced the decision.<sup>36</sup> No Collector or district officer (some patronizing both the institutions) wished to be seen as taking sides in this prolonged struggle between two powerful institutions that continued for several years. In 1900, the municipal authorities, unable to evolve a consensus, sought to placate

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<sup>36</sup> Municipal Order quoted in Minutes of the Nilgiri Game Association, of meeting held 1877-1897.

members of both clubs and the distinct forms of hunting popularized by them. According to its new orders, “nothing shall be deemed an offence under these rules which is done by the Ootacamund Hunt Club in the proper pursuit of hunting.”<sup>37</sup> The riders were therefore protected from accusations (and legal action) of disturbing or injuring game. The same order also reinforced the jurisdiction of the Nilgiri Game Association. It stipulated that the Association would regulate all shooting in the reserve and ensure compliance with The Nilgiri Game Act of 1879 and other rules framed under the Forest Act. This move to pander to both sides could have hardly achieved long-term peace.

In 1913, the Ootacamund Hunt Club once again pointed to the increasing *sambhur* in the area and repeated failure of their hunting runs. The Secretary of the Club argued that these conditions would eventually have a serious effect on the tradition of fox hunting and the revenues of Ootacamund, not to mention his own institution. Seeking to establish the principle of “greater good” done by the Hunt, he pointed out that the Hunt spent Rs. 20,000 a year and he claimed that if hunting came to an end, the

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<sup>37</sup> Municipal Order quoted in Minutes of the Nilgiri Game Association, of meetings held between 1897-1907.



annual loss to the general community would be close to Rs. 5 lakhs.<sup>38</sup> The Club therefore asked the Nilgiri Game Association to abolish the closed season (when hunting was banned) and remove restrictions on the size of game and shooting of hinds. By this time, however, the rhetoric of preservation (almost synonymous with fair play by then) was too deeply entrenched for such a drastic change. In this competition for land, game and influence, the Nilgiri Game Association managed to maintain its edge over the Hunt Club and only agreed to a longer open period when game like *sambhur* could be shot.

The competition over hunting rights was not the only factor that undermined social cohesion among colonials. Personal ambitions, opportunities and limitations on the forms of hunting presented by the Indian landscape as well as social interaction with compatriots also destabilized the myth of a single, glorious and unifying tradition of the colonial hunt in British India. Forms and techniques of the hunt were open to moral interpretation by sportsmen who jostled against each other in search for personal glory, social advancement and recognition.

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<sup>38</sup> Minutes of the Nilgiri Game Association, of meetings held between 1907-1917. A lakh is 100,000.

## Fair Play among Britons

As discussed in Chapter One, with clearer articulation of notions of fair play, certain forms of the hunt such as spearing bears or deer gave way to more “acceptable” practices. In time, these practices crystallized in specific hunting traditions in the subcontinent. Chasing, stalking, beating, and sitting up for animals were the predominant modes of colonial hunting. Given the moral overtones that surrounded hunting, these diverse techniques of hunting display different qualities of the hunter, and followers of each sought to place their favorite mode of hunt in a sporting hierarchy. The chase, a form of hunt in which the quarry was pursued on horseback as in pig-sticking or fox-hunting, not only provided an opportunity to play out the colonial theme of pursuit and conquest, but also demonstrated the riders’ riding skills, and precision in affecting the kill. Pig stickers in fact, insisted on calling pig sticking the “King of Sport,” compared to which even tiger hunting paled.

The stalk, a mode usually employed to track and kill herbivores on foot in the forest, bore testimony to irrefutable bravado and exemplary woodcraft. Beating the forest from elephant backs with the help of beaters and sitting up in a *machan* over a kill were methods used to hunt tigers and other carnivores. Patience and perseverance in waiting, and firm control over emotions in the face of a formidable quarry were essential to make an effective kill. The values attached to each of these practices, and the

supposed moral hierarchy of each mode of the hunt, created much debate within the British fraternity in a subcontinent like India where varied landscapes imposed limitations on certain practices and created opportunities for others. For instance, hunters in the mountainous and wooded Nilgiri Hills asserted their superiority by stalking the quarry, including the tiger, and expressed contempt at the practice popular in other places, of beating for tigers from elephant backs or shooting them from *machans*. The hunters from the *terai* countered this assertion by highlighting the fact that the long elephant grass in the region rendered stalking impossible. They also claimed that unlike the hills, where the hunter had better visual vantage and could shoot from a distance, the thick vegetation of the *terai*, obscured the view and often the tiger broke cover only a few feet away and charged when hit at dangerously close quarters. According to Colonel Burton, a reputed tiger hunter of the twentieth century, foot stalking was an absurd method that most often resulted in a wound rather than a kill.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, all those who considered the pig as animal of chase denounced the practice of shooting boars which was followed in Nilgiri Hills because of the non-availability of grounds appropriate for pig sticking. Once again, fair play comes across as highly flexible notion and accommodative of a variety of hunting practices. In fact, the continuity of the *idea* of

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<sup>39</sup> R.W. Burton, *Tigers of the Raj, Pages from Shikar Diaries, 1894-1949 of Col. Burton, Sportsman and Conservationist*, ed. Jacqueline Toovey (Gloucester : Sutton, 1987), 191.

fair play as moral arbiter of behavior remained stable precisely because of its ability to absorb diverse practices.

Hunting practices also had to accommodate competition between hunters. An important development that accompanied overcrowding in hunting was the principle of “first blood.” The idea of first blood was popular in pig sticking even in the early nineteenth century in the subcontinent. By the end of the century, it had become popular in most forms of collective hunts to diffuse conflicts. Just as in pig-sticking the spear drawing blood first could legitimately claim the trophy, it simply meant that in shooting, the trophy would belong to the gun that drew the first blood, regardless of the fact whether the shot was fatal or not. Outside of pig sticking, the principle was most commonly employed during organized tiger shoots. Most hunters accepted this rule as being fair and agreed that if “some rule of this kind were not in existence and the tiger was supposed to belong to the gun that appeared to administer the coup de grace, there would be a great deal of indiscriminate firing, which would result, to say the least in the skin being hopelessly ruined.”<sup>40</sup> Therefore, the principle of first blood not only dissipated tensions among hunters but also ensured that the hunt resulted in a worthy

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<sup>40</sup> Lady Greville, *Ladies in the Field, Sketches of Sport* (London: Ward and Downey Limited, 1894), 45.

trophy. A pre-appointed Captain, whose decision could not be challenged, settled disputes as to which bullet drew blood.<sup>41</sup> Many hunters put a special mark on their bullet in order to establish if they had drawn blood. While the principle of first blood worked in organized shoots, those who had ready access to game chose to eschew group hunting and rejected the practice of "first blood." Stanley Wilmot, a forest officer in the United Provinces in the early twentieth century, decided not to participate in organized shoots as he felt "...the old rule of first shot to confer ownership was not conducive to good sport, for it led to over eagerness in firing, and sometimes to subsequent loss of interest in the hunt; and lastly, all the wood craft, which is the chief pleasure in big-game shooting, was in the hands of the leader, and his companions had nothing to do but to profit by his astuteness...."<sup>42</sup> Wilmot did not wish to take part in collective hunting because he felt that a forest officer could "obtain all that he wants in the normal course of work" without a "competing horde."<sup>43</sup> Wilmot could afford to take this view because as a forest officer, he enjoyed unparalleled access to game. The question of access to

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<sup>41</sup> James Inglis, *Tent Life in Tigerland : Being Sporting Reminiscences of a Pioneer Planter in an Indian Frontier District*, (London : Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1888.), 623.

<sup>42</sup> S. Eardley-Wilmot, *Forest Life and Sport in India* (London: Edward Arnold, 1910), 29.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

game was one that brought simmering resentments based on class and status to the surface even in the administrative apparatus of the state.

## **Privilege and Access to Game: Hunting and Officers of the Raj**

Even during the Company period, the officers of the Indian Civil Services had gained a reputation for their snobbish ways, earning the sobriquet, “The Heaven-born.”<sup>44</sup> For most of British rule in India, the ICS cadre in the subcontinent continued to enjoy great degree of power and prestige. At the district level, appeasing the Collector was important to protect personal hunting interests. In his advice to those who wished to establish tent clubs, A. E. Wardrop recommended that any sportsmen wishing to form clubs should “remember that somewhere in your country, there is a collector who is the civil ruler of your district. Always a hard worked man with few holidays; he is nearly invariably a fine sportsman. Try to fix meets to suit him... so shall your sport thrive and

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<sup>44</sup> Raymond Veveysan, “Vernede”, *“The Itch to Write: a Disease of the British Empire”*: typescript anthology, dated 1990, compiled by Raymond Veveysan Vernede), Indian Civil Service, United Provinces 1928-47, of British prose and poetry written in India 1750-1954. Mss C502, India Office Select Materials, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library. For a description of early nineteenth century colonial society and attitudes towards the ICS, also see, Captain Thomas Williamson, *East India Vade-Mecum; or; Complete Guide to Gentlemen intended for the Civil, Military, or Naval Service of the Hon. East India Company* (London: Black, Parry, and Kingsbury, 1810):107-127.

you make a friend to value for life.”<sup>45</sup> Civil servants of course, were highly conscious of their own importance. R.D. Macleod, a retired civil servant from the United Provinces, claimed that the Collector was even more important than the Viceroy:

District Officer is not only chief representation of the government in the district but almost the government itself. Viceroys and Governors and even commissioners are legendary figures, rarely, if ever seen by most of the village folk, but the district officer is always with them and always ready to intervene...In the eyes of the ordinary villager the district officer is omniscient and omnipotent...And in a way the district officer is representative not merely of the government but of the King Emperor himself.<sup>46</sup>

Hunting in deep jungles and countryside, and more importantly, access to hunting was one of the visible manifestations of this “omniscient” power of the District Officer. Next in the official hierarchy in the districts were the police and forest officials. The visiting sporting enthusiast from England was advised to make friends with both the district officer and higher officers in the Police and Forest Departments, as it was felt

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<sup>45</sup> A.E. Wardrop, *Modern Pig-sticking* (London: McMillan and Company, 1914), 209.

<sup>46</sup> R.D. Macleod, *Impressions of a Civil Servant* (London: H.F. &G Wither, 1938), 63.

that “these people are in their different spheres, locally almighty” and had power over the natives and shooting blocks.<sup>47</sup>

The administrative hierarchy greatly determined informal social interaction between officers, and perpetuated class divisions with their ranks. For instance, protocol required that even during informal occasions, officers and their spouses sit in order determined by their salary with the result that “you sat almost always next to the same people.”<sup>48</sup> For officers, the perpetuation of the official hierarchy even during informal occasions did not leave many alternative routes to eminence and influence. A show of hunting prowess, however, was one way that a subaltern could earn prestige among peers. With the decrease in game population and restrictions on hunting in the form of licenses, permits and closed seasons, many officers feared that this avenue of self-advancement would no longer be available.

Such restrictions on sporting activity caused great disaffection among all classes of Britons in India, in particular those in lower rungs of the civilian and military administration. Talking about the opposition to game laws by fellow compatriots, A. J.

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<sup>47</sup> *India and the Durbar: a Reprint of the Indian Articles in the "Empire Day" Ed. of THE TIMES, May 24th, 1911*, (London: Macmillan, 1911), 299.

<sup>48</sup> Lionel Fielden, *The Natural Bent* (London: A. Deutsch, 1960), 147.



W. Milroy, Chief Conservator of Forests in Assam in the 1930s, stressed the necessity of educating Europeans to game preservation. He pointed out that the “majority of Europeans belong to the class that had no opportunity to hunt...and recent enquiry proved that while everyone was in favor of cheap *shikar* being furnished by the government, only smallest minority were prepared to subscribe altruistically for the preservation of animals.”<sup>49</sup>

With extension of preservation regimes throughout the early twentieth century that I detail in subsequent chapters, chances of sport were further restricted and placed firmly in the hands of the Forest Officers and other higher officials of a district. Once again, a problem which was largely a result of snobbery of those in power was contested in the language of sportsmanship. Major-General Nigel Woodyatt, though retiring from a high position in the Army, felt that civilian administrators were covetous when it came to hunting. While commenting on the large number of tigers killed by a district officer as an example of the official “selfishness about the tiger,” he observed that “selfishness and sportsmanship are a contradiction of terms.”<sup>50</sup> Unlike the previous century when killing

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<sup>49</sup> A.J.W. Milroy, “Fauna Preservation in Assam”, *Journal of the Society for the Protection of Fauna in the Empire*, Part xxii (1934): 214.

<sup>50</sup> Nigel Gresley Woodyatt, *My Sporting Memories* (London: Herbert Jenkins Limited, 1923), 11-12.

of large tigers conferred a cult status on the hunter, by the early twentieth century killing large numbers of tigers had come to indicate the abuse of official power and to critique the amount of power vested in these officials. In an article on the sporting opportunities in India preceding the imperial Durbar in 1911, one author wrote:

An unfortunate aspect of this official power is seen when it is prostituted for the attainment of purely selfish ends. It is a feeling among those who do not wield such powers, that its use is not unknown in procuring sport for the favoured few, while putting a veto on all other sportsmen...these malpractices have reached the high – watermark of the un- English and unsportsmanlike unwholesomeness. The visitor should avoid such invitations and avoid branding himself as an associate of the morally deficient people.<sup>51</sup>

In response to the opposition from within its ranks and the desire to follow official protocol, the administration sought to find ways to accommodate the conflicting interests of preservation, privilege, and hunting. Exemption from shooting restrictions and special privileges to dignitaries was one such method.<sup>52</sup> At the apex of the administration, the Viceroy enjoyed privileged access to shooting blocks. These

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<sup>51</sup> *India and the Durbar: a Reprint of the Indian Articles in the "Empire Day" Ed. of THE TIMES, May 24th, 1911*, (London: Macmillan, 1911), 299.

<sup>52</sup> Exemptions from shooting laws usually involved freedom from paying fee or having to acquire a license and permission to shoot in areas considered closed for shooting or shooting during a closed season.

privileges were often maintained even if they violated rules established by local authorities. In 1916, Lord Chelmsford's sudden decision to hunt in Dehradun in the shooting blocks already reserved by another party, resulted in frantic correspondence between forest and district officers. While some felt that it would send a wrong signal to cancel the earlier reservations, others were of the view there was no question of not providing the opportunity of sport to the Viceroy. The unseemly delay in decision-making provoked James Meston, the Lieutenant Governor of the United Provinces, to the extent that he intervened directly to cancel the earlier reservations. He justified his decision by claiming, "the Viceroy is the head of our administration; he is also a very busy man and any small courtesy that we can show him in the way of relaxation would be proper and suitable."<sup>53</sup>

The system of exemptions and special privileges of course led to further complications. Forest officials increasingly found themselves in the difficult situation of denying shooting opportunities to friends. In 1918, a Forest Officer in the United Provinces petitioned to his superiors to amend laws so that his peers had the discretion to grant exemptions for shooting even during closed seasons. He claimed that refusal to

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<sup>53</sup> Proceedings of United Provinces Forest Department (henceforth UPFD), File no. 22/1916, Pros. No. 34, Uttar Pradesh State Archives (henceforth UPSA).

friends keen on going “for a walk in the jungle to shoot something” was considered bad form and provoked resentment. He suggested the opening up of more shooting areas to meet the existing demand for more shooting blocks and help raise the morale of the forest officers who were “only desirous of having what always appears as a slur on their hospitality removed.”<sup>54</sup> The decision on this proposal went in favor of the forest officers and a few blocks were set aside where, at the discretion of the district level forest officials, shooting could be permitted even during the closed season. This move however also made the forest officers more vulnerable to allegations of cronyism in the name of preservation.

The issue of shooting exemptions had created inter-department hostilities right from the start of the century. In 1904, for instance, in response to proposed changes in game laws, the Gazetted Canal Officers in the United Provinces demanded to be reincorporated into the list of exemptions in which they had been included up to 1900 when, in “wrathful humour,” they had been cast out. Writing to the Forest Department, one representative of the Gazetted Canal Officers stated it was unfair to expect young officers who had to frequent the forests to respect “rules of these kinds when they see other men with less apparent rights, shooting in front of them. As a matter of fact they

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<sup>54</sup> Proceedings of the UPFD., File no.174/1918, Pros.no.8, UPSA.

will break them and then friction ensues if the Collector is a jealous sportsman.”<sup>55</sup> After much acrimonious correspondence on the issue of game laws between the forest department and other arms of the bureaucracy, a compromise was reached and provision made for the possibility of exemptions for all officers of the gazetted services. The power to grant the exemption, however, remained with the forest authorities.

The district bureaucracy, however, spoke in one voice when it came to the question of hunting by soldiers. From the days of Company rule, the administration had been embarrassed by British soldiers whose drunkenness and irresponsible behavior often led to skirmishes with the Indian villagers. As I will show in Chapter Four, these skirmishes not only created serious problems of law and order but also eroded the prestige of British rule. Both forest officers and district officers therefore found a common interest in preventing soldiers from shooting in areas under their jurisdiction. Given the close proximity of many military establishments to it, the *terai* region in the United Provinces was one of the most popular destinations among soldiers keen on hunting. When reforms for game preservation were underway in the United Provinces in early twentieth century, it created a furor among military personnel. Mr. Keane, an

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<sup>55</sup> Proceedings of the UPFD., File no. 36/1904, Pros. No.22 (a) UPSA.

official of the Forest Department, commented on the prevailing mood of hostility between civilian administration, non-officials and military men:

Now that permit fee and elephant charges were introduced, the expenses of a shooting party were greatly increased; the exemptions became a thing of value and attracted great attention. The Press was full of protests, and nearly all military clubs and messes continued to inveigh against the injustice of exempting the civilian (who is popularly supposed to draw, if not excessive, at least enormous pay) from charge which the ill-paid military man and non-officials were called on to pay.<sup>56</sup>

The district officers and foresters contended that "Tommy Atkins and Johny Gurkha are, between them, rapidly wiping out all the large game."<sup>57</sup> However, it was not easy to restrict hunting behavior of soldiers as sporting exemptions to soldiers had been a long-standing tradition. In fact, exemptions to the Gurkhas as reward for their loyalty to shoot in the Shivalik hills were entered in their charter of service. Many officers felt that exemptions were an "anomaly and a troublesome anomaly persisting by prescription," and needed to be restricted.<sup>58</sup> According to R. Oakden, the District

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<sup>56</sup> Notes and Orders of the UPFD, file 99/1904, 44. UPSA.

<sup>57</sup> Letter from S.R .Daniels, Magistrate of Bijnor to Chief Secretary United Provinces, dated 20<sup>th</sup> July, Proceedings of the United Provinces Forest Department, file 99/1904 ,pros.no. 5, UPSA.

<sup>58</sup> Proceedings of the UPFD, file 168/ 1912, pros.no. 23,UPSA.

Magistrate at Gorakhpur, “in my opinion these are the very men who cause diminution of game. This applies equally to the native army; for instance, in the Gurkha regiments the desire to kill to game is as prevalent among the men as with the British soldier.”<sup>59</sup>

Given the history of rural unrest caused by sporting proclivities of the soldiers, the Military Department passed a general order in 1876, prescribing that permission for sporting purposes would be given only after ascertaining through the civil authorities that resident rural communities were not opposed to the shooting of animals and birds. The United Provinces shooting rules for soldiers from the 1880s not only listed all known sacred places and animals that soldiers should avoid but also issued strict orders not to interact with any natives except through the station *shikari*. In 1879, following a shooting incident in Punjab that led to the death of one person, the Government of India issued guidelines making it mandatory for soldiers to take permission from civilian district officers before undertaking any hunting expeditions.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Letter from R .Oakden, magistrate of Gorakhpur to Chief Secretary, United Provinces, dated 18<sup>th</sup> August, Proceedings of the UPFD, file 99/1904, pros.no..21, UPSA.

<sup>60</sup> Proceedings of Home Department (public), A, 1879, pros.no. 224-225, National Archives of India (henceforth NAI).

District officers, however, claimed that most often military authorities did not notify them of the arrival of a shooting party in their districts who shot incessantly and without consideration to shooting rules. According to G. Bowers, complaints to the commanding officers had no effect, for “sport is ruthless butchery, and breaches of the rule connived at, if not openly winked at!”<sup>61</sup> Soldiers however found support from senior officers of the military who had gained reputation as sportsmen. General Macintyre, a keen hunter in the Indian army, advocated the continuance of exemptions to the Gurkhas in order to make the army attractive to this important ally. He claimed that “a single company of goorkhas is in the time of need, worth more to the state than all the trees in the Dehra Dun forests.”<sup>62</sup> Major-General Nigel Woodyatt also appealed for a show of sympathy for the British soldier:

As a rule he works hard for his sport, and does not get very much. He may have shot a doe for the pot, but you must not be too hard on him for that. At the same time, there is no harm in pointing out the bad example it is to the natives of the country. This appeals to him more than any other argument.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Letter from G. Bower, Magistrate of Saharanpur to Chief Secretary, United Provinces, dated 21 July, 1904, Proceedings of the UPFD, file 99/1904, pros.no. 7, UPSA.

<sup>62</sup> Donald Macintyre, *Hindu-Koh: Wanderings and Wild Sport on and Beyond the Himalayas* (London: W. Blackwood and sons, 1891), 113.

<sup>63</sup> Nigel Woodyatt, *My Sporting Memories* (London: Herbert Jenkins Limited, 1923),11.



This appeal to race superiority however did not always obviate differences in class and status. Civilian administrators continued to think of the average British soldier as callous, insensitive and undisciplined, and no better than the native *shikari*. While the alienation of their soldiers by denying them opportunity to shoot was not a pragmatic solution, the local administrator sought to control their behavior by formulating special shooting rules and codes of behavior.

Such hostilities on the question of access to game reveal the hidden tensions within the colonial state apparatus. Outside this apparatus, officers of the Raj were also keen to preserve social distance from various groups of non-officials like merchants, traders and planters who they held in scorn. Indigo planters, were considered particularly disreputable. In his hunting memoirs, Edward Braddon describes them as territorial magnates about whom “terrible things were said.”<sup>64</sup> James Inglis, an indigo planter in the Assam hills in the late nineteenth century, on the other hand, sought to identify himself with “the missionaries, servants, planters and merchants, and of the many institutions which under the fostering beneficence of British rule are slowly

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<sup>64</sup> Edward Braddon, *Thirty Years of Shikar* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1895),40.

affecting a real revolution in native modes of life and thought.”<sup>65</sup> Peeved with descriptions of planters as “desperate characters” and “vile desperados,” he reminded the bureaucrats of the “red tape brigade” of the role played by them in advancing British rule:

In no other country in the world would the same jealousy of men who open out and enrich a country, and who are loyal, intelligent, and educated citizens, be displayed; but there are high quarters in which the old feeling of the East India Company, that all who were not in the services must be adventurers and interlopers, seems not wholly to have died out.<sup>66</sup>

Given the small closed expatriate community in India, those not in the services had few alternatives to gain social respect. Walter Mackay, who went to the Western Ghats to supervise tea plantations as a junior manager, talks about racial attitudes towards the “unfortunate race of people of British blood, who were proud and passionately loyal to the Crown. They were unaccepted by the English in society in India and looked down upon by the upper class natives.”<sup>67</sup> He describes their struggle to maintain a “good standard of living” and keep up the image of robust frontier-men.

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<sup>65</sup> Inglis, *Tent Life in Tigerland*, 245-46.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* 565.

<sup>67</sup> Mackay, Mss Eur D1063.

Mackay spent most evenings with planters and managers of various tea estates, his hosts advertising that they were:

Magnificent shots with gun and rifle, as the walls of the bungalow bore evidence. Mounted *sambhur* heads, ibex and bison were there, together with skins of leopards, some fifty trophies in all but to show the slightest sign of disgust at the slaughter would have been to put yourself "beyond the pale."<sup>68</sup>

Mackay himself soon became a keen hunter and took active part in game preservation in the Western Ghats. Across the subcontinent, the indigo planter Inglis concluded his narrative by asking all Britons in India to leave aside their dissensions and uphold British traditions together:

Wherever, throughout the realm of the British Empire you pursue your work, or, engage in your sport let the honourable instincts of true Englishmen gentlemen actuate you; and let the grand old country ever have reason to be proud of her scattered sons; let us hand down her illustrious traditions untarnished by degeneracy; her ancient honour unsullied by a sordid stain; and her peerless pre-eminence by dividing jealousies or unworthy rivalries.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Inglis, *Tent Life in Tigerland*, 360.

Inglis was keen to highlight a shared tradition of hunting among all Britons and empire builders. This common heritage was perceived to be social equalizer; a space where an apparent lack of power and privilege could be compensated for by acquiring respectability and prestige as a great hunter.

The discussion on racial attitudes within colonial society is particularly important in the context of the cult of big hunters like Jim Corbett. Highly conscious of not being regarded as a true Briton because of his birth and education in India, and only distantly associated with the official apparatus as a contractor for the Railways, Corbett used his eminence as a “hunter-protector,” a phenomenon I will discuss in Chapter Four, as a tool to validate his status as a member of colonizing elite. He achieved cult status by the 1920s by killing several man-eating big cats in the hill districts of United Provinces and as a champion of conservation. The cult of the hunter acquires a new dimension in this context, as one who while hunting, also simultaneously afforded protection to natives. It not only conferred prestige on those individuals who ranked low in official hierarchy, but also those outside its ranks. Inglis, for example, in memorializing his hunting activities, appropriated the role of the *mai-baap* (held dear by district administrators) in the vast regions where he carried out his planting operations. Emerging as the protector of natives against wild beasts, he challenged the notion cherished by the “heaven born” of the ICS, that the native of India had faith in the

official machinery of the state. He claimed that, “the great majority of the villagers in Behar would go to the factory, and have their *sahib* adjudicate on their dispute, than take it into Court...”<sup>70</sup> And while not all expatriates could claim the *mai-baap* ideal that Inglis claimed to have enjoyed in his huge estates, there were other avenues to highlight their prowess as hunters.

The cult of the big game hunters was largely manufactured and perpetuated through memorialization in popular literature devoted to hunting and wildlife. In the nineteenth century, journals like the *Oriental Sporting Magazine*, *Indian Sporting Review* and *The Bengal Sporting Journal* provided opportunities to communicate with other hunters and advertise personal successes. From the late nineteenth century, those gifted with a flair for writing preferred to write full-length hunting memoirs. Most sportsmen however, continued to be regular contributors to journals. By the 1880s, the old style of hunting journals began to give way to more “scientific” journals such as the *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society*, the *Indian Forester* and the *Journal of the Society for the Protection of Fauna in the Empire*. These journals were important forums not just for demonstrating hunting skills but also in promoting natural history and game preservation. Contributions to the journals also reflected this change and detailed

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid. 184.

queries, comments and observations on natural history, accompanied hunting narratives. The hunters needed to display a greater repertoire of skills to gain acclaim as hunters. However, even as the popularity of hunting literature grew at home and in the subcontinent, this agenda for self-glorification (and British rule) was also increasingly marked by petty rivalries.

Even in the mid-nineteenth century, contributors to the sporting journals had expressed their doubts on the veracity of some of the hunting narratives. Writing in *The Bengal Sporting Magazine*, Theophilus Fingamaree commented:

Since my career in India I have perused I suppose, some thousand of papers more or less on tiger hunting; the greatest *sang froid* with which gentlemen sportsmen in India down the “big cats” as they call them is more a fictitious stretch of their imagination than anything else I should fancy.<sup>71</sup>

As sporting literature grew, so did accusations of false and dishonest accounts. Along with the excessive focus on the language and proof of the hunters’ skill, proof of integrity and honesty also became important. Since there was no real way to prove one’s credentials, these doubts were never laid to rest. One of the most prominent hunters in the Nilgiris, General Hamilton (also known as “Hawkeye”) published his memoirs in

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<sup>71</sup> Theophilus Fingamaree, Esq. “Pickings from a portfolio,” *Bengal Sporting Magazine* Volume 2, No. 8, new series, (August 1845):43.

1881 and drew attention to the complaints of falsification and exaggeration in hunting narratives. In directing this criticism against others, he also appropriated “truthfulness” for his own accounts:

(I) have striven to maintain in them a simplicity and truthfulness of description, not always observed in the too florid accounts adopted by many writers on sporting subjects apparently forgetting, the sound old maxim “viritalis simplex oratio est” (the language of truth is simple).<sup>72</sup>

“Hawkeye” was by no means only author who felt the need to emphasize “truthfulness of description.” Some authors drew attention to their habit of maintaining detailed diaries of hunting trips to establish the veracity of their claims. Implicit in these claims of truth was the suggestion that narratives of others were somewhat embellished. When R.W. Burton, a noted hunting author himself, was asked to review Jim Corbett’s *Man-eater of Kumaon*, his response was polite. He acknowledged Corbett’s skill with the gun, his bravery, and his unusual ability to imitate with accuracy the calls of many animals. The penciled notes in his own diary, however, indicates that he considered Corbett either extremely foolish or inaccurate, or not well informed about wildlife in general. Burton thus wrote, “My review omitted some things that could have been commented

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<sup>72</sup> Major General R. Hamilton, “Hawkeye”, in Preface to *Game* (Madras: Higginbotham and Company, 1881): vi.

upon but felt it was not my business to all in question the foolish actions of the author or his veracity especially in view of the distinguished sponsors of the book.”<sup>73</sup> Corbett’s book had been sponsored by the Bombay Natural History Society, which was as well respected as the famed hunter himself for its researches in natural history, commitment to preservation, and promoting sporting behavior. Collaborations such as these were beneficial to both sides and helped shared ideals of preservation and gentlemanly play. Burton himself frequently contributed to the Society’s journal and did not make his comments public for fear of committing a solecism in questioning the well-established credentials of Jim Corbett and the Bombay Natural History Society.

In this chapter, I have sought to reveal how social relations around hunting were dependant on notions of status and power. Hunting often served as a measure of personal worth and eminence within the British expatriate community. The accommodative nature of the ideology of fair play when translated into action made hunting highly conducive to the broader politics of inclusion and exclusion within the colonial social world. While the institutionalization of hunting took place around elite and exclusive clubs that sought to replicate the patterns of eminence existing in Britain,

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<sup>73</sup> Anand S. Khati, *Jim Corbett of India: Life & Legend of a Messiah* (Noida : Pelican Creations International, 2003.), 84.



social interactions within the elite world often destabilized the coherence of these institutions.

For those who did not enjoy wealth and power, hunting was an identifiable way to gain social acceptance and respectability. The curtailing of hunting by the bureaucracy under various policies of game preservation encouraged the suspicion that the government, like the hunting clubs, was intent on extending the agenda of social exclusion. The denial of hunting and perceptions of discrimination made the question of access of game a socially volatile issue. It not only heightened social tensions within the community but also undermined the administrative unity of the colonial state. The practice of hunting therefore points to divisive social intricacies embedded in the colonial social structure. The rhetoric of fair play could not remain immune to such pressures. It remained socially relevant only by expanding and diversifying to accommodate competing interests of many groups within the British community. As ideas of preservation and conservation entered public and official domains, it became increasingly difficult to maintain a single and stable idea of the British Hunter.

The idea of the noble British hunter was predicated on a supposed conflict between India's wilderness and the colonial imperative to bring progress and civilization to the subcontinent. The next chapter traces the history of this conflict.

## Chapter 3: Nature and the Exercise of Dominance

The enormous brute fell heavily forward: a stream of blood gushed from his mouth; and the much dreaded bear, the man-eater, the monarch of rocky glen, lay at the feet of his conqueror, a harmless mass of black fur and bear's grease.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter explores the exercise of dominance in the Indian jungle during the colonial period. I will discuss the manner in which notions of fair play, governance, and attitudes toward particular animals influenced wildlife policies in colonial India. Articulated in the policies for extermination of vermin and the preservation of game, these ideas placed carnivores in a domain of destruction, and animals categorized as game in a domain of "mercy." In the early nineteenth century, themes of aggression, confrontation and conquest characterize accounts of hunting adventures in Indian forests. The East India Company too in its mission to bring more lands under cultivation had embarked on a campaign to destroy dangerous carnivores. In introducing these measures, colonial administrators relied on native agents. However, the singular focus on an offensive policy to seek and destroy was a departure from diverse native methods of coping with wild animals. While Indian *shikaris* also killed wildlife for food and for protection, the records of the Company dealing with extermination of carnivores suggest

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Campbell, *The Old Forest Ranger* (London: Publishers Unknown, 1844), 36.

that rural communities had their own methods of coping with wildlife that included avoidance and defensive measures.

Following the institutionalization of the policy of vermin extermination in early nineteenth century, stringent measures to preserve birds and various species of herbivores under a policy of game preservation had been established in most districts by 1870s. Identification of game species followed prevalent British definition of game as small and big mammalian herbivores. Preservation regimes show marked coherence with established notions of sportsmanship at home, and emerging notions of fair play in the subcontinent towards the last decades of the nineteenth century.

Indian landscape, Indian wildlife and British hunting inclinations, however, often blurred and undermined the neat organization of wild animals as game and vermin. Hunters who went on to acquire great acclaim did so not by killing deer and rabbit but by acquiring large numbers of tiger, lion, leopard and bear heads in their collection. Fabulously horned heads of *sambhur* and *barasingha* (both of deer family) were essential to every hunting collection, but reputations were rarely built around these. Famous hunters not only preferred pursuing dangerous carnivores but also in the course of memorializing their adventures, zealously avoided the term vermin in describing their victories over all manner of big and small carnivores.

By the beginning of the twentieth century however, as the numbers of big cats began to decline and crop protection from deer became important, the perceived complementarity between game preservation and vermin extermination was shattered. While the colonial administration continued both these policies, the resolution of claims for clemency and claims for destruction increasingly began to dominate colonial policy in the area of wildlife management.

## **Danger in the Indian Jungle**

Generally speaking, beautiful sites are the most dangerous.<sup>2</sup>

The colonial ambivalence characterizing descriptions of Indian jungle as beautiful and dangerous at the same time shows remarkable continuity through early nineteenth and into the twentieth century. For the majority of British men in India, the Indian jungle was a place to bond with nature, to break the tedium of every day existence in the colony, and to relax. Ironically, this place of supposed solace also highlighted colonial anxieties about maintaining dominance and losing control. The jungle was a theatre where the colonial emphasis on alertness and control was tested, upheld and displayed. Perceptions of threat and conquest were embedded in

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<sup>2</sup> R. D. T. Alexander and A. Martin-Leaje, *Some Signposts to Shikar*, (Calcutta: published by Fred R Grenyer, for the Bengal Nagpur Railway Magazine, 1932), 1.

descriptions of forests as beautiful, tranquil places with the potential to lure and seduce the unwary:

Armed as we were to the teeth and bent on slaughter, we felt as if we profaned the scene by our unhallowed presence. It seemed to us the abode of peace and innocence...It was not for such as we- the blood-stained, weather beaten hunter... But the well-known print of the tiger's royal paw recalled our manhood, and rescued us from the pulling of the Arcadian shepherd...we felt that we loved the sweet spot all the better, now that we had a right to explore it's beauties with the free step and roving eye of a hunter.<sup>3</sup>

Prowess as a hunter therefore "legitimated" the enjoyment of beauty and romance of the wilds; it also legitimized violence. A Briton not only resisted various temptations offered by the fecund beauty of Indian jungle, but also established his mastery over wilderness with demonstrations of power, courage and woodcraft. The jungle was a site for confrontation and struggle, and only a conqueror had the right to enjoy its beauty. The expansion of the frontiers of cultivation and the penetration of forests to hunt wild beasts were both activities that served to exercise, reinforce and legitimize the British claim to rule India. In this theatre of institutionalized violence, the hunter and the hunted were endowed considerable physical and symbolic power. The

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<sup>3</sup> Campbell, *Old Forest Ranger*, 275.

hunted appearing in various roles as gentle game, noble quarry and fearful competitor endowed on the hunter an ethical right to kill and an ethical right to rule.

In the decades preceding the uprising in 1857, it was quite acceptable to enforce this right to kill without pretension to fair play or demonstrations of woodcraft. A hunter by the pseudonym -----B reveled in the absolute power of his gun in the contest between man and beast:

“They should take who have the power, And they should keep who can”

The use of this line by Wordsworth best exemplifies the disputed tenure between myself and a certain Bengal tiger laying claim a gallant stag which *he* had killed and I though fit to take possession of. If the case had been impartially investigated in the Supreme Court of Calcutta, I rather think *my* claim to the prize would have fallen to the ground; but it was *he* who bit the earth; for the might of my double Manton, proved too powerful for the right of his possession, and so we reversed the great legal maxim- which yield nine points of the law to the original possessor.<sup>4</sup>

Like the native, brute creation had to be controlled and taught to submit to the authority of British rule. Demonstrations of raw aggression like this went a long way towards naturalizing early decades of British domination in India for natives as well as the colonialists.

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<sup>4</sup> Author Unknown, “The Game Disputed”, *The Bengal sporting Magazine* Volume 1, March no. 3 (1845): 210

Letters written by young recruits in India abound with descriptions of repeated confrontation with wild animals. In a letter written to his brother in Britain, a young officer talked of ponies and dogs being regularly carried off as “tigers, leopards, panther, hyenas, wolves bears and jackals are to be found in these forests is no despicable quantity.”<sup>5</sup> In yet another similar letter home, another recruit talked about running into wild animals as a commonplace occurrence of his existence to “show you how plentiful these animals are and what danger people run in that part of the country.”<sup>6</sup> These letters contributed to the image of India as a place overrun by wild animals, a sporting paradise on one hand and a country needing British intervention on the other.

Most hunters describe the feeling of excitement and tension accompanying a hunt as typical of the contest of man’s reason against the instinct of the brute creation. The excitement and quality of “sport” was often determined by the reaction of the prey, as I noted in Chapter One. An offensive attack or a “charge” from the usually cornered

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<sup>5</sup> Letter, dated 28 Oct 1840, from L C C Rivett to Mrs Whitby, discussing life in India and Indian politics. Mss Eur A 46, India Office Select Materials, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library.

<sup>6</sup> Letter dated 29 August 1830, from Major William Lindsay (Bengal Army 1826-57), to his brother Martin, describing his life in India, Mss C 804, India Office Select Materials, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library.

and injured prey heightened the pleasure of the hunt. While this was true for most animals, including herbivores like elephants, rhinos, buffaloes and gaur, tiger shoots were incomplete without a retaliatory charge. In fact, many hunters maintained that elephant borne hunts were superior to shooting from *machans* as there was greater opportunity for the tiger to charge at elephants. One description of a tiger shoot where a tigress tore up the face, trunk and chest of the elephant in a furious fight drove the hunters “*mad* with pleasure.”<sup>7</sup> Another hunter remarked with satisfaction, “we had encountered all the dangers of tiger shooting today: a man mauled, a charging tiger, and a bolting elephant.”<sup>8</sup> This ratcheting up of tension and confrontation gave credence to the idea of an equal contest where the skill of the hunter matched the fury of nature. The victors in these contests took away trophies that afforded pleasure, “consisting chiefly in its power of recalling vividly the detail of the struggle that preceded their possession.”<sup>9</sup> The “gallant” charge therefore, became an important trope of the hunting narrative. Pitted against guns, elephants and beaters, the hunted had very limited opportunity for

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<sup>7</sup> J.G Elliot, *Field Sports In India 1800-1947* (London: Gentry Books, 1973), 39.

<sup>8</sup> C. Larking, *Bandobast and Khabar* (London: Hurst and Blackett Limited, 1888), 186.

<sup>9</sup> S. Eardley-Wilmot, *Forest Life and Sport in India* (London: Edward Arnold, 1910), 129.



an “equal” contest and yet, a challenge from the quarry was essential to stage a confrontation and give the hunt an aura of difficulty and nobility. In reality, there was very little danger attending elephant borne hunts, and very few British hunters, unless they were thrown off their *howdahs*, were injured during a charge. Elephants, unarmed native beaters and trackers who actually bore the brunt of the charge were relegated to the status of mere auxiliaries in the course of the memorialization of the contest in hunters’ recollections and memoirs.

## **Nobility and Violence**

For the successful memorialization of a hunt, the hunted also needed to conform to their role as worthy and noble competitors. A “gallant” and noble charge not only heightened the adventure of hunting but also exalted the status of the hunter who appropriated the qualities of the quarry first by killing, and then preserving the material remains as trophies. Waiting for the charge of a tiger at bay, one sportsman wrote, “Just then I would not have exchanged places with the Governor General of British India. There really was some dignity in confronting such a foe... he has quite made up his mind to die game at all events.”<sup>10</sup> The hunter *waited* and hoped for violence. The more the

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<sup>10</sup> -----B, *The Bengal sporting Magazine*, Volume 1, March no. 3 (1845): 208.

number and ferocity of the charges, the greater the nobility endowed on the hunted and the hunter. Thrilled at being charged four times by a tiger, Oakeden writes:

He made three other charges I but stopped them all. Just before the last charge he looked out of the grass, his head all bloody and shook himself. I stood looking at him with admiration and did not fire till he charged and he fell never to rise again. I fired eight balls at him. He was a gallant tiger about six years old and never attempted to run off.<sup>11</sup>

In the period before 1857, hunters employed “unsporting” practices to make an animal fight back. Forests and grasslands were burnt to make sure that the animal did not take refuge, and it was common to shoot and break the hind legs of a prey to prevent it from escaping. Despite these tricks, an animal refusing to fight back and provide greater excitement was described as cowardly, lacking in pluck and despicable.

*Khubbar* (news/intelligence/ information) and *bandobast* (material organization of the hunt) were two important words in the colonial hunting lexicon. One of the most anticipated *khubbar* was that of a man-eating tigress with cubs. News of cattle lifting, usually regarded as a setback by the administration, was good news for the sportsman.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Journal entry dated 21 October, 1824, “Diary and sporting journal of William Parry Okeden” (1906), Mss Eur A210, India Office Select Materials, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library.

<sup>12</sup> See for instance, Westley Richards, “Notes of a Sporting Excursion,” *The Bengal sporting Magazine*, Volume II, New Series, September no. 9 (1845): 469.

Big cats and bears anxious to protect their young not only offered more chances of a contest but also enabled the hunter to carry out the administrative agenda of ridding the countryside of carnivores. Edward Raleigh, triumphant after shooting a “sporting” mother leopard in 1828, captured “two most beautiful little kittens about a fortnight old” who were “still very furious, lifting up their little paws and snarling at a great rate. I had them most carefully secured and took them home to tent for the purpose of rearing them.”<sup>13</sup> Killing of the mother and taking away the young was common among sportsmen. Just as the impotent rage of the mother deemed her noble, the protestations of the defenseless cubs rendered them plucky and adorable (like kittens) at the same time. Destined as presents for Lady Amherst, these cubs, as others like them, soon died and were sent to Britain stuffed, to decorate the Amherst household.<sup>14</sup> While in the later years, delight in killing or capturing the very young fade from hunting accounts, killing the young of carnivores was still highly desirable in upholding the policy of ridding the countryside of dangerous animals in the nineteenth century.

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<sup>13</sup> Journal entry dated January 3, 1828, “The Log of a Griffin”: manuscript journal by Edward Ward Walter Raleigh, Bengal Medical Service 1826-46, describing a tour by the Governor-General Lord Amherst, from Barrackpore through the Upper Provinces of Bengal, Mss Eur D786/2 of Mss Eur D786, India Office Select Materials, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

Even tiger hunting, however, was deemed second to the “King of Sports,” pig sticking. Pig-sticking enthusiasts held that the boar’s pluck and courage in charging the hunters made it the most noble of all quarries. Defending themselves against the criticism that pig sticking was a brutal and bloody pastime, pigs stickers argued that the wild pig did not know fear or pain as other animals know it:

No doubt whatever about his savage nature taking real enjoyment in a tough and fighting finish. He always seems to be glad to see you and glad to die, which I cannot recall in the case of any animal of more sensitive temperament- he is well prepared for rough and tumble life with a sporting end to it and would wish for no other.<sup>15</sup>

Given its popularity with the military men, pig stickers often spoke and wrote in the language of war. To hunt the pig, it was said, “was as gallant an achievement in the Deccan in 1820, as fighting the French in Portugal, in 1809.”<sup>16</sup> Pig sticking was said to “include all the elements of noble excitement- ardour in the pursuit, emulation in the race, the race, danger in the charge and triumph in death!”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Frederic Mathews, *The Call of the Kadir*, (Lucknow: Perry’s Printing Press ,1924), no pagination.

<sup>16</sup> “The Sportsman”, Untitled, *The Bengal sporting Magazine* Volume 1, New Series April no. 4 (1845): 365.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

In conquering their foe, the hunters also felt they were following rules of nature. Nature, they argued, was cruel and “all wild animals, not killed by stronger animals die of starvation and disease.”<sup>18</sup> Sportsmen, therefore, were only playing the intended role of a supreme predator.

The role of the supreme predator also complemented the idea of a paternal benefactor. As I will further discuss in Chapter Four, this role became more important after the Arms Act of 1878 disarmed native populations, depriving them of means to defend themselves against attacks from wild animals. The power to protect now rested with the Briton. Vivid descriptions of death throes of bears, tigers, and leopards embellish the narratives of nearly all the colonial memoirs under study. Sportsmen claimed they performed a service for the state “by annihilating a portion of the brute creation.”<sup>19</sup> Ridding the countryside of noxious vermin was an important official agenda and in establishing control over dark forces of nature, the hunter-protector acquired legitimacy to govern. Extermination and preservation policies clearly indicate a domain

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<sup>18</sup> Mathews, *The Call of the Kadir*, no pagination.

<sup>19</sup> “The Sportsman”, Untitled, *The Bengal sporting Magazine* Volume 1, New Series April no. 4 (1845): 382.

of destruction that was integral to the territorial and symbolic reach of British rule in India.

## **Noxious Beasts: Contest and Control**

In Britain, extermination of carnivores was an important part of landscape management in the countryside, which included protection of livestock, extending the arable and preserving animals classified as game. The ferocity of big carnivores in India further crystallized the conviction that human settlement was incompatible with wild animals. While the colonial government acknowledged that herbivores (especially pig, porcupine and members of the deer family) caused considerable crop damage and it was appropriate to kill them where necessary, a consistent and persistent drive for extermination was launched only against the carnivores. In one of the earliest accounts of hunting in the Indian subcontinent, Daniel Johnson, a former surgeon in the Company, mentions that the system of rewards for killing carnivores was in force even during the 1790s.<sup>20</sup> In addition to the great cats, local governments were empowered to undertake measures to eradicate animals considered destructive like wolves, jackals, hyenas and bears. In the early years, extermination of wild elephants was part of the

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<sup>20</sup>Daniel Johnson, *Sketches of Field sports as followed by Natives of India*. (London : Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1822), 81.

extermination drives, but as the Company learnt of the utility and profitability of Kheddah operations, it sought to monopolize the capture of wild elephants.

The policy of game preservation resulted in extermination drives as well. Animals like the otter (seen to be destructive to fish), and the ratel (a member of the ferret tribe, perceived to be destructive to birds) were included in the list of vermin to be exterminated. Extermination drives also often included raptors and nearly all over India, rewards were offered to kill the “notorious poacher and game bespoiler”<sup>21</sup> ----the jackal and the wild dog which was “ insatiable and merciless and ought to be exterminated.”<sup>22</sup>

The presence of large carnivores was seen as a setback to British efforts to civilize India. Calling for urgent measures against tigers and advocating the system of bounties as most effective method for tiger extermination, H.S. Thomas (Esq.), acting Magistrate of South Canara, argued in 1870:

It was done in England with wolves, when the country was densely wooded and not so well armed as India now is. I venture to think it a stain on our administration that at this date, the beasts of prey should still

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<sup>21</sup> Proceedings of the UPFD., File no. 99/1904, UPSA.

<sup>22</sup> Proceedings of the UPFD., File no. 99/1904, , Pros. No. 7, UPSA.

contest in the field with us, and no man dare leave his flocks out at night...<sup>23</sup>

The desire to assert spatial authority over landscape was inseparable from the professed rationale of protecting rural populations and livestock. British sportsmen echoed the language of conflict between the domestic and the wild: "...it hath always been found necessary for men to hunt and destroy those animals, which would soon increase upon and overcome those which are so serviceable to man, so mild and docile as to submit to his government and answer his various domestic purposes."<sup>24</sup>

The method thought most appropriate for extermination of "noxious beasts" was bounty hunting. Bounty hunting not only satiated the hunger for trophies among sportsmen, but was also held to be more economical in the long run. Despite the continued importance of controlling dangerous animals in British India, as we see later in this chapter, only large mammals caught the fancy of the British hunters. Local administrations across the subcontinent struggled to encourage the hunting down of snakes, which caused more deaths among humans and livestock than the overall

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<sup>23</sup> Proceedings, Home (Public), 8 February 1870, Part A, Pros. No.45. National Archives of India (henceforth NAI).

<sup>24</sup> "M," "Philosophical Sportsman," *Indian Sporting Review*, Volume XI (1850):248



destruction caused by mammalian carnivores. Popular literature on hunting rarely mentions the native *shikari* as contributing to extermination of carnivores. As I discuss in the next chapter, *shikaris* were often seen as competitors to the British hunter, and denigrated as poachers. The importance of native methods of controlling wild animals is clear in Company records. These records also point to the traditional ways in which natives coped with conflicts with wildlife. As the Company strove to disarm natives and appropriate the role of protecting its human, animal and agricultural assets from wild life, this expertise was gradually lost.

### **The Problem of “Noxious” Beasts: Avoidance and Conflict**

While more research is needed to understand indigenous methods of dealing with human-wildlife conflicts, Company records suggest that prior to British rule, local rulers maintained specialized establishments for controlling human-animal conflicts.

In one case in 1820s, the Company became aware of how local rulers managed such conflicts when it wished to extend cultivation in Coimbatore district and build a road to the newly discovered Nilgiri Hills. Unfortunately, for the district officials, both these projects faced failure due to frequent attacks by wild elephants. Reprimanding the District Collector J. Sullivan, the Board of Revenue at Fort St. George in Madras, called attention to the fact that since the region had come into the Company’s possession, the public revenue had diminished by nearly a lakh of rupees every year due to destruction

of crops by elephants. In response to enquiries on declining revenues, Sullivan claimed helplessness at the scale of the problem and alluded to the destabilizing nature of the British conquest in the region. He noted that under the previous rule of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan, approximately seven to eight thousand men identified as *Cundachar* Peons were distributed over the district in the neighborhood of the hills.<sup>25</sup> They practiced agriculture and had a personal interest in preserving the country from the ravages of elephants. According to Sullivan, due to the efficiency of the *Cundachars*, “elephants were unknown in the parts of the country of which they have now obtained almost undisturbed possession.”<sup>26</sup> When these lands were transferred to the Company, the peons were discharged and the “lands have from that time remained waste and unprofitable.”<sup>27</sup> In contrast to general Company policy, Sullivan claimed that he had issued orders authorizing the distribution of arms to “respectable inhabitants,” but due

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<sup>25</sup> The Cundachars or Candachars were part of a military establishment of the Mysore rulers. They were given land to cultivate and were in charge of law and order in the areas they resided. They were called upon in times of war to provide extra military strength.

<sup>26</sup> Correspondence between J Sullivan Esq., Collector of Coimbatore and the President and members of the Board of Revenue, Extract proceedings Board of Revenue at Fort St George, 10<sup>th</sup> October, 1822-November 1825, IOR/F/4/862/22786, Records of the Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India: Board’s Collections [IOR/F/4/0804 - IOR/F/4/0917], Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

to “the general disarming, a generation has sprung up which is unacquainted with the use of arms and in consequence but little inclination is shown by the people to avail themselves of the privilege.”<sup>28</sup>

In addition to declining revenues in some of best country in the region, there were also reports of depopulation with newly settled peasants abandoning their fields. Arguing that “the population recedes as the elephants advance,” Sullivan suggested wooing back the *Cundachar*.<sup>29</sup> The Company’s practice of maintaining stipendiary peons to control wild elephant populations in other districts had failed in this region. Sullivan argued “the evil can only be checked by an armed population, resident on the spot, whose interest it would be to put down the elephants.”<sup>30</sup> The *Cundachars* had formed such a population in the days prior to the Company. Sullivan’s suggestion was to settle a reduced number of *Cundachars* in the area in rent-free lands so that they would once again have a stake in protecting the crops.<sup>31</sup> In a special meeting, the Board authorized

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

Sullivan to re-establish two thousand *Cundachars* with an allowance of 18 rupees per annum, half of which was to be paid in cash and the other to be assigned in land. By July of 1824, however, this method had proved to be a failure as Sullivan could not procure the requisite number of peons on these terms.<sup>32</sup> To augment the efforts of the *Cundachars*, the Board adopted an earlier suggestion also made by Sullivan to import a small contingent of hunters from Chittagong who had successfully managed to keep elephant numbers down in other areas under Company rule. On the question of paying for such a contingent, the Board expressed the opinion that the expense required to instruct the people of Coimbatore in the “approved method of catching the wild elephant, is trifling compared to the evil which it is calculated to repress if not to prevent, that we have no hesitation in recommending it for your adoption.”<sup>33</sup> Sullivan also wanted the resident European officers to be involved formally in the helping to bring down the numbers of the wild elephants. Few, however, volunteered and the Governor in Council felt that the services of military officers could not be spared for the purposes of elephant hunting. Instead, he raised the reward for each elephant killed (to Rs. 25).

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

By February of the next year, administrators questioned the effectiveness of these measures once again. The Chittagong method involved driving entire herds of elephants into a ditch and capturing them.<sup>34</sup> The Board advised Sullivan that given the amount of bounty given for each elephant was the same, it made better sense to shoot them rather than drive them to pits.<sup>35</sup> Sullivan however chose to continue with the method of capture as he claimed that the shooting elephants was difficult unless at close range. The Chittagong method was continued, and it destroyed forty to fifty elephants in the course of one season.<sup>36</sup> While there is no information in the records of the specific strategies

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<sup>34</sup> The records do not mention if at this time the Company was involved in Kheddah operations or what the elephant catchers did with the elephants taken alive. The Madras Wild Elephant Preservation Act 1873 made killing or capture of wild elephants illegal. This act was extended to all of India by The Elephants Preservation Act 1979. Besides the license to capture elephants, the Collector and Deputy Commissioner of a district were also given the power to kill rogue elephants.

<sup>35</sup> Correspondence between J Sullivan Esq., Collector of Coimbatore and the President and members of the Board of Revenue, Extract proceedings Board of Revenue at Fort St George, 10<sup>th</sup> October, 1822-November 1825, IOR/F/4/862/22786, Records of the Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India: Board's Collections [IOR/F/4/0804 - IOR/F/4/0917], Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library. Curiously, this record has no information on what happened to elephants once they were in pits. While it is possible that they were subsequently killed, given the profitability of the trade in captured elephants, it is entirely possible that these elephants were domesticated. Kheddah operations commenced in the South only in Mysore State after G P Sanderson introduced it in 1874. For more information see, R. Sukumar, *The Asian Elephant: Ecology and Management* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

employed by the *Cundachars* to check attacks by elephants prior to the adoption of these new methods, these discussions hints at their preference in driving away elephants from villages rather than capturing or killing them. The practice of trapping entire herds of elephants in pits was new to this area. The “Chittagong method” on the other hand was transported from eastern India and appropriated by the Company and replaced the traditional method of coping with wild elephants in this region.

Another example of a similar process of change from local native strategies to new ones comes from a discussion on tiger extermination in the district of Ramgurh in the Central Provinces. Here, tiger hunters called *baughmars* had traditionally been employed to control tiger attacks. In an effort to utilize the services of the *baughmars* and make them its own, the district administration had by the 1820s, set up a Baughmar Establishment. On being questioned on the additional expense of maintaining this establishment, the acting Collector argued that though the *baughmars* did not kill many tigers, “I am very far from considering that their services are useless or their situation sinecure.”<sup>37</sup> According to him, there were numerous and ferocious tigers in the district

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<sup>37</sup> Letter from T. Cuthbert, Acting Collector of Ramgurh to Board of Revenue in Bengal, 8<sup>th</sup> February, 1825, IOR F/4/970/27430, Records of the Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India: Board’s Collections [IOR/F/4/0918 - IOR/F/4/1019], Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library.

which frequently stalked travellers on the public roads and disrupted the *dawk*. In such cases, the services of the *baughmars* had proved useful in frightening away the tigers. He warned that disbanding the establishment would disrupt communications and delay the *dawk*. However, since the numbers of vermin killed determined the success of extermination policies, the Board questioned the viability of maintaining the Establishment. Given the low number of tigers killed by the Establishment in comparison to the expense of maintaining it, the Board judged that it did not fulfill its mandate. The Collector defended the low number of kills, arguing that destroying tigers was not necessary as long as the *baughmars* succeeded in scaring them away from the roads and villages. The Board, however, directed that additional rewards be given to *baughmars* for killing tigers with specific orders to bring down tiger numbers instead of deploying defensive strategies to avoid conflict.<sup>38</sup> The Company State needed measurable evidence of its administrative success and justification of administrative expenses.

Where such proof existed, the Company actively supported districts with special sanctions to increase the rate of rewards. The Collectorate of Midnapore, for example, was granted a concession for higher rates of reward for vermin extermination during the

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

1820s because its revenues had increased sufficiently to justify this cost. The higher rate was intended to encourage natives and resident Europeans to take part in the extermination campaign. The native *shikaris*, resident Europeans, and the Raja of Midnapore himself actively hunted tigers and leopards. The Board of Revenue approved the continuance of higher rates of reward not only to protect natives, “but likewise of encouraging them to subdue the jungles and extend cultivation.”<sup>39</sup> While much more research is needed on native methods of coping with threats from wild animals, these examples hint at the different approaches to avoiding conflict with these deadly carnivores. The evidence also suggests that in regions where the strategy of avoidance had been followed earlier, the practice of direct confrontation and extermination was systemically encouraged under British rule.

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<sup>39</sup> Letter from the Board of Revenue in Bengal dated 23 January 1824, Lord Amherst the Governor General in Council, 1824 IOR F/4/970/27430, Records of the Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India: Board’s Collections [IOR/F/4/0918 - IOR/F/4/1019], Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library.

<sup>39</sup> Bengal Revenue Consultations, IOR F/4/970/27430, Records of the Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India: Board’s Collections [IOR/F/4/0918 - IOR/F/4/1019], Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library.



## Implementing the Agenda for Extermination

The implementation of extermination measures often lacked coherence however and seem fettered by administrative structures. In an attempt to evolve an efficient economic template to bring down the numbers of dangerous animals, the Board of Revenue in Bengal initiated an enquiry on the progress of extermination measures in various districts in 1820. As the discussion progressed, the Board grew increasingly concerned at the growing and fluctuating expenditure in the form of rewards disbursed annually in various districts. It sought answers on these disparities from the Collectors of districts with the highest expenditures. The enquiry also indicates that the government suspected fraud by their own officers and native *shikaris*, a suspicion that continued to plague policies of extermination until the very end of British rule in India.

In 1821, prior to the discussion on the *Baughmars*, this enquiry had questioned the Collector of Ramgarh about increased expenditure in rewards without a corresponding decrease in damage by tigers. The Collector had explained that given the high number of tigers in his district, he had decided on a reward of ten rupees for every tiger killed in Ramgarh. Since the neighboring districts paid only five rupees, hunters from neighboring regions also applied to the Ramgarh treasury for payment of rewards. The Board suggested that the Collector discontinue the practice of paying the larger sum unless the person producing the skin could prove satisfactorily that the animal was

killed within the jurisdiction of the district. The Collector, however, chose to abandon the system of higher rewards despite claiming greater tiger numbers in the district, as he did not have much success in ascertaining where the skins came from despite attempts to do so.<sup>40</sup>

Ascertaining and ascribing territorial jurisdiction to carcasses and skins was one of the biggest obstacles in the implementation of vermin extermination. In response to a similar query on high expenditure, P.P. Nisbet, the newly appointed Collector of Rungpore in Bengal, expressed surprise at the large number of applications for rewards in his district. Further investigations revealed that many of the animals had been destroyed either in neighboring Assam or near the Bhutan Hills, "I therefore refused all heads of this description and now seldom or ever have any been brought to me."<sup>41</sup>

While extermination policies were part of the campaign to extend and establish territorial control, this control had to be exercised within a rational administrative

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<sup>40</sup> Letter from P.P Nisbet, Collector of Rungpore to the Board of Revenue for Lower Provinces 29 October 1823, IOR F/4/970/27430, Records of the Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India: Board's Collections [IOR/F/4/0918 - IOR/F/4/1019], Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library.

<sup>41</sup> Bengal Revenue Consultations, IOR/F/4/889/23171, Records of the Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India: Board's Collections [IOR/F/4/0804 - IOR/F/4/0917], Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library.

apparatus with clear boundaries and jurisdiction. Colonial officers, *shikaris* and wild animals alike were increasingly required to conform to the rationale of administrative structures.

Other similar enquiries also noted that there was large-scale fraud committed by native *shikaris*. They also concluded, however, that except “zealousness” on the Collector’s part, no easy measure could be adopted to check such abuse. The company administration in their recommendation to districts, advised close inspection, the branding of carcasses, and questioning of the *shikari* as the only measures that could discourage fraudulent practices. The suspicion of fraud extended to colonial officers as well. The Collectorate of Bhagulpore, for instance, was implicated in a long and “systemic course of fraud.” The Collector was held responsible for his failure to examine the revenue charges of the District and inability to detect the fraud earlier. On examining the revenue charges at the Collectorate, the Board of Revenue found that though the reward for killing tigers had been reduced from five rupees in the year 1807 to ten rupees in 1815, a much larger sum of Rs. 1,07790 had been disbursed in that period. This amount, the Board claimed, could be justified only if 22,895 tigers had been killed in that period. Certain that this was a near impossible feat, it asked for the records of animals killed. The Board was particularly irked that the Collectorate had maintained no such records or statistics. It accused the Collectorate and the Bhagulapore Board of Revenue

of gross negligence. While no proof was found of corruption or connivance on part of the previous collector, the Board felt it was impossible for them to acquit him of gross negligence in the performance of his duty. The appointment of a new Collector, it was hoped, would check some of the abuse, and further all districts were directed to prepare annual statement showing the expenditure and the number of wild animals killed.<sup>42</sup> Extermination policies however continued to be vulnerable to malpractice, and accusations of frauds against agents of the state remained common even in twentieth century.

With changes in administrative structure in the decades following 1858, the responsibility of undertaking measures against wild animals came to rest with the Home Department of the Government of India and with the General Administration departments in the provinces. The Board of Revenue gave rewards for the destruction of carnivores. According to guidelines of the Home Department:

In determining the sum (of reward) to be granted, the collector will be guided by the circumstances of the case; the size and ferocity of the animal; the havoc committed by it, whether in the carrying off of cattle or the loss of human lives; and the danger attending its pursuit and the personal courage displayed by the parties concerned in its destruction.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Proceedings, Home (Public), 1871, Pros.No. 45, NAI.

<sup>43</sup> Proceedings, Home (Public), 1870 , A, Pros.No. 33, NAI.

In setting up the contest between normative notions of “personal courage” against the size and ferocity of the animals went a long way in cementing the combative nature of contest and control. These normative values were given a more real form by rewarding the hunter against the real and potential economic damage caused by the animals.

The co-operation of native *shikaris* and villagers was necessary to make the extermination drives successful. When questioned about continuing attacks to humans and livestock, provincial administration fell back on oft-repeated argument of native habits of superstition and fear. According to colonial officials, natives often refused to cooperate even in the face of grave threat from dangerous species like snakes and tigers. Natives, it was said, possessed “as a rule an extremely strong, superstitious reverence for snakes and avoid killing them. It is needless to explain why this is so, it is so beyond a doubt.”<sup>44</sup> Tiger worship in certain parts of India (particularly the Central Provinces) and the natives’ fear of offending the tiger deity, as I will discuss in Chapter Five, was another factor ascribed to unsuccessful attempts at tiger extermination. While

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<sup>44</sup>Proceedings, Home (Public), 1870, A, Pros. No. 33, NAI.

some of the bigger native landlords actively hunted tigers in support of the government's attempts to exterminate dangerous animals in early nineteenth century, most came to resist the killing of tigers on their lands by the close of the century. Given the popularity of hunting big mammals among Britons, they preserved most big mammals (including carnivores) in order to provide good sport and thus gain access to senior British officers. The preferences of the British sporting elite also undermined the drive against dangerous animals. As I have discussed earlier, most sportsmen tended to focus their skills on "big game" like the tiger, and showed little inclination to hunt other vermin. Surgeon Shortt, who in Madras was overwhelmed by the number of people succumbing to snake bites, complained:

Wild beasts afford sport to the *shikari* and are sought out with that view, while a snake is a mean reptile that nobody cares to destroy and it is allowed to roam unmolested... a great noise is made when a single individual is carried away by a tiger but any number of individuals are killed by snakes and nothing is said about them.<sup>45</sup>

Snakes and other such "mean" creatures did not possess the necessary qualities that when transferred to the sportsman allowed him to claim nobility and courage. The disinclination of the European hunters to go after the "lesser" game was a continuing

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<sup>45</sup> Proceedings, Home (Public), 1872, Pros.No. 243, NAI.

feature of colonial rule. In 1912, for instance, the villagers in the hills of Nainital complained of cattle lifting by a ferocious beast. Assuming that the offender was a tiger, Alfred Blunden, who had just been promoted as an inspector, “sat up” to kill the tiger. His joy at having killed the animal was marred by the discovery that it was a hyena. He eventually got over his “bitter disappointment” at the sub inspector’s reassurance that the villagers would nevertheless be pleased, as the hyena was the animal responsible for lifting cattle. In further validation of his feat, Blunden claimed that his efforts were not a waste as “hyenas have terribly strong jaws and are even more cunning than panthers.”<sup>46</sup> While the memoirs of British hunters abound with stories of destroying dangerous beasts, they are silent on the issue of collecting bounties. Official records however, especially for the period before 1857, however suggest that many British hunters did in fact collect rewards.<sup>47</sup> The silence on the question of rewards collected by British hunters

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<sup>46</sup> “What Did The Indian Police Do?”, Unpublished memoir of Alfred Charles Blunden Indian Police 1912-47, describing his long career with the Indian Police in the United Provinces, Mss Eur F 51176, India Office Select Materials, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library.

<sup>47</sup> Letter from E. R. Barwell, Collector of Midnapore to J Wyatt, Acting Secretary to the Board of Revenue in Lower Provinces dated 10 October 1823, IOR F/4/970/27430, Records of the Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India: Board’s Collections [IOR/F/4/0918 - IOR/F/4/1019], Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library.

<sup>47</sup> Proceedings, Home (Public) 1877, pros.no.249-280, 1880, pros.no.32-70, 1885, pros.no.172-209, 1899, pros.no.322-338, 1889,316-353,,1890,pros.no.316-353, 1895,pros.no.322-338,1919,pros.no.74-90, NAI.

bolstered the claim that the native *shikaris* hunted for food and rewards and while the British sportsmen hunted for the noble purposes of sport and for protecting life and property. This argument in favor of fair play, as I have argued in the Chapter One, complemented the articulation of racial differences between British and natives hunters.

The Home Department collected statistics on the number of humans killed by wild animals and the number of wild animals killed by humans until 1922 when the system of rewards was provincialised.

Year	Number of People Killed by Wild Animals	Number of Cattle Killed by Wild Animals	Number of Wild Animals Killed
1877	2822	49144	22090
1880	2808	54872	14247
1885	2849	58463	22831
1890	2424	62071	13711
1895	2944	40005	14310
1899	2848	83426	17081

Table 1: Numbers of wild animals killed and native deaths due to wild animals.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Proceedings Home (public), December 1878- Part P, Pages: 249-250; Home (public), December 1878- Part P, Pages: 249-250; Home (Public), December 1886, Part A, page 172-209; Home (Public). December 1885, Part A, Page 001, 69-101; Home (Public), October 1891, Part A, Pages 316-353; Home (Public ), September 1895, Part A, Pages 211-247.



I have compiled these figures from the returns from Madras, Bombay, Bengal, Northwest provinces and Oudh, Punjab, Ajmere- Merwara, the Central provinces, Assam, Coorg, and Hyderabad and adjoining districts. These figures seem to suggest that the extermination measures of the late nineteenth century did not really reduce the human-animal conflict in the period for which the statistics were gathered. Given the rhetoric of governance and protection however, the colonial government persisted in continuing measures for extermination despite no clear indication of success even in their records.

Even though the colonial government vigorously implemented the agenda for vermin extermination, sportsmen expressed concerns over bad hunting practices and decrease in game numbers by latter decades of the nineteenth century. In response, the government sought to establish rules to regulate hunting. These regulations greatly limited the hunting practices of natives and were to institutionalize the idea of “game” in a domain of mercy.

### **Game: The Domain of Mercy?**

In Chapter One, I discussed how the idea of fair play was an effective tool in distancing the British from native hunters. This section will focus on the process by

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which notions of fair play, (particularly the idea of giving clemency to females and immature males and of “clean” kills by using firearms) applicable to animals regarded as game, were formally instituted into laws under the rubric of “game preservation.”

The push toward the preservation of certain species identified as game came during the 1870s. The Nilgiri Game Association was one of the earliest organizations to campaign for legalizing the domain of mercy to animals classified as game. The concept of game preservation was largely derived from prevalent European methods of defining certain species as game and protecting their breeding to secure a steady stock of game animals. As defined in England, “game” included members of the deer and antelope family and a number of bird species. Carnivores like the wolf were not only perceived as threat to human life and property, but also predatory to game animals and hence deemed vermin. Britain was known for its stock of deer in aristocratic game reserves. The British also held the distinction of destroying all wolves in their country. According to *The Badminton Library of Rural Sports and Pastimes*, legal protection was given to hares and deer traditionally because they were “beasts of compassion never accounted with either cruelty or foul play,” but it was acceptable to “knock foxes and wolves over the head as they can be found because they are beasts of prey.”<sup>49</sup> Carnivores represented the

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<sup>49</sup> Duke of Benfort ed, *The Badminton Library of Rural Sports and Pastimes*, (London: Longman , Green and Company, 1889), 26-27.

barbaric forces of nature and had to be quelled, while herbivores seen to be gentle and unthreatening, were deserving of protection.<sup>50</sup>

In India, though, when the idea of closed periods or closed areas for shooting was suggested, many a Briton found the idea quixotic and contrary to the fundamentals of game preservation:

(the sportsmen) by keeping down vermin such as wild dogs and hyenas and wild cats, &c., and also by shooting panthers and tigers, do far more good than harm to herbivorous animals and feathered game. The real "poachers" are the above-mentioned animals, and which will now run riot "in periods of grace"<sup>51</sup>

Those who advocated game protection argued that it was precisely because "game destroying-vermin (are here) so much more various and numerous than in Europe," that made preservation in India more crucial.<sup>52</sup> While extermination measures would control carnivore population in areas outside shooting blocks, game would get

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<sup>50</sup> However, since fox-hunting was a passion with the landed elite, the fox was preserved in some estates.

<sup>51</sup> Proceedings of the UPFD, File no. 99/1904, UPSA.

<sup>52</sup> Letter from Mr. Conybeare, Commissioner, Meerut Division to Chief Secretary to Government, United Provinces, dated 5<sup>th</sup> August 1904. Proceedings of the UPFD, File no. 99/1904, Pros.No. 10, UPSA.

some reprieve from human hunters inside them, especially during the breeding period when they were most vulnerable. The concern to render hunting “less cruel” was a preoccupation that hunters shared in England. Stonehenge, while defending the practice of hunting, found it necessary to call on legislators to formulate game laws in order to “to purge it of all the bad and vicious tendencies” such as shooting of does and immature males.<sup>53</sup> Preservationists also argued that if game laws were not implemented, some game species would become extinct. Preservationists sought to give legal form to the idea of fair play through legal prohibition against activities like snaring, netting and shooting over water holes, which were considered unfair and unethical.

### **Protection, Fair Play and Power**

In Chapter One, I discussed the changing contours of the rhetoric on hunting. I argued that with the consolidation of colonial rule, and in particular, in the aftermath of the revolt of 1857, the language of power became more subtle, cloaked in notions of clemency and fair play when it came to hunting. In the sporting journals of first half of mid-nineteenth century, a time when military conquest, expansion and annexation were more important, there were no such pretensions. In one account of organized *sambhur* hunting, a sportsman delighted in his ability and capacity for violence:

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<sup>53</sup> Stonehenge, *Manual of British Rural Sports* (London: Fredrick Warne and Company, 1867), 27.

Now comes the most exciting time... the jungles that were formerly as still as death are now resounding with the noise of the stones causing no little sensation to an inexperienced hand and anxiety to an old one. The herd now broke right and left, flying in every direction, regardless of rocks and precipices whilst a running fire from the matchlock men kept up the merriest peal I had heard for a long time- very little execution, however is even done these occasions; one ball out of fifty tells; they are not adapted for hitting an animal running.<sup>54</sup>

This behavior was deemed as slaughter in the later years. Though exceptions continued, organized hunting of deer and antelope with beaters was considered unsporting and stringent local laws were put into practice by the 1870s on the killing of hinds and immature males. From the 1870s, it is also rare to find accounts of such indiscriminate firing. The expertise of the hunter lay in killing with a sure quick shot rather than with a barrage of bullets mean to injure but not kill.

Though the movement towards game preservation was in response to the decrease in game animals, the call for preservation also reflects anxieties about colonial control and accepted social behavior. The famous Nilgiri hunter, General Hamilton or "Hawkeye," had campaigned for game preservation as early as the 1860s. Prominent newspapers like the *South of India Observer*, *The Pioneer*, and *The Field*, published his

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<sup>54</sup> Purdy, 'Sambur Shooting', *The Bengal sporting Magazine*, Volume 1, March no. 3 (1845): 109.

articles on the necessity of preservation. His arguments reveal how perfectly the cultural preoccupation with notions of fair play coalesced with the need to ensure breeding of animals seen as game. For instance, his campaign against killing of pregnant does stressed that this “slaughter” not only smacked of foul play, but was also against the law of nature. Referring to the campaign for preservation laws in Britain, he argued, “Nature bids its creature to increase and multiply and the man who raises his hand against this ordinance is more than a criminal- he is a beast...why the government hesitates to put in force a law based on the law of nature is beyond my comprehension!”<sup>55</sup>

Enforcing the “law of nature” served two important purposes. First, like wars, it made the hunting adventure a uniquely masculine affair between supposed equals where instinct and ferocity of nature were matched by intelligence, courage and skill of the British hunter. And second, in doing so, this practice in fair play yielded better trophies. Chronicling his hunting adventures, Julius Barras wrote that they were “quite above shooting does----only bucks with good skins and horns were considered worthy

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<sup>55</sup> *The Field* 25<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1871 quoted in Richard Hamilton, “Hawkeye”, *Game* (Ootacamund : Observer Press, 1876),187

of our prowess.”<sup>56</sup> Similarly, a ban on killing fawns insured that on reaching adulthood, they yielded trophy worthy game to sportsmen.

According to Hawkeye, apart from protection from vermin, there were two other measures needed for preserving game: (1) the fixing of a closed season to secure their breeding; (2) and the taxing of all persons who wished to kill and capture game during the open season by forcing them to take out a license for that purpose. The novelties introduced in the “land of liberty” he felt were reasonable because indiscriminate slaughter had resulted in the virtual extinction of game.<sup>57</sup> The kind of preservation advocated by Hawkeye was necessarily restrictive and elitist by nature. In fact, he claimed that the success of preservation rested on the exclusion of the “oi-polloi” who had little understanding of sporting behavior.<sup>58</sup> Just as the emergence of self-help books on hunting in Victorian England revealed a concern with corruption of hunting traditions, the call for preservation in India also reveals anxiety in the general “deterioration” in hunting practices of the colonial British. Big Bore, yet another famous

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<sup>56</sup> Julius Barras, *The New Shikari at Our Indian Stations* (London: Swan, Sonnenschein, 1885), Volume 1, 40.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* 265.

<sup>58</sup> Hawkeye, *Game*, 248.

Nilgiri hunter, advocated a limit on the number of heads of each game species that could be killed in a season. He hoped that “some such ruling would necessitate the call to greater and more skilful woodcraft, patience in pulling the trigger and, generally sport, and not be the tame past time it appears at the present moment.”<sup>59</sup> Couched in these terms, the agenda for preservation became an important extension to the kind of moral suasion that influential hunters and hunting clubs employed to control social behavior.

Given the importance attributed to hunting in cultivating empire-building qualities of the administrators, preservationists argued that preservation would not only protect game, but also strengthen the empire.

### **Preserving Game, Preserving Empire**

Commenting on the Government of India’s proposed bill to regulate game in 1904, the editor of the *Pioneer* wrote of the character- building nature of hunting:

One of the reasons in favour of the proposed law is that the encouragement of sporting proclivities is beneficial to the individual concerned. The pursuit of game almost always improves health, adds to physical strength and develops the qualities of endurance, sagacity, observation and courage that without this stimulus would have lain dormant.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Big Bore, *Guide to Shikar in the Nilgiris*, (Madras : S.P.C.K. Depot, Vepery, 1924), 34.

<sup>60</sup> *The Pioneer*, 20<sup>th</sup> August, 1904.



Others like A.B. Fforde, Magistrate of Bulandshahar, argued that restrictions on hunting would have an adverse influence on the quality of British administrators in India:

One of the chief attractions to young English officers to serve in India is the sport that India affords. If the game is destroyed, it will be more difficult to get the better class of young Englishman to enter the Indian services... The true sportsman gradually becomes the champion of wild creatures...<sup>61</sup>

T.W. Morris, the Magistrate of Mainpuri, claimed that the British had a right to the "relaxation of shooting" since, "the shooting of game is, by custom of the country, the privilege of the ruler."<sup>62</sup> Similarly H.H. Risley of the United Provinces Forest Service argued that game preservation was not "alien to the ideas of the country," and that "there is hardly a native state in which it is not more or less preserved, while in Kashmir, in Mysore and in Hyderabad elaborate regulations have been framed for its

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<sup>61</sup> Letter from A.B. Fforde, magistrate of Bulandshahar to Chief secretary to government dated 7 October, 1904, Proceedings of the UPFD, File 99/1904, Pros.No. 34, UPSA.

<sup>62</sup> Letter from T.W. Morris, Esq., Magistrate and Collector of Mainpuri, to Chief Secretary, United Provinces, dated 5 August, 1904, Proceedings of the UPFD, file 99/1904, Pros, No. 8. UPSA.

protection, the beneficial result of which is already becoming apparent.”<sup>63</sup> Preserving and reserving of game for the ruling elite mimicked practices and purposes of game preservation both at home and in the subcontinent. The right to hunt was a privilege that set the rulers apart from non-rulers who did not have the prerogative to hunt. Indian wildlife became deeply implicated in the symbolic display of legitimate power.

In the context of the changing political context of the post-1858 era, such invocations of the practice of native rulers to preserve animals for purposes of *shikar* also strengthened colonial claims of upholding and continuing “tradition,” much in the manner that the holding of grand durbars and appropriating big ceremonial Mughal hunts. This fondness for the idea of game reserves in early twentieth century was possible only with the assumption of certain degree of control over Indian jungles and Indian rulers. In the days when expanding frontiers, military conquest and subjugating Indian rulers were still a priority; the practice by Indian rulers of maintaining game reserves was seen as a sign of misrule and belligerence. Sailing down the Indus during a march into the Sindh in 1838, Captain Outram, for instance, found game preserves of the hostile resident *ameers* a strategic threat:

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<sup>63</sup>Letter from H.H. Risley, Secretary to the Government of India (Home, Public) to Chief Secretary, United Provinces, dated 23 May 1904, Pros.No. 1. UPSA.

On both sides of the river the banks are covered nearly the whole way with dense jungles enclosed for the preservation of game called *shikargahs* for the private amusement of the *ameers* who had thus laid waste and usurped the richest portion of the Sindh territory.<sup>64</sup>

Feeling enclosed by the dense forests, he felt that passage of boats was risky. The forests cloaked potential enemies that could have been lurking on the banks for an opportunity to launch an attack. The presence of wild and ferocious beasts nurtured by the *ameers* precluded the possibility of an infantry escort. The idea of maintaining wild animals in dense forests by hostile *ameers* increased the perception of threat manifold. The British had participated in hunts in game reserves of the traditional native elite before and after assuming formal power but as rulers, they viewed protection to dangerous animals by hostile powers contrary to good governance and undermining the civilizing endeavors of British rule. The idea of a sanctuary for all wild animals gained acceptance in colonial circles only in early twentieth century.

While officials and non-officials continued to debate the nature of preservation policies well into the twentieth century, the idea to establish governmental ownership over forests had found wider acceptance amongst officials even in late nineteenth

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<sup>64</sup> Journal entry dated, 17 January 1838, from journal of Captain James Outram Bombay Army while on staff of Lt-Gen Sir John Keane describing the latter's march through Sind to Ghazni and Kabul at the outset of the Afghan War; MSS Eur B 330, India Office Select Materials, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library.

century. While I will discuss the intricacies of game preservation in Chapter Five, in the following discussion I detail the process through which legislation on forests provided an opportunity for the state to intervene in hunting and extended its ownership over Indian wilderness.

### **Game and Ownership**

The first attempt to regulate access to game on an all India basis was the Indian Forest Act of 1878. It defined and asserted the state's right over forest produce. Forest produce included skins, horns, tusks and bones of wild animals. The Forest Act of 1878 also established the Forest Department as protector of game and forests within the areas administered by it. As Baden-Powell reminds us, the Act did not recognize native rights to hunting:

The circumstances of the country are not such that any legal rights have become fixed as they have in Europe. People, no doubt, have always in former days gone about the jungle very much as they pleased, and hunted and fished: but the practice is not one which has been habitually and necessarily exercised by certain villages in certain localities, like the grazing of cattle or the cutting of firewood. Hence, no *right* is provided or recognised. It is quite sufficient, in our present stage, to leave the local government to make such rules as any be necessary to regulate the matter... opportunity is usually taken (also) to protect the game itself, by close seasons, prohibiting driving in the snow, &c.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> B.H. Baden-Powell, *Manual of Forest Law*. First Indian edition (Delhi : Biotech Books, 1997),170.

By passing The Indian Forest Act of 1878, the colonial government assumed ownership of vast tracts of forests and animals that inhabited them. For preservation purposes, specified forest reserves were demarcated into shooting blocks. At the discretion of local forest officers, the blocks were opened and closed for shooting. For most part, these blocks were closed for shooting during the breeding period. During the open season, hunters could hunt only after paying the license fee. The Forest Department which had been constituted in 1864, controlled access to shooting blocks with licenses and regulated entry to the forests with rules of trespass.

While the Act of 1878 established colonial control over forests and animals, further legislation extended control by establishing who could hunt and in what way in these state owned lands. The Nilgiri Game and Fish Preservation Act of 1879 set the direction for further legislation on this issue. The sex and size of the animals of game was legally defined. It was deemed illegal to hunting immature males, which did not confirm to the proportions of a good trophy. Similarly, shooting at females and the young was prohibited, as was shooting at animals near water holes. Hunting methods such as snaring, trapping, poisoning, use of darts and bows and arrows hitherto used by native hunters were also prohibited. Firearms were the only legitimate weaponry allowed in these areas. Hunters like "Hawkeye" who had championed the cause of

game preservation in the Nilgiris were keen to restrict unsporting activities of their countrymen. They were equally zealous in their desire to eliminate native *shikaris* as potential competitors for game. Taxing guns and imposing licensing fees were effective ways of eliminating competition from native *shikaris*. Defending these measures in the proposed Act, Hawkeye had argued:

We require some control over the numerous native shikaries who may be said to infest these Hills and we can see no such remedy except by a tax of some description, and we prefer the license as the least oppressive for the special reason that it affects only those who can afford to pay for the luxury of sport. The native can give up his fun, or at any rate his shooting---- we will not defile the world "sport" by applying it to him---- and thereby avoid the tax, and the game will be preserved. The object of the Act will be defeated without some such protection from the indiscriminate slaughter, in which the native indulges.<sup>66</sup>

The license fee imposed by the Act made it almost impossible for native *shikaris* to buy licenses and de facto ensured the complete exclusion of native *shikaris* from hunting "legally." The Nilgiri administration also made it mandatory for *shikaris* who wished to serve as trackers to register themselves with the Forest Department *and* the Nilgiri Game Association (NGA). The NGA also required that their members employ only registered *shikaris* for hunting and further extended colonial control over native

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<sup>66</sup> "Hawkeye", *Game*, 309-311.

*shikaris*, leaving only a narrow legal space for them to act as subsidiaries in the hunt. Native *shikaris* who were dependent on methods like snaring, trapping and poisoning for their livelihoods found continuing these illegal practices resulted in heavy fines and imprisonment. The domain of mercy, legal and moral jurisdiction over game, and the legitimacy of hunt were secured as unique privilege of the ruling elite. The relationship between the hunter and game became closely bound to each other in an institutionalized framework of fair play.

The Nilgiri Game Act was followed by The Madras Act no. 2 of 1879, which further defined the various categories of game and fixed a closed season in the Nilgiris. In 1887, this measure was extended to the rest of the country by the Government of India's Act no. XX. In 1912, the Government of India also passed the All India Wild Birds and Animal Preservation Act that gave more power to local governments to demarcate open and closed areas, designate game reserves and enforce penalties.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, discussions on proposed game legislation show that some colonial officers questioned the prudence of continuing with policies of preservation and extermination. Increasing incidents of crop damage by deer created conflicts between the Forest and Revenue Departments over the enforcement of preservation laws. As sportsmen complained of the scarcity of tigers and repeated

failure of tiger hunts, even some administrators began to wonder if a domain of mercy should be extended to the tiger.

## **To Exterminate or Preserve? : The Question of Tigers**

My blood tingled at the anticipation of such a contest, for from boyhood the apex of my sporting ambition had been to kill a tiger.<sup>67</sup>

The British obsession with tigers was in large part due to the symbolic importance of tigers in the subcontinent. The belligerent and dangerous Tipu Sultan had adopted the tiger as his emblem in the late eighteenth century. Many Rajputana princes had continued with the Mughal tradition of reserving tigers as royal sport into the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Eager to appropriate this symbolism, the British were also fascinated by the tiger. "Beautiful" and "barbaric" at the same time, the tiger epitomized the inherent conflict between humans and animals. According to the famous hunter J. Forsythe of the Central Provinces, "the matchless beauty of form and colour" of the tiger combined with the "terrible power of offensive armature" drew men to its continued pursuit.<sup>68</sup> It is paradoxical that while tiger was considered the best

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<sup>67</sup> -----B, "The Game Disputed," *The Bengal sporting Magazine*, Volume 1, March no. 3 (1845): 205.

<sup>68</sup> J. Forsythe, *The Highlands of Central India*, (London: Chapman and Hall, Limited, 1889) quoted in Elliot, Elliot, *Field Sports in India*, 52.



“sport,” it was not classified as “game.” Though officially a vermin, most sportsmen sought to elevate the tiger as a symbol of brute creation with immense destructive power. According to the Deputy Commissioner of Fyzabad, “Tiger shooting is only incidentally a sport; its true nature is protection of the kingdom.”<sup>69</sup> In the colonial context, where dominance and control were the guiding principles, the perceived aggression of tigers was not to be tolerated. And while many sportsmen had their own views on the most appropriate methods for shooting tigers, notions of fair play did not extend to this much sought after quarry. Defending his suggestion to poison tiger kills as a method to exterminate the ferocious animal, Captain Rogers observed, “a short time since I would have scorned the idea of killing a tiger or any other beast by such stratagem and would have felt the most supreme contempt for any English sportsman doing so.”<sup>70</sup> His views underwent a change because he felt it was more commendable to save the lives and property of “nominally protected human beings.”<sup>71</sup> Justifying the

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<sup>69</sup>Letter from J.W. Hose, Deputy Commissioner of Fyzabad to Commissioner of Fyzabad, Dated 30<sup>th</sup> August, 1904. Proceedings of the UPFD., File 99/1904, Pros. Nos. 36 ( b), UPSA.

<sup>70</sup> Proceedings Home (public) 1870, Pros. no. 45, NAI.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

tying live baits to tempt the tiger, J.G .Elliot explained that such a practice, “may seem to break every canon of British regard for fair play,” but since the tiger was a killer, and he would have killed some other animal in any case, by sacrificing one animal as bait, lives of other game and humans had been saved.”<sup>72</sup> The infamy of the tiger grew exponentially in the second half of the nineteenth century. Stories about man-eating tigers spread particularly fast, as did the fame of the hunters that killed them. During the topographical survey in Central Provinces 1867-68, stories of a man-eating tigress travelled all the way to interior Bengal in a matter of days. The tigress was accused of devouring fifty people and driving away villagers from thirteen villages. According to Mr. Priestly who finally killed her:

Prior to our arrival at Sornadi, the people intended to desert the village and would have left, had the tigress not been killed. The relief to the whole country has been very great...Before we left, we had the satisfaction of learning that the whole of the villages would be re-occupied.<sup>73</sup>

The idea of extending and defending the boundaries of the frontier was precious both in Britain and at the outposts of the empire. The fame enjoyed by a hunter-

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<sup>72</sup> Elliot, *Field Sports in India*, 95.

<sup>73</sup> Proceedings Home (Public) 1870, Pros. no. 37, NAI.

protector like Jim Corbett depended on his ability to uphold the prestige of the empire.

After shooting the Rudraprayag man-eating leopard in 1925, he commented:

It is a very great pleasure to me to have the privilege of serving His Excellency in this small manner, and if the shooting of the Rudraprayag leopard has saved the life of a single one of His Excellency's subjects, I am repaid a hundred fold for any little inconvenience I any have been out to.<sup>74</sup>

The fact that the metropole recognized and honored this role is seen in the special prestige conferred on him. His list of awards include the *Kaiser-I-Hind* Gold medal, the Order of the British Empire, the Star of India, and a lifetime exemption from hunting regulations in Kumaon. According to district officers, exemption from hunting rules was ideal reward as "Corbett would never abuse the privilege and would appreciate it more than a costly rifle, a reward or any other vanity."<sup>75</sup> The only other men who enjoyed the privilege of such an exemption were the Commissioner of Kumaon and the Superintendent of Police for Kumaon. The cult of the hunter- protector was perhaps perpetuated by Corbett's own accounts that appeared in some leading newspapers before they were published as anthologies. While narrating the pursuit of

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<sup>73</sup> Extract from a letter by Corbett, General Administrative Department, File No.214/1924. Pros. No.3 UPSA.

<sup>75</sup> Proceedings of the UPFD, File No.267/1926, pros.no.34, UPSA.

the Mukteswar man-eating tigress, for instance, Corbett remarks that the villagers had lost faith in British hunters. Noting that a fresh kill had not been reported, Corbett questioned the local *shikari*: "When I asked Badri why the kill had not been reported to the sportsmen at Mukteswar, he said that owing to the repeated failures of the sportsmen to bag the tiger the village folk had lost confidence in them."<sup>76</sup> By killing the man-eater, Corbett restored the faith of British community in its collective imperial identity and its ability to ward off threats to the empire.

The ability of the tiger to confer prestige and nobility on the hunter was one of the main factors that destabilized the neat categories of game and vermin, noble and ignoble prey. G. Bower articulated this ambiguity while commenting on game preservation and the idea of shooting blocks. He argued that the blocks would invariably be a combination of "good and worthless" forests, the latter having lesser carnivore. Further, there would be "no demand for worthless ones as many men (myself included) derive no pleasure from shooting a deer and herbivorous animals and care only for carnivora and dangerous animals, but everyone will want to get one of the good

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<sup>76</sup> Jim Corbett, "The Mukteswar Man-Eater", in *Jim Corbett's India*, ed. R.E.Hawkins, (New York : Oxford University Press, 1978), 89.

blocks.”<sup>77</sup> The contradiction between “sporting” (dangerous) animals and “game” was never quite resolved by the British.

By 1900, many sportsmen had begun to complain about the reduction in tiger numbers. Responding to complaints of crop damage by deer, many suggested that since tigers helped to keep the number of crop destroying game in check, some protected should be given to them. In his introduction to Maharaja of Bobilli's *Advice to Indian Aristocracy*, John Reeds recently retired as an ICS officer posted in Madras, commented in 1905:

I would like to put in a plea for that much-maligned friend of the agriculturist, the tiger, who keeps down the head of crop destroying deer, antelope and pig and takes a comparatively moderate toll on cattle. The man-eater is a disgrace to his class and a rare occurrence, for the destruction of such it is fair to offer rewards, but surely the slayer of hundred tigers is the ryot's foe. ...Hardly however is the man taken seriously who deprecates the destruction of anything so distinctly Indian as the tiger and I lifted my voice in vain upon the great cat's behalf in the Viceroy's Legislative Council.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Notes and Orders, Proceedings of the UPFD, File 99/1904, UPSA.

<sup>78</sup> John Reeds, Preface to *Advice to Indian Aristocracy* by Venkata Swetachalapati, Sir Maharaja of Bobbili, (Madras : Printed by Addison, 1905), vii.

<sup>78</sup> Letter from Mr. Conybeare, Commissioner, Meerut Division to Chief Secretary to Government, United Provinces, dated 5<sup>th</sup> August 1904. Proceedings of the UPFD., File 99/1904, Pros.No. 10., UPSA.

In 1904 when the Government of India asked the various provinces for their opinion on the preservation of game, H.C. Conybeare of the United Provinces argued that the system of rewards had to be changed in favour of the carnivores. He wrote that “from the naturalist’s point of view it is extremely undesirable that these species of carnivora should be exterminated, the logical goal of the present policy pursued.”<sup>79</sup> Encouraged by this plea for carnivores, J.C.Faunthrope argued that tigers and bears specifically should be included as game and no reward should be given for their destruction as they were rapidly becoming rarer: “Tigers do not kill cattle for choice if they can get game. The superintendent of the government reports that very few cattle are killed by tigers here (Nainital district), and I agree with him.”<sup>80</sup> He suggested that the rewards given for the destruction of tiger, leopard, and bear be discontinued (in his district) except in special cases.<sup>81</sup> In his memoirs, Stanley Wilmot expressed concerns about the over-shooting of tigers and felt that “its extinction is certain because no government would face the rare opportunity which would be afforded for

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<sup>80</sup>Letter from Mr. J.C. Faunthrope, deputy commissioner of Nainital to Chief Secretary, United Provinces, dated 13<sup>th</sup> August, 1904, Proceedings of the UPFD, File 99/1904, Pros.No. 16, UPSA.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

misinterpretation by taking steps to protect so interesting a beast from extermination."<sup>82</sup> The ambiguity between notions of "sport," "game" and "vermin" became more pronounced as more people visited India with the express intention to shoot a tiger. Wilmot felt that the growing number of visitors to India, especially Americans who despite enormous custom duties still wished to take tiger skins back home, had contributed to the rapid decline of tigers.<sup>83</sup> Tiger skins had also become a popular item of interior decoration by early twentieth century and profitability of the trade in tiger skins further encouraged tiger hunting.

Other officers however contended that tigers were already protected in Reserved Forests where entry was strictly regulated by the Forest Department. Given the general directive to exterminate tigers, it would be extremely difficult to justify their protection out of Reserved Forests. Similarly, on the question of charging higher fees from the visitors, officials were of the opinion that it would be an anomaly "to do anything that will discourage a destruction, which we are doing our best to promote by the offer of a reward."<sup>84</sup> The administrators seemed to oscillate between the desire to protect the tiger

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<sup>82</sup> Wilmot, *Forest Life and Sport in India*, 89.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* 129.

<sup>84</sup> Proceedings of the UPFD, File 99/1904, UPSA.

one hand and to assert dominance over the landscape by carrying on with the larger policy of reclaiming the arable on the other.

In the 1920s, the United Provinces government decided to fix a limit on the number of tigers that to be shot by a single gun. By the 1930s, the decrease in wild animals, including the tiger, accompanied by a sense of loss of British power led to the romanticisation of the Indian jungle and wildlife, including the tiger. After more than a century of persecution, the tiger no longer posed a threat to the Empire. The call for preservation of these persecuted species perhaps displayed complete domination of Indian wildlife.

For most part of British rule in India however, colonial administration and administrators had considered extermination of carnivores as an essential part of good governance. The next chapter looks at the importance of hunting in constructing the image of the *Sahib*-hunter in the Indian countryside.



## Chapter 4: The *Sahib* in the District: Hunting, Recreation, and Power

If our officers had not always been such good sportsmen, we should have had greater difficulty in holding India. An officer in search of sport learns the language, gets a knowledge of the country and the people; all this is to our good.<sup>1</sup>

By the last decades of the nineteenth century, hunting was popular at all levels of the colonial administration. This chapter will evaluate the role of hunting in the constitution of British power in the rural districts of their Indian empire. My attempt here is to highlight the role of hunting in enabling the colonial state's claims to a powerful, pervasive and paternal presence in the Indian countryside. Specifically, this chapter will identify the processes by which the officer-hunter's claims of quelling dangerous beasts and protecting natives created the image of the *sahib* as a paternal benefactor, the *ma-baap* (or *mai-baap* meaning mother-father).

The image of the *sahib* was heavily dependent on the complicity and cooperation of the native. This chapter will focus on the interactions between officers and villagers,

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<sup>1</sup>Arthur Brinckman, *The Rifle in Cashmere, Narrative of Shooting Expeditions in Ladak, Punjaub etc. with Advice on Traveling, Shooting and Stalking*, (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1865), 127.

native *shikaris* and local landed elite groups who were complicit in the creation and perpetuation of the image of the *sahib* as protector and *ma-baap*. The *sahib* relied on villagers for rations, and information on wildlife, and depended on their cooperation as beaters. Native *shikaris* were indispensable as trackers and guides in the Indian wilderness, and the local landed elite provided elephants, labor and game in their lands. In addition to these forms of material support, conventionalized *images* of the natives propped up the idea of paternalism. In creating the image of the helpless, superstitious yet devious villager, colonialist administrators also created a need for strict but fair and just paternal presence. British administration fulfilled this need.

The interaction with natives in the countryside was not as smooth as professed by self-proclaimed paternal hunters. Confrontations between villagers and colonial hunters often occurred due to colonial demands on labor and rations, the killing of animals held sacred by natives or more seriously, because of the accidental shooting of natives. These conflicts also reveal how disaggregated forms of colonial power in the shape of resident district officers and travelling sportsmen (especially soldiers) confronted natives, and the manner in which natives coped with this power. For instance, resident civil administrators generally learned the particular customs of the region and usually managed to avoid conflict by not deliberately or unconsciously offending religious sensibilities, and by using local networks of patronage and

modalities of persuasion in procuring labor and supplies. Visits of hunting party of soldiers on the other hand, partly due to their ignorance of the region and sometimes deliberately ignoring hard-learned lessons of their civil counterparts frequently resulted in violent clashes in the countryside.

Hunters' memoirs however downplay the conflicts evident in the judicial files of the British administration. In rare instances when hunters write about villagers' resistance are used instead to illustrate the trials of British officers in the Indian countryside and to justify the exercise of benign authority by the *sahib*.

## **The Sahib**

Many contemporaries commented upon the power of the hunt in asserting dominance in the colonial encounter. Writing in 1949, Rene Maunier commented:

The legal sources of imperialism are to be sought in the old mood of the Anglo-Saxon soul, in the ideal of *gentleman* who was the standard type of culture and good manners. The gentleman is not only the polite and polished man, he is more, especially the man who knows how to command; the imperial man in a certain sense, who having powers, makes it his duty and his right to use them for the common welfare. The ideas of authority-as power and authority –as duty are the heritage of an aristocratic tradition.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Rene Maunier, *The Sociology of Colonies : An Introduction to the Study of Race Contact* (London, Publisher Unknown, 1949) 31, quoted in Allen Greenberger, *The British Image of India, A study in the Literature of Imperialism, 1880-1960* (London: Oxford University Press,1969), 11.

According to British officers, camping in the countryside and hunting which was almost synonymous with camping, gave them the opportunity to know the countryside and maintain the health necessary and skills needed by the officer in the execution of his duties. Members of the ICS most readily highlighted the complementary relationship between hunting, touring the countryside, and good governance. However, as I have argued in earlier chapters, every Briton associated with the government considered himself a *sahib*.<sup>3</sup> Officers of other civil departments and those in the military also thought of themselves as *sahibs*. In claiming the right to hunt, they also argued that hunting was essential to the broader project of ruling India.

In the subcontinent, therefore, boundaries between work and play were often blurred, and in a period that witnessed dedicated campaigns to exterminate carnivores and reclaim forested tracts for agriculture, play became work. Hunting allowed the hunter-official to emerge as a sportsman, an ideal frontier man, an able administrator and a protector of native and animals alike. Such an all-purpose image, manufactured and sustained by a conscious memorializing of their experiences, was perfectly complemented by colonial policies of native disarmament and extermination of vermin.

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<sup>3</sup> See for instance, Inglis's claims of being a *sahib* in the lands under his control in Chapter Two.

The memoirs reassured colonialists in the subcontinent and the audience back home of the resilience of strong but benevolent frontier men committed to bringing modern governance to Indians. Disarming natives and killing ferocious carnivores on the ground served at the same time to convince the native of the need for a strong paternal ruler and displayed the potential violence of the rulers.

Collective hunting expeditions were important social occasions that brought officers in the district together. Despite the professional competition between the services and personal competition over game, hunting together was said to encourage camaraderie between various officers serving in the districts. It also reinforced expected patterns of behavior required of a colonial officer and displayed this collective ideal behavior to the native. According to Phillip Woodruff, pig sticking, which often brought civil and military offices together, was popular not only for the entertainment it provided but also because hunting together displayed the collective skills of these officers as good administrators of India. Pig sticking displayed good horsemanship, which was essential for the *sahib's* touring and taking measure of his domain. But it also showed *character*: "power of quick but cool judgement, a stout heart, controlled but fiery ardour and a determination not to be beaten," qualities that are needed in crisis, "riot or

battle.”<sup>4</sup> Pig sticking also served as a “harmless outlet” for negative aggression for aggressive tendencies: “ugly lusts of power and revenge melted away and even the lust for women assumed----so it was said----reasonable proportions after a day in pursuit of pig.”<sup>5</sup> By channeling and disciplining the fiery passions to “reasonable proportions,” hunting, as I have argued in Chapter One, not only allowed the officer to remain “temperate” in a land of extremes, but also enhanced the qualities needed for empire building.

British officers, particularly those in the ICS, also had an exaggerated sense of their own moral worth. In chronicling his experiences as a district officer, Philip Mason eulogized British officialdom for its focus on “character,” a strong sense of commitment to “unpleasant and dangerous” duties and devotion to service.<sup>6</sup> George Orwell’s critique of the *sahib* of course, presents an entirely different picture:

There is a prevalent idea that the men at the “outposts of the Empire” are at least able and hardworking. It is a delusion. Outside the scientific services---- the Forest Department, the Public Works Departments and

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<sup>4</sup> Phillip Woodruff, *The Men Who Ruled India, The Guardians* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954), 180.

<sup>5</sup> F. Richards quoted in Roland Hunt and John Harsion, *The District Officer in India 1930-47* (London: Ashgate, 1980), 131.

<sup>6</sup> Mason, *Shaft of Sunlight: Memories of a Varied Life* (London: Deutsch, 1978), 31.

the like---- there is no particular need for a British official in India to do his job completely...the real work of administration is done mainly by native subordinates; and the real backbone of the despotism is not the officials but the Army.<sup>7</sup>

The prevalent idea of the civilizing mission, and the imagery of frontier men giving form to imperial visions and of imparting moral values to a backward people amidst adverse conditions were important in justifying British rule, both in Britain and in its vast colony. Recent historiography has shown that even as the contours of British masculinity in nineteenth and twentieth centuries changed in response to domestic and international events, the image of the robust frontier man continued to be important to self-identity of British men.<sup>8</sup> Clive Dewey's work on the ICS also reveals that these frontier men too carried the weight of this expectation:

No one, in Anglo-India wanted to be labelled as impractical theorist, an effeminate aesthete or an immoral atheist. "Character" was what counted, not brains. Civilians living up to a manly ideal prided themselves on enduring isolation and illness and overwork. They quelled riots with a glare, silenced subordinates with a word, played games with a manic

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<sup>7</sup> George Orwell, *Burmese Days; a Novel* (New York: Harcourt Brace, , 1934), 87

<sup>8</sup> See Martin Francis, "The Domestication of the Male? Recent Research on Nineteenth and Twentieth Century British Masculinity," *The Historical Journal*, 45, no. 3 (2002): 637-652.

<sup>8</sup> Clive Dewey, *The Mind of the Indian Civil Service* (Delhi: Oxford University Press 1996), 5.

determination. But the harder they tried, the less plausible their pose became. Whether they liked it or not, they were competition wallahs chosen for their intellectual ability; mandarins unable to escape their condition.<sup>9</sup>

These “intellectuals” *had* to be men of action in the field and were often under pressure to act out the expected image of a frontier man---- the brave explorer, chivalrous soldier and the able administrator. The hunting officer as I have shown in Chapter One, epitomized these traits. The link between “character,” athleticism and colonial control was so pervasive that some sportsmen used it as an argument against imposition of import duties on rifles:

So much do I think of the importance of keeping up our great character as proficient in all athletic sports that I would humbly suggest that no duty should be imposed on any articles coming to India- if it is a necessary adjunct to sporting pursuit.<sup>10</sup>

Even in the early decades of the nineteenth century when such attitudes were still nascent, young officers were enchanted by anecdotal accounts of hunting feats of

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<sup>9</sup> Arthur Brinckman, *The Rifle in Cashmere*, vi.

<sup>10</sup> Journal entry dated August 23, 1827, “The Log of a Griffin: manuscript journal by Edward Ward Walter Raleigh, Bengal Medical Service 1826-46, describing a tour by the Governor-General Lord Amherst, from Barrackpore through the Upper Provinces of Bengal, Mss Eur D786/2 of Mss Eur D786, India Office Select Materials, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library.



prominent administrators. Touring with Lord Amherst in Bengal, a “young griffin” was delighted to find his boat anchored at the same spot where “Lord Hastings, when coming down the country, killed a rhino.”<sup>11</sup> Writing in the 1880s, J. Murray Brown, a soldier in the British army, presented a detailed and ancient lineage for the famous hunter- soldiers of the East:

Almost all great Eastern soldiers were hog hunters. Alexander the Great was one, so was Wellington, so was William Havelock (not Sir Henry); so, and keener than most, was the renowned Sir Walter Gilbert, one of the few men who ever fairly rode and speared a tiger; so was Sutherland, one of the founder of the Irregular Horse, so was Shakespeare, Jacob and Malcolm,... so last and best sportsman of all, the world renowned “Bayard” of Bombay, the glorious James Outram, a true type of chivalry in every way.<sup>12</sup>

The idea of a good hunter as an able administrator, or what I term as the hunter – administrator, continued to grow because of the prominence enjoyed by heroes of the age like Sir George Yule credited with crushing the Santhal rebellion in 1855. According to his associate Edward Braddon, George Yule’s fame as a hunter had greatly influenced the decision to appoint him Commissioner of the district to suppress the Santhal uprising: “George Yule had killed his hecatombs of boars. He had shot tigers on foot,

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<sup>11</sup> J. Murray Brown, *Shikar Sketches, With notes of Indian Field Sports* (London: Hurst and Blackett Publishers, 1887), 65-66.

from horse and from elephant, and killed from first to last more than any man living or dead.”<sup>13</sup> Though Yule was earlier posted in an isolated district, his fame had reached Calcutta and “when Santhalia was ablaze from end to end, and the strongest hand and ablest head were wanted to restore order, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal at once chose Yule as the one man fitted for the task.”<sup>14</sup> Braddon himself internalized the language of the hunt during his involvement in the Santhal Revolt. During the last battle with the Santhals, he describes a native soldier who “anathematising the Feringhi with his last breath, charges home,” but was shot as he rose to sabre Yule.<sup>15</sup> Braddon continues, “We who were *shikaris* made use of opportunity and ammunition, and every now and again, a saddle was emptied and another human form added to those that lay upon the field.”<sup>16</sup> *The language of the hunt thus greatly aided the martial conditioning of non-military, civilian administrators.* The insidiousness of the hunting lexicon in the

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<sup>13</sup> Braddon, *Thirty years of Shikar*, (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1895), 101

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 110. Also see discussion on the “gallant charge” by the hunted game in Chapter Three.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

nineteenth century also influenced writers such as Mark Twain who described the colonial government's pursuit of dacoits as the very acme of the hunting experience:

When the lust in the hunter's heart is for the noblest of all quarries, man... how watery and poor is the zeal and how childish the endurance of those other hunters by comparison ... of all the hunting passions that burn in the breast of man, there is none that can lift him superior to discouragement like these but the one the royal sport, the supreme sport, whose quarry is his brother... neither wealth nor honours could satisfy a reformed thug for long. He would throw them all away and go back to the lurid pleasure of hunting men and being hunted by the British.<sup>17</sup>

As the language of violence gave away to a more nuanced idea of dominance, descriptions of "hunting the native" grew scarce, and were reserved for belligerent groups. Hunter-administrators, however, continued to impress young recruits in India. After meeting senior district officers in early twentieth century, Blunden, recently recruited to the Indian police in the United Provinces, was equally impressed by the officer "in charge of the criminal tribes work and helped the Salvation Army run their settlements" as he was with one who "had shot half a dozen man eating tigers."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Mark Twain, *Following the Equator, A journey around the World* (Hartford, Conn: American Pub. Co., 1897), 437-441.

<sup>18</sup> "What Did The Indian Police Do?," Unpublished memoir of Alfred Charles Blunden Indian Police 1912-47, describing his long career with the Indian Police in the United Provinces, Mss Eur F 51176, India Office Select Materials, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library, 50

Hunting provided a ritualistic domain of display British power, substituting for the past demonstrations of force by the conquering armies. Pervasive as it was, hunting was also a reminder of the military might of British rule. The shift from an aggressive military force to “benevolent” rule, as I have argued in earlier chapters, was predicated on conveying a sense of tolerance, paternalism and respect of Indian traditions. The colonialists claimed that while bringing progress and good governance to the natives, British rule did not disrupt Indian polity. In his memoirs, Philip Mason naturalized British rule as an extension of the traditional Indian polity:

In every village there were people who owed allegiance to someone, usually (based on a system of)...protection and service. Master and man, protector and henchman---everyone in the village could be classified such. It was impossible not be affected by this network of hereditary authority...We---young men straight from Oxford or Cambridge---were superimposed on top of this system...as patrons or protectors above the whole network.<sup>19</sup>

The claim that Indian villagers accepted and trusted their rulers lent further legitimacy to this “superimposition.” However, the colonialists also made sure that the difference between British rulers and native rulers were made obvious to British audiences by arguments based on normative values like fair play, and to the natives by

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<sup>19</sup> Mason, *Shaft of Sunlight*, 97.

the benevolent intervention of the *sahib* to protect them from dangerous animals. Arguments based on the myth of “real India,” as we shall see later in this chapter, were based on claims of the special relationship of trust and loyalty that existed between villagers and British rulers. However, this facade of tolerance did not intend to give the impression of administrators being “soft” or ineffective. The idea of controlled aggression was critical to the display of this new brand of authority. Hunting, I argue, was central to this enterprise. In the absence of offensive military expansion from the closing years of the nineteenth century, hunting advertised the martial potential of the colonizers by proxy. It created a legitimate domain of violence where knowledge and power of colonizers were on public display. The hunting down of carnivores proved that the British *sahib* was capable of protecting his subjects. As the next section will reveal, the construction of image of the hapless villager dependent the white *mai-baap* was deeply complicit in creating the image of paternal ruler.

### **“An Inert, Lawless People”**

The vast historiography on the “imagining of India” in British discourse highlights some of the ways in which the British colonialists not only constructed a myth

of their own omniscience but also the myth of a “real India.”<sup>20</sup> Extending the rationale that being in the field aided in acquiring knowledge of the land, hunter-officers also claimed to represent the truth of rural India. Claims to true character of Indians possessing a “mixture of treachery, childishness and ferocity that could be bred only in the same jungle with the tiger who crouches, springs, gambols and devours” acquired pseudo-scientific legitimacy as amateur ethnographies.<sup>21</sup> Both animal and natives needed to be disciplined and controlled by firm and fair British administration. Underlying this rhetoric of protection was a more powerful suggestion: the need for mediation by a superior power between these two parts of the Indian landscape.

According to a newspaper article:

The annual report of the destruction caused by wild beasts and snakes ...reminds us of the primary functions of Government in the Indian Empire. The unremitting campaign waged against these pests is only a minor instance of the large share of attention which the Administration is obliged to devote to defending an inert population against the most

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<sup>20</sup> See for instance, Francis Hutchins, *Illusion of Permanence, British imperialism in India* (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1967), Benita Parry, *Delusions and discoveries; studies on India in the British imagination, 1880-1930* (New York : Verso, 1998), Ronald Inden: *Imagining India* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990) and David Spurr: *The Rhetoric of Empire, Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel writing and the Imperial Administration* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).

<sup>21</sup> Sir Lawrence Edwards and Herman Merivale. *Life of Sir Henry Lawrence* ( New York: Macmillan, 1873), 337, quoted in Hutchins, *Illusion of Permanence*, 201

immediate dangers to life and property. But it will serve its purpose as well as more conspicuous illustration to show how continuously the efforts of government must be exerted in this direction, and how impossible it is to implant and foster western habits of self-reliance and energy in the races of the Indian peninsula.<sup>22</sup>

Without this mediation by the superior colonial hand, the wilderness would overwhelm natives. The power to quell wild nature is evident in ceremonial fashion in which carcasses of carnivores were carried through a village before being transformed as trophies to grace interiors in the colonies and at home. Van Ingen and Van Ingen, the famous Mysore-based taxidermists, lamented that the skins often came to them in poor condition because “sportsmen often allow their tigers and panthers to be carried out in procession to please the beaters, and wonder why parts of the skin are burnt by the hot sun.”<sup>23</sup> The published hunting accounts of Williamson, Daniel Johnson and Walter Campbell had already celebrated the image of the unruffled white hunter amidst panicky natives. Photos of vanquished carnivores lying at the feet of their conquerors and private letters also strengthened this image. In his letter home, John Lowth

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<sup>22</sup> *Saturday Review*, Jan 15, 1887, quoted in James Inglis, *Tent Life in Tigerland : Being sporting reminiscences of a pioneer planter in an Indian frontier district*, (London : Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1888.), 25

<sup>23</sup> Van Ingen, *The Preservation of Shikar Trophies* (Mysore: Publisher Unknown, 1933), 40.

concluded his description of killing a man-eating alligator in front of an excited crowd by noting, “the natives are the greatest cowards possible and are good for nothing on such occasions but making a noise.”<sup>24</sup> Similar arguments went a long way in shoring the legitimacy of Pax *Britannica* in the later years and more importantly to reassure the colonialists of their own moral and physical superiority.

In pursuing their hunting interests, officers were quite convinced they were acting for the good of the native population. Blunden, the police officer of the United Provinces admits:

We could not afford armies of beaters to get the pig out of the thick sugarcane and we could not afford compensation to villagers for riding over the fields. Our idea was that we were performing a public service in dealing with the voracious pigs, and the pork would be highly prized by the shikaris and their friends.<sup>25</sup>

A particular factor that aided the assumption of this role as protectors of course was the general policy of “disarming the native” especially in the post 1858 period. Along with disarmament, the loss of traditional methods of animal control discussed in

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<sup>24</sup> John B. Lowth “*A Letter from India* (Oakham : George Snodin Cunnington, 1841), 98.

<sup>25</sup> Blunden, 37.



Chapter Three, made the native villager more dependent on British hunters for protection against attacks from wildlife.

Amongst this group of hunting and protecting officers, some often expressed bewilderment at the fact that some villagers carried on their daily tasks despite frequent attacks by tigers. One officer commented, “some well authenticated anecdotes are likewise told of the fearless way in which the cattle keepers, with only a stick in their hands, go up to them and frighten them off when they have pounced upon any of the herd.”<sup>26</sup> While some hunters attributed this show of courage on the part of natives to the familiarity that came with living in the wilderness, others thought this acceptance of tigers in their neighborhood to be characteristic of their passive and submissive thinking. The hunters, in professing to represent the truth of India, also took recourse to the often used narrative style of giving voice to their native informants in identifying characteristics of the natives. The native informer in the memoirs of C. E Gouldsbury, a police officer, is his native *shikari* who first informs him of “Eastern fatalism”:

These people all unarmed and defenseless as they were, trudged merrily along this narrow belt of neutral ground, giving no thoughts to the dangers that surrounded them but laughing and chatting gaily as they went.

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<sup>26</sup> Extract from the Narrative report of the Surveyor in Charge (1867-68). Home (Public), 8 Feb. 1870, A, Pros. 31-48., NAI.

This callousness to a real and what might be called imminent danger struck me as very singular, and questioning the old Forester, I observed “are these people not afraid to walk through this path, exposed as they are to attacks from tigers, bears and other animals we have seen?”

“Why should they be afraid *sahib*? It is their Kismet! What is to be must be. Is it not written on their heads? How then can they avoid their fate?- it is not possible then why should they fear?”

This very stoical but hardly comforting way of looking at the matter had not suggested itself to me but being the first instance I had yet met with Eastern fatalism, I was much impressed and now understood better why our old friend himself had seemed so callous at times.<sup>27</sup>

The representation of themselves as childlike primitive and passive people from the mouth of natives and right from the field was critical to conveying the sense of truthful reporting from the countryside and is a critical element in the memorialisation of the hunt in India.

British progress was essential to bring such “children of nature” out of their primitive state into modernity.<sup>28</sup> As I noted in Chapter Three, one of the tasks that the colonialists professed to have set for themselves in improving India was to encourage

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<sup>27</sup> C. E. Gouldsbury, *Dulal the Forest Guard*, 30-31.

<sup>28</sup> Arthur Musselwhite, *Behind the Lens in Tigerland*, (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & co., 1933), 54.

<sup>28</sup> C.E.Gouldsbury, *Tiger Slayer by Order, Digby Davies, late Bombay Police* (Publisher Unknown, Chapman & Hall,1916), 27.

natives to challenge and vanquish wild beasts. Of course, this encouragement was extended at the same time that the agenda of native disarmament was also being pursued.

The claim of native passivity in face of threat from wild beasts however did not prevent the natives from being devious in their interaction with each other and sometimes their colonial rulers. British paternalists therefore also needed to be firm disciplinarians in their interaction with natives. The common goal of good governance, gaining knowledge of India, and disciplining primitive peoples and wild nature is evident in giving the name of "Tiger Slayer" to the office of the Bhil Agent in Khandesh: "The lawless spirit of these wild men necessitated the constant presence of a British officer in their midst."<sup>29</sup> This officer was the executive and judicial head of the district and from this empowered position, he was responsible for bringing British civilization endeavor to this backward region. Digby Davies, who held this office in the 1880s, before being promoted as the Deputy Inspector-General of Indian Police commented, "I found that much of what I learnt while tiger hunting was of equal use to me as

Superintendent of Police, for to carry out efficiently the duties of either office it was essential to mix freely with the natives and elicit information.”<sup>30</sup>

Further representing the “truth” of a devious Indian population, “Hawkeye” recalls a time when a reward of Rs. 100 was offered for the capture of the Tinnevely man-eating tiger:

In those days money was money and such a reward called forth the ingenuity of sundry avaricious natives to gain possession of it. Some tigers were trapped, one or two shot and as the man-eater has been described as a mangy hairless brute, these captives were in various ways disguised by shaving, scaling etc. to make the collector or his assistant to believe that the real Simon Pure had at last been caught... One sly old fellow nearly succeeded, but that spirit of distrust amongst themselves which enables us to hold possession of India, cropped out, even in such a trivial case and the crafty old chief of a poligar (village chief) was told on and he only got the usual reward for an ordinary tiger.<sup>31</sup>

The repeated insistence that natives were in a habit of cheating and conniving and especially against each other, strengthened claims of a discordant village society riddled with petty rivalries. Such a notion in turn enabled British assertions of the need for an impartial paternal arbiter and firm governance.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 53.

<sup>31</sup> Hawkeye, *Game* (Ootacamund : Observer Press, 1876), 59.

As further evidence to native treachery, the evolving notions of fair play were found to be handy in drawing moral judgments regarding an unchanging (and possible unchangeable) native “mentality.” Natives were seen as inherently corrupt and lacking humane sensibilities. Big Bore thus wrote:

Assuming that wild dogs have caught a sambhur, no attempt is made to rescue the poor beast or to shoot the dogs. Events are calmly awaited and as soon as the dogs have killed the sambhur, they are driven off and the carcass taken away. This method of disposing a kill is so lucrative that the wild dog is worshipped by the majority of the labouring classes who bow down with foreheads touching the ground should a dog or dogs be seen.<sup>32</sup>

This “moral transgression” also reveals the cultural prejudice against carnivores and is a reminder of the ever present threat from both wilderness and natives. The British despised wild dogs that competed for game and hunted in packs while deer and antelope family were held in special affection. Narratives of deer pursued and waylaid by a pack of wolves or wild dogs no doubt also found resonance with the anxiety of a minority ruling elite, heavily dependent on the cooperation of natives.

The image of a cruel, morally deficient native populace highlighted the need for a firm hand. When villagers had the temerity to challenge the authority of their

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<sup>32</sup> Big Bore, *Guide to Shikar in the Nilgiris* (Madras : S.P.C.K. Depot, Vepery, 1924), 39.

protectors, they were summarily dealt with. Walter Campbell's semi fictional *Old Forest Ranger*, which in 1844, describes a confrontation with a *kotwal* (headman) of a village over the supply of food and chicken is a case in point. The *kotwal's* quoted remark "suppose Master speak civil word, that time I do Master's business" inflamed the hunting party so much that the *kotwal* was "tamed by wrenching off his beard."<sup>33</sup> Despite claims to benevolence, the threat of violent retribution was a potent reminder of who held the power. Discipline was a key ingredient in the rhetoric of paternalism. Display of mastery over native was as important as display mastery over nature.

The ability to discipline and demand obedience made hunting in India particularly desirable. James Murray Brown, for example, while extolling the leisurely way that British could hunt in India observed:

The sportsman knows that he is pursuing his sport in a part of the British empire and that as one of dominant race, his wishes will be more likely to be forwarded by the native inhabitants, than they would be in any other part of the world.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Walter Campbell, *The Old Forest Ranger* (London: Publishers Unknown, 1844), 175.

<sup>34</sup> Murray Brown, 278.

This assertion of privilege and power as rulers was justified by the colonial emphasis on character and the image of a hard working and just British administration toiling for the “improvement” of natives. However, despite claims of an efficient and confident administration, the experiences of hunter-administrators also reveal the pressures and anxieties of carrying the burden of representing the British Empire in the Indian countryside.

### **“Upholding Prestige”: The Burden of Playing *Sahib***

In playing out the role of the capable and powerful *sahib* who always achieved his goals, the hunter-officer often had to abandon notions of fair play. The officers *believed* that the natives expected them to succeed, a belief that was in large part, their own creation. Burdened with the weight of such expectations and a very real fear of non-performance, hunters confessed to a loss of power.

Following the traditions of British and Indian aristocracy, British hunters often gave away game meat to villagers or local *shikaris*, as compensation for their labor. R. G. Burton, for instance, admitted to killing of hinds (female deer) on a number of occasions to fulfill the villager’s expectation of meat. He also confessed to killing numerous blue bulls, an act of “horrid slaughter” but since “the forest people particularly ask for them

to be shot and the village is pleased with the meat," he was helpless to resist the force of the expectations.<sup>35</sup>

The official policy of vermin extermination also added to the weight of expectations. As I noted in Chapter Three, the failure to check carnivore population was seen as a failure of local administration and Collectors were often held personally responsible by the administration. Largely because of this pressure, the killing of man-eating carnivores became an important agenda of district officers. The respectability earned by Corbett in the 1920s was a result of successfully achieving the role of the paternal ruler, who championed the cause of villagers and wildlife on one hand and vanquished man-eaters at the same time. Elimination of man-eating beasts was not just a sign of personal skill but also earned prestige for the hunter-administrator as an empire builder. Failure to perform meant the lowering of prestige of Empire and Crown.

George Orwell's famous autobiographical essay, "Shooting an Elephant" regarding captures the *Sahib's* dilemma is about a police officer in Burma, who is called out to shoot down an elephant reportedly on a rampage. On reaching the site, he realized that the elephant, which had suffered an attack of "*must*," was quite harmless.

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<sup>35</sup> R.W. Burton, *Tigers of the Raj, Pages from Shikar Diaries, 1894-1949 of Col. Burton, Sportsman and Conservationists*, eds. Jacqueline Toovey, London, 1987),103.



Although there was no need to destroy it, the *Sahib* felt compelled to do so because a crowd had formed. He writes:

I perceived in this moment that when the white man turns tyrant it is his own freedom that he destroys. He becomes a sort of hollow, posing dummy, the conventionalised figure of a *sahib*. For it is the condition of his rule that he shall spend his life in trying to impress the "natives" and so in every crisis he has got to do what the native expects of him. A *sahib* has got to act like a *sahib*...<sup>36</sup>

Entrapped by the expectation of upholding prestige of the *sahib* and of the Crown, and fearing ridicule, he decides to shoot the elephant despite being a poor shot himself:

The sole thought in my mind was that if anything went wrong those two thousand Burmans would see me pursued, caught, trampled on and reduced to a grinning corpse like that Indian up the hill. And if that happened it was quite probable that some of them would laugh. That would never do... I often wondered whether any of the others grasped that I had done it solely to avoid looking a fool.<sup>37</sup>

The system of repression and dominance that characterized colonial rule therefore also seemed to have disempowered colonialists.

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<sup>36</sup> George Orwell, *Shooting an Elephant and other essays* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1950), 24.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* 28.

Such incidents however also identify and delineate the way in which the act of asserting superiority was legitimized on the basis that it was expected of the *sahib* to do so. This expectation, cultivated by the ruling elite, was also a tool in the hands of the natives. As we will see later in the chapter, the educated urban native also used the colonial rhetoric of protection to attack the legitimacy of British rule. Also, “impressing” the natives was not always an easy task; at times they simply refused to acknowledge the benevolence of the hunter-administrator in the latter’s attempts to rid *their* jungles of ferocious beasts. F. C. Hicks, a forest officer, having also killed a native accidentally in the course of “ridding the countryside of a wounded tiger, “ felt indignant at being refused the gratitude due to him:

Altogether, this job was a thankless one for me. In the first place a sad accident like this throws a shadow over the enjoyment of the whole trip, while of course for a long time I had the pleasure of paying out of my own pocket a monthly pension to the widow as well as providing a post for her son. And all this because I was quixotic enough to go and do the work of ridding the countryside of a wounded tiger in order to open government works under my charge in this neighbourhood, though there were a large number of other tigers in the district to be had with half the trouble and risk.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> F.C.Hicks, *Forty Years among the Wild Animals of India from Mysore to the Himalayas* (Allahabad: Pioneer Press, 1910),34.

The exercise of power and benevolence needed acknowledgment from villagers. Hicks appears so enamored of his own benevolent intentions that he completely overlooks the devastating consequence of his initiative to kill the tiger. His frustration arises from the villagers' refusal to recognize the initiative, skill and courage of the white hunter. The villager therefore was not just important for providing material help to officers; by refusing to act in the way *they* were expected to, they had to the ability to rob the officer the gratification of being the *mai-baap*.

### **The Problem of Dependency: The *Sahib* and his "Real India"**

Villagers, it appears, also understood the symbolic and material importance of hunting in the lives of the officers of their district and used this knowledge towards achieving their own ends. Captain J. H Baldwin complained that villagers chose not to cooperate with sportsmen from outside their district:

If a party of European gentlemen do come into the neighbourhood purposely equipped for shooting tigers, such is the apathy of the people of the country, that unless they are acquainted with the "*sahibs*" or known them to be officers over their own district, with whom, for obvious reasons they desire to be on good terms, likely enough they will not open their mouths, or give even the slightest information although every one of them could, if he chose, point out the every spot where a tiger which had quite recently devoured dozens of their cattle lies at that very time concealed.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> J.H. Baldwin, *The Large and Small Game of Bengal and North Western Provinces of India* (London: Henry S. King, 1877), 15.

This apparently vindictive behavior shows that village communities recognized the power that information on game afforded and held out for better returns for their information from resident *sahibs*. Non cooperation, withholding information or misinformation, identified by James Scott as “weapons of the weak” are important to understand how natives coped with the demands for hunting from British administrators.<sup>40</sup> As I discuss later in the chapter, sportsmen depended on villagers and local *shikaris* for *khubber* and *bandobast*, and their demands for rations and labor were often a cause of violence and conflict between villagers and *sahibs*. J. H. Baldwin in his advice to his fellow sportsmen observed that the success of any hunt depended on the cooperation of the native villagers, and that unhappy villagers would refuse to give any information on available game:

Often much disagreeableness is occasioned by the native following of a sportsman literally “eating up” the supplies of some poor jungle village who have only sufficient for their own wants. Of course this is distasteful to say the least of it to the villagers concerned and if they think they will be subject to such treatment they will withhold information regarding game for fear of bringing the “*sahib log*” and their harpies of servants

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<sup>40</sup> James C Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven : Yale University Press, 1985).

down on the village. Information of game, if proved correct, should always be liberally rewarded.<sup>41</sup>

With the threat of potential violence due to the exorbitant demands of hunting parties, sportsmen advised their colleagues to take practical steps to plan their routes to ensure that villagers could easily spare rations for the hunting party. In an effort to maintain the image of the prestige of the *sahib* and accommodate the power of villagers, reputed hunters, the “arbiters of fair play” urged sportsmen to adopt self-reliance and resourcefulness on one hand and sensitivity during their interaction with the natives on the other. “A sportsman to be successful,” wrote one authority “has to be a linguist, accustomed to the habits of the natives and above all not too proud to associate and converse with the poor jungle tribes.”<sup>42</sup> Writing about the establishment and running of tent clubs, Wardrop advised that it was sound policy to “take every opportunity of dealing personally with the villagers. Have little races and scrambles, a few annas go a long way and the children never forget.”<sup>43</sup> In order to gain confidence of the

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<sup>41</sup> Murray Brown, 290.

<sup>42</sup> Baldwin, 17.

<sup>43</sup> Wardrop, 211.

neighboring villagers, the Meerut Tent Club had a white doctor attend to the villagers regularly. Such benevolence indeed went a long way in protecting broader hunting interests of the colonial hunters:

If the villagers' crops are being damaged by pig you must protect them, killing sows if necessary. Having taken these steps you may approach your collector with a light heart and ask him to reduce the number of gun licences; unless he does this you will never succeed in preserving your grounds.<sup>44</sup>

“Protection” of villagers provided sport, safeguarded long-term hunting interest in preserving game, legitimized disarmament, and was said to gain villagers’ loyalty. Paternalism in an age of disarmament was highly effective in reinforcing dependence of rural communities on their colonial *sahibs*. The officer-hunter masquerading as protector is one of the best examples of this brand of paternalism.

Even before the idea of paternalism had crystallized in the late nineteenth century, British officers exhibited a marked partiality towards “village India,” especially when compared to cities like Calcutta populated with English-educated Bengali population. In the course of his travels away from Calcutta in 1841, John Lowth claimed, “Those who live in the interior are to be preferred to these Bengalees, their manners are

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<sup>44</sup> Wardrop, *Modern Pig-sticking* (London: McMillan and Company, 1914), 212.

more civilized; they place more confidence in Europeans and their word is more to be depended upon."<sup>45</sup> As has been mentioned by many historians, with the emergence of an English educated Indian middle class, from the late nineteenth century, colonial administrators increasingly invoked an image of the real India. "Real" India, namely India of the villager, understood and appreciated the rule of the *sahibs*.<sup>46</sup> With the spread of the nationalist movement spearheaded by the educated urban middle class who questioned the benevolence of colonial rule, British officers, worried about the spread of anti-colonial feelings to the countryside, became acutely sensitive to signs of dilution of loyalty among villagers. During one of his hunting expeditions in the Central Provinces, Colonel Burton complained of having to "do much execution among the green pigeon" due to the shortage of poultry in the countryside. In one of the rare examples of admission of hunting for the pot, he claimed, "It appeared that the dearth of fowls was due to propaganda on part of the Hindus, for Korkus of the valley are becoming much Hinduised."<sup>47</sup> Burton's conclusion of the valley being "Hinduised" was based on the

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<sup>45</sup> John B. Lowth, "A Letter from India" (Oakham : George Snodin Cunnington, 1841), 104.

<sup>46</sup> See for instance, Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly' English and the 'effeminate' Bengali in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 1995).

<sup>47</sup> Burton, *Tigers of the Raj*, 210.

villagers' insistence that "Gandhiji is our god," when asked why they had suddenly decided to eschew meat. He further notes:

There are further instances of Hindu influence. A porcupine was shot for them, but because the *sahib* had touched it, it was unfit to eat, and these same people in the hill country, fifty miles to the South, eat pretty well everything from owls to tigers and panthers which I have helped them skin.<sup>48</sup>

Touring India on an extended hunting trip after his retirement from the army he felt that sportsmen like him were in much closer touch with the millions of India who:

Knew nothing and cared less (still less would have cared if they knew) of the self government aspirations of the small quota of urban population, which is nowadays so noisily clamorous. Are they really working for the greatest good of the greatest number?<sup>49</sup>

The need for the subservient and dependant villager who would help sustain the image of the masterful but benevolent *sahib* became even more pronounced as nationalist sentiment grew, puncturing the imperial front of the officers. In 1911, having experienced about five years of popular unrest following the partition of Bengal, an author encouraging the pursuit of hunting commented:

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 149.



A visitor who leaves the still comparatively narrow lines of civilisation and travels into the unspoiled wild tracts will find himself in a better India...he will find the inhabitants of this happier India living in ignorance of the present day follies of their miseducated brethren, and as ready as of yore to respond with faithful devotion and sympathy to the *sahib* whose heart is with them and their simple ways. It has been said, not without good reason that the Forest Officer is nowadays the only Englishman over whom India continues to exercise her old charm.<sup>50</sup>

These sentiments clearly indicate the fragility of the idea of imperial *sahib*. The stability of the image of benevolent ruler was heavily dependent on a static image of the "simple" and "happy" villager. In the years that followed, which not only saw an escalation of nationalist opposition but also inclusion of Indians into higher ranks of officialdom, it became increasingly difficult to sustain the Imperial façade of British paternalism.

Colonial hunter-administrators had claimed that hunting was essential for good governance and that it helped to forge special bonds of patronage and protection with rural populations. Despite these claims, hunters often complained of non-cooperation from villagers. The next section is a brief exploration of the conflicts that took place around the colonial hunt in the countryside. While hunting enabled the hunter-

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<sup>50</sup> *India and the Durbar : a reprint of the Indian articles in the "Empire Day" Ed. of The Times, May 24th, 1911, (London: Macmillan,1911), 310.*

administrator to display and naturalize his rule, there were limits to this exercise of power. In addition to withholding information and supplies, villagers also resisted more openly to offensive actions of sportsmen. In most of these cases, British administration took care to defend its officers, but it was just as apparent that hunting, rather than bringing the “real” people of India closer to their colonial rulers, often created deep resentment against British rule.

### **Conflict or Cohesion? Hunters in the Countryside**

Contrary to the claims of hunters that hunting in the countryside brought them closer to the people and helped in forming close ties with village communities, colonial hunting in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries often caused bitter conflicts between British hunters and resident natives. These conflicts arose around issues such as the forcible acquisition of supplies, forced labor, damage to standing crops, offense to religious sensibilities, and the accidental killing of villagers. Though civil officers were also involved in confrontations around such issues with villagers, soldiers of the Raj seem particularly prone to enter into violent conflicts in the countryside. In its observations on the case of *Empress Vs. Mayers*, which I will discuss later in this section, the Government of India also expressed concern at frequent altercations among villagers and non-civilian officers:

Beating standing ripe corn for quail harms the crop and the people don't like it. With civil officers they don't like to interfere, but with Europeans whom they don't know, and who won't listen to them, they occasionally do interfere and in such cases the villagers have some show of right on their side. The Commander-in-Chief has issued one or two General Orders warning soldiers not to shoot peacocks and not to get into fracas with villagers when they are out shooting.<sup>51</sup>

As discussed in Chapter Two, hunting expeditions by parties of soldiers travelling through the districts, usually resulted in angry correspondence between district officers and those from the Military Departments. In the areas adjoining military cantonments, civilian district administrators had their hands full, placating forest officers who complained of violation of shooting regulations by the soldiers as well as resolving disputes that arose from villagers' protesting behavior of soldiers during hunting.

British hunters, including officers, assumed that the villagers would gladly make *bandobast* for the *sahibs* in their hunting ventures. The demands on hunting parties placed a huge burden on villagers and it is possible that while villagers were reconciled (or willing) to provide supplies to district officers who were resident in the districts, they

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<sup>51</sup> Extract from proceeding of the GOI in the Home, Revenue and Agriculture Department (public) 24<sup>th</sup> Sept. Simla, Home (Public) A, Sept 1879, No.224-225, NAI.

were resented and resisted the additional burden of the demands made by soldiers on hunting excursions.

The issue of forced labor or *begaari* remained one of the biggest causes for tensions between colonial hunters and villagers. Hunters often asked villagers to act as beaters or coolies on their hunting trips and regardless of whether the latter were willing or not, they were coerced into acting as such by British hunters. Resistance in the days of Company rule often resulted in tragic losses on both sides. The incident involving Ensign McKean of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 14<sup>th</sup> Regiment, stationed in Lucknow is a case in point. According to the dispatches of the Acting Resident at Lucknow in 1824, McKean was shot by a villager “at the instigation of the Baboo or Zamindar, whilst engaged in pressing men to serve in his detachment as coolies.” Apparently, McKean who had gone with some friends on a shooting excursion had sent a sepoy to a neighboring village to procure “begarries” or coolies. On the sepoy insisting that some men be made available, “the begarries ran away and took refuge in the gurhee of Bhyroo Buksh.” McKean instructed the sepoy to catch the men and bring them back. In response Bhyro Buksh, the resident *taluqdar*, (landowner) was said to have replied that “he was not of the caste of shoemakers to send him begarries.” He also asked the sepoy to ask McKean to leave the area and not create a disturbance. When McKean with the intention of confronting the *taluqdar* himself approached his house, an armed man belonging to the *taluqdar* was

said to have inflicted a mortal wound on the ensign with a matchlock.<sup>52</sup> The accompanying sepoy killed the “murderer” and news of this violence reached the Acting Resident to the *Nawab* of Awadh and to the *nawab*, Ghazi-ud-Din Haidar. Careful diplomacy on both sides prevented further escalation of tensions. While the Nawab’s *muftees* (scholar, those who interpret Islamic law) acquitted the *talukdar*, Ghazi-ud-Din Haidar sent his ministers to express his deep concern at the incident. The British government, which had arrested the *talukdar* for murder, also judged that “the death of the Ensign McKean was mainly produced by his own indiscretion.”<sup>53</sup> The Company government also clarified that orders in military stations strictly prohibited the practice of demanding coolies for the purpose of carrying baggage, and accordingly instructed officers to enforce its implementation.<sup>54</sup> Preexisting instructions indicate that forced labor by soldiers had been an issue of concern even before this incident and it appears

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<sup>52</sup> Translation of a letter and of its enclosure from Meer Ghoma, Hoosain to the address of Lt. Col. Rose, commanding at Pertabgarh, Ensign Mckean shot by a villager whilst engaged in pressing men to attend him as coolies on a shooting excursion. f/4/858/22687, Records of the Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India: Board’s Collections [IOR/F/4/0804 - IOR/F/4/0917], Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library.

<sup>53</sup> Extract Political letter from Bengal 10<sup>th</sup> September, 1824, f/4/858/22687.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

that despite instructions to the contrary, officers had very little power to control the behavior of the soldiers in the countryside.<sup>55</sup>

Incidents of an even more serious nature involved the shooting of villagers. While most hunters claimed these were accidents (sportsmen seem curiously unthinking in taking blind shots towards standing crops when villagers were working, hidden from view), at other instances, these deaths occurred as a direct result of villagers opposing hunters from shooting in and around their fields. As the numbers of these deaths grew, the Government of India took notice and in 1879, following the case of *Empress Vs. Mayers* in 1879 recommended that instructions and guidelines for shooting be extended to all sportsmen, including civil officers. The GOI was deeply disturbed by reports published in the vernacular press in the Punjab in 1879 about rumors “that a European tried to enter a field in the pursuit of game. The owner of the field prohibited him from entering the field on the grounds that crops would be injured by his walking over them

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<sup>55</sup> As early as the 1870s, orders and instructions seeking to control hunting behavior had been promulgated both by the Military Department and Government of India. General Order of the Military Department. no 122 dated 28<sup>th</sup> may 1877 asked for strict observance of General Order 186 of 1876. As per this latter Order, permission for sporting purposes would not be granted to soldiers by regimental commanding officers until it had been ascertained through the civil authorities that local inhabitants were not opposed to the shooting of pea-fowl, and other birds or animals considered in certain localities to be more or less of a sacred nature. The earlier circular absolutely prohibited soldiers from shooting in the immediate vicinity of villages or private residences. Extract from proceeding of the GOI in the Home, Revenue and Agriculture Department (public) 24<sup>th</sup> Sept. Simla, Home (Public) A, Sept 1879, No.224-225. NAI.

and a quarrel took place between them. The European twice took aim at the cultivators. The first time a man was shot dead and the next time another man was wounded in the leg by the bullet. The Court convened a jury, which consisted of Europeans to try the case. The jury acquitted the accused."<sup>56</sup> The GOI asked the Government of Punjab to give a detailed account of the incident. The Punjab government's information was based on the notes of the presiding judge's directions to the jury that had acquitted an European named Mayes, whose profession is not mentioned in the records.<sup>57</sup> The official opinion according to the Government of Punjab supported the view that Mayes was innocent, the first shot an accident and the second in self-defense.

In its observations regarding this case, GOI seems more concerned with rising cases of "disturbance and affrays" than with the deaths of natives as the numbers of Europeans rose in late nineteenth century. Given the bad press that such matters got, the government opined that every endeavor should be made to check:

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<sup>56</sup> Quoted in notes of the Offg Secretary of Government of India, Extract from proceeding of the GOI in the Home, Revenue and Agriculture Department (public) 24<sup>th</sup> Sept. Simla, Home (Public) A, Sept 1879, No.224-225, NAI.

<sup>57</sup> From Lepel Griffin, esq. secy to the Government of Punjab to C. Bernard, Offg. Secy to the GOI Home Public A, Sept 1879 No.224-225, NAI.

A practice which, if carried on without the consent of the owners of the crops cannot fail to give rise to disturbances and affrays. In the Military Department, orders were some years ago issued by His Excellency the Commander in Chief, which have for their object the prevention of affrays between soldiers engaged in sport and villagers. The Governor General in Council deems it expedient that measures should be taken with a similar object in the civil departments. His Excellency in Council accordingly requests that instructions may be issued to Local Government, Administrations, district officers to take every opportunity of warning Englishmen, and others against entering on standing crops for sporting purposes, unless they first obtain the permission of the owners to do so.<sup>58</sup>

Colonial sportsmen, who claimed that these killings were mere accidents, refused to validate the anger of villagers. While expressing concern with violent encounters in the countryside (which could damage the prestige of the British rule), the GOI also downplayed the anger surrounding frequent shooting of humans as “disturbances and affrays.” The description of villagers’ anger at the death of their fellow men as another manifestation of inherent native irrationality and racial jealousy, served to assert the colonial privilege to shoot despite native opposition. Colonel Julius Barras describes how a hunting friend of his fell prey to a mob of angry, irrational natives in the following words:

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<sup>58</sup> Extract from proceeding of the GOI in the Home, Revenue and Agriculture Department (public) 24<sup>th</sup> Sept. Simla, Home (Public) A, Sept 1879, No.224-225. NAI.



The calm and dignified belief in the presiding fate that orders everything for us, and render thought not only laborious but positively wicked at once gave place to feelings of rage akin to madness, together with an exaggerated sense of the entire responsibility of the *sahib* for his minutest actions and the remotest consequences entailed by them. In short, they all set upon their natural superiors with blind fury, wrested his gun from him----which he was in no heart to use at such a moment---- and bound him to a tree.<sup>59</sup>

Barras claimed that this incident was “painfully suggestive of the latent and ineradicable enmity of race. The colonel was alone---- the only white man. Against him was a swarm of blacks: these united and charged our worthy and excellent countryman with willful murder!”<sup>60</sup> During the 1890s, investigations and trials were conducted into these incidents but sportsmen were let off by paying a fine or reimbursement to villagers. The leniency shown to sportsmen was of course not limited to hunters. The courts also took a lenient view of other crimes and offences committed by Europeans. The politics of hunting also influenced debates around the Ilbert Bill. Mrinalini Sinha has pointed out that the Bengali babu’s lack of interest in hunting was regarded as proof of his inability to judge Europeans in a court of law. Resident Britons were also concerned

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<sup>59</sup> Julius Barras, *The New Shikari at Our Indian Stations* Volume. II. (London: Swan, Sonnenschein, 1885), 115.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

that Bengalis would not show proper leniency in evaluating criminal charges brought against Anglo-Indians in the mofussil.<sup>61</sup>

In 1893, however, similar resistance by villagers near Agra brought severe retribution upon them. Three soldiers of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Royal West Surrey Regiment stationed in Ferozabad went on a hunting expedition without the permission of their seniors. Privates G. Edwards, M. Mussoon, and W. Banks also did not possess shooting passes. According to official correspondence, Private Edwards took a shot at a buck in a field and missed. However, three villagers “sprang up” from the place where the shot hit the ground and claimed that one of them had been injured in the shoulder.<sup>62</sup> Rather than noting Edwards’ carelessness in shooting over standing crops, the government claimed that the “villagers were not visible before the shot was fired.” Edwards offered some money to a villager to get medical aid for the wounded man, but he took the money and “then with oriental duplicity, without a word of warning turned on Edwards with his lathi caught him a most stunning blow on the head.” Edwards offered

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<sup>61</sup> Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity*, 42.

<sup>62</sup> Shooting affray between three European soldiers and villagers in the Agra District, NWP, Judicial and Public Annual Files, IOR/L/PJ/6/364, File 2512, Public and Judicial Department Records [L/PJ/6/349 - L/PJ/6/375], Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library. British Library.

his gun as a “conciliatory” step but this was broken by villagers.<sup>63</sup> Edwards who it seems tried to run was chased by the villagers, captured and tied to a tree, and later taken to the fields where his colleagues were also tied up with ropes. A policeman who “happened to be passing that way” released the three men. The lawyer for the accused argued that the villagers had only used sufficient violence to detain the three soldiers until the arrival of the police to whom notice had been sent. The judge rejected the argument and sentenced the villagers to rigorous imprisonment. The judgment commended Edwards’ honesty in admitting he had shot the native. The native reaction, on the other hand, was deemed perverse: “The attack on Edwards after accepting the two rupees and the subsequent attack on Musson and Bank was treacherous, cowardly and carried out with the evident intention of inflicting public disgrace on soldiers of Her Majesty’s British Army.”<sup>64</sup> The severity of punishment was justified by the intended insult to the Crown.

The judgment was also calculated to dispel any misconceptions that might arise about British vulnerability because Edwards and his colleagues did not use their

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Summary of the judgment, produced in a letter from W. H. L. Impey, to the A. Lyall, Secretary to Government of India, Home Department, IOR/L/PJ/6/364/2512.

weapons to protect themselves against the native assault. The court took a kindly view of the fact that the British men were hunting without permission which, it was careful to point out in its judgment, was the only reason that they did not fire at the natives:

“Obviously the fact that they were not complying with orders induced them to try and hush the matter up and to use no violence.” Despite the fact that the hunters’ weapons had been confiscated by the villagers, the judgment noted “even when their conciliatory conduct was mistaken for cowardice by the natives and they were beaten, insulted and bound, the three privates exercised a self control which was as admirable as it is rare.”<sup>65</sup>

It concluded:

In this case, the usual condition of these affrays were inverted. Frequently in past years I have seen accounts in the papers, more or less garbled, of similar mishaps at shooting where the soldier when cornered lost his temper or his head, and attacked the native assailant. Here the violence was all on the side of the native and this case throws a strong light on the feeling of the ordinary villager towards English soldiers.<sup>66</sup>

This rare “inverted” pattern of violence shocked British paternalists. A few decades earlier, the revolt of 1857-58 had been suppressed through military might. In this

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

later age of paternalism, British *justice* delivered an equally powerful blow to those who dared to dispute British prestige and power. The judgment itself assumed that the soldiers “will no doubt be punished by their commanding officer for going out shooting without a pass.”<sup>67</sup> Civil administrators, while claiming that such incidents only diminished the prestige of British Empire, could do little but appeal to military officers to caution their soldiers to be careful during their shooting expeditions.

In the absence of any strong action by the military or civil authorities, the hunting behavior of the officers in general (and soldiers in particular) changed little. Enamored as they were with the self-image of a ruling elite, they approached the villagers with an assumption of a right to demand labor and supplies. Most often, the *sahibs* let their servants do the dirty work of procuring supplies, displacing the responsibility for the exploitation of villagers on to their servants: “All villagers in our part of the country have a traditional awe of the *sahibs*, so your servants often take supplies without paying for them, and tell the villagers that if they complain the *sahib* will thrash them.”<sup>68</sup> While British hunters exercised their privilege to hunt in the countryside, they were also keen to allay doubts to notions of arbitrary and unfair

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<sup>68</sup> Arthur Brinckman, *The Diary of a Hunter from the Punjab to the Karakorum Mountains* (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1860), 55.

exercise of this authority. The native enablers of the hunt became convenient to blame for coercive extraction of resources from villagers. Proclamation of ignorance regarding behavior of their retinue of course, flew in the face of claims of exercising control over *shikaris* and ammunition which otherwise contributed to the image of the great hunters.

Denial of the *sahib's* demands on the part of the native evoked outrage and presented as a sign of native intractability and vindictiveness. The use of violence to discipline the unreasonable native was justified by invoking the accepted notion of a patriarch exercising benign authority. Augustus Irby describes a confrontation between his servants and villagers on the issue of forcible acquisition of sheep. When the villages repeatedly refused to sell the animals, Irby claimed that they did so out of "churlish brutish perversity":

It certainly goes against my grain to sanction any forcible appropriation: but what to do? These Wurdwanites are the most intractable of savages. It is quite useless treating them with the kindness, liberality and consideration one practices to civilized people They neither understand nor appreciate it. They refuse to part with their stock or produce, as it would appear, solely to enjoy the unaccustomed luxury of giving a refusal...I am, therefore, *compelled* to exercise arbitrary authority over them, or I should not be able to procure supplies. Their ungracious denials do not proceed from any wish to retain their properties in expectation of higher profit: for I, as do others I understand pay them double the price the articles are worth, or would realize if disposed of to

native dealers in the usual course of sale. So that one can only attribute their rejection of liberal trading offers to churlish brutish perversity.<sup>69</sup>

In the face of such a conclusion, Arby felt no guilt in exercising “arbitrary” authority to discipline villagers out of their “perverse” behavior.

British hunters were also dependent a variety of services provided by natives to make their hunting adventures successful. Trackers, coolies and beaters were indispensable to most hunting expeditions. The relationship between *shikaris* and villagers, as well as the relationship between different groups of natives involved in the hunt itself—the trackers, the coolies and *shikaris*—is an important subtext in the social relations of the colonial hunt and one that needs closer study. All these groups were important to a successful and comfortable hunt. However, *shikaris*’ long-term interest in finding employment lay in their ability to provide the game demanded by the *sahibs*. Beaters and coolies on the other hand, were more interested in procuring meat for consumption (or possibly sale). James Best’s description of his dilemma in having to chose between pursuing a tiger, or to shoot a readily available stag is a case in point. “The coolies who were far more interested in venison than in the slaying of a tiger were quite happy with things as they were. My *shikari*, who had tied the baits for a beat

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<sup>69</sup> Augustus Henry Irby, 83-84, emphasis mine

thought differently.”<sup>70</sup> The *shikari* was hired specifically for his success in leading sportsmen to tigers, and his success lay in being able to provide tigers. In missing the opportunity to shoot the tiger, Best had also wasted the *shikari*’s time and labor in tracking and tying baits. Even in the seemingly cohesive group of hunters and enablers, there were multiple and sometimes conflicting interests at work that became apparent in the course of an expeditions.

For British hunters in India, however, the easy procurement of labor was one of the charms of colonial hunting. According to Murray Brown:

In other countries no doubt, game of every description is to be found in as great variety and in as great numbers but in most of these countries the pursuit of sport is attended with far greater exertion and many more difficulties. Servants are not so easily obtained, means of transport for large supplies have to be provided, and many comforts cannot be taken. Much rough and dirty work has to be done by the sportsman himself... now in India, none of these objections exist. Servants are easily obtainable and at comparatively low wages.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Hon. James Best OBE, “To shoot or not to shoot? Some changed missed and Taken” *The Field*, Aug 27, 296, 1932.

<sup>71</sup> Murray Brown 278. The example of Augustus Irby’s hunting expedition to the Himlayas gives us some idea of the labor required during hunting trips. His ‘small’ retinue included a “khansamah, who unites the duties of caterer, cook, and director general of the ways and means. Secondly, the sirdar or bearer,—the individual who, in this land of the minutest division of labour, looks after the clothes, bedding, &c., and assists in dressing and washing. Thirdly, the bheestie, who, in addition to his ordinary duties of fetching water, undertook to assist in cooking, washing up dishes, &c., Fourthly, the classee, in whose charge were the tents and their belongings, &c.—his duty to accompany and pitch them. Fifthly and sixthly, two syces, grooms,



The labor of beaters and coolies was easily extracted and easily explained away. The dependence on the *skill* of native *shikaris* and trackers, however, was another matter.

### **The Native *Shikari***

In the Indian jungle, British sportsmen were heavily dependent on the labor, skill *and* goodwill of native *shikaris*. Native *shikaris* performed a number of functions. They tracked game, carried the *sahib's* arms, acted as navigators on his explorations, and brought him back to safety after successful hunts. The British hunter's relationship with the native *shikaris* was one of great ambivalence that ranged from faith in their skills and great distrust of their character. For instance, "Big Bore" admitted to his fellow hunters, "It is wise if you have good local help, or good shikari to leave the marking down of the tiger to them as a European is likely to make a noise should he walk near the tiger."<sup>72</sup> All

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in whose charge were my two ponies." In addition to these men, twenty coolies were also hired for this one -man hunting expedition. Shikaris and trackers were hired locally to supplement the efforts of this retinue to ensure a successful *shikar* trip for the *sahib*. Irby, *The Diary of a Hunter*, 2-3.

<sup>72</sup> Big Bore, *Guide to Shikar on the Nilgiris*, 89.

the same, it would be wise to “keep a check on ammunition, which sometimes mysteriously disappears.”<sup>73</sup>

In addition to depending on the *shikari's* skill for their welfare and successful hunts, hunters were keen to be seen as upholding the prestige of British Empire. Just as the *sahibs* were anxious to uphold the prestige of the British Empire, they were equally apprehensive about their performance in front of the *shikaris*. Wilmot admitted that he did not enjoy shooting in the hills:

To be successful, a man must enjoy walking on ground where a false step may mean extinction; and accomplished as he may be in this art, his companions are infinitely more so, and their verdict upon the performance will always take into consideration that they are criticising a “*sahib*” and not a hillmen.<sup>74</sup>

Similarly, Burton wrote that failure to secure a kill was “so bad for one’s prestige with the local *shikaris*.”<sup>75</sup> So much so that one occasion he “sat up and wasted sufficient time for *shikari* not to be able to say “no panther because *sahib* would not make trouble”

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> S. Eardley-Wilmot, *Forest Life and Sport in India* (London: Edward Arnold, 1910), 61.

<sup>75</sup> Burton, 110.

so I shall get one of the two stags which roar every evening. I hope.”<sup>76</sup> Unlike the villager “who did not always directly observe the *sahib’s* actions, the *shikari* was ever present as audience and witnesses to the conduct and action of the white sportsman in the jungle.

### **Asserting Difference between British Hunters and Native *Shikaris***

This vulnerability to the *shikari* was a threat to the image of the *sahib* as a robust hunter.<sup>77</sup> The dependence on the *shikari* were explained away by focusing on the latter’s limitations rather than capabilities. Big Bore, for instance, sought to downplay the importance of the native *shikari*:

With a hungry shikari bent on laying by a store of dried venison for the off season, it is always a case of “shoot sir, shoot, big horns, shoot quickly sir” and rest can be imagined...to judge the length of a stag’s horns accurately is no easy matter and the sportsman is at times likely to be lured into pulling the trigger on the shikari’s assurance that it is a large stag. Therefore, unless he can use his own initiative, an awkward position

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid. 40.

<sup>77</sup> In an article published in the 1880s in the Australian newspaper, *The Queenslander*, the author questioned the leisurely manner in which the British in India practiced shikar: “The self reliance engendered by the constant wrestle with nature in her silent wastes, which induces patient endurance of hardship, the fortitude to bear disappointment, and the intense enjoyment of success, is not a requisite in our Native Shikar ... and with every appreciation of comfort, we are led to think he has failed to attain to a hunter’s truest pleasures.” Quoted in Inglis, *Tent Life in Tigerland*, 140.

is likely to arise and many have suffered the indignity of a fine or a cancellation of their licences in consequence.<sup>78</sup>

The stress on initiative, skill, and knowledge of animal physiology was one of the strategies by which British hunters explained away the agency of native *shikaris*, and the emphasis on the rhetoric of sportsmanship was handy to define the difference between the white and native hunter. The native's agency was also diminished in the final act of the hunting adventure. Having tracked the game and bringing the hunter to it, the *shikari* relinquished the power of the kill to the sportsman. And while *shikaris* might carry the *sahib's* firearms, they were not allowed to fire unless the *sahib's* life was threatened.

While sportsmen often claimed that the "sporting" experience was more important than bagging a trophy, the *success* of a hunt was measured by trophies acquired. *Shikaris* were paid, rewarded and recommended to others for their ability to successfully provide game to the sportsman. The *shikari's* insistence on the *sahib* taking a shot at game was to ensure that his own labor (and skill) in presenting game to the sportsman did not go waste. Sportsmen who claimed that this insistence added to the difficulty of the hunt, argued that the ability to exercise his own judgment despite the provocation to shoot differentiated the skillful hunter from his more amateur peers. The

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emphasis on hunter's poise was complemented by highlighting the native *shikari's* excitability in urging the *sahib* to take a shot. Describing the frantic appeals to take a shot, one hunter commented, "I was much amused by my shikary. He kept dancing about saying- fire sir, fire, or you will lose him, like the one yesterday. I never met but two natives on the hills who were cool and collected when in the presence of large game.<sup>79</sup> Despite the *shikari's* attempt to shake his confidence by reminding of a missed shot, the hunter in this case held his nerve taking a successful shot at his own discretion.

As I have discussed in Chapter One, another popular strategy to diminish the skill of *shikaris* was caricaturing them as primitive; their "skill" therefore a sign of primitive living rather than the ennobling experience of a civilized sportsman learning woodcraft. Lowth, for example, describes his *shikari*, "something like a monkey, being nearly naked of dress, but clothed in a natural covering of hair" and familiar with tiger haunts in the region.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> J---n, Letter to Editor, *Indian Sporting Review*, Volume X (1849):129.

<sup>80</sup> John B. Lowth, "A Letter from India" (Oakham : George Snodin Cunnington, 1841), 76.

## Controlling *Shikaris*

Native *shikaris*, who played such an important part in the *British* tradition of hunting, were relegated to the status of mere auxiliaries in the memorialization of the hunting adventure. Early legislation arising from the Nilgiri Hills was also responsible in great part in bringing the role of *shikaris* under the control of British sportsmen. In his comments to the proposed game law in the Nilgiri Hills, Hawkeye, who we have already encountered in Chapter One, made a strong case against arming the native *shikari*. He disapproved of British sportsmen who armed native *shikaris* under their employment. He argued that in giving arms to the native, Britons were relinquishing control over their firearms and enabling *shikaris* to “poach” game away from legitimate sportsmen. Arming *shikaris*, he claimed, was unfair to the sporting community and created a humiliating situation for sportsmen:

Game is becoming more and scarcer every succeeding season, and it is not fair to the sporting community. Let our sportsmen by all means, shoot what they can during the season; but let them have what others of their own clan may leave them---- not the leavings of the native shikarrie.<sup>81</sup>

*Shikaris* were also seen as illegitimate competitors for game. Hawkeye thought it was outrageous that native *shikaris* shared hunting fields, “killing the snipe and enjoying

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<sup>81</sup> Hawkeye, 27.

the sport vastly, on the very ground where I hoped to have done the same!"<sup>82</sup> Recalling the efficiency of disarmament during the years following the revolt of 1857, he regretted the laxity that had greatly empowered the native *shikaris* against the British sportsman:

A few year ago, for the sake of a rupee or two, many a report of the whereabouts of a fine stag or fierce boar was brought by the natives of the several villages around Ooty; now-a-days they prefer to keep the sport to themselves, all owing to their having arms. Fancy a Toda turned sportsman and dead shot too! I have never heard of such a thing: but they have taken, I hear these days to turbans and umbrellas so it is not to be wondered at. Alas! for the good old times!<sup>83</sup>

His influential articles called for stricter control of arms. The Nilgiri Game Association (NGA) too was vociferous in its demand for disarming the native and extending control over them. It made it mandatory for their members to use services of *shikaris* registered with the Association. As discussed in Chapter Three, in other regions as well, native *shikaris* were often left only with one legitimate avenue to use their skills--that of acting as guides for British sportsmen.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Hawkeye, 207.

<sup>84</sup> By the 1920s, making use of the rapidly growing demand for tiger hunting, some Indians established businesses to cater to tourist hunters, particularly from the United States. One such example is Sardar Vivek Singh Majitha, a.k.a. "Black Hunter" who was ran a successful venture, Tiger camps Limited, in the United Provinces. Despite the emergence of this new brand of

## The Ideal *Shikari*

Despite such attempts at controlling him, the reliance on and vulnerability to the native *shikari* ruptured the masculine front of the colonizers. Groups of native *shikaris* who were perceived as tame, obedient and childlike were popular with British officers. Musselwhite for instance recommended Gond (a tribe) hunters to fellow sportsmen. The Gonds not only had “great powers of endurance,” but more importantly, “return to the camp with never a complaint and as happy as children.”<sup>85</sup> While claiming that natives did not have a sense of sportsmanship, British hunters nevertheless favored those groups who they claimed enjoyed the “excitement of the beat” and had no expectation of reimbursement for their services.<sup>86</sup>

The other kind of native *shikaris* who found favor with the British was the “free and noble savage” who was located outside the traditional village society. See for instance, Campbell’s description of Kamah in his semi-fictive *Old Forest Ranger*:

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enablers, Britons residents in India largely preferred to use the services of the local native *shikari*. (Papers and photographs illustrating the career and social life of Gilbert Waddell, Indian Police Deputy Inspector General of Police, United Provinces 1940-47, Mss Eur F250 /24Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library).

<sup>85</sup> Musselwhite, *Behind the Lens in Tigerland*, 27.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*



His short woolly hair, flat features, and thick lips, betray an African origin; but his air and manner are very different from what we are accustomed to expect in that persecuted race....he is a Seedee, a free inhabitant of the forest, and displays all the lofty bearing and dignified self possession of an independent savage...He, fully aware of his own importance, dignified himself with the title of Jemmedar... and comported himself with becoming dignity, never condescending to act as guide to the hunters, except when in pursuit of bison...He rose and extended his hand to salute them with an air of an equal... have to treat him with utmost respect.<sup>87</sup>

Having traced the bison, Kamah even throws a challenge, "I have done my duty, there is the game; and now gentlemen, let me see what you can do."<sup>88</sup> Contrary to the insubordination by the *kotwal* described earlier in this chapter, this challenge by a supposed noble savage, perceived to be as alienated from the Indian masses as from the British, was seen perfectly in keeping with the professed idea of sporting rivalry between equals. The supposed "rivalry," however, existed in so far only as Kamah did not exceed his brief by demanding a hand in killing the bison. The right to kill lay with the colonial *sahib*. The white hunter matched the woodcraft and tracking skill of Kamah by his own skill in killing the bison. As long as Kamah played his part, the intimate

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<sup>87</sup> Campbell , *Old Forest Ranger*, 85-90.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*91.

experience of hunting “together” was said to have created a special bond between the two based on an *assumption* of shared experiences of the hunt.

Campbell’s narrative also describes the mistreatment of Bhurmah, a village *shikari* who after having failed to kill a man-eating tiger, was dragged through the village by its *kotwal* and abused by the resident Brahmin:

With that despotic disregard of right and wrong, which ever accompanies an Asiatic’s possession of power...And the man, who wore three medals on his breast, rewards for gallantry in his many conflicts with tigers, retired cowering from the presence of an effeminate Brahmin, without a word of reply to the most insulting and unjust abuse.<sup>89</sup>

While rural India remained important to the idea of the paternalism, large caste-based rural communities often undermined the power of the rulers. The “effeminate Brahmins,” for instance, because of their religious importance, still held considerable power in rural communities and deemed British as untouchables. The “irrational” and “regressive” Indian social structure not only posed a challenge to the rational administrative authority of the British, it was also deemed to undermine the skill and potential independence of the native hunter such as Bhurmah. Many hunters mention that the local *shikaris* employed by them were regarded as untouchables or were ranked

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid. 207-8.

lowest in the caste hierarchy. In Campbell's account, an assumption of common understanding and appreciation of hunting, a masculine and noble pursuit brought Kamah (aloof from village society) and Bhurmah (persecuted by it) closer to British hunter.

At other times, the collaboration between native and colonial hunter was more pragmatic. In pig sticking districts for examples, *shikaris* and villagers were often at odds with each other. Villagers often killed pigs to prevent crop damage. "A crime as heinous in a pig sticking district as vulpicide (killing a fox) would be in a hunting country at home," claimed once pig sticker.<sup>90</sup> Since this greatly reduced the game available to pig stickers, *shikaris* and pig stickers found a common interest in protecting pigs. In an effort to control pig population, the *shikari* and the pig sticker often worked together to cull a small number of pigs to ensure a stock ready for the pig sticking season.<sup>91</sup>

The third group of natives who find mention in the hunting literature was the group that enjoyed power in the countryside. This included *zamindars*, *taluqdars*

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<sup>90</sup> Murray Brown, *Shikar Sketches, with notes of Indian Field Sports*, 21.

<sup>91</sup> See Wardrop, *Modern Pig-sticking*, 212.

(landowners) village headmen, large landowners, planters and rajas from smaller princely states.

## **The Local Landed Elite**

In Chapter One, I drew attention to the importance of hunting expeditions in diplomatic exchanges between the British and Indian princes. In the countryside as well, British officers formed close alliances with local landed Indian elite around the practice of the hunt. Of these elites, the *zamindars* and landed gentry were particularly important for purposes of the hunt. Just as British administrators claimed that hunting was an essential part of the diplomatic ties with Indian aristocracy, officers in the districts claimed that friendly relations with the locally powerful was important to maintaining British rule in the countryside.

Hunting expeditions were dependent on villagers for labor and rations, and as we have seen earlier, these demands were a source of considerable tension between sportsmen and villagers. At these times, the support of the village headman was essential in smoothing frayed tempers and ensuring successful *bandobast* for the hunt. Big Bore, in his treatise on hunting, urged hunters to be on good terms with the villager headman:

The headman of a village is a magnate not to be despised for he can be of great assistance if he chooses and his influence at times goes a long way

to make a shoot successful especially if beaters are required... These are little details but they are of importance and should not be neglected.<sup>92</sup>

While the village headman could facilitate smooth *bandobast*, *zamindars* and other landed "gentry" also provided sportsmen with horses, elephants and game that they preserved on their lands. Wardrop, whom we have earlier seen advising sportsmen to show little acts of kindness for the villagers, also urged sportsmen to take "no shame when he meets a native gentleman on equal terms" and that "small invitations will win the hearts of bigger natives."<sup>93</sup> This friendship with "bigger natives" was especially important given the fragmented ownership and tenancy rights of the land. Speaking specifically in the context of preserving pigs, Wardrop observed, "Unless dealing with Rajas, Raikes, really big Zamindars, the trouble lies in the multiplicity of owners of any given piece of land."<sup>94</sup> The issue of fragmented land holdings, subleases and multiple ownership also carried with it differing notions of rights and privileges, as a case in 1825 from the Punjab illustrates.

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<sup>92</sup> Big Bore, 74.

<sup>93</sup> Wardrop, *Modern Pig-Sticking*, 207-210.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

In 1825, peace between Raja Ranjit Singh and the British was threatened when two officers of the Company, hunting on the banks of the Sutlej, were chased off by the headman of a village. On this occasion, an agitated Captain Wade, the Assistant Political Agent at Ludhiana, wrote to C. J. Metcalfe, Resident at Delhi, of the “rude and insolent” behavior of those in the service of Raja Ranjeet Singh. In this particular incident, two officers of the Company who had obtained permission to shoot from the *Vakeel* of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh, were threatened and chased on the banks of river Sutlej by men representing the *Jemmadar* (the headman) who came over in boats from the opposite bank. Refusing to recognize the pass given by the *Vakeel*, or the right of the British to hunt in the area, the villagers claimed that the officers were not allowed to hunt on the banks of the river. Carrying firearms, they threatened to destroy their tents and supplies. The officers returned to headquarters and filed a complaint with Captain Wade.

In his letter to Metcalfe, Wade in turn complained that such “insults” had become common during shooting trips. Despite repeated complaints to the Raja, “the people under his authority continue to abuse and insult the British name and government in the person of its officers in the most open and flagrant manner.”<sup>95</sup> Wade

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<sup>95</sup> Letter dated 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 1825, From Captain Wade Assistant Political Agent at Loodhiana to Sir C J Metcalf, Resident at Delhi, IOR/F/4/1039/ 28636, Offensive conduct of Runjeet Singh’s officers in firing upon two British officers whilst on a shooting expedition. Records of the Board of

claimed that his inspection of the terms of the treaty with Ranjeet Singh did not reveal anything which would give the Raja “and his subjects an exclusive right as of approach to the bank of the Sutlege.”<sup>96</sup> Taking a serious view of the matter, Metcalf assured Wade that he had written to Ranjeet Singh asking him to take measures to “repress the insolent spirit of his people stationed at Sehore.”<sup>97</sup> Runjeet Singh’s officers were still getting used to the changing balance of power between the colonialists and native rulers. In this case, the Raja’s headman was made to realize that two officers of the Company embodied the political and military power of the Raj and had come to enjoy more power in his lands than he did.

For the most part in the period of 1857, with the British not acquiring new territories, hunting relations with headmen and big proprietors were mutually beneficial. Big *zamindars* often preserved game in their territories for the exclusive purpose of providing sport to British officers posted in their districts. While the British

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Commissioners for the Affairs of India: Board’s Collections [IOR/F/4/0306 - IOR/F/4/0362] ,Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library. British Library.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> R.D. Macleod, *Impressions of a Civil Servant* (London: H.F.&G Wither, 1938),193.

carried out extermination drives in the lands they administered, local rajas and *zamindars* protected carnivores in their lands. For those desiring a tiger trophy, hunting invitations from local satraps were particularly welcome. Hunting in the districts closely followed the tradition of the elaborate viceregal hunts where the British dignitaries bagged the largest trophies. R.D. Macleod, a civil servant in the United Provinces, narrates an incident when while hunting deer, he missed his shot and the deer was instead killed by the local raja's son. At the end of the day however, the trophy was presented to Macleod on the principle of first blood. The principle of first blood was usually not followed in deer hunting, and Macleod was well aware that his bullet had completely missed the mark. He claims to have accepted the trophy so as not to offend his host.<sup>98</sup> While it was in the local host's interest to keep friendly relations with his powerful guests, the officers justified these "informal" exchanges on the familiar argument that it allowed them to know their districts better and establish close personal bonds with those enjoying traditional authority:

Acceptance of such hospitality was allowed though it was not easy to repay it, but one had the consolation that such men who owned of hundreds or even thousands of acres were wealthy men, and in the

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<sup>98</sup> R.D. Macleod, *Impressions of a Civil Servant* (London: H.F.&G Wither, 1938),193



course of conversation could provide you with a of useful and interesting information about your districts and it's inhabitants.<sup>99</sup>

Hunting as diplomatic tool was also helpful in restoring confidence among powerful allies in the countryside. A case in point is the management of the Bettiah estate in Champaran, owned by the Bettiah Raja. Large parts of the estate were leased to indigo planters. The surrounding area was held by the Ramnagar state directly, or leased to *zamindars* and indigo planters. The managers of the Bettiah estate, the Ramnagar estate, *zamindars* and planters shared a common interest in maintaining the indigo economy of the region. The Bettiah estate "jealously" guarded its shooting rights and the Bettiah shoot was a prestigious event, its scale and splendor matched only by the shoots organized by the big princely states. The two shoots given by the Raja of Bettiah every winter in the estate's forests were crucial in reinforcing the common political and economic ties between the different stakeholders. The estate itself maintained a considerable number of elephants and the *zamindars* within the estate and around it (being lease holders of the Bettiah raja) all lent their animals for the shoots. The

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<sup>99</sup> Hunt and Harrision, *The District Officer in India*, 130-131.

forests were carefully preserved and were in charge of an estate forest officer.<sup>100</sup> When the Champaran agitation in 1917 challenged the political and economic status quo, “it was thought desirable to have as Manager, a senior member of the civil service to be in charge until all outstanding questions of policy were determined.”<sup>101</sup> As the new manager took charge in troubled times, he took care to continue “the traditional hospitality of the Raj” of giving two shoots in the Bettiah forests every winter. The attendance of British officers, leaseholders and *zamindars* was important for demonstrating the solidarity of “traditional” power holders in the face of a continued agitation by peasants and the arrival of Gandhi in the district for one of his early *satyagrahas* in India.

While British officers still claimed the right to hunt as the privilege of the ruling class, they found it increasingly difficult from the 1920s to justify the need for *shikar* in bringing good government to India. Reports of crop damage by game, loss of human life and property to carnivores due to disarmament, and allegations of connivance of British officers with *zamindars* made such justifications increasingly indefensible. In the final

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<sup>100</sup> W H Lewis, Unpublished Memoir *The Lighter side of India Life Shikar and Other Recollections* (West Home Cambridge December 1920). European Manuscripts, MSS Eur G111/2, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library. 46.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.* 45-46.

section, I will discuss how the western educated Indian elite, especially those elected to legislatures used their position to attack the government on the issue of hunting.

## **Colonial Hunting and the Urban Educated Native**

As we will see in Chapter Five, in the 1920s the United Provinces took a lead in the issue of game preservation. By 1914, it had already passed legislation fixing a limit on the numbers of tigers that could be shot by a single sportsman. While the agenda to preserve wild animals was gaining momentum in the official circles during the 1920s, the government of the United Provinces was facing considerable criticism from elected representatives in state legislature. In 1921, Babu Brajendra Prasad Misra called upon the United Provinces Legislative Assembly to pass a resolution putting an end to the practice of district officers obtaining elephants, carriages and other supplies from wealthy landlords. The government representative Ludovic Porter defended the practice as a sign of long standing *tradition* of mutual respect and loyalty between landowners and the British Raj:

It is perfectly true that in the view of the friendly relations which exist in practically every district between the district officer and the large landowners, the latter, very often lend elephants, particularly in jungle tracts where it is difficult to carry luggage etc. It is part of the traditional friendly relations which have been in existence from time immemorial

between the district officer and land owners and others; and I for one see no reason whatever why government should stop it.<sup>102</sup>

While Misra did not question the invention of tradition as it were, he highlighted the poor state of the peasantry in the rural areas. He argued that landowners gave elephants to officers in the hope for favors, and the latter ignored the exploitation of peasants by the landlords. In response, Porter argued that an adequate response had already been given and suspended the proceedings for want of a quorum. Not to be discouraged, the next year, Babu Brajendranath Misra once again drew attention to the hunter-officer. He demanded that the United Provinces Legislative Council form a committee to review the practice of touring by officials. Describing touring as signs of government's "misdeeds and extravagance," he claimed that he failed to perceive "a single advantage in support of the present practice of touring." According to him, the officers only toured for the three months that coincided with the commencement of the shooting season. The importance of touring, he argued, was greatly exaggerated by officers for whom touring was "a fine opportunity for hunting and add to their purses the travel allowance." He challenged the view that touring allowed officers to meet with people in the interiors who normally would not get the chance to meet their *sahibs* at the

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<sup>102</sup> Proceedings of the United Provinces Legislative Council, 9<sup>th</sup> August, 1921, Volume III, 1921.

head quarters; he claimed that since the officers confined themselves solely to hunting expeditions in the forests they were more inaccessible while touring the district.<sup>103</sup> The Council however, was not convinced of the need for such an enquiry. Two years later, Misra again attacked the hunting proclivities of the British officials in the course of the discussion on the annual budget. He argued that due to financial stringency, unnecessary posts like those of commissioners be abolished:

I know of very little official business which they have to transact; they have got plenty of time for shooting and the whole of their time is passed in sports and hunting. Therefore, if we want to retain these posts in order to give opportunity to a certain number of officers to indulge in shooting it is a different thing.<sup>104</sup>

In addition to attacking the practice of colonial hunting, legislators also highlighted the inability of the government in protecting villagers near game rich forests, and demanded more firearms be provided to the villagers. As the government surrendered to the demands of allowing more firearms to villagers for crop-protection, the British administrator felt this bastion of imperial control crumbling. Macleod complained:

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<sup>103</sup> Proceedings of the United Provinces Legislative Council, Volume XI, 12<sup>th</sup> December 1922.

<sup>104</sup> Proceeding of the United Provinces Legislative Council s, Volume XVII, 12<sup>th</sup> March, 1924.

The politicians have seized on the administration of the Arms Act and rules as a test of the British sympathy with India's aspirations of the equal treatment of the British and Indian. They even go so far as to assert that the British Raj, by depriving Indians of the knowledge of the use of arms robbed them of their manliness...The Government of India have bowed before the verbal storm and whereas in the old days Europeans carried arms without a licence and Indians obtained licences with great difficulty, it was decided soon after the Great War to amend the rules so that no European as such is any longer exempt from the necessity of taking out a license and the exemptions that remain are mainly Indians.<sup>105</sup>

The increasing opposition to their authority and the heightened awareness of hostility brought the British closer to the animal world. The self-identification of the Orwellian colonial with the dying elephant conveys the brooding sense of loneliness amidst hostile conditions that overwhelmed the *sahib*. This sense of separation and isolation is reflected in the figure of the rogue elephant that has been separated from the herd. The policeman feels one with the elephant and in killing the elephant, feels like he has lost a part of himself. His own helplessness is reflected in the dying throes of the wounded elephant: "it seemed dreadful to see the great beast lying there, powerless to move and yet powerful to die, not even to be able to finish him."<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> R.D. Macleod, *Impressions of an Indian Civil Servant*, 59.

<sup>106</sup> George Orwell, *Burmese Days; a Novel* (New York: Harcourt Brace, , 1934),

In a show of empathy with wildlife, F.W.Champion, a forest officer in the United Provinces who became famous for wildlife photography in the 1930s, felt closer to a leopard in the jungle who exhibited great dignity amidst raucous opposition:

Every fifty yards or so some sambhur, or kakkar, or monkey saw the dreaded feline calmly strolling down the path and the chorus of abuse which followed the leopard's movements vividly reminded me of shouts of "simon, go back," which were such a familiar accompaniment to the progress of the Simon Commission in India. The leopard, like Sir John Simon, realised that the only thing to do was to maintain a calm demeanour and to continue his progress unperturbed; but the inhabitants of the jungle were wiser than the non-cooperators, for once the object of their hate had passed out of their sight they promptly forgot all about him and continued their happy life without brooding upon their supposed wrongs or longing for a swaraj of the jungle where all from the cheetal to the leopard, from the kakkar to the tiger, should stand on equal footing and have equal rights!!<sup>107</sup>

In a period where nationalist sentiment challenged imperial rule, the increasing inclusion of Indians in higher levels of government and growing opposition from elected Indian legislators had a demoralizing impact on the British hunter-administrator, his ideal of serving as paternal benefactor becoming increasingly precarious. In the endeavor to regain some sense of their former imperial self, the British hunter-administrator desired the countryside even more. The call for a broader agenda of game

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<sup>107</sup> F.W. Champion, *The Jungle in Sunlight and Shadow* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1934), 77.

preservation, I argue in the final chapter, can be placed in the context of a growing sense of the loss of former power they had wielded. The desire to save Indian jungles and Indian wildlife reflected a desire to salvage a part of their own romanticized history as intrepid frontier men, upholding the prestige of the Crown in far-flung corners of the world.



## Chapter 5: Wildlife and Trusteeship

The shooting of game is, by custom of the country, the privilege of the ruler.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter explores the colonial policy of protecting Indian wildlife in late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This chapter will also trace the processes by which attempts were made to formalize the aesthetics of the colonial hunt as law in the name of game preservation in the late nineteenth century. From the 1920s however, the idea of conservation had become popular in Europe and a growing international movement seeking to conserve all species in specific areas designated as sanctuaries and national parks found acceptance in influential pockets of official opinion in India as well.

The last decade of the nineteenth century saw a proliferation of new “preservation societies” in Britain and in India which shared the concerns of existing game associations over dwindling game numbers and reduction in trophy worthy specimens. Comprising of prominent sportsmen and administrative officials, these pressure groups were instrumental in campaigning for legislative intervention for the protection of fauna. While it was generally claimed that the main cause for the

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from T.W. Morris, Esq., Magistrate and Collector of Mainpuri, to Chief Secretary, United Provinces, dated 5 August, 1904, Proceedings of the UPFD, file 99/1904, Pros, No. 8. UPSA.

disappearance of wildlife was hunting by natives, some among the campaigners also acknowledged the role of British hunters (both residents and visitors) in this process. Preservationists argued that if game laws were not formulated and implemented, some game species would even become extinct. It is interesting to note that the preservation policies formalized notions of fair play and reinforced racial differences and social distances. The ensuing preservation regimes regulated the movement and practices of hunters in a manner that not only restricted the native *shikari's* access to game but also of those within the colonial hunting community.

The early game laws of the late nineteenth century were a precursor to the establishment of the first Protected Areas for wildlife preservation in first decade of the twentieth century. They give us some idea about the social, economic and political processes that led to the formation of sanctuaries and National Parks in British India in the 1930s. At the same time, they also illustrate the ways in which the British administration dealt with the different social and political pressures informing early efforts at wildlife preservation in their most important colony. I explore how these pressures, along with the desire to protect and breed certain species for sport, led to the prioritization of game to be preserved in colonial India. A brief analysis of the acts and debates also reveals the constraints that fettered preservation policies in India. The debates around game preservation reveal that the colonial state had to balance the

economic interests of the state, especially agricultural revenue with game protection, and at the same time deal with intense protests on limiting opportunities to hunt from its own officers.

Thus, following up on my discussion on the projected human- animal conflict in Chapter Three, I now focus on the arguments that led to the conclusion that such a conflict could only be reconciled by a separation of habitats, initially in Reserved Forests and later in game reserves. The idea behind the creation of such areas was to demarcate land use patterns in a manner that facilitated the creation of a sacrosanct haven that ensured the survival of wild species in perpetuity.

The agenda of wildlife protections (whether in guise of game preservation or in sanctuaries) is an excellent example of the exchanges between the colony and the metropole and influences they exerted on each other in the early decades of the twentieth century. It is interesting to note that it was wildlife in the colonies, much more than wildlife at home that captured metropolitan urge towards conserving all species. Twentieth-century notions of "Conservation" (translated into formation of sanctuaries and National Parks) owed its popularity to the colonial encounter. Hunters, ecologists and naturalists were among the enthusiasts who flocked to associations like the Society for Protection of Fauna in the Empire which took upon themselves to conserve fauna in

the colonies by exerting influence on the Colonial Office and through sister associations in the subcontinent.

By the 1920s as more Indians made their way into the civil services, the hunter-*sahibs* seem gripped with desperate urgency to protect Indian wildlife before they themselves were replaced by natives who did not seem to care about wildlife at all. This urgency was most palpable in officers of the Forest Department who already controlled large tracts of forest and wildlife in the subcontinent. Given the colonial assumption that there was an inherent conflict between human settlements and wildlife, a few influential officers of the Forest Department advocated separation of habitats. From the 1900s, the Forest Department extended the areas that were closed to shooting and even created a few sanctuaries. And in 1935, British India became a part of the global movement to preserve animals in highly specialized wild life reserves called National Parks.<sup>2</sup>

## **Colonial Society on Preservation**

The discussion in earlier chapters of this thesis has highlighted of the colonial emphasis on hunting as a privilege of the ruling elite. As we have seen in Chapters Two and Three, the question of game preservation often divided colonial society and colonial

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<sup>2</sup> Though, as we see later, Indian concept of a national park differed from both the North American and the African models. The Forest Department continued to “work” these areas and earning revenue from logging.

administration. Colonial sportsmen, forest officials and district administrators agreed that hunting was important to maintain the morale of colonial officials and the prestige of colonial rule. Most influential hunters also agreed that game preservation was necessary to ensure the continuation of the colonial hunt. But colonialists also found it hard to accept that preservation interfered in the exercise of their prerogative to hunt.

From the late nineteenth century when game preservation regimes limited the opportunities for hunting, colonial hunters invoked prestige and privilege to argue both for preservation and for against restrictions on hunting. Hawkeye for example, arguing for strict game regulation to maintain the morale of the British men claimed:

It was the excitement of the chase-the delights of horse, dog and gun, that made the Englishman in India in days gone- in the days of Empire-building-contended with his lot in India; that as much as anything, made him the "Anglo -Indian." The restlessness now so painfully evident among all classes of Europeans to get out of the country as soon as possible should make the government more keenly alive than ever to the necessity of availing itself of all possible means to induce men to become permanent settlers; and the Preservation of Game is one of those means.<sup>3</sup>

Clearly, according to Hawkeye, government failure to initiate measures to ensure the perpetuity of the hunt spelled a deep crisis of the Empire. This thought, that the Briton was being deprived of an important privilege signaling his rule in India, shows

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<sup>3</sup> Hawkeye, *Game*, 287.

amazing resilience from the late nineteenth century to the end days of British rule in the subcontinent. In 1935, Sir Maurice Garnier Hallett of the Indian Civil Service recalled his own hunting-filled-days and expressed great sadness that the “political changes in India” and in the life of the British community had deprived the new recruits “of much of the zest, the glamour and the happy outdoors life experienced by the new comer in days gone by. Not the last pleasurable anticipation was that of sport; the hunting in their native wilds of big and small game.”<sup>4</sup> At the same time, colonial administrators agreed that it was difficult to get support from British hunters who favored cheap *shikar*. Calls for preservation most often led to closed seasons and restriction on shooting by making it mandatory for sportsmen to pay a fee to buy a license to hunt. These measures were resented by those who argued that while preservation laws should be in place, hunting when allowed, should be free. In Chapters One and Four, I have discussed the professed importance of hunting to governance. The group that most vociferously fought against the new system of fees and licenses were officers who insisted that hunting contributed to their capacity as administrators by putting them in direct contact with the people.

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<sup>4</sup> Maurice Hallett Hallett, *Birth of a Jungli*, Official papers and correspondence of Sir Maurice Garnier Hallett Indian Civil Service 1907-45; Secretary, Home Dept, Government of India 1932-36, Governor of Bihar 1937-39, Governor of United Provinces 1939-45. Mss Eur E251/70.

They argued, "legitimate sport is a thing, which (should be) encouraged ----not taxed."<sup>5</sup> They claimed that that by forcing the official to pay a fee, the authorities were depriving them of a means to know the country better.

By the late nineteenth century as the sense of the ethic of the hunt became strong, influential hunters also drew attention to the "unsporting" ways of British hunters. The actions of these few men were seen as jeopardizing British rule in the same way as declining opportunities to hunt. Already in mid nineteenth century, Arthur Brinckman noted with much chagrin:

These pothunting sportsmen damage our prestige amongst the natives. I really believe that the excellence of our officers as sportsmen is the second great prop of our ascendancy in India...it is a great pity that a few imposters should creep in amongst them.<sup>6</sup>

In the Nilgiris, from where the calls for preservation initially came from, reputed hunters routinely tried to control the behavior of British hunters through the Nilgiri Game Association (NGA). However, despite concerns with "falling standards" of British hunting, the real efforts of game preservation in the Nilgiris were directed against native hunters.

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<sup>5</sup> Letter from H.H. Risley, Secretary to the Government of India (Home, Public) to Chief Secretary, United Provinces, dated 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1904, pros.no. 1. UPSPA.

<sup>6</sup> Arthur Brinckman, 127.

## Preservation in the Nilgiri Hills

In Chapter Two, we have seen the efforts made by Hawkeye in asking fellow hunters to maintain the ethic of British hunting in the late nineteenth century. Nearly fifty years later, another equally influential hunter Big Bore commented on the necessity of controlling excessive hunting. He advocated a maximum limit on the number of heads of each game species that could be killed in a season in the hope that “some such ruling would necessitate the call to greater and more skilful woodcraft, patience in pulling the trigger and, generally sport, and not be the tame pastime it appears at the present moment.”<sup>7</sup>

The powerful Nilgiri Game Association, which I have discussed in previous chapters, used its considerable power to enforce desired codes of conduct and maintain the ethics of the hunt. One of the agendas of its formation in the 1870s had been to form a collective of influential hunters who strictly observed a closed season themselves and for urging the government on the necessity of passing a game law. The major thrust of game preservation in the Nilgiris however, as we have seen in Chapter Three, was directed towards ensuring exclusion of native *shikaris* and limiting their activities as guides and trackers for the British. In this agenda, they were aided by Hawkeye, a

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<sup>7</sup> Big Bore, *Guide to Shikar in the Nilgiris*, 34.



prolific writer well known in the region. Hawkeye had not only published his memoirs but regularly wrote to local newspapers as part of his campaign on game preservation.

In his review of the proposed Nilgiri Game and Fish Preservation Act of 1879, Hawkeye noted the district administration's worry that game preservation could lead to harassment of cultivators and create unrest. Following up on his suggestions that hunting be allowed only through licensed arms and a license for sport (which in effect would exclude the *shikari*), he suggesting using the out-of-work *shikari* as watchers of game:

We have great faith in the well known principle of setting a thief to catch a thief, and we would accordingly advocate the entertaining, as watchers and keepers, a few of the well known native shikarries hanging about the place, who have no permanent employments and would we conceive, be but too glad of a situation with regular monthly pay. These men who know all the haunts of the animals, are well acquainted with the inhabitants on the hills are shrewd men, and capable of understanding the intention of the Game Act and if sufficiently paid, and at times, rewarded for good service, would prove of great assistance to the officer appointed to carry out the provision of the Game Act.<sup>8</sup>

As a final death knell to the activities of the native *shikari*, he also suggested a complete ban on sale of game meat for a fixed period of time. Such a ban was important to achieve one of the chief aims of legislation namely "protection from the Natives for a

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<sup>8</sup> Hawkeye, *Game*, 307-308.

time; for they net and kill only for gain, and a prohibition of the sale of game puts them out of the market for a given period.”<sup>9</sup> During this period, he was convinced that *shikaris* would realize that their activities were unprofitable and be willing to become part of the NGA’s game preservation regime. The ban on sale of meat was also meant to accommodate the interests of power planters in the Nilgiris who opposed any move to curtail their right to hunt game in their lands. As noted earlier, Hawkeye, who believed that planters in the Nilgiris allowed the native *shikari* to kill for them, had wanted to extend the scope of the proposed act to include prohibition on shooting of game in private lands as well. The government also insisted that a similar curb on landowning native cultivators would result in rural unrest. Though critical of the “indulgence” granted to proprietors of estates in the region, Hawkeye suggested that the ban on sale of meat was one way of resolving the crisis on declining game numbers:

It leaves the planter and cultivator the power to kill animals trespassing and committing depredation on their property; it leaves the sportsman the opportunity of indulging in his pastime, if he chooses and even the Native shikarrie may kill game but he cannot sell it, he would accordingly consider it too great a loss of powder and shot. ...Here then is the beginning of preservation; let it be granted a trial.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 286.

The Nilgiri Game and Fish Preservation Act of 1879 was passed by the Madras Government (The Madras Act no. 2 of 1879) for the preservation of game and acclimatized fish on the Nilgiris, and the observance of “closed seasons” in respect of animals, birds and fish. In the second edition of Hawkeye’s *Game*, in 1881, the publishers proudly noted the contribution of the author and the NGA in pushing forward the agenda of game preservation.

As discussed in Chapter Three, The Nilgiri Game and Fish Preservation Act of 1879 defined the various categories of game and fixed a closed season in the Nilgiris. It also enabled the NGA to presume immense power over hunting in the area. Most native methods of hunting considered cruel and un-sportsman-like were prohibited. Thus trapping and snaring were criminalized. The sex and size of the animals that could be hunted was also fixed. Immature males that did not confirm to the proportions of a good trophy were not to be hunted. Similarly, shooting at females and the young was prohibited, as was shooting at animals near water holes. The system of registering *shikaris*, and the rule that members could use only those registered as such, brought the activities of native hunters under control. Sale of game meat during the closed seasons was banned. The exclusion of natives from legitimate hunting was made complete by a prohibitive licence fee that, in addition to the provisions of the Arms Act, made it impossible for them to carry out their trade. Planters were allowed to kill game in their

lands except during the closed breeding season. And while the official power to issue license lay with the Collector of the district, all license holders had to keep a record of the number of game killed and report it to the Nilgiri Game Association, failure to do which could result in the cancellation of the license. The Act also gave the Association power to regulate shooting in large areas under its control and carry out campaigns for the destruction of vermin and preservation of the breeding stock of game animals. This power, as we have seen in Chapter Two, resulted in the clash between the NGA and the Ootacamund Hunt over Wenlock Downs. The Act also introduced the provision of exemptions empowering the Collector to reduce the fee for non-commissioned officers.

The Nilgiri Game and Fish Preservation Act of 1879 became a template for similar measures by local administration in other areas of the country. In 1887, the Government of India passed the first All-India act to preserve game: The Wild Birds and Game Protection Act of 1887. In addition to identifying game and closed periods, this Act too, prohibited the possession or sale of wild birds killed during the notified breeding season. The act however was applied only to cantonments and municipal areas in cities and towns.

In 1891, the legislative department of the Madras Presidency advanced two important changes to the 1879 Act: by extending its scope of operation, and by introducing the principle that the no shooting could take place on government

wastelands unless *shikaris* possessed a license. The main criticism of the proposed changes came from the civilian branch of the administration. Charles Turner, Governor of Madras, opposed the move stating that the provision to ban shooting and hunting by all those who did not possess a license would be detrimental to the interests of the wild tribes who hunted wild animals for food. Turner therefore argued that the impact of such a law on local populations should be assessed before the changes were passed. In a move suspiciously seeming to appease the planter's lobby, he also proposed that landowners and cultivators should be allowed greater liberty to kill the animals that attacked their life and property. The changes were sent for reconsideration and consequently abandoned.<sup>11</sup> This intervention by the civilian administration, mostly from the revenue department is seen in other debates on wildlife legislation as well. While a significant factor of this intervention was to contain rural unrest, at other times, the "cultivator" was also used to curtail the increasing power of the Forest Department and its ambitions for greater power over wildlife and hunting.

Speaking on the desirability of all-Indian legislation on wildlife, H.H. Risley, Chief Secretary to Government of United Provinces, noted the many challenges in passing all-India legislation that extended to the countryside: cultivator's crops, jungle

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<sup>11</sup> Home (Public), August 1892, B Pros No: 1991-1992 and Home (Public), December 1892, B, pros. nos. 81-81.NAI.

tribes who were dependent on hunting. He also objected to the penal measures, “enforced by a subordinate and often corrupt agency” to which the new provisions might afford new opportunities of extortion.<sup>12</sup> Risley, however failed to mention just how strong the opposition to game preservation was within colonial society and colonial bureaucracy.

In 1912, Government of India passed the Wild Birds and Animals Protection Act, 1912 as the earlier Act of 1887 proved to be inadequate. The new Act that gave more power to local governments to demarcate open and closed areas, designate game reserves, and enforce penalties. The Act of 1912 was amended in the year 1935 by the Wild Birds and Animals Protection (Amendment) Act, 1935 (27 of 1935). While each of these Acts extended the list of animals that could be shot or introduced a limit on the numbers of heads of a particular species, it also created greater space for provincial administrations to deal with game preservation to the best of their abilities. The central government was unable to evolve a uniform set of laws that could be enforced across the subcontinent. The flexible nature of these All-India Acts reflects the complex diversity in the situation in various regions. For most part, provincial authorities made rules that could work the best in their areas with varying success.

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<sup>12</sup> Letter from H.H. Risley, Secretary to Government of India to Chief Secretary to government of United Provinces, dated 23<sup>rd</sup> May, 1904, Extracts from the Proceedings of the United Provinces Forest Department, file 99/1904, pros.no.1, UPSA.

I now focus on the debates in the United Provinces which began in an enquiry initiated by the GOI in 1900 for further legislation needed to preserve game. The responses from various branches of the administration show that while reconciling differences between preservation and cultivation was a problem that offered no easy answers, much of the legislation was fettered by internal tensions and dissensions within the colonial administrative system. The process of evolving game legislation brought out the deep conflict between the forest department and civil officials.

### **The Experience of United Provinces**

In August 1900, the central government asked local governments to report upon the nature and adequacy of protection of wild birds, especially insectivorous birds and those with bright plumage. While this matter was under examination, the question of advisability of a general game law for the protection of game in India also came up. In 1904, the Government of India asked the provinces to give their opinion on preservation while keeping two cardinal principles in mind. First, where there was any conflict between the interests of cultivation and those of game preservation, the latter must give way. Second, the destruction of wild beasts dangerous to human beings and cattle must not be interfered with by any arrangements for game preservation.

As we have already seen in Chapter Two, the question of access to game often created great tensions within colonial society. Many game preservation measures had to

accommodate the interests of elite shooting interests by inserting the provision of “exemptions” in their clauses.

### *Administrative Privilege and Game Preservation*

In the midst of the debates taking place in response to GOI, the United Provinces Forest Department proposed several measures for better protection of wild birds in 1904. One of the factors that led to disaffection in the ranks of officialdom was a proposed introduction of a graduated scale of fee scale. Sportsmen were to be divided onto three categories: the Natives of India and residents of India in the service of the Crown would be charged the lowest fee; other residents in India would be charged a little more; and lastly, visitors would have to pay the highest fee. Commenting on the proposal, C. E. D. Peters of the Public Works Department claimed:

The opinion of the majority is much against the proposed division of sportsmen into three classes, but on different grounds, one gentlemen objecting to natives and Europeans being treated alike, while another with apparently very considerable reasons on his objects to the distinction between officials and other residents.<sup>13</sup>

While different departments were formulating their responses to the new proposal, the United Provinces Forest Department published a new set of regulations for

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<sup>13</sup> Extracts from the Proceedings of the United Provinces Forest Department, file 99/1904, pros.no. 15, UPSA.



shooting in Reserved Forests. The responses to these regulations articulated much deeper dissensions within the administrative apparatus of the state. The popular perception among these officers was that the proposed regulations intended to overthrow the exemptions that had been granted to various classes of officers by earlier provisions since 1880 and in turn gave unlimited power to forest officers to control access to game.<sup>14</sup> According to G. Bowers, the Collector of Saharanpur, the new

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<sup>14</sup> After the passing of the Forest Act of VII of 1878, the first notification was issued in 1880 noted that with the sanction of the local government the Conservator of Forests might declare any Reserved Forest, or parts of forests closed. But otherwise hunting was open to officials and public also to shoot without payment of any fees in the open season. Since no provision for exemptions were made, it was practically left in the power of the Conservator "to do as he pleased and to exclude or admit whomsoever he pleased." Representations against these exclusions were made to the Lieutenant Governor who also held that they were needlessly exclusive. In October 1895 new rules were introduced allowing for exemptions to be granted. The officials exempted included: Commissioners of divisions and superior officers in the Revenue department, The Conservator of the circle, The Collector of the district, Assistant to the Collector, including Deputy Collectors, District superintendents of Police. In 1899, fresh rules also exempted Gazetted officers of the Public Works, Police, Medical, and Survey Officers and distinctly laid down that exemptions were granted for the convenience of officers employed in the district in which the forests were situated or whose duties take them to the neighborhood of forests. In the same rules Commissioner of divisions, Collectors of districts, Joint and Assistant Magistrates, District Superintendents of police, Gazetted Forest Officers, and persons not exceeding three in number accompanying them were exempted from the taking out of permits under these rules and from the payment of fees. In 1900, officers of the Opium department were added to those exempted. Notes and Orders, Extracts from the Proceedings of the United Provinces Forest Department, file 99/1904, UPSA.

regulations in 1904 “practically closed big game shooting not only to district officials, but to everyone except Forest Officers”<sup>15</sup>:

A valued privilege has been taken away not only from Commissioners, District Officers, and Police, and from other services, for no ostensible reasons what ever, and rules have been framed which can be so worked by the forest Department as to practically exclude them altogether, even if they are prepared to pay, from the forests in their own districts and which form part of their jurisdiction.<sup>16</sup>

Bowers also expressed great dismay at the thought that the Collector was placed in the position of “having to apply to his own subordinate, the Forest Officer, for permission and will have no right of appeal expect to the Conservator, an officer holding an inferior position to his own.”<sup>17</sup> Aware that Collectors were most often perceived as wrangling hunting privileges in government forests, he clarified that the current opposition was not directed at “District Officers and officials as a whole, but Forest

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<sup>15</sup> Notes and Orders, Extracts from the Proceedings of the United Provinces Forest Department, file 99/1904, UPSA.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.,21.

Officers, who have been charged with abusing their powers.”<sup>18</sup> In his note he warned of the dangers of alienating the district official:

Let the district officers only once show they are indifferent to the preservation of game, or let them but give the slightest hint that they no longer take interest in its preservation of forests, and in a short time all these elaborate rules for sanctuaries, for restricting the number of heads shot by the most part genuine sportsmen and not pothunters will be found to be absolutely ineffectual! Even granted that these rules have only been framed with no other object than to give the public greater facilities for sport and to preserve game, they will themselves defeat this very objective as they must alienate the sympathies of every District Officer and official.<sup>19</sup>

In Chapter Four, I have noted how presumptuous District Magistrates could be about the loyalty they commanded from natives. Invoking this popular myth, Bowers hinted that the move to curtail hunting by Collectors would invoke strong public opposition for “the general public does not wish to see high officials put in to a humiliating position.”<sup>20</sup>

On their part, the forest officers argued that the Conservator, besides being the head of his department, was “the man on the spot” and in the best position to be

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.,20.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

acquainted with all the local details, and therefore the most suitable appellate authority. According to them, the previous rules had been somewhat unfair, since instead of an appeal going to their own chief, they had to seek out the Commissioner who might well be without local knowledge. This rule cast judgment on the sense of fairness of the Conservators. Regarding the agitation to revert back to the former position, they contended "the retransfer now without a trial will intensify the previous bitterness and will be interpreted by the department and the public generally as a sign that the Government cannot trust its Conservators and puts them openly aside in favour of the Commissioners."<sup>21</sup>

Though the Forest Department conceded to exemptions to senior officers of the gazetted services towards the end of 1904, it still retained the power to grant admission into Reserved Forests. With the help of forest and game legislation, the United Provinces Forest Department had managed to acquire great power during early twentieth century. During the 1930s when preservationists in the United Provinces called for the constitution of a new Game department, autonomous of the Forest Department, it

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.,47.

successfully blocked the idea by claiming that game preservation by the Forest Department had “been a labour of love” and was effective.<sup>22</sup> According to Champion:

The United Provinces Forest officers as a class are and always have been extremely sympathetic towards wild animals... It would be a grave mistake to remove the wild animals inside Reserved Forests from the protection of the Forest Department and place them in charge of a separate Game department. The present system is working very well, and such action would be regarded as slur on Forest Officers and would alienate the all-important sympathy of the powerful Forest Department.<sup>23</sup>

Their claims were validated in 1935 when during the wild life conference, its role in preservation was lauded and the idea of creating a separate wild life department (doing rounds since the early twentieth century) was discarded.

### *Race and Privilege*

Another source of discomfort for the district officer was the concern about the class of magistrate competent to take cognizance of an offence under the bill. With increasing numbers of natives in lower positions of colonial administration, district

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<sup>22</sup> M.D. Chaturvedi, Preservation of Wild Life, Journal of Bombay Natural History Society, Vol. 48, 1949. reproduced in Lt. Col. Burton, The Preservation of Wild life In India, A compilation with a summarised Index of Contents (1953):131.

<sup>23</sup> F.W. Champion, Wild Fauna Preservation in the United Provinces, Journal of Society for the Protection of Fauna in the Empire – xviii (1933):22-23.

officers demanded that “no magistrate exercising less than first class powers should be empowered to try the offences enumerated in the bill.”<sup>24</sup> Bowers declared:

If subordinate police and forest officers are given power in these matters which, though offences against the law, involve no moral turpitude, there will be great outcry and collisions will not be infrequent. Very few of the Europeans would book the seizing of their arms or dogs or animals by subordinate police or forest officials. To give the power to do so is to be discouraged in every way...I would rather have the evil than the remedy.<sup>25</sup>

One of the more interesting turns of this debate is the way the native (cultivator or the villager) was pulled into this struggle for colonial power and privilege. In his opposition to the provisions of the regulation, A. L. Saunders, Commissioner of Lucknow claimed:

Nowhere in the world were the men of the constable, forest guard, and the game keeper class anything as corrupt and tyrannical as in India. Nowhere else is it so vitally important to diminish their opportunities for preying on the mass of the people. To no other government is it of such cardinal necessity to avoid occasion of race friction, whether between

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<sup>24</sup> Extracts of official and non-official Gentlemen, United Provinces Forest Department, file 99/1904, Pros. no. 26.

<sup>25</sup> Letter from G. Bower, Magistrate of Saharanpur to Chief Secretary, United Provinces, dated 25<sup>th</sup> June, 1904, Proceedings of the United Provinces Forest Department, file 99/1904, pros.no. 6.

European officials and native non officials, or between native officials and Europeans in their non official capacity.<sup>26</sup>

The officer-hunter used the idea of protecting the native villager against carnivores as a prop to paternalism. Saunders also invoked this feeling of having to protect the “masses” from the tyranny of one of their own, in what was essentially, a fear of whites being prosecuted by a native enjoying administrative authority. Despite the changes in bureaucracy the memory of the Ilbert Bill still loomed large. While retaining other measures, the Forest Department agreed that employees of the lower rungs of the administration could only inform higher authorities of the offences and only the latter could initiate penal measures against offenders.

By 1908, the Government of India had arrived at the conclusion that the line of action originally contemplated should be abandoned, and that legislation of a very simple nature need be undertaken for protection of those wild birds and animals that are threatened with extermination. It was felt that the diversity of regional conditions made it impossible to set out clearly defined preservation schemes. Local governments continued to make regulations as regards the nature of protection of various species. For instance, in the areas where deer and antelope caused considerable crop damage, not

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<sup>26</sup> Letter from A.L. Saunders, Commissioner, Lucknow division to Chief Secretary, United Provinces, dated 21<sup>st</sup> September, 1904, Proceedings of the United Provinces Forest Department, file 99/1904, File 99/ 1904, pros.no. 31. UPSA.

only was the open season extended in Reserved Forests but the shooting of hinds was also allowed outside its bounds. Similarly, opinion was divided regarding the pig: should an animal that caused crop damage be protected as game or not? Ardent pigstickers sought its inclusion as game and it was decided finally that in places where tent clubs existed, the pig could be protected provided the clubs paid compensation to the cultivators ( a practice we have already seen Wadrop advocate in Chapter Four).<sup>27</sup> Most local regulations sought to prohibit activities like shooting over water holes, snaring, and netting by the natives outside Reserved Forests. Since entry to Reserved Forests was prohibited in the closed periods and was regulated through licenses in the open periods, it was hoped that these activities of the native could be controlled inside them. It was accepted that though it would be impossible to enforce the rule that prohibited shooting by natives over water holes outside Reserved Forests and surreptitiously inside them, it was still necessary to retain such as rule as an indication of the government's desire to control unsportsmanlike activities.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Letter from J.W. Hose, Deputy commissioner of Fyzabad to Commissioner of Fyzabad, Dated 30<sup>th</sup> August, 1904. Extracts from the Proceedings of the United Provinces Forest Department, file 99/1904, Pros. Nos. 36 ( b), UPSA.

<sup>28</sup> Extracts from the Proceedings of the United Provinces Forest Department, file 136/1908, pros.no.27,UPSAs.



While debates on game preservation raged within colonial bureaucracy, the political opinion among some urban Indians questioned the government's policy of restricting arms to native Indians. In particular native legislators argued that wild animals were wreaking havoc on life and property in the countryside and that the cultivators should be armed to protect themselves and their crops. The official view of the problem was that decrease in game numbers was due to the natives and the success of preservation depended on the control of natives' access to guns. Mr. Rodgers of the forest department argued that though there would be difficulty in bringing the control of guns into practical politics, firearms should be controlled as they were controlled:

In all civilised countries for the purpose of the preservation of law and order and are so controlled in the British Isles. There seems no reason why the ordinary village shikari and licensee of humble position in India should be entrusted with a weapon with which he can commit indiscriminate destruction.<sup>29</sup>

There were others like A.J. Cook, the Magistrate of Jalaun, who felt that the argument that the natives were destroying game with weapons meant for crop protection was an exaggeration: "A taste for sport is not common among natives of India, and a large proportion of the guns held under license in form XI are used merely to frighten off animals and not to kill them. Many of the guns are seldom or never

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<sup>29</sup> Extracts from the Proceedings, Education, Health and Lands, No. 367 of 29, 1929, pros.no, 44, NAI.

discharged.”<sup>30</sup> Despite the views of administrators like Cook, the common perception and thrust of policy making continued to be directed against the native.

## **The Urgency to Preserve**

In Chapter Four, I have discussed the kinds of arguments used by western-educated urban natives in their critique of the hunting passions of the *Sahibs*. By the 1920s, as the nationalist movement grew, this also opposition had gained momentum. In 1921, Kunwar Anand Singh, an elected legislator to the United Provinces Legislature, asked if the government would consider exceptions from licenses for natives and ensure at least one gun free from licenses for protection. The government response was that it did not deem it necessary or desirable to lift the prohibition on guns and stated that “owing to Non-cooperation campaign in the Kumaon the distribution of licenses has been hindered and cannot be resumed until the return of the district to normal conditions.”<sup>31</sup> For the United Provinces government, however, the task of defending itself against elected legislators became increasingly difficult. During a council session in 1925, the subject of protection from wild animals came up in connection with a discussion with the Arms Act. According to another legislator, G.B.Pant, despite the

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<sup>30</sup> Letter from A.J. Cook, Magistrate, Jalaun, to Commissioner, Allahabad, dated 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 1904., Proceedings of the United Provinces Forest Department, file 99/1904, pros.no.22 (a), UPSA.

<sup>31</sup> Proceedings of United Provinces Legislative Council, 28<sup>th</sup> March., 1921.

ravages of the Rudraprayag man-eating leopard, "all that the government did was to withhold or cancel licences."<sup>32</sup> The government hurriedly sought to clarify that the government had not refused any application for a gun license by any person resident in the areas where the Rudraprayag man-eater had been operating and subscriptions were being raised to fund hunters to kill it.<sup>33</sup> Pant argued that the British attitude was one of extending preferential treatment to certain classes: while restricting shooting and fishing rights to the local population, it had exempted all gazetted officers and Indian titleholders to bear arms and shoot game. He claimed that the damage to cattle and crops due to wild animals was tremendous:

If statistics were collected it would not be surprising if the aggregate loss came to about a quarter of the total local out turn for the year... apart from the incalculable loss of human lives the depredations of wild animals cost Kumaon about 36 lakhs in agriculture and live stock. This enormous wastage is largely due to the reservation of extensive tracks in the neighbourhood of populated areas and to the paucity of arms licences...There is also an Act penalising cruelty to animals. A government possessed of a tender heart for the beast of the jungle would ordinarily be expected to assess human life at its proper value but the general policy of disarmament of the entire community followed side by side with reservation of extensive forests in the immediate vicinity of populated tracks is apt to raise a suspicion that the govt. cares more for

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<sup>32</sup> Proceedings of United Provinces Legislative Council, 31<sup>st</sup> January, 1925.

<sup>33</sup> Proceedings of the United Provinces Forest Department, File. 214/1924, Pros.22, UPSA.

the protection and preservation of wild animals than of their human neighbours.<sup>34</sup>

Reacting to this kind of criticism, Corbett the killer of many man-eaters commented, "Hindus, who formerly looked upon the taking of life as against their religious principles, are now clamouring for gun licences and are competing with each other in the indiscriminate slaughter of game."<sup>35</sup>

On a more sombre note, some sportsmen felt that the extinction of game was only a matter of time. W. H. Cobb, the Commissioner of Meerut, pointed to the overwhelming success of the "civilizing mission." According to him, the disappearance of jungles, drainage of swamps, extension of cultivation, diversion of rivers to canals, improvement of communications, extension of railways, and increase of human population that followed British rule and expansion impacted game adversely:

The Indian ruler of bygone days expected his subjects to provide him with tigers and stags at the expense of their cattle and their crops. Can a government which lays down as first considerations the protection of crops and the destruction of dangerous beasts, claim at all to have inherited from him the royal prerogative of sport?

The only persons who can claim to have inherited it and they do claim it and exercise it – are the English officers, civil and military, who are

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<sup>34</sup> G B Pant, *Forest Problems in Kumaon*, Allahabad: 1922.

<sup>35</sup> Corbett, *Jungle Lore*, 215.

stationed in the country. But year by year the prerogative dwindles, and such personal and local influences as they are able to exert becomes less and less effective; they cannot preserve game, they can only retard its extermination.<sup>36</sup>

The problem of protecting natives and protecting game seem inherently conflicting and contradictory. Despite their commitment to game preservation, the fair minded British *sahibs* had to compromise on wildlife protection to further the improvement of the native. Such arguments were later used to bolster the movement towards the creation of game reserves.

### **Trusteeship and the Agenda to Conserve**

In a period that saw extension of cultivation, reduction of forested areas and expanding population, mere preservation laws could not go very far in either protecting human life or killing of wild animals. Since economic development was more important than conservation of animal species in terms of overall state policy, it was felt that this dilemma could only be resolved by separating the functions of the land into areas for growing crops and for game preservation more rigidly. The establishment of the first game sanctuary in Assam in the early 1900s was a result of this mode of thinking within officialdom. Some conservationists were of the opinion that if wild animals were

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<sup>36</sup> Letter from W.H.Cobb, Magistrate of Meerut, to Commissioner , Meerut, dated 20<sup>th</sup> August, 1904, Proceedings of the United Provinces Forest Department, file 99/1904, pros.no.24 (a), UPSA.

secluded from habitation it would serve a dual purpose. On the one hand, the animals would remain well protected, and on the other, destruction of life and property of humans would be minimized. Conservationists thus contemplated the setting up of wildlife sanctuaries to separate animal habitats and human settlements from each other. In 1897, the idea of sanctuaries had found popularity with some officers of the provincial forest departments. As R.H. Thompson, the Conservator of Forests North Circle Central Provinces wrote:

The formation of sanctuaries for game in which no shooting is permitted except by special permission of the imperial government, is undoubtedly the only proper and rational course of action to pursue if interesting fauna of the country is to be preserved from extinction... locales for such sanctuaries should be cut off from circumstances that allow extension of cultivation and animal husbandry.<sup>37</sup>

The formation of the first sanctuaries from the first decade of the twentieth century onwards can be seen as an impetus towards solving the human-wildlife conflict.

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<sup>37</sup> Proceedings, Revenue and Agriculture (Kheddah) B Pros No: 707, July 1897. NAI. It is interesting to note that while many sportsmen and administrators were aware of the fact that many areas were set aside as "sanctuaries" by natives where no form of hunting was allowed, this was not taken into consideration in the wider debate on sanctuaries. For instance, Burton described his guide describing such areas in Central Provinces, "Another thing he told me of is the extensive hillside to the south, which he pointed out to me, is never shot over by any native, and presumably *sahibs* cannot shoot over it either, At any rate it would not be any use trying as the whole countryside is under the protection of the Deity, and anyone shooting there always meets with no success: either the gun bursts, or he slips and falls or is mauled by a tiger. That piece of jungle must be full of game. A pity more of such sanctuaries cannot be established in many parts of the country." Burton, *Tigers of the Raj*. 93.

The idea of “sanctuary” was highly romantic. It was meant to be an area where wildlife could live in its “natural state.” This idea had become so popular that when Lord Minto shot in the Kamrup Sanctuary in Assam, in 1909, his actions created considerable amount of resentment amongst the Europeans of the province. The entourage was quick to offer a public clarification that he had been “deceived as to the state of affairs.”<sup>38</sup>

The idea of sanctuaries and national parks however gained popularity only after the horrors of the violence experienced in the First World War. The move towards pacifism, concerns about diminishing wildlife, and the emergence of the concept of conservation due to extensive campaigns by preservationists had brought about a visible change in attitudes. F.W. Champion, who served in United Provinces Forest Department, earned his reputation as a skilled wildlife photographer rather than a hunter. Frustrated at the obsession with trophies and continued decline of wildlife, he commented:

I have never been able to understand why nature-photography does not become more popular in a country where very other Britisher is keen on

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<sup>38</sup> J.W.Milroy, “The Kamrup Sanctuary” *Indian Forester* September (1934): 146.

shikar----keen to such an extent that no hardship, no privation is to great, provided only that the unfortunate quarry is brought to bag.<sup>39</sup>

He also countered the justification given by many hunters that the jungle was a cruel place by stating that, "cruelty for cruelty's sake is a vice practiced only by the self-styled lord of creation."<sup>40</sup>

As a forest officer and a lover of nature, he hoped that his book *The Jungle in Sunlight and Shadows* (1934) would generate more sympathy for nature:

I am trying throughout this book to show that nature is not cruel- that wild creatures do not live a life of terror, forever trembling at the thought of the awful thing that may happen to them at any moment...and for the most part, live a happy care free life of physical fitness and keen enjoyment.<sup>41</sup>

Such a view was a departure in an era where most self-proclaimed nature lovers who campaigned for preservation of animals only to ensure a ready stock of game for hunting.

The idea of conservation was popularized by bodies like the Bombay Natural History Society which was established in the 1880s.. The organization that had

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<sup>39</sup> F.W. Champion, *The Jungle in Sunlight and Shadow*, First published 1934, Reprint.1996, Dehradun, p.97.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 34.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. 106.



positioned itself as popularizing the natural sciences among the reading public, regularly published articles on the importance of each species of animals. Speaking of government's efforts to create sanctuaries, it sought to clarify the governments objectives:

The term "game preservation" is really to some extent a misnomer, and it may perhaps create the impression that the preservation of fauna is of interest only to the sportsman. One of the first things we have to do is to bring it home to the public generally that what we are talking about is simply the protection of all wildlife. It is simply asserting the right to live of undomesticated animals and plants of the world....<sup>42</sup>

And while reptiles and amphibians were not romanticized the way mammals were, a respect for the complex interrelationships within the natural world engendered a broader romanticization of nature that created the space to recognize their existence legitimate. The fact that popular science was accompanied by a romanticization of the natural world is reflected in Mr. Hobley's arguments for reserves and national parks without which, he felt, the science of zoology itself would atrophy:

The existence of all museums depends to a great extent on a continual influx of fresh zoological material; even with the help of the highest taxidermist skill, specimens cannot be expected to last forever... It is therefore, I submit, the greatest scientific importance that the game reserves and National parks should be kept intact as natural reservoirs...love of wildlife has sprung up in civilised man, and although

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<sup>42</sup> Editorial comment, *Journal of Bombay Natural History Society* Vol XXXIV, (1929): 607.

sport conducted on a reasonable and fair basis is not condemned, the right of species to exist in areas which may be set aside for the purpose of is fully conceded.<sup>43</sup>

Others argued that natural science and preservation of animals were dependent on each other, one could not survive without the other. Theodore Hubback, a member of the Society for Protection of Fauna in the Empire, argued that “the “hit or miss method” of a budget allowance for what is erroneously called “game preservation” would never achieve the saving of our wildlife.”<sup>44</sup> He felt the only way to insure against extinction of species was the careful understanding of ecology and animal numbers which was possible only in a natural and protected setting of reserves like national parks. Individuals like Fraser Darling extended this view by pointing out that national parks were needed not just for furthering the cause of game preservation but for wider knowledge of ecology and cycles in nature.<sup>45</sup> The main impetus for this thinking in India however, came from the metropole. Preservation associations here had been

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<sup>43</sup> C.W.Hobley, “The Preservation of Wild Life,” 27.

<sup>44</sup> Theodore Hubback, “Principles of Wild Life Conservation”, *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* vol. 40, No. 1,(1938), reproduced in Lt. Col. Burton, *The Preservation of Wild life In India, A compilation with a summarised Index of Contents*, (1953), 90-99.

<sup>45</sup> Fraser Darling, *Wild Life Conservation, Journal of Society for the Protection of Fauna in the Empire* part xxiii, (1934):24.

“championing” the cause of game preservation since beginning of the twentieth century. By the 1920s, they looked to extend their activities to the subcontinent. Their efforts found enthusiastic reception in like-minded people, who also formed similar associations to campaign for wildlife protection.

### **Preservation Societies and the Metropolitan Influence**

In the international arena the move towards national parks had been gaining momentum since early twentieth century. By the 1920s, wild life was being viewed as an international asset and it was argued that, “precious fauna does not belong to provinces and states but whole of India and further to the whole world therefore her protection is the task of the Central Authority.”<sup>46</sup>

One of the chief conduits of this metropolitan urge to conserve all fauna came from the highly influential the Society for the Preservation of Fauna in the Empire (SPFE) that was set up in 1903 in an effort to stop the widespread destruction of animals in Africa. Its mandate slowly extended to controlling the decrease of wildlife throughout the empire. Its core membership comprised of elderly big game hunters and its patrons

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<sup>46</sup> Theodore Hubback, “Principles of wild life Conservation, Society” vol. 40, No. 1, 1938, reproduced in Burton, *The Preservation of Wildlife in India*, 92.

included prominent politicians and naturalists.<sup>47</sup> By 1905, its membership included a number of colonial official and administrators who had consented to act as its vice president and honorary members. By the 1920s, the Society had earned prestige in influential circles by its successful campaigns to create reserves in Africa. During the 1930s, its members played important roles in two international conferences convened to discuss standards and legislation affecting the protection of African flora and fauna. The conference in 1931 resulted in the signing of a convention by a number of African powers to protect flora and fauna. This convention formed a basis for demands of this society and its sister organizations in India for a similar convention in Asia. In the period between the two world wars the Society also became associated with the American Committee for International Wildlife Protection and through the 1920s and 1930s, it pushed for the formation of sanctuaries and National Parks.

The Society advertised its close links with colonial administration. In 1926, in thanking the various Colonial Secretaries of State for their support and sympathetic consideration to the representations of the Society, the editorial of its journal asked

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<sup>47</sup> A list of historical records of the Fauna Preservation Society, Compiled by Phillipa Bassett Center for Urban and Regional Studies, University of Birmingham, and Institute of Agricultural History, University of Reading, 1980.

British legislators and colonial governments to undertake the cause of wildlife protection on an urgent basis:

Most of the colonies where a wealth of fauna exists have progressed in political status and Colonial Office control, although still existence is being applied with a much "lighter hand." Local legislatures have been established, and owing to the growth of agricultural development, *local* interests are daily becoming of greater weight. The situation is this far more complicated than it was some twenty years ago.<sup>48</sup>

The primary mandate of the Society remained the establishment of game sanctuaries in "every dominion or colony where the fauna indigenous to the country can live in unrestricted freedom." The language of trusteeship and the British burden of ensuring that wildlife survived in perpetuity was largely framed by organizations like the SPFE:

Appeal to all others who feel that some responsibility rests on the present generation for the transmission to our successors as a sacred trust, the perpetuation of the wonderful fauna of the lands with constitute the British Empire. It is not sufficiently realized how many of our most interesting animals are in danger of extinction.<sup>49</sup>

The records of the Education, Health and Lands Department of the GOI show that they were very proactive in soliciting support from the top officials of the colonial

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<sup>48</sup> Editorial comment, *Journal of Society for the Protection of Fauna in the Empire* Volume vi (1926): 3, emphasis mine.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

bureaucracy. Lord Onslow as a patron of SPFE wrote to Viceroy Linlithgow to encourage the Governors of various provinces to support the expansion of its membership and activities in India. The Viceroy felt it was his “duty” to encourage such an association and issued orders that governors when approached,, should try to extend cooperation to the SPFE.<sup>50</sup>

In the International Conference for the Protection of Nature held in Paris in July 1931, the British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald sent a message where he clearly indicated the policy of the British government:

In the territories for which they are responsible His Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom regard themselves as trustees for the Protection of Nature not only in the interests of their present inhabitants, but in those of the world at large and of future generations.<sup>51</sup>

Citing MacDonald’s words, Theodore Hubback further justified the intervention of international bodies like the Society for the Protection of Fauna in the Empire: “Are we as a Nation, to allow the conservation of wild life to be undertaken by local governments as a purely domestic policy? The pronouncement of the Prime minister is

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<sup>50</sup> Pros. Department of Education Health and Lands, GOI, 22-7/37, NAI.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

against this.”<sup>52</sup> These views were also voiced at international forums by the SPFE. Stating the objectives of the Society, C.W. Hobley explained that society desired to keep in touch with the preservation measures adopted in the colonies and to “bring to notice of both the imperial governments and governments overseas” any matter which it considered endangering the perpetuation of species.”<sup>53</sup> It is claimed that the society fulfils a need and performs a function which as time goes on, we believe will meet with increasing appreciation.”<sup>54</sup>

In India, similar ideas were encouraged through numerous preservation associations as well as institutions like the Bombay Natural History Society that also had close links with the Society for the Protection of Fauna in the Empire. In the United Provinces, the Association for the Preservation of Game in United Provinces (henceforth APUP), founded in the 1920s, was a powerful body and one of the most active campaigners of the National Parks Bill. Like the SPFE, APUP’s stated objective was to

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> C.W.Hobley, “The Preservation of Wild Life”, *Journal of Society for the Protection of Fauna in the Empire*, (1923):26.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. 27.

launch “extensive propaganda by bringing like-minded individuals together”<sup>55</sup>. This association headed by Jim Corbett and Hasan Abid Jafry and like the Nilgiri Game Association, seems to have been successful at soliciting the support of important officials. Not only was Mr. F. Canning, I.F.S. Chief Conservator of Forests U.P. a member of the association but it also secured the patronage of Lord Hailey, the Governor of United Provinces, after whom the first national park in India was initially named.

Just as SPFE played a pivotal role in calling for and in organization of the International conferences on African fauna held in Europe, the APUP encouraged an All-India conference to deliberate on the question of wildlife preservation and to consider if the African convention could be extended to India. Though the African convention was not ratified to in its entirety, the GOI signed on to certain provisions governing custom duties and import of trophies from Africa.

### **The Question of National Parks**

By the 1930s, though the idea of taming the wild frontier had not completely died out, the “naturalists” made sure that their voice was heard by the powerful. Stuart Baker, an observer for Government of India in the International Conference for the

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<sup>55</sup> Annual Report of the Association for the Preservation of Game in the United Provinces, 1933.



Protection of the Fauna and Flora of Africa in 1933, was impressed by the idea of reserves and national parks and advocated the forming of such entities in India:

You cannot eradicate the hunting instincts from man. "Where man is he kills." In The African national parks the most wonderful thing is the astonishing tameness of the animals. They are no longer hunted and they have, therefore, no longer any fear of man. Surely, it would be a wonderful thing for India to have such a national parks in each province where wild life could remain unmolested and where man would be free to enjoy the wonderful spectacle of wild animals, which are no longer afraid of him.<sup>56</sup>

The idea to form national parks, he argued, not only respected the long-standing ethos of the country, but in the contemporary situation national parks provided "the means by which the clash of interests between Man and the Animal is obviated."<sup>57</sup>

However, the move towards national parks was not embraced by all. In 1936, a proposal to alienate the whole of the Mudumalai forest from the Nilgiri Game Association and to turn it into a national park was put forward by the Chief Conservator of Forests. The suggestion was most strongly combated by the Association as economically unsound and also unfair to its members as it took away what is admittedly

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<sup>56</sup> D. Stewart, Observer for the Government of United Provinces, *Report on the International conference for the Protection of the Fauna and Flora of Africa, London, 1933 and the Convention relative to the preservation of fauna and flora agreed to by the Conference*. The United Provinces Forest Department, File 256/1933. Page 7.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*,37.

the best shooting ground in the low country. According to Pythian-Adams, "National Parks on the lines of Africa and America are unsuited to India as the fees from visitors will be small; while sanctuaries unless adequately policed merely form a happy hunting ground for poachers, as has been found in other parts of India."<sup>58</sup> The NGA which had hitherto been at the forefront of preservation in the Nilgiris, scuttled the idea of a national park to preserve its own hunting interests in the region.

In the United Provinces however, the combined efforts of the APUP and a powerful forest department, the National Parks Bill was introduced in its legislature in 1935. During the All-India conference called on the question of wildlife preservation, Mr. Canning, pointed out that reserves as proposed by the African convention would lead to a lot of difficulties:"our circumstances are very different. We proposed a park in the United Provinces but it is not a park in the sense of this convention, that is, we do not propose to stop forest work in it at all."<sup>59</sup> This was a remarkable departure from the national parks model being advocated in Africa and North America as wild places where animals were undisturbed.

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<sup>58</sup> E.G. Pythian -Adams, "The Nilgiri Game Association, – 1879-1939", *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society*, Vol. XLI (1939):396.

<sup>59</sup> Proceedings of the All- India Conference for the Preservation of Wildlife, 1935.

In 1935, in response to the efforts of APUP to organize an all-India conference on the question of wildlife legislation, the Forest Department of the GOI, decided to hold an official all-India conference on the subject. The agenda included a discussion on the convention adopted in 1933 by the International conference for the Protection of the Fauna and Flora of Africa and the desirability of creating reserves on the lines advocated by the convention. In a lengthy memo, echoing the voice of SPFE and the APUP, the Forest Department stressed the urgency for more efficacious measures for preservation in India:

Time has come when courageous and sure methods should be adopted in India to place her fauna on a safe footing. This has become all the more desirable since the political destinies of India are on the anvil of Reform and it will be a sorry day if we fail to give proof to practice wisdom at this juncture.<sup>60</sup>

The concern with instituting game preservation as a clearly defined policy of the state was largely due to the increasing number of Indians in the administrative services. It was argued that “more and more Indian functionaries will fill up the place of British authorities in the management of agriculture, forests etc. Will they be decided to conserve the precious inheritance and will they take care, like their ancestors that

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<sup>60</sup> Demi- official letter to Government of India from secretary to government of United Province, proceedings, Education, Health and Lands, 15-3/38-F, NAI.

treasures will not perish in a short time, having needed aeons to develop?"<sup>61</sup> While the conference itself threw up many issues of conflict, one of the resolutions passed was that the various provinces would attempt to create reserves in suitable areas.

Canning , who had earlier clarified that the United Provinces Forest Department would not halt forestry operation, stated the objective of creating a national park: "Our object in calling it a National park is to have a sanctuary which is established by legislation and which cannot be affected by executive order. That is the difference we make and it is a material difference."<sup>62</sup>

The National Parks Bill was passed by the United Provinces Legislative Assembly in April 1935 paving the way for the declaration of the Hailey National Park (renamed Corbett National Park in 1957 in memory of Jim Corbett) later in the year. The United Provinces Forest Department had been able to effectively manage conflicting interests and political opposition to reassert its control over wildlife over large sections forests. And while British hunters continued to hunt in other forests, the Hailey National

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Demi- official letter to Government of India from secretary to government of United Province, proceedings, Education, Health and Lands, 15-3/38-F, NAI.

<sup>62</sup> Callum. McKenzie, "The British Big-Game Hunting Tradition, Masculinity and Fraternalism with particular reference to "the Shikar club." *Sports Historian* 20 1( 2000): 70-96.

Park became a ultimate symbol of British paternalism and their success in fulfilling the self appointment role as trustees of nature in the Empire.

## Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have attempted to understand the politics and sentiments that shaped colonial policies on wildlife in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries in British India. In the course of exploring British interactions with Indian wildlife, I found that colonial hunting and policies on wildlife management provide a new perspective on the imperial encounter in India. Colonial hunting as it emerged in the late nineteenth century reflects the changing nature of the colonial state and underwrote a new imperial ideology of dominance. British policy on wildlife tells us about colonial notions of “governance,” the tensions as well as ideals that animated expatriate colonial society, and the role played by metropolitan influences on wildlife management.

The culture of the hunt and the evolution of notions of sportsmanship, mark the way the colonial state sought to display itself to itself and to the native in the post 1858 period. Hunting enabled the colonizer to highlight his racial distance from the native, and to justify British rule in India as one based on paternalism. The idea of the paternal hunter-ruler ----the *sahib*----appealed to popular notions of aristocratic behavior in the metropole and provided a platform where colonialists and the home audience drew moral legitimacy for the empire. While there has been important work on ideology of

difference and on colonial dominance, a study of colonial hunting can take the field forward in a number of ways that I now spell out.

## **The Influence of Metropole and Colony in British Interactions with Wildlife**

I have argued that hunting (in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) and conservation (from the 1920s) contributed to the construction of colonial identity in the subcontinent, and imperial identity in the metropole. Hunting in the subcontinent embodied the peculiar notions of sportsmanship, masculinity and gentlemanliness important to Victorian England. I have sought to highlight the significance of these ideas in defining the practice of hunting in colonial India and have suggested that these notions acquired new meaning and significance during the colonial experience. In India, athleticism and sportsmanship (as displayed in hunting) were as important in identifying the native as Other, as they were a shield against potential physical and moral corruption of the self in a hostile Indian climate.

While current historiography on the ideologies of difference have identified the many and often conflicting discourses that went into its making, this study on colonial hunting reveals that these “differences” drew on existing cultural engagements in the metropole and were articulated in a way sensible to the home front. The

memorialization of the hunt, therefore, was meant for metropolitan consumption as much as it was for fellow colonialists in India. Hunting was an indicator of tradition, traditional power and privilege in Victorian England, and colonialists endeavored to assert hunting as their exclusive prerogative in the subcontinent. The colonial preoccupation with fair play and policing its own members occurred at a time when Victorian Britain was trying to educate new hunting enthusiasts from the cities in the etiquette of the traditional British rural hunt.

The elite also used the notion of fair play in Britain to distinguish poaching from leisurely hunting. The idea that snaring and trapping animals was cruel was already established in Victorian Britain. Anti-poaching laws of the nineteenth century made the mere possession of traps grounds for prosecution. The image of the cruel and immoral poacher was reflected in the caricatured figure of the cruel native *shikari* in colonial India who, like his counterpart in Britain, hunted for consumption rather than for sport. There were however important differences between these two figures. Unlike hunters in Britain who could completely distance themselves from poachers, colonialists were heavily dependent on the skills of the native *shikari* for success in their own hunting adventures and endeavors. At the same time and paradoxically, while in Britain the cruel poacher was seen as a social misfit, in the subcontinent, he defined Indian character.



Class prejudices at home also influenced the colonial hunt. The idea of the sporting masculine man as an emblem of imperial Britain gained importance at a time when the new system of bureaucratic recruitment, the so-called the open competition introduced in 1853, ostensibly opened the door for new classes of Britons to emerge as the ruling elite of empire. In an age where Darwinism and scientific racism increasingly informed an evolving Victorian worldview, the new class of empire builders were deemed to be lacking physical aptitude and poorly equipped to cope with the moral and physical challenges posed by the subcontinent. Hunting and quelling ferocious beasts in the Indian wilderness was one way that colonialists reassured the home front of their physical prowess and also earn greater social acceptance. Class-based Victorian notions of masculinity, physical fitness, and capacity to hunt therefore heavily underwrote the idea of the colonial *sahib*.

The metropole was an important influence in shaping the contours of the colonial hunt. But did the colonial hunt influence hunting at home. Callum McKenzie's study of a British association of hunters called "The Shikar Club" founded in 1908, seems to suggest that the powerful colonial *sahib* was unable to influence hunting practices at home.<sup>1</sup> The London-based Shikar Club was founded by men who had served

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<sup>1</sup> J A Mangan and Callum McKenzie, "Pig-Sticking Is the Greatest Fun: Martial Conditioning on the Hunting Fields of Empire," *European Sports History Review*, 5 (2003).

in the military in the colonies, and were high-ranking officers well known in the world of big game hunting. It is interesting to note that members of this association in using the word *shikar* not only identified themselves as Indian colonialists but also advocated hunting in the colonies. They argued that hunting deer, hare, and fowl in Britain did not offer the same danger and thrill as vanquishing wild vicious carnivores in their own habitats. The Shikar Club would be an interesting future object of study in a wider discussion of colonial and imperial identities that considers if the “colony” was able to influence hunting norms in the metropole. However, the fact that there is very little archival material on this institution possibly indicates that the Club failed to capture popular imagination and remained largely a preserve of the retired colonial big game hunter. The influence of the colonial hunt in the metropole was more ideological than institutional. It enabled the construction of imperial masculinity and of imperial identities.

The metropole’s influence is also apparent in the treatment of Indian wildlife. As I discussed in the preceding chapter, the idea of game preservation, when it was introduced in India in the 1870s, closely followed the precepts followed at home. Much like in Britain, the colonial state gave protection to herbivores and launched extermination drives against animals that preyed on game species. In the 1920s when

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British public opinion invested in conserving wildlife against extinction grew, the Colonial Office was deeply implicated in the pressure brought to bear upon the Government of India to introduce measures to protect wildlife, including the creation of sanctuaries and national parks. The metropolitan attitude towards wildlife had seen a major shift in the 1920s, and British imperial identity of this period included a self-image of Britons as protectors and trustees of all animals.

While many of the ideas that influenced policy making in the subcontinent can be attributed to the metropolitan influence, I have also argued that the colonial encounter on the ground in India shaped the experience of hunting in the Raj.

## **Social and Colonial Relations of the Hunt**

Colonial hunting practices and policies of managing wildlife were important sites for human interactions between self and other. "Hunting" encounters of Britons were embedded in a broader context of relations of power, conflict and dependence that characterized everyday interactions within the world of the colonialists and with natives. I argue that hunting as a site for social and colonial interactions destabilized the unified image of the confident imperial hunter popularized in the hunting memoirs.

## The Ideology of Difference and Colonial Society

The cultural importance of the colonial hunt made it a marker of class relations amongst colonialists and communicated notions of privilege, status and honor among them. Hunting had the potential to facilitate social mobility and put an individual on the path to eminence within the British expatriate community. Used as a tool in the broader politics of inclusion and exclusion to an elite circle, the “ritualization” of hunting took place around elite and exclusive clubs. As I discuss in Chapter Two, the records of one of the earliest hunting clubs, the Calcutta Tent Club, also mention that the main object of framing rules was to preserve *uniformity* in the sport. Hunting clubs not only managed the hunt but in effect also managed colonial behavior by exercising their moral authority to enforce conduct expected of a *sahib*.

While abstract metropolitan notions of fair play exercised a strong moral influence on the hunters, given the diversity of Indian landscape, practices signifying fair play were loosely identified. The flexibility of fair play (the “hunters” code” that I elaborated upon in Chapter One) allowed it to absorb and accommodate varied and often conflicting practices. Hunters from across the subcontinent continued to argue as to the best modes to hunt particular animals by appealing to standards of fair play. And, as I discussed in Chapter Two, on the case of division of expenses of a hunting meet in the correspondences of The Calcutta Tent Club, even in exclusive clubs with clearly

defined rules and sporting practices, members used notions of fair play to mediate distinctions in hierarchy, wealth, and status.

Debates on game preservation have also revealed the myriad tensions embedded in the formal administrative apparatus of the colonial state. By the early twentieth century, the Forest Department had established its control over forests and game. District officials resented the power of forest officials in regulating their access to game. While those in higher positions of district administration managed to arrange exemptions to shooting rules, officers who ranked lower continued to feel belittled in applying for licenses and permission to shoot. District administrators and forest officials both felt beleaguered by the problem of soldiers on hunting expeditions. Forest officials complained about over-shooting by soldiers, which left their reserves depleted of game. In the wake of their visits by outsiders, district administrators had to control damage resulting from conflicts between soldiers and natives. Since alienating their soldiers by denying them opportunity to shoot was not a pragmatic solution, local administrators sought to control their behavior by formulating special shooting rules and codes of behavior.

While the ideology of difference enabled British to legitimize colonial rule, it also had a profound impact on colonial society. From the late nineteenth century, as articulation of racial difference grew sharper, the policing and regulation of behavior

amongst themselves became common, and class tensions more apparent. The question of exclusion, inclusion and social acceptability is therefore not just important to understanding colonial culture but also for a more holistic understanding of the ideology of difference. Historiographies focusing on imperial ideologies therefore must also address the oft-ignored complexities of social relations and class conflicts within the colonial state and expatriate society more generally.

### **Colonial Interactions of the Hunter-*Sahib***

Even though colonialists commemorated their hunting methods as distinct and different from native methods, hunting in the Raj was a result of the encounter between Indian and British ways. Colonial hunting was also influenced by personal interactions with natives who hunted in colonial India. The forms and methods of Indian royalty were appropriated not only as a symbol of conquest, but in the hope that such acts of appropriation would redirect loyalty towards the colonial state. British hunters, for example, continued the ceremonial elephant-borne hunts of the Mughals. In keeping with Victorian morality, however, they eliminated the practices of singing and dancing that had accompanied the Mughal hunting ritual. They did retain though the large numbers of caparisoned elephants, horses, trackers and beaters, rifles, spears and guns that had been used in the Mughal hunt, possibly because of the aura of splendor they bestowed upon the activity. Similarly, while the broader rhetoric of sportsmanship

went against the native *shikari*, their so-called primitive skills in tracking and locating the game propped up the manly front of the colonial hunt.

The practice of hunting was also important in the constitution of British power in the district. I have suggested in Chapters Three and Four that hunting was an exercise in distancing Britons from natives that simultaneously also allowed the official elite to enact the role of paternal rulers. Officers argued that hunting was integral to good governance and allowed them to get in close contact with natives in the countryside. Hunting did play an important role in the exercise of domination. While the colonial hunt was heavily dependent on native villagers and *shikaris*, the fact they could exercise the privilege to demand rations, labor, and skill demonstrated the very existence of colonial power in the districts. In addition, colonial hunting also enabled civilian administrators to display their martial potential by highlighting the ability and capacity for violence. In their hunting adventures, colonialists reinforced the projected vulnerability of natives to wild animals. With successful disarmament and costly license fees for carrying arms, the officer-hunter's claims of quelling dangerous beasts and protecting natives gained legitimacy as paternal acts of benevolent rulers. Paternalism in an age of disarmament was highly effective in reinforcing dependence of rural communities on their colonial *sahibs*. The officer-hunter masquerading as protector is

perhaps the defining characteristic new brand of authority displayed in British paternalism.

Colonial interactions with natives on the question of the hunt were however not as smooth as professed by self-proclaimed paternal hunters, and the colonial *sahib* was never completely secure in the assumption of absolute power. Conflicts between paternal hunters and villagers were common due to demands made on native labor and rations. As I argue in Chapter Four, such conflicts also emerged on account of the killing animals held sacred by natives, and because of the frequent incidents of the so-called accidental shooting of natives. These conflicts also reveal how disaggregated forms of colonial power learned to cope with natives differently, just as natives learnt and behaved differently with different officers. For instance, resident civil administrators generally learned the particular customs of the region and usually managed to avoid conflict by not offending religious sensibilities, and by using local networks of patronage in procuring labor and supplies. Villagers on their part offered selective information on game depending on the official power of the hunter. They preferred to give information and extend support to the resident civilian officers who had official power to affect their lives. Visiting officers, including soldiers who were perceived to be making arbitrary demands and held little local influence, often met with hostility and non-cooperation.



Powerful natives such as village headmen, zamindars, and local rajas also used the pretext of hunting with district officers as a social occasion to strengthen mutual political and economic interests. Of these elites, the *zamindars* and landed gentry were particularly important for purposes of the colonial hunt. The landed elite often lent labor, rations, elephants, and horses to British officers for hunting. In turn, district officers claimed that friendly relations with the locally powerful were important to maintaining British rule in the countryside.

The responses of various groups of natives to colonial hunt, and the recognition of power they held over *sahib*-hunters, is a fascinating future theme of research that could deepen our understanding of native engagement with state machinery. Such a study has the potential to capture native responses at various levels. At the local level, a deeper study of the dynamic relationships between the village *shikari* and the villager and the response of the villager to the different types of hunter-administrators can tell us how different native groups negotiated with disaggregated forms of state machinery. The response of the urban-educated native makes the canvas much larger and can throw light on how they often chose to articulate their opinion of hunting as a comment on and challenge to colonial rule

## Changing Attitudes towards Indian Wildlife

In this thesis, I have also tried to identify the cultural imperatives that guided the government's policies that preserved some animals and sought to exterminate others. As I argue in Chapters Three and Five, colonial hunting practices and policies for wildlife management were influenced by both metropole and the colonial encounter.

The policy of extermination of carnivores was integral to management of the countryside in Britain. In India, with its ferocious carnivores, the policy of extermination provided yet another rationale for British mission to civilize the subcontinent just as elimination of sati and eradication of *thugae*. In early nineteenth century, themes of aggression, confrontation and conquest characterized accounts of hunting adventures in the Indian forests, and the East India Company initiated measures to destroy dangerous carnivores, a policy that the colonial state maintained until the end of British rule in India. Ridding the countryside of noxious vermin was an important official agenda, and by extending arable land and protecting native life and property from harm, the hunter-protector acquired his legitimacy to govern.

By the late nineteenth century, colonial hunters also showed a different behavior towards herbivores. Identified as game, these animals were to be accorded special treatment. The notion of fair play became extremely important in killing such "game"

animals, as I argue in Chapters One and Three. Since game animals were seen as less dangerous, it was up to the hunter to make the hunt “more difficult” and therefore more sportsmanlike. This desired behavior was formally instituted into law under policies of “game preservation” from the 1870s onwards. The notion of fair play in the subcontinent was predicated on the use of and access to firepower. The idea of a quick and painless death from the rifle of a Briton was a contrast to the slow and agonizing death by a native poacher’s trap. The notion that Indians were cruel to animals while the British were fair and kinder was an outcome of, as well as contributed to, colonial ideology of difference. The native *shikari* was carefully controlled by successive legislation that left him with little option but act as an enabler of the colonial hunt.

Game preservation provided colonialists legal and moral jurisdiction over game, and legitimacy of the hunt was secured as the unique privilege of the ruling elite. The relationship between the hunter and game became closely bound to each other in an institutionalized framework of fair play.

Indian landscape, Indian wildlife and British hunting inclinations, however, often blurred and undermined the neat organization of wild animals as game and vermin. By the beginning of the twentieth century especially, as the numbers of big cats began to decline and crop protection from deer became important, the perceived complementarity between game preservation and vermin extermination was shattered.

By 1904, some local governments allowed the Forest Department to prohibit shooting of tigers within Reserved Forests during the closed season and fixed the number of heads that could be shot in the open season. These preservationist efforts were deeply influenced by the new international movement to protect all wildlife against possible extinction.

Big game hunters in the subcontinent and other parts of the world had long claimed that they were the very best friends of nature and wildlife. As big game numbers dwindled in Africa, hunters became forerunners in the demand for sanctuaries and national parks to protect wild life along the lines of the Yellowstone National Park in the United States in 1872. They were, of course, not arguing *against* hunting but *for* dedicated areas where wildlife could roam free from all human interference.

By the 1920s, big game hunters, wildlife lovers, and naturalists had organized themselves in powerful associations that pressured colonial governments to create sanctuaries. They also campaigned to educate public opinion in Britain and the colonies on the desirability and necessity of such areas. In 1922, Britain and other European powers decided to come together in a unique collaboration to protect all animals and passed a convention agreeing to protect all wildlife against extinction.

In India, the agenda of game preservation gained new urgency from the 1930s. While metropolitan influenced contributed to this sense of urgency, it was the political

situation in the subcontinent that really pushed the agenda for national parks through. From the 1930s, along with growing nationalist challenge to colonial rule, the increasing inclusion of Indians in higher levels of government, and escalating opposition from elected Indian legislators, colonialists complained of the loss of white prestige. The urban native opinion also punctured the paternal front of the *sahib* by demanding the right to bear arms to protect themselves from wildlife. The British penchant for the Indian wilderness grew as opposition in cities and villagers against colonial rule mounted. Convinced as they were that natives did not care about wildlife protection, they argued that it was up to the colonial administration to ensure protection of wildlife before it was too late. It was this thinking that allowed a few important high-ranking officials to push through with the establishing of Hailey National Park in the United Provinces, as I detail in Chapter Five.

The call for a broader agenda of preserving animals reflects a sense of loss of power and prestige enjoyed by colonialists earlier on. The desire to save Indian wildlife was an attempt to reclaim the role wildlife had played in displaying the paternal benevolent *sahibs*. While previously, protection of natives from wildlife had provided the rationale for British rule, towards the end of the empire, colonialists believed that it was their duty to protect wildlife from callousness of the average native.

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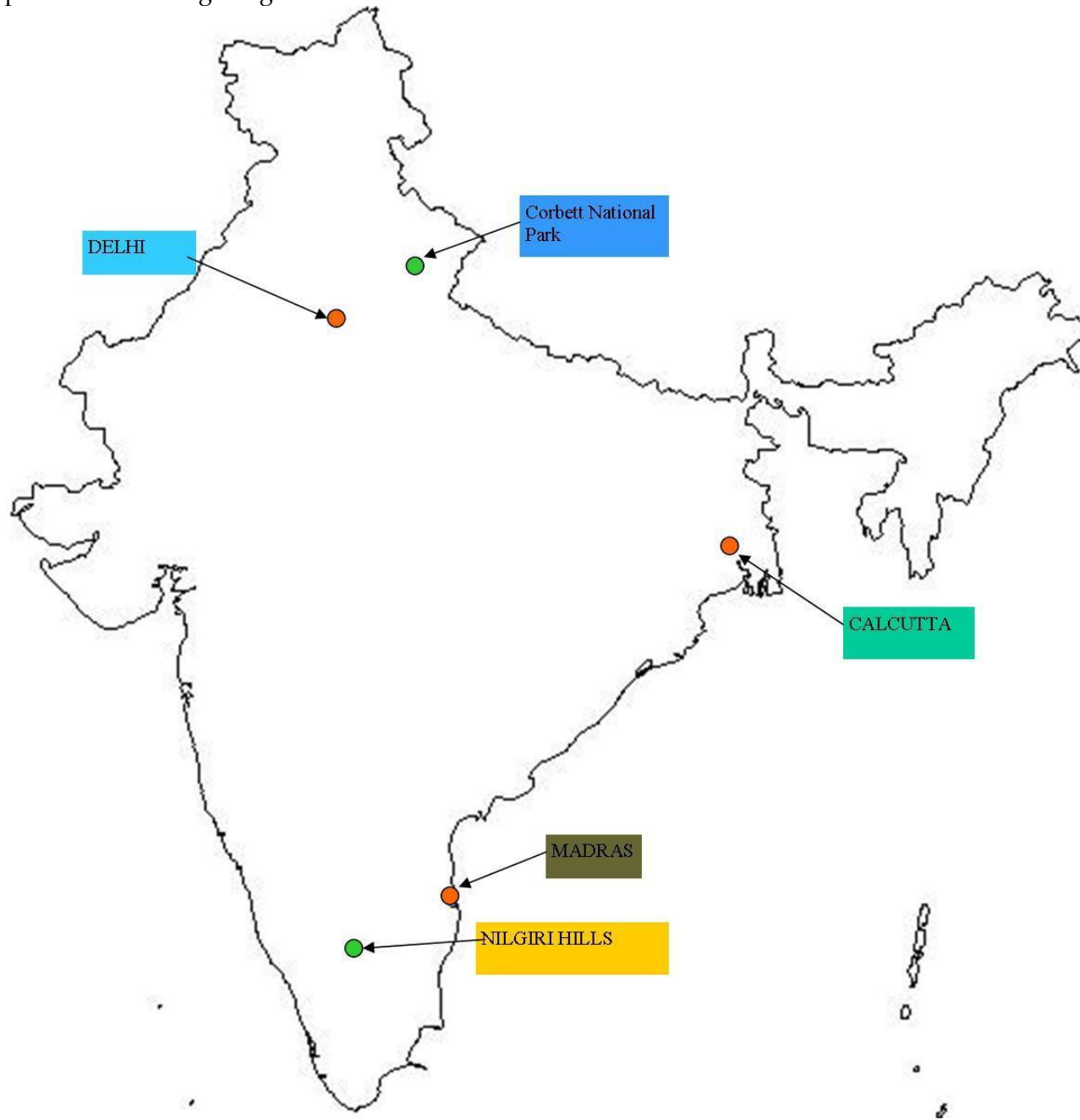
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Map of India showing Nilgiri Hills and Corbett National Park .



## Biography

Swati Shresth got her Master's and M.Phil. degrees in Modern Indian History from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India. She is currently working on expanding the scope of her work to include hunting in medieval and early modern India.