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### *Ecocriticism in Jungle Lore*

Jim Corbett, a colonel in the British Indian Army, was best known for being a hunter, conservationist and naturalist. *Jungle Lore* is an autobiography by Jim Corbett, revealing his life-long passion for the people, jungle, and animals of the Kumaon hills in the Himalayan foothills, and his despair at humanity's estrangement from its environment. From the very beginning or childhood, he was fascinated and attracted towards forest and wildlife around his home in Kaladhungi. As he grew up he learned to identify the sounds of various birds and animals.

During his life Corbett tracked and killed a number of tigers and leopards, which he has very minutely described it in his books like *Man Eaters of Kumaon*, *The Temple Tiger and Man-Eaters of Kumaon*, *The Man Eating Leopard of Rudrapryag*. Though Corbett kills the man eaters but he never forgot to analyse his kill to know what was the problem with the tiger or leopard which made him man eater. And usually he come to conclusion that due to injury tigers retort to killing as it has resulted from a carelessly fired shot or quills of porcupine.

As he became more experienced there came gradual changes in his thinking, as he later on wanted to shoot tigers and other animals but with a camera. Corbett brought his first camera on 1920s to record cine film of tigers as he was inspired by his friend Frederick Walter Champion. Corbett himself said that it was a difficult task for him to shoot animals and specially tigers as they are very shy in nature.

Whenever Corbett was free he used to give lecture to children about their environment and how to save them and live with the plants and animals in harmony. He promoted the

foundation of Association for preservation of game in Uttarakhand. Corbett with the help of his friend Frederick Walter Champion succeeded in establishing India's first national park in Kumaon Hills the Hailey National Park, initially named after Lord Malcolm Hailey. After that park was renamed in Corbett's honour in 1957. He believed in the ideology of Deep Ecology. As Deep Ecology may be defined as "the fundamental interconnectedness of life forms and natural features. It believes that anthropocentric thinking has alienated humans from their natural environment and caused them to exploit it". (Nayar 246)

It is an environmental philosophy that see the inherent worth of non-human living beings regardless of their use and need in human life and also need a radical restructuring of the society according with such ideas. Deep ecology's main belief is that the living environment as a whole should be respected and regarded as something which has its own rights to live and flourish, independent of its human use.

The phrase "Deep Ecology" was coined by Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess in 1973. Naess rejected the very idea that being can be ranked according to their value. Naess states that every living being has the right to live, and no single species has more of the right to live and suppress and exploit the other being.

*Jungle Lore* deals basically with Nainital, Uttarakhand. Corbett's *Jungle Lore* is written about his childhood days and he describes about the changes that have occurred in nature from the time of his childhood to present when he is writing the *Jungle Lore*. It's how the pattern of land and forests has changed in the meantime, how the landscape has changed as earlier there were forest now clear lands and earlier there was clear land now there is bushes and trees, and he explain how the changes have occurred due to manmade and natural activities . Changes which have occurred not only have effect on the humans, but most badly on animals and birds of the jungle, as forest has been exploited and its fragility is being destroyed by the human .

The very title of the book '*Jungle Lore*' is very important from the point of view of Eco criticism as Corbett himself explained it clearly in the book. As lore means a body of traditions and knowledge on a subject or held by a particular group, typically passed from person to person by word of mouth. And here in *Jungle Lore* it means the traditional knowledge about nature which is passed from one generation to other. This is what happens when Corbett was given this knowledge by his elders in the childhood when he was taken to jungle to show that no animal attack on human until unless he is not wounded, and to show

that both human beings and animals can live peacefully. And what he learned in childhood proved true, when he was left unwounded by the leopard without any injury.

Corbett says that jungle lore is not a science which can be learnt from textbooks, it is something which can be absorbed a little and this process go on, as the book of nature has no beginning or end. As there is no age limit, it can be learnt at any stage of life.

Corbett in the very opening chapter shows his concern about the changing pattern of the forest and its effects on the flora and fauna of the nature. He speaks of the ill effects of the over exploitation of forests, which in turn not only leads to deforestation but also have drastic changes in it, Corbett remembers how during his childhood and after 30 years there is a huge change in the pattern of jungle of Terai and Bhabar due to human intervention . How during his childhood there were waist high grass and jungle, but due to over human interference and exploitation it has changed and some changes are also due to natural causes also. As he says:

In my lifetime I have seen great changes in the forests of the Terai and Bhabar. Some of these changes have resulted from exploitation, other have been brought about in a natural manner. In some areas where there were dense virgin forests there is now scrub jungle, and where there were wide open stretches of grass and plum bushes there is now forest. To the south east of Garuppu where there is now tree jungle, there was (at the time I am writing about), waist high grass and plum bushes. (154)

Corbett speaks about an incident with his brother Tom, how he was wandering in the forest to shoot birds, as they were going they saw a peacock and Tom asked Corbett to shoot it, as Corbett step forward to aim at it, he saw a beautiful peacock sitting on the branch, he got so enchanted by the beauty of the peacock that he forgot that he had come to shoot it, as he wanted to enjoy the beauty of the peacock rather to shoot the peacock. As Corbett was a lover of nature he wanted to enjoy the beauty of nature and its living being than to destroy it. As he says:

The samal tree was leafless but was covered with big red flowers and sitting on a branch on my side of the tree, with the slanting rays of the sun shining on it, was the most beautiful peacock I had ever seen. The time had now come to cock the gun but what with excitement and my frozen fingers I found it impossible to draw back the hammers, and while I was wondering what to do next the peacock flew away. (156)

In chapter three, there is an instance of how as a young boy he was given the traditional knowledge by his elders of the nature and its rules which they were also given in their childhood and which they are passing on to Corbett. That tigers and leopards or any other animal do not harm you until unless they are not being wounded. And as Corbett grow and matured in his life and while he was writing he experienced that all that was being taught to him was right. That's why he said

Lessons taught when young are never afterwards forgotten, I had learnt my lessons well. I had been taken into jungles in which there were tigers and bears with the object. I believe, of showing me that no danger was to be apprehended from unwounded animals. Lessons well learnt when young are never afterwards forgotten, and I had learnt my lessons well. (157)

Corbett tries to emphasize that one have to live in harmony with our flora and fauna because it is beneficial for stopping the global extinction crisis of birds and animals and to achieve true ecological sustainability and this is also followed by the village folks. And this is what he did during the season when the birds were nesting, he abstain from shooting while birds were busy caring their young ones. As he says:

During the close season my catapult would have to be put away, for at this time birds were nesting and it was cruel to kill them while they were sitting on their eggs or caring for their young. During the open season I mad use of every bird I killed.(158).

It is not that only after India got independence that the collection of bird's species and compiling them in book was started. In *Jungle Lore* it is shown that during British rule there were many steps taken towards the collection and counting of birds species to know how many species were there in the Nainital, Kumaon and its areas. As he says "a cousin of ours, Stephen Dease, was at that time compiling a book of the birds of Kumaon and most of the four hundred and eighty coloured illustrations in his book were birds in my collection, or from specimens I specially collected for him."(158)

The traditional knowledge which Corbett gained during his childhood proved true as Corbett speaks about his meeting with a leopard in the forest and how he left Cobbett and his dog Magog unhurt, because leopard don't have any danger from them, and he went away without hurting them. Corbett tries to change the mind set of humans that animals are not dangerous and kill humans as they are thought to be, and animals and humans can live peacefully. As he says:

Driven off the road by the men, he was quite possibly making for the mass of rocks over which Magog and I had recently come, and on clearing the bushes and finding a boy and a dog directly in his line of retreat he had frozen, to take stock of the situation. A glance at us was sufficient to satisfy him that we had no hostile intentions towards him, for a leopard can size up a situation more quickly than any other animal in our jungles. And now, satisfied from or whole attitude that he had nothing to fear from us, and satisfied also that there were no other human being in the direction that he wanted to go, he leapt from his crouching position and in a few graceful bounds disappeared into the jungle behind us.(163)

In chapter four of *Jungle Lore* Corbett speaks about the title of the book, what he mean by jungle lore, by jungle lore Corbett means all the traditional knowledge about forest, animals and birds. He said that it cannot be learnt like any subjective knowledge but be absorbed, by having close association with the nature. There is no time or age limitation, as it can be acquired at any time and period of life. As he says:

I have used the word 'absorbed', in preference to 'learnt', for jungle lore is not a science that can be learnt from textbook; it can, however be absorbed, a little at a time, and the absorption process can go on end. Open the book where you will, and at any period of your life, and if you have desire to acquire knowledge you will find it of intense interest, and no matter how long or how intently you study the pages your interest will not flag, for in nature there is no finality.(165)

The ill effect of the increase in population put pressure on the nature and natural resources ,and to satisfy its need human start to exploit nature and this is what Corbett speaks about how the pressure of population has brought the destruction of forest by cutting and making it cultivable land. Corbett emphasized this that what he enjoyed during his childhood will never be enjoyed by the present generation as the place where he used to roam and play, is now made farm lands. It has influenced animals and birds too, as the trees on which they depend for food and shelter are totally destroyed. As he says:

Opportunities which will never be enjoyed by another, for pressure of population has brought under cultivation large areas on which in my time game wandered at will; while standardization of forests, with all the evils it brings in its train of wild life, has

resulted in the total destruction of the trees that bore the flowers and the fruit that birds and animals live on.(167)

The destruction of natural habitat of monkeys, by destroying the forest has resulted in scarcity of food for monkey, which have effect both physically and mentally on them, as they resort to come out to cultivated land for food, Corbett says that this small problem due to human over exploitative nature, will result in a big problem, as in future all animals, will come out in search of food towards villages and cultivable land, as their natural habitat and their food is destroyed by humans. As he says:

One result of this destruction, which in my opinion was quite unnecessary, has been to drive millions of monkeys out of the forests on to cultivated land, presenting Government with a problem which they are finding it difficult to deal with owing to the religious prejudices of the population, who look upon monkeys as sacred animals. A day will come when this problem will have to be faced, and the lot of those who have to face it will not be an enviable one, for in the united provinces alone the monkey population in my opinion is less than ten million, and ten million monkeys living on crops and garden fruit present a very major problem. (167)

The use of Kamala for dyeing cloth is a perfect example of material obtained from nature. It is made from runi berry and is rubbed with the hand to extract powder from it. This is an example of sustainable use of natural resources by human without destroying it. As he says:

“When the poor people who migrate in winter from the high hills to the foothills in search of food and warmth-as do the birds-can spare a day from their regular labours, old and young resort to the jungles to collect kamala. Kamala is a red powder which adheres to the runi berry, and the method of collection is to cut down the branches, strip the berries into big shallow baskets, and then with the hand rub the berries against the sides of the basket. The powder when freed from the berries drifts through the cracks in the basket and is caught on a chital skin or square of cloth. The powder is used in India and Middle East for dyeing wool.”(253)

A perfect example of eco-friendly use of nature and its resources is given how ruby coloured gum is used for dyeing silk. Amaltas contain a sweet jelly like substance which is used as laxative. As it is better than the artificial material available in the market and it is freely available in the nature. As he says:

Mingled with the many shades of green for each tree has its own individual colour are vivid splashes of orange, gold, lilac, pink, and red. The trees with orange coloured flowers are dhank which produces a ruby coloured gum used for dyeing silk of the finest quality .the trees with the three foot long showers of golden bloom are amaltas. The two foot long cylindrical seedpods of this tree contain a sweet jelly like substance which is used throughout Kumaon as a laxative.(254)

The use of Nal grass for hut making is an eco-friendly use of the forest, which is easily available to the village folk. Corbett tries to emphasize that human can sustainably use forest and its natural resources, as they are a rich source of food and material things which are very useful and freely available to human. As he says “Nal grass is hollow, jointed like bamboo, grows to a height of fourteen feet, and when accessible to villages is extensively used for hut building.”(216)

The interdependence of nature and its animals on each other for food and shelter, occurred in the novel, when birds loved to drink the nectar and monkeys, pigs, loved to eat the fleshy flowers when it falls to the ground. As he says “the red are samal trees the flowers of which are loved by all birds that drink nectar, and by paroquets and monkeys that eat the fleshy flowers, and by deer and pigs that eat them when they fall to the ground”.(254)

The importance of seeds in the life of human and nature is emphasized in the story, how seeds of the samal are carried by the winds in hot winds of April to far and distant areas of forest, which help in regeneration of the trees. As he says:

Later in the year the samal flowers will give way to large woody seedpods. When the hot winds blow in April these pods will explode like anti-aircraft shells and a white cloud of silk cotton each section carrying a seed, will drift away in the wind to regenerate nature’s garden. (254)

The use of plants as medicines by the villagers is shown in the Jungle Lore. In an incident in the story a small plant juice is applied on the wound to save the wound from infection and it helped in healing also. The villagers can easily identify it in the jungle. It needs only to squeeze the leaves and pour its juice and it will heal the wound in one -two days. And is named as BrahmButi, ‘God’s flower’. As he says:

If you ever get a flesh wound in the jungles I will show you a small and insignificant little plant that will not only cauterize but also heal your wound better than anything else that I know. The plant which is found in all jungles, grows to a height of twelve inches and has a daisy like flower on a long slender stem. The leaves are fleshy and serrated like the leaf of a chrysanthemum. To use the plant break off a few leaves, rinse them in water to wash off the dust-if water is available and then squeeze the leaves between finger and thumb and pout the juice freely into the wound. No further treatment is needed and if the wound is not a deep on, it will heal in a day or two. The plant is well named. BrahmButi, 'God's flower'. (250)

Corbett has tried to convey that human beings should exploit natural resources but to such an extent that nature can regenerate itself. Corbett believed in sustainable development. He tried to create awareness about the ecological balance of nature and its importance for survival of human beings on Earth.

## Works Cited

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