

**THE LIFE AND TIMES OF
MAHARAJA JUDDHA
SHUMSHER JUNG BAHADUR
RANA OF NEPAL**

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THE MAHARAJA AS A SPORTSMAN

It isn't mere convention. Everyone can see that the people who hunt are the right people, and the people who don't are the wrong ones.

—G. Bernard Shaw

From time immemorial hunting has been a favourite pastime of royalty all over the world. Kings and noblemen in the hills as well as in the plains have always been fond of game shooting and have looked upon it not merely as a recreation but as a duty incumbent upon men born in the purple. The ancient books of the Hindus furnish ample evidence of the proficiency attained by members of the ruling aristocracy, both in the theory and practice of hunting. The princes of Kshatriya descent regarded it as their duty to kill wild and ferocious animals, who did injury to human life, and the manner in which they organised their hunts shows how minute was their knowledge of the denizens of the forest. The rulers of Nepal, like the Kashtriya princes of old, have practised big game shooting with an assiduity and skill which are worthy of admiration. They have shown a great appetite for adventure and that thrill of delight which results from a duel with the lords of the jungle. The aptitude and habits of men are largely the outcome of their physical and geographical surroundings in which they live and in this respect the peculiar situation of Nepal and her multitudinous flora and fauna have created in her sons a love of excitement which inevitably attends all hunting expeditions. Thus the braver spirits seek distinction in this sphere as they do in battles and campaigns. The organisation and management of a hunt and the successful tracking of a dangerous quarry call forth the highest qualities of human character—valour, presence of mind, keen insight, coolness, correct judgment, skill of the hand and the eye and inexhaustible patience when the intended victim eludes one's grasp and disappears in the impenetrable forest. It is true that almost every member of the ruling family in Nepal knows the art of big game shooting but none has achieved such success and renown as Maharaja Juddha who had killed a large number of blood-thirsty animals and had shown an extraordinary capacity for bold and courageous action.

He was a born shikari; he had a genius for sport and was gifted by nature with an unerring insight and an iron nerve which no danger, however, imminent or serious, could shake. He went to the forest like an ardent lover whose soul is aflame with passion to seize the object of his desire. He concentrated his full attention upon his prey and pursued it with undaunted vigour sometimes in complete defiance of death. He surpassed all his contemporaries in Nepal and elsewhere in planning great hunts and as we read the account of his during feats of adventure, we are reminded of the Qamargah hunts of Akbar the great Mughal Emperor, which are described in the pages of the Akbarnamah. The Maharaja was a specialist in his line; he had a minute knowledge of the jungle; he had not only practised shooting with wonderful skill but had also mastered its technique and suggested new methods and devices by following which a man can avoid waste of time and labour and achieve good results without incurring an easy loss of his life. It is for this reason that the Maharaja's name became a household word in the world of sport and *Shikar* and no apology is needed for describing at length in a book dealing with the events of his life his glorious feats as a hunter and a sportsman. One who has actually seen him at work has drawn the following portrait of him :-

What strikes one chiefly and primarily about His Highness is his absolute fearlessness. He goes into a ring raging with tigers, and remains throughout cool, clam and collected, never flurried and ready for all eventualities. By nature and abundant practice he is a magnificent rifle shot, quick to spot the animal in the thick grass of undergrowth and quick to kill it as soon as a fair opportunity arises. His knowledge of wild animals of the jungle is immense, and his shikar-Craft most impressive."

Nepal abounds in hills and valleys full of evergreen forests which are the hunts of tigers, leopards, rhinos and other wild animals. Specially rich in game in the *Tarai*, a strip of wet jungle, extending over 500 miles and watered by countless springs. It is a fertile, well-watered alluvial plain and has rightly been called "the sportsman's Paradise." In the *Tarai* is a tract of land called the *Nayamuluk* which is 80 miles in length and 15 to 20 miles in breadth. It is covered with forests of sal, saj, karma and sallo trees and is the favourite abode of tigers, leopards, wild elephants and all kinds of beautiful birds. The scenery is grand and in the cold weather the climate is superb. To the shikari and the lover of nature this tract of the *Tarai*, having its own peculiarities makes an irresistible appeal. North of the *Tarai* belt lies *Bhabar* (Charkosiya Jhari or Eight mile wide forest). This is malarious and unfit for cultivation but an ideal place for the growth of

trees, and here the Maharaja indulges in his sport of big game shooting. The forests are deep but they are here and there broken up with patches of cultivated land. The inhabitants are mostly Tharus, an aboriginal tribe, who are cultivators and possess an intimate knowledge of the jungle and the ways and habits of wild animals. They keep large herds of cattle and are very fond of killing deer, pigs and jungle fowls. To the north of Bhabar are the foot hills—the churia range—broken and uninhabited. It is intersected by ravines and streams with their banks covered with grass. It is the home of tigers, leopards, wild dogs and the deer—Sambhar, chital and others—in which they live. Behind them is a range of sand-stone hills. Between these two ranges are found the 'Duns' and the largest and the most famous of them is the Chitawan big games preserve in the Rapti valley. It is pear-shaped, four or five miles broad at the eastern end, stretching towards Hetaura, and getting 25 miles wide towards the western end, and extending over nearly a thousand square miles.

It is an admitted fact that the fauna of a country depends upon its flora, while the flora depends principally on altitude, soil and rainfall. Nepal has all these things and therefore, it shows an amazing variety of both. The country can be divided into three zones according to altitudes:—

- (1) The lower region in which are comprised the Tarai, Churia (Siwalik) foothills up to about 4,000 feet;
- (2) the central region containing the hill ranges and valleys from 4000' to 9000' or even 10,000 feet;
- (3) the Alpine, region which includes the main Himalayan Chain and peaks about 10,000 feet and magnificent mountains clad with snow.

The variety of fauna increases as the altitude decreases and vegetation grows in quantity. Luxuriant vegetation is highly favourable to the growth of fauna and consequently the Tarai zone has the largest amount of game. The forests of Tarai are the homes of tigers, leopards, the wild bear, the wild elephant, the rhinoceros and the buffalo.

There are several kinds of deer including the shumbhar, Chital, the hog-deer and the little mouse deer and a large variety of small animals. The principal game birds are the peacock, jungle fowl and the black partridge and the lakes and rivers of the Tarai swarm with migratory ducks and geese. No wonder if the fertile and forest-covered lands of the Tarai with their luxuriant vegetation and enormous variety of beasts and birds have attracted the native and the foreigner alike. The inhabitants of these parts,

who are mostly cultivators, have excited the wonder and admiration of sportsmen by their minute knowledge of the jungle and dexterous skill in shikar. It was here that king George V came in 1911 for shooting and the prince of Wales of 1921 and both of them had thrilling experiences.

It is natural to expect that the ruler of such a country and people would be a superb sportsman, Maharaja Juddha took from his early days a keen interest in the national pastime of Shikar and his diary shows that from 1933 onwards he had been without a break shooting in the Tarai and having some of the most exciting and unique experiences. The Shikar dairy is full of heroic tales of adventure and is crammed with information which enables us to realise how brave the Maharaja was and how extraordinary was the control which he exercised over his nerves. He gave up Shikar several years ago partly on account of advancing age and partly out of a desire to abstain from injury of life, but whenever he heard of a beast endangering the life of man and cattle in a locality, he at once took steps to bring about his destruction.

The Maharaja hunted rhino, bears and other animals but nothing raised his spirits so much as an infuriated tiger. Normally a tiger is not a dangerous animal but once he is cornered he rushes upon his foe with a mad rage and becomes a mass of "diabolical fury", caring nothing for gunshots or the ponderous weight of elephants. In the jungle of the Tarai, in the midst of thick grass which sometimes grows as high as the howdah of an elephant, surrounded on all sides by huge trees which spread out their leafy branches in all directions, trampling on shrubs and plants, which sometimes entwine round the feet of the beast which carries you, it is a dangerous task to face a tiger in a state of desperate fury. The sudden flight of the elephant, if he is seized with panic, is sure to plunge the rider headlong into disaster and ruin.

"It is no sport for bad shots, hasty excitable people, or those with no stomach for danger, Even the most *blase* hunter is likely to experience for a second or two a sudden spasm of fear when he first hears the blood-curdling roar of an infuriated tiger and sees in the great striped body launched in its charge, a thunder-bolt of death and anger in mid-air. It is one of the most terrific sights in the world."

The Maharaja never failed or faltered in the face of danger. Imagine the plight of a hunter following in the thick forest a wounded tiger—the striped and whiskered monarch of the jungle roused to fiendish fury yet His Highness never betrayed emotion or lost his nerves. More than once he

pursued a wounded tiger to its lair and gave proof of his courage and self-possession. One incident of the Maharaja's life fully illustrates the equanimity with which he entered upon the scene of his exploits. Once on January 20th, 1933 a tiger was seen coming straight towards the *howdah* from a spot over hundred yards away. The scene is thus described :-

"It was a nerve-breaking situation. With ears thrown back, brows contracted, mouth open and glazing yellow eyes scintillating with fury, the cruel claws plucking at the earth, the ridgy hair on the back, stiff and erect like bristles, and the lithe, lissome body, quivering in every muscle and fibre with wrath and hate, the beast came down to the charge with a defiant roar which the pulse of the Shikar party bound and the breath came short and quick."

It seemed as if the brute emitted from his face pitiless ferocity and fiendish rage. The party was seized with panic and shouted: "Look, look the tiger is going to charge. Your Highness should shoot him without delay." "Yes" replied the Maharaja coolly, "Yes. I see him" and then added after a short pause, "I will shoot him at a range of three yards". All the time while the hair of the party stood on end, the Maharaja continued to watch with delight the charge of the infuriated beast towards himself. At last he shot him dead and the incident came to an end with a broad smile upon His Highness's face.

In all these daring adventures which went on incessantly during the Shikar season the Maharaja's knowledge of game and insight into the forest stood him in good stead. Never fond of ease and luxurious living, he went out every winter to hunt even if it were only for a few weeks. Generally these excursions lasted from two to three months in the season. The area of the hunt was not always the same. It changed from year to year. In a particular year if he went to Nayamuluk, next year he would go to the glorious wilds of Chitawan and in the third year to Morang. It was impossible for him to stand the full monotony of one place and he tried to go away as soon as he obtained relief from administrative business. As we looked at his impressive figure even when he had exceeded seventy one we could form some idea of the strength, energy and determination he must have been in the heyday of his manhood. His loud voice and sparkling eyes are indicative of the leonine majesty of his nature which could not fail to strike even a casual observer.

The peculiar genius of the rulers of Nepal has developed a unique method of *Shikar*. Never lacking pluck and courage in war or sport, they

have reduced Shikar to a fine art. They have bestowed much care and thought upon its organisation and evolved new tactics to cope with dangerous situations. As the old method of hunting a tiger with sword and spear was found wholly unserviceable, Jung Bahadur, a man of erratic genius but brave as bravery itself, evolved a system known as the 'King Method' a method peculiar to Nepal which was brought to the highest pitch of perfection by Maharaja Juddha. In fact in no other country are to be found the many concomitants of the 'King shoot' a large stud of trained Shikar elephants, skilled Mahawats who knew how to keep cool and guide their hearts in terrible moments. Shikaris who are past-masters in their job, who are fully acquainted with every nook and corner of the jungle, the vast expanse of forests like the Tarai and the abundance of big game such as we find in these deep, impenetrable recesses, which fill the uninitiated with awe and wonder. Without these it is impossible to have a successful and rich tiger-hunt. The tiger is a cunning, ferocious king of the feline tribe more fitted for destruction than any other animal in the whole range of zoology. He combines extreme cunning and agility of limbs with prodigious strength and his ferocity and savage fury mark him out as the very type of a beast on whom every hunter should exercise his valour, ingenuity and skill. It is for killing him that the Nepalese have devised this system.

Before the commencement of the shoot motor roads and bridges are constructed to connect the various jungle camps and all the paths, streams and river beds are examined to locate the abode of tigers. The Shikaris dexterously trace their foot marks and follow them. Overnight or in the afternoon young buffalo calves (*padas*) are tied up in scores or even hundreds in likely places to entice the tiger out of the surrounding in which he hides himself. In the morning the game keepers and the Shikaris go round to see if any of those animals had been killed. A tiger after killing his victim drags it to a distance and then devours enough of it to satisfy his hunger and then lies down to rest, not far away from the place where he has left the mangled remains of the young buffalo. The Shikaris come and examine the drag and determine the direction taken by the revenues aggressor. Then they noiselessly go round and make a circle, a quarter or a half mile in diameter, carefully marking the circumference with grass knots or small twigs. Thus the drag is enclosed and the final circle is called 'The Ring.'

The tiger having been approximately located, the process of driving him out of his resting place begins. About a hundred and fifty 'pad' elephants that is to say elephants not intended to carry guns, proceed to the

appointed place. Along with them are many female elephants with their young ones roped to them for training. They divide themselves into two parties and in perfect stillness move forward towards the jungle to the right and left following the circumference of the circle. Thus a ring is formed and when it is complete, the order '*Mudi Phira*' is given which means that heads are to be turned inwards. The elephants with the hunting party mounted on them advance towards the centre, closing in gradually until they almost touch each other. The circle grows smaller and smaller about two or three hundred yards in diameter and the tiger is driven towards the centre. The men of the party scream and shout and the movement of elephants stops when the tiger is firmly enclosed on all sides. He charges the ring with a terrible roar in desperate fury and produces a great excitement. The howdah elephants with guns move forward and his attacks are repulsed by rifle shot. At this moment the excitement is at its highest pitch. The beast leaps forward in fury, roars like thunder dashes against the ring, making frantic efforts to escape, until he is brought down by a succession of well-aimed shots. The struggle sometimes goes on for hours in the midst of strange cries of men and the thumping and gurgling of elephants and it is only when the tiger is killed that the thrill and excitement come to an end. In the old days when a tiger escaped by breaking through the ring, Jung Bahadur used to give a good thrashing with his stick to the *mathouts* and saw that the animal was successfully ringed again.

Maharaja Juddha introduced certain changes in the 'Ring Method'. The Shikar started with a smaller number of elephants. They were sent to ring the tiger and when he had been circumscribed, long strips of white cloth were fixed upon small posts of trees just in front of the circuit of elephants, thus making a *pardah* of cloth, which flapping in the wind, aroused the suspicions of the tiger. Thinking that there might be greater danger behind the cloth wall, he kept within the ring and fought on until he was killed. Another party of elephants was sent to another locality to deal with other beasts. In this way in a single day several tigers could be killed without employing a large number of elephants.

Another change which the Maharaja made in the 'Ring system' was intended to reduce the period of hunting inside the ring and to increase the thrill and excitement of the hunt. It was a dangerous innovation, involving risk of life, but the Maharaja being a rack rifle shot and a magnificent snapshot did not mind these dangerous possibilities. Instead of waiting at one point on his elephant, while the other elephants were struggling with

the tiger, the Maharaja dashed forward into the ring, flanked on either side by another elephant, with three or four forming a barricade in front. As soon as the tiger was noticed, the front line withdrew and the Maharaja advanced forward, in complete disregard of danger, and fired at the beast who was brought down to the ground in a short time. An eye-witness thus comments upon the efficacy of the system introduced by the Maharaja:—

“The ring of white cloth, added to the ring of elephants, facilitates this mode of Shikar, and helps to prevent the tiger from charging the ring. By these innovations and improvements the tempo of big game shooting has been greatly accelerated, and this has enabled some phenomenal daily bags of big game to be obtained in the Maharaja’s shoots, not only tigers but also bears and the great Indian rhinoceros. Thus seven tigers have been shot in one day, and on another occasion 6 tigers in one ‘Ring’. Again no less than five rhinos have been hunted and shot in one day (but not in a ring) and elsewhere five bears on another day. Daily totals on this scale are believed to be unique in India or anywhere else in the world.”

“The organisation was indeed marvellous but the splendid results would have been impossible without the extraordinary skill presence of mind, and the courage of the Maharaja. Many tigers were enclosed and killed according to the new method but it was one which could be followed only one who had attained a high standard of proficiency in shooting.”

Another big game which is found in the dense forests of the Tarai is the Rhino. In hunting the rhino the ‘Ring Method’ is not employed for the obvious reason that the elephant is a timid animal and is scared away by the huge beast. A rhino can easily break a ring and put the elephants to flight in pellmell confusion. The usual method followed in dealing with the rhinos is to stalk them or track them down with three or four very powerful elephants. The rhinos are found mainly in the Chitwan area and steps have been taken by Government to protect them against the ravages of poachers, who used to make much money out of the rhino horn which was sometimes sold for more than Rs. 1,500. A rhinoceros horn is often handed down from generation to generation as an heir-loom. It is considered so auspicious that when a child birth is expected in the family, it is kept near the mother to save her from the pangs of labour. The shooting of rhinos is interdicted in Nepal since Maharaja Jung Bahadur’s day so that no one can shoot a rhino without the express permission of the Government. The rhino is a huge figure and its heavy footsteps and breathing easily announce its advent. Maharaja Juddha shot many rhinos but he regarded this heavy, slow-

footed animal as 'a poor form of sport.' The tiger is incomparable and strains to the uttermost a sportsman's dexterity, courage and presence of mind.

The ring method is not applicable in the case of elephants also. As the elephant represents the God Ganesa in the Hindu pantheon, its killing or shooting is strictly forbidden by the Government of Nepal and the object of Shikar, therefore, is merely to capture him alive. There are three methods employed for this purpose. (1) The 'Kheddah' method which means driving a herd of elephants into a fortified place and then get them trapped; (2) the second is the method of snaring them into pits by alluring them toward female elephants; (3) the third which is commonly used in Nepal is the *jangi* or war kheddar. The wild elephant is hotly pursued by tame elephants who are well fed for the purpose and is ultimately caught when he is exhausted. He is bound in ropes and then tied to a tree or a post. In captivity he is extremely fidgety but he is rendered powerless. For sometimes he is not allowed to have any sleep and gradually he is trained to obey man's command. The Maharaja has never hunted a wild elephant though he has watched with interest the operations leading to its final capture.

The Shikar exploits of the Maharaja will require a volume to themselves and all that can be done here is to mention some of the most conspicuous instances of his courage and dexterity as a hunter. No ruler of any country in the world has had such a distinguished record to his credit; none has bagged such a large number of ferocious animals. As has been said before, the Maharaja had an innate aptitude for hazardous adventure in the hunting fields, indeed he was to the manner born. He had an iron will and no difficulty or disappointment could make him flinch from his resolve. Once in December 1933 he was in Nayamuluk and on learning the report that a tiger had killed a buffalo he went in search of it and sent the elephants to form a ring but darkness set in and the animal could not be traced. The royal camp was far away and the Maharaja had to pass the night in a Tharu farmer's hut. A Charpai was provided by his host who was bewildered to see the Maharaja and his entourage accustomed to the luxurious life of palaces, seeking shelter in those humble surroundings. The Maharaja, who was tired, had a sound sleep and next morning when he was about to depart, generally recompensed the farmer for his hospitality. He granted him a piece of land in perpetuity and ordered the construction of a brick house in place of his thatched hut.

In the cold weather of 1936-37 the Maharaja was again in Nayamuluk and shot a large number of tigers. On the 29th December occurred an incident which is the most remarkable in the whole career of the Maharaja as a sportsman. The ring was formed and the Maharaja moved forward on the back of his elephant and fired at a tiger and his mate who was wounded. They disappeared in the thick grass but the Maharaja pursued them—a most dangerous step to big game shooting. The Commander-in-Chief offered to go forward but His Highness prevented him from doing so as his elephant was nervous and timid, and not likely to bear the strain of a terrible struggle. The tiger could not be traced in the wild grass and shrubs but all of a sudden from a range of 8 feet the tigress dashed towards the Maharaja's elephant in great fury and catching hold of his trunk began to bite it and tear it with her claws. The other elephants bolted away as fast as they could, but the Maharaja's elephant Bhingaj stood his ground and tried to kill the tigress by striking her to the ground. In doing so he bent his head so much that the howdah in which the Maharaja was seated tilted downwards almost to the ground and it became impossible for the occupants to remain in their seats. If they were thrown out, they would have immediately fallen into the jaws of death for the tigress's mate was hovering about.

"In this critical situation defended by the mad roaring of the tigers and the trumpeting of the elephants, His Highness kept his position by bracing his legs against the front of the howdah and firmly clutching the hard rail. General Surya (who was entrusted with organisation of the shoot) who was terrified of falling on to his father and knocking him out similarly clutched the back of the howdah with all his might."

The struggle between the elephant and the tiger went on breathlessly in the midst of great excitement and no shot could be fired. How the Maharaja killed the wild beast at last is related in the Shikar Diary which is an authentic document prepared under His Highness's personal supervision. The Diary gives a graphic description:

"The scene was very terrible and pitiable, for the heads of the boy, the tiger, and the elephant appeared to be all together, the tiger was holding on to the elephant's head with one paw and to the mahout's leg with the other. A soldier on the pad was holding on to the boy mahout by his belt, and he was holding on to the elephant's ear with both hands. After a long minute the tiger dropped to the ground; he had torn away the flesh of the mahout's leg down to the bone, which was immediately bandaged by Dr. Ganga Prasad."

The Maharaja failed to kill the wounded tiger but he successfully aimed at a tigress and then turned towards the infuriated animal who had broken through the ring. He was closed in again but undaunted this majesty of the forest attacked the elephants again and tore slices of flesh from the legs of two of them. The Maharaja was ready with his rifle; he fired several shots which brought him to the ground. It was after a life and death struggle lasting for one hour and a half that the animal was killed. He was a magnificent tiger measuring 10 feet 4 inches.

After a few days the Maharaja faced another tiger who appeared in the ring and attacked an elephant called Moti Prasad. We have a graphic description of the fight between the two animals.

“The tiger suspended itself from the elephant’s holly and began to tear at it. The elephant also kicked with its trunk and legs and tired to dash the tiger down against the ground; the tiger also tried to hurt the elephant and for some minutes they were engaged in a deadly scuffle. Then the tusker dropped down and rolling over crushed the tiger with his enormous weight. The kunkun noise of the elephant and the A-O-Ao groan of the tiger were heard and there was a great excitement all round.”

The elephant pressed the tiger with all his might against the ground so that only the latter’s head was visible. The mahout and the man at the back were thrown down and luckily they succeeded in climbing up a tree. The beater mahouts shouted and the men on the elephant were killed by the tiger and there was a great uproar and excitement.

As soon as the Maharaja heard the noise, he moved fearlessly into the danger zone and on seeing him, Moti Prasad left the tiger and came near His Highness’s elephant. The tiger was lying on the ground with ribs seriously damaged and therefore, unable to rise. A couple of shots finished him and the Maharaja was pleased to hear that the men who had been thrown down were alive.

At the close of January 1933 a party of European ladies and gentleman including the British Minister, the Earl of Aylesford, Major-General Sir Richard Howard-Vyse, and Colonel Stevenson, the Legation Surgeon came to the royal camp and the Maharaja, always generous to his guests, gave each of them an opportunity of bagging a tiger. A few days later the British Minister was asked by His Highness to bring Field-Marshal Mannerheim of Finland who was his guest, to the hunt along with other friends. The Field Marshal experienced the thrills of a tiger ring shoot

and was greatly impressed by the hospitality which the Maharaja extended to him. The Field-Marshal killed a tiger who measured 10 feet 7 inches and was the recipient of congratulations from all sides.

The Chitawan area is indeed a shooting paradise. It is full of tigers and was visited thrice by the Maharaja during the period 1933-40. Within a few months after his accession to the Prime Ministership, he went there and bagged a number of ferocious tigers but on January 16th he saw a tiger crossing the Rapti river to escape into the jungle. A ring was formed but the beast was not easily cowed down; he rushed towards His Highness's howdah but he was checked by a shot from him. This scene is also reproduced in a painting which used to hang in the Durbar Hall at Kathmandu. The tiger measured 10 feet 9 inches, probably the largest which the Maharaja had shot so far. During three successive days three tigers were killed, measuring 10 feet 2 inches, 10 feet 5 inches and 10 feet 9 inches—a fact which goes to show what a wonderful sportsman the Maharaja was.

A more deadly encounter took place on January 17th, 1933 when the Maharaja had a hair-breadth escape. In the course of a shooting expedition in the woods of Bhagadi, an injured tiger made a tremendous bound and clung to the Maharaja's howdah. There was no time to lose and with cool courage he repeated the shot. Stunned by this blow, the tiger relaxed his grasp and rolled off. But now it turned towards the elephant Bikkram Prasad and began to chew its trunk. The elephant tried to crush the tiger and the two engaged in a terrible scuffle which lasted several minutes. The situation was so tense that minutes seemed like hours and the Maharaja was again and again violently to see about in the howdah which was shaking like a toy. But with his marvellous skill and courage he steadfastly kept his position and maintained his grip on his rifle. In the end Bikkram Prasad trampled over his foe and cursed the life out of him.

What followed nearly cost the life of the Maharaja. Seized with an impulse of sudden fright, the elephant turned tail and rushed madly forward, sweeping every thing before it. The Mahout's attempt to arrest the flight proved of no avail. Had the elephant dashed against trees or fallen into ditches in the course of his headlong career, the expedition would have ended in a tragic disaster. But unfortunately the animal stopped before the outer ring of elephants and the Maharaja had a providential escape.

Let us read the picturesque narrative in the official Diary which brings the scene vividly before our eyes.

“Ten or fifteen seconds later, this mighty tusker, who had come out with such flying colours from the fray, all of a sudden bolted from the field like a frightened child to the utter surprise and consternation of all. It was strange that well-trained elephant should run helter-skelter through the jungle without a care for the noble occupants on its back. The mahout tried all he could, but to no use. The terrible jolting on this occasion and the great risk of the huge beast crashing into trees roused the alarm of everybody. After careering thus madly for a hundred yards, the elephants came to a stop as abruptly as he had jerked off. The Maharaja had a lucky escape—so shouted all the shikaris. His Highness considered it a thrill, and called the day a good one which had provided such a tingling adventure.”

It is a fine example of the Maharaja's coolness and courage. That he should have called the day a, good one shows what stuff he was made of and with what imperturbable composure he could act in perilous situations.

The Maharaja was a splendid host and in December 1936 he extended an invitation to shoot in the jungles of Nepal to Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy and Governor-General of India. The latter came with a party consisting of his wife, three daughters and the Viceregal staff. Grand shoots were organised in the Chitawan areas where the Maharaja was himself present but they were different from those of which we have spoken before.

During a Shikar the Maharaja revelled in danger—indeed, it was the element in which he lived, moved and had his being—and the greater the risk of life, the higher rose his spirits, but he did not want to expose his distinguished guests of the frightful risks of tiger-shooting and, therefore, eliminated from the arrangements ‘the nerve-cracking episodes’ which were the delight of his soul. A good deal of big game was bagged and the Viceroy and his family enjoyed the most thrilling experiences. At the conclusion of the shoot which had been so wonderfully organised Lord Linlithgow acknowledged the Maharaja's hospitality in a farewell speech in these words:—

“No other could have been more delightful than the setting which Your Highness has chosen for our camp. The memory of the amazing shikar which you have provided for our party will indeed be a last in one, and I cannot be sufficiently grateful to you for having given me a chance to shoot rhinos. Let me take the opportunity to say how greatly we have enjoyed the activities of the wild tusker who stepped in occasionally to

make his brief appearance on the stage in the river valley. I thank Your Highness once again most warmly on behalf of myself, Lady Linlithgow, my family and my staff for your unvarying kindness to us all, and for the immense trouble you have taken of every detail of this never-to-be forgotten visit."

The total bag of the Viceroy and his party in eight days amounted to 14 tigers and 3 rhinos.

After the departure of the viceregal party the Maharaja remained at Thori for a few days and had a strange almost unprecedented experience which deserves a brief mention. On December 13th a wild elephant of huge size with sharp pointed tusks was seen near a stream. He was decoyed by female elephants into the open and the stage was set for an elephant fight. Bikkram Prasad and Bahadur Prasad were brought to attack the wild tusker but the latter turned tail and bolted away. Then a young *Makana* called Ram Parsad (a tuskless male) came forward and with astonishing pluck and audacity engaged his opponent. The fight continued for sometimes and the scene was watched by the Maharaja, the Bada Maharani and his staff from the top of a bluff 50 feet high. The official Diary describes the encounter:—

"The tussle was a very thrilling one, and although his trunk was wounded by the tusk of the wild elephant, Ram Prasad knocked him about and the mahout wounded him with his lance. No other elephant would go forward to help him against the wild one. For four of five minutes the fight continued and the spectacle was most exciting and dramatic. Then our elephants made an encircling movement round the wild elephant at close quarters, who turned and bolted away along the stream banks, and Ram Prasad pursued his rival, striking him with his trunk, pulling his tail, and trying to entangle his back legs, while the mahout too made thrusts with his lance in an admirable manner, and the whole pack of tame elephants followed closely behind. It was a very fine sight to see the wild one being pursued by the domestics like a hawk sometimes pursued by a block of crows."

But soon the struggle took a new turn. Ram Prasad was violently attacked by his opponent and was thrown down badly wounded. The Mahout was also thrown off and he crawled away to save his life. Ram Prasad was about to be killed when General Bahadur and others came forward and began to fire in the air but the aggressor would not turn aside. Then some one fired a bullet which struck him in the leg and he fled into

the jungle. Poor Ram Prasad lay down on the field of his fame, fresh and covered with blood. His heroism impressed all and the Maharaja called in the doctors to dress his pounds. Again he pulled himself up and got ready to rise as if to engage in another bout with his antagonist but he was prevented from doing so. His wounds were serious and he died after a few days. The Maharaja then ordered the capture of the wild tusker who was chased and hemmed in on all sides and bound with ropes. Ram Prasad's death was fully avenged.

Till the end of February the shikar went on and the Maharaja's total bag, during a period of three months, amounted to 120 tigers, 38 rhinos, 27 leopards, 15 bears, 1 elephant (captured), 2 lions, 10 crocodiles and about 70 deer...an amazing record to which no parallel can be found any where in the world.

There is one other thrilling episode in His Highness's shikar career which deserves to be mentioned. In February 1936 when the Maharaja was staying in the Shaktimuhar and Chaughadamodi camps, he had an encounter with a ferocious tigress who was accompanied by four cubs. He advanced into the ring the Bikkram Prasad and other elephants. The tigress came out with a bound making a terrible noise with her tail lifted up in the air and the cubs created a tremendous uproar. She rushed towards the Maharaja's howdah and he fired at her. Again she charged with a violent fury at the Maharaja but the elephant repulsed her attack. The tigress then clutched his hind leg with both of her claws and clung to it fast making it difficult for the Maharaja to fire a shot. The elephant ran off and dragged her for a dozen yards. With a violent jerk he threw her on the ground and the Maharaja at once killed her with a Winchester. The 3 cubs which measured 5 feet each were captured alive and sent to the camp.

While at Rajghat camp the Maharaja successfully shot a wild buffalo which has now become scarce in the Morung district. At one time this animal was found in abundance in Morung and in the neighbouring Jungles of the Darbhanga district but perhaps due to increased cultivation and deforestation its number has decreased and the only remnant of a plentiful tribe is a small herd. The wild buffalo does not molest the simple, half-baked villager, who has no fear of her and is accustomed to see her grazing near his fields without attracting much attention. But she hates modern sartorial equipment and the following entry in the Shikar Diary is interesting.

“The wild buffalo seems to dislike modernity in dress, and is fanatically opposed to coats and trousers. He charges at sight of one or two products of twentieth century fashion.”

It is not an easy thing to shoot a he-buffalo because of his unwillingness to enter the ring. Even if he enters it, he tries to break through it and bolts away. As soon as the Maharaja heard the news that a buffalo with enormous physical dimensions was roaming about, he mounted his elephant and went in pursuit of him. On seeing the elephant and his illustrious rider, his suspicions were roused. He took to flight immediately and galloped at full speed. The Maharaja continued to fire at him with the greatest dexterity, firmness and steadiness and did not abandon the chase. After traversing a distance of about two miles, the buffalo concealed himself in a thick grass where it was impossible to pursue her. The Maharaja ordered the ring to be formed and before the buffalo could bolt away, he quickly fired at her and the huge beast came down to the ground. The Shikaris got down from their elephants and went to inspect their victim but when they saw her quivered, they fled in terror. The Diary says:—

—“his last moment had not yet come. He summoned his last strength to bring himself on to his legs and turn round to face His Highness’s elephant one more, and this movement send his inspectors off in wild terror to their mounts to clamber up with their hearts going pit-a-pat. This is the only wild buffalo which the Maharaja had shot. He was 14 feet in length, the height at the shoulder being 6 feet and each of his horn was 3 feet in length.”

Another visit was paid to Morung by the Maharaja in the cold weather of 1937-38. On December 10th at Amlekganj General Bahadur ringed a tiger. His Highness learnt his in camp that Lady Halifax, wife of the ex-Viceroy of India with a friend had just arrived at the station *enroute* for Kathmandu. A car was at once sent to bring her to the royal camp and as the Maharaja was talking to his guests in the drawing room, news came that a tiger had been ringed. He asked Lady Halifax and her friend to accompany him and watch the shoot. They were delighted and when the tiger (9 feet 7 inches) was bagged, they offered their thanks to the Maharaja for receiving them so kindly and providing them with such a wonderful entertainment. Day after day the Shikar proceeded with uninterrupted excitement and on December 20th a man-eating tigress that had already devoured eight human beings in the neighbouring villages was shot by His Highness. The last victim of this blood-thirsty animals was an old man

with a grey beard for human hair were found in her stomach when it was ripped open.

Towards the end of the first week of January (1938) the Maharaja proceeded by special train to Biratnagar where he was accorded an enthusiastic welcome. So great was his popularity among his subjects that they gathered in thousands to greet him and decorated the route by which he was to pass with triumphal arches and festoons of flowers. We read in the Dairy.

“Everywhere in the plains where His Highness has travelled he has received a hearty welcome, but none of the districts or divisions could excel the grand gala reception which the officials and people of Biratnagar had organised. His Highness’s car passed slowly through the wildly cheering streets of Biratnagar, but even then many people were deprived of a glimpse of His Highness due to the immense crowds.”

During his stay at Biratnagar the Maharaja indulged in Shikar to his heart’s content and bagged a number of formidable animals. Want of space forbids a detailed description of all the thrills that were experienced during this period and, therefore only the most notable incidents can be related here. On January 18th four big tigers were enclosed in ring and as soon as the Maharaja entered it on his elephant Bhimraj, a tigress furiously charged at the *howdah* and the shot that was fired missed its aim. Encouraged by this misfire the tigress was about to rush at Bhimraj, when Bikkram Prasad, who was on the right advanced forward and knocked her down. He kicked the tigress like a football with both of his forelegs for about 20 feet and crushed her with one of his legs so that her ribs were broken. Bikkram displayed great bravery as on several previous occasions and protected Bhimraj from the attacks of the tigress. The Maharaja asked General Bahadur to fire and the latter shot her immediately. The father of the family, who measured 10 feet 5 inches, was bagged by His Highness.

But more thrilling than all these episodes was the adventure which resulted in the shooting of a tigress who was engaged in a scuffle with a bear. Efforts were made to bring her out of her retreat for two hours but in vain. As it became dark, His Highness called off the shoot and returned to his camp. Next morning General Bahadur was deputed to see what had happened and on examination it was found that the bear had gone out but the tigress was still there. A ring was formed again, and the Maharaja, who soon afterwards arrived on the scene, shot the tigers. The scene is thus described:

"The beating started again with the same zeal as yesterday, if not more so. The elephants threw broken branches with their trunks where the tigers were concealed, uprooted and pushed down trees towards them. Pistols and revolver, were fired, and even fires were lit to provoke the hiding tigers to break cover. After all this, the attempt was at last successful, and a tigress, magnificent for her size and colours came into view of His Highness, who chose an opportune moment and fired two shots. She fell a once dead with shots through the chest and backbone to the great satisfaction of His Highness. She measured 9 feet 8 inches, equal to the record size for a tigress in Nepal. One thing peculiar was noted on the body of the tigress; there was fresh wound on her back of the size and shape of a human hand, which was explained by the fight with the bear that had been heard overnight."

Attempts were made to shoot the other tiger who had disappeared in the under-growth but they failed. Then His Highness suggested the employment of small elephants and the tiger charged but again disappeared. He was spotted again by General Bahadur who fired at him and shot him.

During the next fortnight three or four tigers were shot but the most remarkable incident of the period was the killing of a tigress who had concealed herself in the thick foliage of a Gayo tree. It was extremely unusual for a tigress to climb a tree and to go up higher still from one branch to the other when a shot was fired at her. It was the Maharaja's third bullet which brought her down to the ground from a height of 20 or 30 feet. The shikar season had now ended. It had proved highly successful. The total bag amounted to 57 tigers, 13 leopards, 4 bears and numerous other animals. The arrangements were excellent and their success was due to the indefatigable energy and organising capacity of General Bahadur who worked early and late to make the arrangements and personally supervised the details.

A study of these hunting expeditions clearly shows that the Maharaja loved the excitement of the game and utterly disregarded danger which only added to his enthusiasm and determination. It is this which entitles him to rank among the greatest sportsmen of our time.

The Maharaja was not only a good shot and a first class sportsman but also a great connoisseur of animal skins. From the heap of tiger skins you take out any and place before him and he will tell you where, when and how he shot it and you feel thrilled to hear his account.

The tale of the Maharaja's *shikar* has an epic grandeur about it. It is impossible to describe all his heroic exploits in the compass of a single chapter. The subject has been dealt with by Mr. E.A. Smythies in his book '*Big game shooting in Nepal*' which has been freely drawn upon in writing these pages. The reader who wants to have a full measure of the Maharaja's greatness as a Shikari must delve for facts in the pages of his wonderful diaries which record with great minuteness and accuracy his feats of valour and endurance. Danger only served to strengthen his nerves and he countered animal fury with a rare coolness of mind. At a time when tigers furiously charged his elephant and made a dash towards him so as to imperil his life, he smiled and allowed them to come within a narrow range, and then fired at them. Few men could handle their rifle with ease in a ring, confronted by a number of tigers and leopards, roaring and foaming with rage and clawing the trunks of elephants and fewer still could pursue the wounded beast to his lair under a thick cover inside the ring. While panic sized other men, the Maharaja rejoiced in the excitement of the hour and cared more for the thrill of the adventure than for the safety of his life. On numerous occasions his courage was put to the test but each time he came out of the ordeal unscathed. No man in our times has shown such fearlessness in the midst of nerveshattering danger and none has acted with such intrepidity and swiftness in shooting big game. When he invited guests to have shooting in his jungles, he fully provided for the security of their lives. Day after day the shikar proceeded yielding unprecedented thrill and excitement. Europeans were charmed by his hospitality and bewildered by the variety of game which he placed within their reach. With breathless admiration they followed the Maharaja into the jungle and watched his performances. Truly the stories of his accidents and encounters would make a thrilling reading a wonderous as the Arabian Nights. Men marvelled at his inflexibility of purpose his utter disregard of personal safety, his reckless courage his preciseness of aim and his accurate knowledge of animal psychology, and by common consent assigned to him an honoured place among the sportsmen of the world. If an international congress of world shikaris were held we would have unhesitatingly chosen to be represented by His Highness Maharaja Juddha Shumsher Jung Bahadur Rana of Nepal, and we are confident that our choice would have been completely vindicated.

The Maharaja's success was unique. During the seven seasons (1933-40) his total bag amounted to 433 tigers, 33 rhinos, 93 leopards, 22 bears, 20 crocodiles, 1 wild buffalo, 3 elephants (captured) and many wild dogs, hyenas, deer and other lesser animals.

The biggest tiger shot by the Maharaja measured 10 feet 9 inches (weight 705 lbs) a record unsurpassed in the whole world. Indeed it is no exaggeration to say that the Maharaja was a born sportsman.

RENUNCIATION

*For even the purest delight may pall
And power must fail, and the pride must fall,
And the love of the dearest friends grow small
But the glory of the Lord is all in all.*

—Wordsworth

According to our ancient lawgivers the life of a Hindu was divided into four stages (Ashrams)—Brahmacharya, Grahashta, Vanprastha and Sanyas. This fourfold scheme was intended for all persons irrespective of their social rank or status and there was a time when it was followed by princes and commoners alike. Our sacred books relate that some of the greatest Kshatriya kings like Raghu, Dalip and Janak in their old age retired from the world and spent the remaining days of their life in seeking the peace of the soul. The aspiration to attain the highest spiritual bliss has existed throughout the ages and we read of kings turning their backs upon the world and going into the solitudes of the forest, where dwells eternal calm, to practice meditation and prayer. Maharaja Juddha who was deeply religious by nature and conversant with the great epics always kept this ancient ideal in view and tried to follow it. In one of his speeches soon after his accession to the Prime-Ministership he had declared that the interests of the country were paramount and that he would lay down the tools of office if he were unable to perform the duties pertaining to it. According to him duty was the highest law and no man had a right to disregard its dictates. This was treated merely as a conventional utterance at the time for no one believed that the unlimited power which the Prime-Minister of Nepal wields could be voluntarily abdicated. With great energy and vigour, he devoted himself to the business of the administration and it is a matter of common knowledge with ability, wisdom and farsightedness he governed the country for more than a decade. When he exceeded the allotted span of life he began to think of retiring from the world but again he was not taken seriously for he was in the full enjoyment of his physical vigour and capable of performing his duties. Before the outbreak of the war, he again reverted to the subject and indicated his wish in his inner