

Man Eaters and the Eaten Men: A Study of the Portrayal of Indians in the Writings of Jim Corbett

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Abstract : India to the Colonial mind was a crazy quilt of multicoloured patchwork- a land of untold wealth and bejewelled maharajas, of snake charmers and tight rope walkers. India was also the land that offered unparalleled game. Indeed Shikar (hunting) was de rigueur for the Raj experience. Tales of shootings and trophies were told and retold in clubs and in company. Foremost among the writers of this genre is Jim Corbett - tracker, hunter, writer, conservationist. Corbett is best known for the killing of man eating tigers and his best known books are Man eaters of Kumaon, The Temple Tiger, Man eating Leopard of Rudraprayag etc. The stories of Jim Corbett are stories of hunting, with no palpable design, no subtext of hegemony, or white man's burden. The protagonists are the cats. Nevertheless from his writings emerge a vibrant picture of Indian villages, of men, women and children toiling for a livelihood under the constant shadow of the man eaters. Corbett shared a symbiotic relationship with the villagers. They needed him to kill the predators while Corbett needed the support of the locals as drum beaters, coolies and runners to accomplish his tasks. The aim of the present paper is to study the image of Indians in the writings of Jim Corbett and to examine them in the light of colonial perception of Indians.

Keywords : hegemony, orientalism, Shikar literature, White Man's Burden

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