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The Environmental Law of Jungle: An Eco-Critical Reading of Kenneth Anderson's Hunting Narratives

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Abstract:

The concern for ecology and the threat that the continuous misuse of our environment poses on humanity, has recently caught our attention to the Indian hunting narratives. The Indian hunters, whose lives have been spent with many adventures which upholds the glorious Indian nature and Indian animals fight for the world in which they live. The earth as home, lying at the root of ecology, etymologically, indicates a vast space. They had envisaged a possibility of establishing a connection anew with the earth and every earthly creature and their narratives are brief account of their observations where nature and animals often stands as their alter-ego. My focus in this essay is to explore the ways in which the deceptively simple form of the hunting story allows the Indian hunters to develop a remarkably nuanced and complex style in which their environmentalism seems to arise as a re-fashioning of the importance of hunting narratives. The hunting narratives of these Indian jungle writers would appear to please the arm-chair naturalists and wildlife enthusiasts of the present, to be consumed alongside, a whole array of visual commentaries of wildlife films telecast through the Discovery and National Geographic channels worldwide. The time has come at last with the community of ecocritics and environmental writers, to pay attention to the many examples of positive, healthy male attitudes toward others humans and toward the natural world available in these pre-independence hunting narratives. Against the hypercritical attitude toward men by the ecofeminists, I will mention several Kenneth Anderson's narratives on my paper that shows men in caretaking roles. Particularly as fathers or as children are looking after their children and ageing parents respectively, these environmentally conscious individual demonstrating a caring and careful view of the world. The prescriptive tenets of deep ecology could be found heavily within the hunting narratives of the Indian jungle writers, especially in Anderson. Their narratives account how they cease to think in terms of anthropocentric alone and extend their lives into the heart of all being in a trans-humanistic eco-centrism. This brief examination of male caretaking in contemporary environmental literature aims simply to halt a reflexive antagonism toward men or the idea of men with new perspective or idea of "Eco-Man".

Keywords: Big-game, Ghooming, Eco-masculinity, Trophy-hunting.

During the last decade of the 20th century it became obvious that the greatest problem of this century would be the survival of the earth. Men themselves are responsible for that, in consequence man feels vitally threatened in the ecologically degraded world. The end of the 20th century showed that everyone had to do something to think for the betterment of the environment, to help the earth to survive. Ecocriticism is one of the ways in which humanists fight for the world in which they live. Ecocriticism is the study of literature and environment from an interdisciplinary point of view where all sciences come together to analyze the environment. Eco-critics investigate such things as the underlying ecological values, human perception of the wilderness, environmental degradation and its possible solutions. Glotfelty's definition in *The Ecocriticism Reader* is that ---

What then is ecocriticism? Simply put, ecocriticism is the
 Study of the relationship between literature and the
 Physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines
 Language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective,
 Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production
 And economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes
 An earth centred approach to literary studies. (Glotfelty 1996, xix)

Again Lawrence Buell defines ecocriticism as a “...study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmental praxis.” Most of all, ecocriticism seeks to evaluate texts and ideas in terms of their coherence usefulness as responses to environmental crisis. Western civilization has traditionally viewed women as *Prakriti* or rather closer to nature than man and this has reinforced the subjugation of women. So the Ecofeminists take on the life struggles of all nature as their own and held the man responsible for the degradation of nature as well as women. In the process of clarifying their discourse the ecofeminists criticises the attitude of Modern European men. But Indian hunting writers like Anderson were acutely conscious and sensitive to the fragility of nature and well ahead of their time in understanding the need for conservation. From tiny birds to the wild tigers to the mighty trees and thick jungles surrounding their life, they found themselves confined to, everything in nature appeared to be an integral part of not only their mortal existence, but also the most precious experience of the whole called life.

If Corbett has provided us with brilliant accounts of the flora and fauna of the lower Himalayas, Anderson’s chosen territory is the Southern peninsular India. Corbett brings alive the creatures of Kumayun and Nainital, and Anderson breathes life into areas adjacent to Bangalore, and the erstwhile Madras and Mysore presidencies. Anderson deserves special attention as his writings are strikingly different it is originated in the Deep South, varied in its ecology and wildlife. The denizens of forest in his writings are often diverse, ranging from elephants to wild dogs, sloth bears to crocodiles. Anderson’s books---beginning with *Man-eaters and Jungle Killers*(1957), down to the last one, *Jungles Long Ago*(1976)---provides the rare insights into a changing world. He dedicates his book *Nine Man-eaters and a Rouge*:

To the memory of the jungle of the Southern India,
 Their birds and animals, particularly elephant, tiger
 And animals, particularly elephant, tiger and panther
 And the forest people, chensoos, scholagas, karumbas
 And poojaries, I proudly and gratefully dedicate this
 Book, in return for the twenty-five years of unadulterated
 Joy they have given me in making and keeping
 Their acquaintance. (Anderson, 10)

For all his invaluable contributions to literature, to local heritage and to wildlife conservation in this part of India, there's no more than a cursory mention of Kenneth Anderson in the literary circles. The jungles and its creatures were his lifelong obsession; Anderson wrote books about his exploits which revealed his concern for the environment. He is also famous for his close observation and reading of animals, he is passionate to describe the affections between the animals:

A few of the very young members nuzzle up against
 Their mothers, slyly dipping their tiny heads under
 Udders hanging temptingly close, to sneak a drink of
 Milk. The mothers in turn stop their feeding now and
 Again to lick their little offspring affectionately, but n-
 Ever for a moment do they halt their close scrutiny of
 The surrounding jungle for a possible foe. (Anderson, 15)

From his book *The Call of the Man-eater*, from his early childhood he has the feelings and attachment with wildlife because of his father "who instilled in me, when very young, a love for the wild places and living creatures of the land, the beauties of the countryside, and a deep appreciation of the marvellous ways of nature and of God". In *The Black Panther of Sivanipalli*(1959), he writes with warm sympathy of the sloth bear---"The sounds he emits can resemble anything from a bagpipe being inflated to the droning of an aeroplane, from buzzing of an angry wasp to the huffing of a blacksmith's bellows, the latter being a sort of background, accompaniment to the buzzing and humming sounds"(Anderson:89). In the story "The Sulekunta Panther", from *The Call of Man-Eater*, even when the hunter-writer is aligning his rifle to shoot the man-eater at so close a dangerous range, he is admiring the beauty of the animal:

Very slowly I raised my rifle, fitted the stock comfortably
 Into my shoulder, and started to align the sights on the p-
 Anther....What a perfect picture he presented, his glorious-
 Ly spotted hide a thing of beauty!...I had almost squeezed
 The trigger when I thought of the many nights of excitement
 And entertainment with which this animal had provided me.
 Was I now justified in butchering him in cold blood when he
 Was quite unaware of my presence when he had committed
 No crime? (Anderson, 284-285)

The sporting ethic is deeply inscribed in his worldview as he is keenly aware of their plight even as he shoots them for trophies or to get rid of cattle lifters or man killers. He is very much aware of the rules of the jungle as in his story "Ghooming in the Dawn", he tells us about a touching scene when a fawn's mother, forgetful of her own safety, rushes forward

a panther to save her son. When Anderson's friend John raises his gun to shoot the panther and to save the hind, Anderson stops him---"I stretch out a hand to hold the muzzle and deflect your aim. Don't shoot John! It's the law of jungle. The panther has killed for food, not wantonly" (Anderson, 16). There is the tiger of Tumkur, a district which did not boast of a regular forest but was covered with ordinary scrub jungle, a small island of thickets in a sea of cultivated fields. His accounts in *Nine Man-eaters and One Rogue* (1961) tell us about panthers that live much more often in the proximity of villagers, in small patches of tree cover and bush:

The larger tiger, wandering into such grounds, finds life
 More difficult. The mauler of Rajnagar, which injured
 And attacked many humans but rarely, deigned to feed
 On their flesh, made its home in rocky terrain broken
 By grass jungle and boulders, stream beds and bamboo
 Clumps. The tiger took to killing milk cows and mauling
 Herdsmen. (Anderson, 215)

Anderson also gives valuable insights into the people of the Indian jungles of his time, with their lush green woods teeming with wildlife and local inhabitants having to contend with poor quality roads, communication, and health facilities. The diverse landscapes we are taken through are a patchwork quilt of dry scrub jungle and river thicket, of thick forests and village grazing grounds, plantations and woodlands. Again his books delve deep into the habits of the jungle tribes, their survival tactics, and their day-to-day lives. There is a brief account of Lambani tribesmen catch crabs in hill streams, travellers walk down mountain paths. Anderson also tells us about the superstitious villagers who spread many rumours due to their ignorance:

I thought of the rest of the strange rumour: that no victim
 Could ever escape this terrible and diabolical alliance, once
 The lone jackal had located him or her and the hunt had be-
 Gun. I shivered involuntarily, and at that instant felt
 Ananth-aswami's left knee pressing hard against my right
 Thigh. The knee was trembling very violently. (Anderson, 434)

His accounts and anecdotes are infused with his own feelings and concern for the biodiversity and environment. In his book *The Call of the Man-Eater* he presents the suffering of villagers, turned into the victims by the man-eaters:

A child grew up into a lovely girl of about seventeen
 Years. Her father made arrangements for her to marry
 A respectable villager...she never returned. For, as she

Stopped to dip the pot in the spring, the man-eater got
 Her...the tiger bounded away into the jungle, while the
 Poor girl's cries grew fainter and feebler and soon died
 Away. I was told by the bereaved man that he never fo-
 Und his daughter's remains.(Anderson, 413)

Again in this book Anderson is very much sympathetic with the helpless condition of the madmen in India where the lunatics are treated with certain rashness. He presents the vile picture of one such madman, killed by a man-eater---"whitening bones of the mad-man, only his head, that lay at a little distance and grinned at them as stupidly in death as in life, provided the clue that identified the bones as those of the missing lunatic"(415). Again in this book he presents an excellent account of courage, determination and affection for child of the villagers through the character of Ananthaswamy as he comments:

Don't think that I am doing this for your sake.
 Don't think I am doing it because I am brave and
 And have no fear---for I am terribly afraid too. But
 I am doing it---and doing it cheerfully in an attempt
 To avenge my little daughter...I will gladly sacrifice
 My life to bring about the death of her cruel slayer.

(Anderson, 421)

His love for the simple outdoor life and the spiritual upliftment, his respect for the Indian 'aborigines' of the jungles, inculcates a deep ecological aspect in him. He comes across himself, as a colourful, rough hewn personality, always ready to give as good as he got to the environment, proves him to be a true ecomasculinist or Eco-Man.

Anderson's deep ambivalence is partly due to his own immersion in the world of shikar. He is proud of his son's bag of seventy panthers but deeply perturbed by city based hunters who traverse the forest in jeeps, shooting everything on four feet. Again there is anger at the man who uses a rusty matchlock to slay sambhar at a water-hole. Plumwood shows how philosopher Rene Descartes proposed an influential account of the difference between mind and body that struggled to eliminate all traces of the similarity between the humans and animals. He had to---

Reinterpret the notion of thinking in such a way that those
 Mental activities which involve the body, such as sense per-
 Caption, and which appear to bridge the mind/body and hu-
 Man/animal division, become instead, via their reinterpreta-
 Tion in terms of 'consciousness', purely mental operations.

(Descartes, 115)

Thus Descartes hyper separated mind and body, and denied to animals not only the faculty of reason, but the whole range of feelings and sensations that he had associated with thought. As a result, he saw animals as radically different from, and inferior to humans. They were bodies without minds, effectively machines. Plumwood advocates recognition of both similarity and difference in the human-nature continuum. We can continue to distinguish reason and emotion, man and woman, human and animal, but without the neurotic obsessiveness of the mainstream philosophical tradition but in doing so, the mastery model that legitimates anthropo- and androcentrism is undermined. Anderson never distinguishes between humans and animals as all of them belong to the category of his 'simple friends', as he dedicates his book *Tales from the Indian Jungle Life*---"I dedicate this book to the memory of...my simple friends of the forest, both humans and animals, with whom I have spent many happy days and nights". Anderson praises the beauty of a tiger which is almost similar to Blake's praise in his poem "The Tiger"----"Although a tiger has practically no sense of smell, he has abnormally acute hearing and marvellous sight, to catch the minutest of movements in his vicinity" (Anderson, 409). The jungles and its creatures were his lifelong obsession, Anderson wrote books about his exploits which revealed his concern for the environment. In *The Man-eaters and Jungle Killers*, he wrote:

I know localities where until 1930 the moaning
Sough of a tiger or the guttural sawing of the p-
Anther were normal sounds in the night. Now
The night passes without a sound. Except perh-
Aps for a persistently chirping cricket. The pug
Marks of a tiger...tiny tracks of a few rabbits mi-
Ght today indicate that they atleast have not been
Exterminated. (Anderson, 234)

Again in *The Tiger Roars*, he noted that---"In the Mysore and Salem districts tigers and panthers have been almost wiped out by villagers, who used a poison supplied to them almost free by the local government as an insecticide to protect their crops"(Anderson: 123). In his book *The Call of the Man-Eater* he rejects the fact that every man-eating tiger or panther subsists on human flesh alone:

But when he cannot easily find a human being he
He has no hesitation in reverting to his natural diet
Till the next opportunity offers. Added to this is the
Strange fact that, no matter how many people he m-
Ay kill and eat, a man-eating tiger and panther remain
Basically afraid of the human race. (Anderson, 419)

It has been proved again and again often enough the fiercest of the man-eaters has turned tail and fled in the fear of human beings. But never at any time does a tiger fear domestic cattle or

the wild beasts he preys upon, with the exception of the adult bull bison and the elephant. He rouses his protest against the government which supplies deadly insecticide to the villagers free of charge to protect their crops against various pests. Due to this the riots whose cattle or goats have been killed by the tigers, have no compunction about smearing the flesh of their slain animals with this stuff. The result is so disastrous:

Particularly in Mysore state, tigers, panthers, hyenas,
And even jackals, vultures, have been practically wiped
Out by the misuse of this chemical...It is deplorable that
The authorities cannot, do not, or will not see the truth of
This matter. (Anderson, 208)

Ecocriticism recognizes, as anthropocentrism does not, that human beings live in a more than human world and therefore he must have concern for the non-human creatures:

If humans do learn to care about what happens to other
Species and ecosystems---that is, to treat nature as if it
Mattered---then the repercussions of ecological destruct-
Tion to humans will be lessened. The vital thing, therefo-
Re, is to set anthropocentric concerns within ecocentric
Concerns. (Sylvan and Bennet, 90)

In *Jungles Long Ago*, is a window to peep into the lives and beliefs of natives in India towards the last days of colonial era and also a very resourceful book about jungles. His concern for the future of wildlife takes him to sanctuaries where no shot may be fired. Thus Anderson's keen interest in conservation and preservation of Indian biodiversity proves him to be an Eco-Man.

An ecocentric ethic alone will probably not suffice to save the Earth fit for life as we know it. As Fredrick Bender says:

It takes extraordinary forbearance to refrain from ex-
Ploiting nature. To find nature important enough to j-
Ustify the changes necessary to preserve and restore
It, first we must experience it as intrinsically valuable.

(Bender, 348)

Corbett, as all great hunters, always had his quarry in the cross hairs and the story moves ahead giving the readers the impression that they are walking a step behind the author as Corbett tells the story as seen by the hunter with his eye. Anderson on the other hand, is a more avid student of nature. This typical naturalistic aspect takes his narration to a slightly wider canvass; one gets an intimate picture of the forest, its inhabitants and their behaviour patterns. He would often go into the jungle alone and unarmed to meditate and enjoy the

beauty of untouched nature. In his introduction to *Tales from the Indian Jungle*, he writes of himself--- “*He appears to be the jungle himself, and we get the impression that he belongs there. This is the home for him and here is the place he would want to die; the jungle is his birthplace, his heaven and his resting place when the end comes.*” (Anderson,108). The ultimate historical foundations of nature preservations are aesthetic and ethical. We recognize this when Anderson dedicates this book:

To all those who love the still wild places of the earth
 ---the tropical jungles, the towering mountains and ro-
 Lling hills, the open skies, and to all those who love pe-
 Ace, stillness and solitude, wildlife and nature...(Anderson, 77)

In the Introduction of his book *Man-Eaters and Jungle Killers*, Anderson writes of the effect progressing civilization and industrialisation is having on the natural world. He writes these stories not only to give pleasure to the adventurous, but to provide a record of what the great forests of record of what the great forests of India were once like:

Time and civilisation march inexorably onward, bringing
 In their wake industrialisation, higher standards of living,
 And greater amenities and comforts, but at the price, it s-
 Eems, of an ever-diminishing nature.....With the crash of
 The forest giants, other things take their departure too: the
 Wild animals, the birds and all the living creatures that once
 Beautified our lands. They are all disappearing, and very rap-
 Idly too! (Anderson, 233)

Again his book *This is Jungle*, is also an attempt to serve the growing protest against the destruction of the natural habitat and species. He presents his accounts of night ghooming in jungle, followed by a lesson in jungle lore and daytime tracking in the jungle and at dawn. In his story “Ghooming at Dawn” from *Tales from the Indian Jungle*, his observation of the natural scenario is very touching----“In the jungle a tardy awakening may spell the difference between life and death...stretch of water, lit by stars...unwelcome visit by wandering elephant that might have come to drink...unpleasant foes such as crocodiles, snakes and scorpions...”(Anderson,6). This kind of reciprocity of man and nature is evoked in vivid, rhythmic prose:

They felt the rush of the sap in spring, they knew the wave
 Which cannot halt, but every year throws forward the seed
 To begetting, and falling back, leaves the young-born on the
 Earth. They knew the intercourse between heaven and earth
 Sunshine drawn into the breast and bowels....their life and

Interrelations were such; feeling the pulse and body of the soil
 That opened to their furrow for the grain, and became smooth
 And supple after their ploughing....They took the udder of the
 Cows, cows yielded milk and pulse against the hands of the men,
 The pulse of the cows beat into the pulse of the hands of the men.

(Lawrence, 42)

Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature*, ascribes to Francis Bacon a pivotal role in the construction of an environmentally destructive world view where 'the image of an organic cosmos with a living female earth with its centre gave way to a mechanistic worldview in which nature was reconstituted as dead and passive, to be dominated and controlled by humans.' From an ecocritical perspective this reflects the ambivalent role of humans as both a producer of environmental hazards and a critical analyst of them. In one of his lesser known novel *The Fire of Passion*, he discusses the Anglo-Indians as inhabiting a middle-ground and being despised both by the British imperials and by the Indians. Anderson is against this ambivalence and in his last book *Jungles Long Ago*, his concern for the future wildlife takes him to sanctuaries where no shot be fired. His venture from his hunting grounds to sanctuaries indicates how much ecological transformation these environmentally conscious colonials undergo as they turned into conservationists. In the introduction to his book *Man-Eaters and Jungle Killers*, Anderson exposes the loss of Indian biodiversity:

India, too, has lost much, for the decrease in the variety and
 Number of her wild life has been alarming...One cannot doubt
 But that the time will come when even the few living creatures
 That today remain in their natural state will have vanished, man
 May then, and only then, realise too late what a priceless asset
 He has wantonly allowed to be thrown away. (Anderson, 234)

These writings of Anderson provide an alarm call for the conservation of Indian animals which are almost going to be exterminated. Again due to his close attachment with the trees of Indian jungles Anderson is also aware of many unknown herbs and plants which have inherent value. In his book *Tales from the Indian Jungle*, he has mentioned 'vellari' plant which could be used as a remedy against poisonous snake-bites, slowing down high blood-pressure. Again he has mentioned Indian periwinkle shrub, which is known as 'sugar-killer' could be used to control diabetes. Anderson is overwhelmed with these beneficial aspects of nature:

Truely the jungle is filled with all manner of herbs and plants
 Whose leaves, stems, seeds, flowers and even roots are remedies
 For most of the maladies from which the human race suffers.
 They grow in the forests and also in civilized areas, even al-

Ong the railway track. (Anderson, 14)

One may argue that hunting activity is against the ethics of ecocriticism as killing the animals, means affecting the eco-diversity of the environment. But one should also remember that these big-cats were man-eaters and they had killed more than 1000 villagers, from this perspective shooting man-eaters is a responsible task, undertaken to save villagers and their livestock. Anderson's texts although mostly hunting narratives, emphasise the importance of protecting, nurturing and guiding human beings but each and everything which are part of nature. Anderson's enthusiasm for conservation is clear in his book *Tales from the Indian Jungle*:

Some enthusiasts have read my books...it has become
A matter of necessity, from the point of view of Indian
Conservation...For tigers, panthers and bears are becoming
very scarce in Southern India. The heavy shooting which
Resulted from the influx of foreigners into India during
World War II began their decimation. The Indian poacher
Particularly, of the kind that uses jeeps with spotlights, continued
the process. (Anderson, 207)

Well meaning animal lovers often do not understand that in a highly pressurized situation, safe chemical capture of a free ranging tiger is difficult. On the other hand, shooting the man-eater with a gun is easier and it saves human lives. An eminent hunter-conservationist Ullas Karanth argues that by caring for every individual wild tigers too deeply, we may be dooming the entire species as due to these man-eaters tigers became the enemy of mankind:

Science and practical experience clearly shows
That we cannot care for every individual wild tiger,
Animal lovers and conservationists should therefore
Focus on saving the species as a whole, rather than
Worry about saving every individual. Conservation
Interventions must therefore be guided by scientific
Evidence and social practicality, rather than emotions.

(Rangrajan, 10)

Trying to rescue a few man-eating tigers is irrelevant to accomplish the conservation objective of expanding and stabilizing wild tiger populations. Therefore human response to nature should be characteristically "synecological" or collective rather than "autoecological" or individualistic. Furthermore, in

Anderson's mind, conservation and environmental awareness grew directly out of both the ideology of empire and that of sport and thus Anderson's concern for Indian bio-diversity and wildlife conservation really prove him to be an Eco-Man.

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