

CHAPTER – 1

INTRODUCTION

The present work focuses primarily on the hunting history of the princely state of Cooch Behar along with associated issues and events, factors and forces, covering a period beginning from the British intervention in Cooch Behar state through a treaty concluded in the early seventies of the eighteenth century and subsequent colonial interventions into the governmental affairs of this princely state which continued both by East India Company and thereafter by British Government till the merger of Cooch Behar State with the decolonized India Union in the late forties of the twentieth century. The study primarily explores the history of hunting as an expression of colonial masculinity, paternalism and supremacy of colonial rulers for acquiring legitimacy of the princely rulers. The coloniser, while realising such objectives, did follow the principle of accommodation and compromise of the hunting practices of the princely rulers. At the hindsight, hunting as a tool of forest clearance and reclamation of forest into cultivable land for revenue generation was insisted upon by the coloniser as a part of a greater imperial political project. The study traces the anthropogenesis and biocentrism behind hunting, keeping in mind the basic intrinsic antagonism between colonial and indigenous hunting and to understand contestation and sharing of such nature of hunting in the perspective of Nature, Culture and Colonialism. The study further explores the interrelationship of hunting with political authority, legitimacy, people, peasants, gender identity, and associated ecological concerns.

The primary thrust is to understand hunting as a politico-cultural practice of colonialism and its impact on indigenous practice (*Shikar*) with special reference to princely Cooch Behar. It has covered themes such as the effects of colonial construction of masculinity on royal hunting in princely Cooch Behar and the development of leisure hunting or

hunting as a sport under the influence of the colonizers. The study has highlighted hunting as an instrument to make a close connection between the British and the princely Cooch Behar. The purpose is to depict the real motive behind the increasing popularity of hunting in Cooch Behar during the reign of Maharaja Nripendra Narayan and its continuity and changes in the post-Maharaja Nripendra Narayan regime. The role of royal women hunters in Cooch Behar has also been an important pointer covered by this study. The study analyses hunting as a parameter of distinction between the ruler and the ruled, differentiating princely hunting under the aegis of Imperialism and indigenous people's hunting. The study will also cover the burgeoning debate on hunting as unnecessary wildlife destruction vs. saving people's life and property and the impacts of princely hunting on ecology in the context of natural equilibrium versus dominant eco-imperialism.

Statement of the Problem:

In contemporary academic discourses, colonial Indian princely states have drawn considerable attention among the historians of South Asia. These peripheral regions have hitherto been located at the margins of the historiography of the subcontinent and used to be viewed as an integral part of colonial historiography. For over the last fifty years, researches on princely states have been many. The Marxist writings emphasise on centre periphery thesis to understand the political economy of the princely states, while the subaltern theorists argue that colonialism was instrumental in destructing the pre capitalist agrarian structures of the peripherally situated Indian states.

Nicholas B. Dirks has made an extensive study on Indian states by developing “Little Kingdom” model, where he has attempted to analyse the anthropological issues like castes and such other social and religious practices prevalent in pre-modern Indian society, which were absorbed and accommodated by the coloniser while dealing with the

princely states assuming power as a cultural construction.¹ Appreciating the contribution of Nicholas Dirks, scholars like Hira Singh, Frank Perlin, and Wallerstein have argued that the Little Kingdom model has failed to differentiate British India and Indian India. Moreover, the princely states cannot be understood unless the power relations are to be construed in terms of people and given variegated land relations and proprietary hold of people over land cantering around Rajas. This political economy model needs to be highlighted while dealing with the study of Indian princely states.

Whether considered as a puppet kingdom or claiming to have a variegated amount of autonomy, the hegemonic influence of colonial rule cannot be ignored in the princely states, especially in terms of societal and cultural representations. One major intellectual concern in post-colonial historiography ponders over the question whether princes were a 'creation' or 'invention' of the British or whether they represented a continuity of traditional state formation in India.² The princess suffered from the dual compulsion of being termed as 'progressive' against the traditional labelling of 'oriental despot'. This dual compulsion forced them to embrace an 'alternative modernity' which was highly influenced by the model of colonial modernity. Representation of hunting as a symbol of colonial masculinity was one such attempt to reach the 'alternative modernity goals'.³ The concept of masculinity has its origin in our colonial past; however, the concepts of masculinity and masculinism, are distinguished on the grounds that while 'masculinity ... is always local and subject to change, masculinism or heterosexualism' is relatively constant. Masculinism is an underlying ethos or totalising worldview that implicitly universalises and privileges the qualities of masculinity and in doing so, subordinates and other alternative ways of understanding, knowing and being. The concept of masculinism allows us to separate our gendered analysis from liberal ideas of gender as a binary attribute of individual men and women.⁴

This study attempts to represent the processes and practices through which the cultural representations of two differently positioned elites, i.e. the colonisers and the colonised, were constituted respectively as the 'manly Englishman' and the 'effeminate Bengali' in nineteenth-century India and how the rulers of the princely state of Cooch Behar had attempted to accommodate this cultural reflection by participating in the so-called masculine hunting. In the words of Mrinalini Sinha, “Neither the colonisers nor the colonised represented homogenous groups; there were not only important internal hierarchies of class, gender, and status within each group, but also alliances across various axes that in fact, helped fashion the opposition between colonial and nationalist politics. Indeed, Colonial masculinity reframes, from the perspective of the uneven and contradictory intersection of various axes of power, the dynamics between colonialism and nationalism, on the one hand, and between colonial Indian and metropolitan British society, on the other. It thus re-contextualises some of the major colonial controversies of the late nineteenth century in India.”⁵

By the late 19th Century and the early 20th Century, the British had established unquestionable supremacy over the North-Eastern frontier region, especially up to Assam plains or up to Western part of Brahmaputra. This site of India's North-East was an amorphous zone mostly ruled by the native princes subjugated to the British Empire. For example, long before the colonial hunting expedition, the state of Cooch Behar had become a tributary state of the East India Company with the treaty of 1773 between the East India Company and Raja of Cooch Behar concluded immediately after the Anglo-Bhutan war. This maiden space, under forest cover, was spotted as a sporting ground for the big game hunting of the British in association with the princely elites and continued till the late nineteenth century, including the early two decades of the twentieth century. By that period, the forest was brought under the complete control of the British empire by way of the establishment of a forest regime legislating forest laws, which provided

few riders to the princely rulers for hunting. Collaborative hunting in Cooch Behar forests stretching up to western part of Brahmaputra was thus a location of royal hunting occasionally corroborated by British and European hunters. The primary purpose of this exercise is to find an answer to the question: how did colonial hunting, in association with the princely ruler of Cooch Behar, focus on its symbolic political significance in which the sovereign displayed the ability to rule and extract legitimacy from the subjects.⁶

The relevant accounts of available literature show that both the indigenous rulers of the Indian princely states and the British hunters had perceived hunting as a cultural means to display their powers as sovereign.⁷ In pre-colonial India, tiger hunting was considered as a symbol of Kingship by the local society. The colonisers in fact, appropriated the symbolic meaning of the hunt to assert their authority over the local society but, in the process, imbued it with a different significance. Within the context of colonialism, hunting represented a different configuration of power that a princely state emulated in the relationship between a King and his subject. William Storey argues that for the British sportsmen in India, hunting became an indirect way of domination of western cultures over restless natives, which also represented the victory of European culture over nature.⁸ Annand Pandian argues further that the British signified hunting more with the display of their caring attitude towards the Indian society than with the display of their disciplinary powers as the Mughals had done.⁹ With the passage of time, for the colonialist, hunting had become a platform to assert a masculine self-identity over the local society and some fellow countrymen - an identity which was then articulated with triumphant British nationalistic rhetoric.¹⁰

Hunting in colonial India, in general, constituted the identity of the British sportsmen and suggested the idea of fairness in hunting, making it a gentleman's game, which was

introduced by the British towards the end of the 19th Century in the form of hunting codes and game laws. Such codes and laws had been developed by the influence of liberal political ethos of the Enlightenment era, a subjective idea based on equality, justice and fairness. In fact, the idea of fairness in hunting, along with masculinity and mastery over nature, had been central to the making of the sportsman identity.¹¹ It is to be noted that colonial hunting in association with the local princes in the forests located in peripheral zones of British India was a symbolic attempt to re-establish the unquestionable supremacy of the rule of empire both over forests and people at its margin.

British hunting and Indian princely hunting did develop on contradictory value premises, while the former was largely individualistic and anthropocentric, the latter was bio centric and communitarian in nature and forms. Certain ideas relating to moral ecology of hunting followed by the indigenous rulers had been a kind of reciprocity renewal and regeneration as a part of a local subsistence economy, which were largely missing in the hunting ethos of British sportsmanship. For the British, the size of a trophy had remained at the centre of attention.¹² While the British represented fairness as a contest between two equal players, the indigenous hunting represented it as an exchange between two unequal players. Thus, the rules of gaining trophies by palming off heads of the animals had been different in moral cultural values of the indigenous hunters and that of the British.¹³ The basic difference lies in the bio-centric ethos of hunting of the Indian rulers and the anthropocentric ethos of hunting of the British colonisers.

Inspired by James Scott's work on moral economy, Michael Dove has informed us to the notion of moral ecology, while he observes the followings: "the difference in the production system and the nature of the economy gives rise to difference in moral ecology of the colonizer and the colonized. For example, India, being an agriculture

economy, is mediated through unique drawing actionable order which is based on long term reproduction of a social cosmological order. On the contrary, agri-industrial or industrial society focuses more on the short term maximization of transfer of benefits and profits. Here develops, hunting as a production system profits out theoretical insights at different economic zones. While the element of fairness, which is essentially a moral question in hunting, thus played out differently in the two different kinds of economic systems.”¹⁴

Tiger and lion hunting in the Indian states was more about their exhibition of symbolic ability to rule rather than merely to exhibit their prowess through hunting. Cooch Behar, being a resource poor native state, hunting was considered as an economic burden on the empire. The rulers of the small princely states in the North-east in the last 19th and early 20th Century lacked the minimum economic resources to engage in hunting as a show of their power. Despite such conditions, the princes and Maharaja undertook hunting to equate themselves with the British sportsmen, despite harsh economic conditions, as a form of symbolic governance. Thus, collaborative hunting represented as a protector of the people living in the margin and to provide them relief from the wild beasts for their subsistence.

Thus, the cultural contour of British sportsmanship was always clashed with the native princess on moral ecology and fairness questions. However, the irony is it was the collaboration and assistance of indigenous shikaris (hunters) and their knowledge of the animals and habitats dealing with the local population always contributed to the success of British sportsman hunting as it was evident that during the late 19th and early 20th century, hunting in India became popular means for claiming a superior self-identity based on liberal ideas of fairness. The fair hunting codes based on liberal ideas that were introduced in colonial India, however, proved a little success in making hunting a fair

sport in reality. The ideals of liberalism as included in fair hunting codes of the sportsman, contended to undermine the agency toward nature as they rendered hunting as a competition between nature and society. These views clashed with the moral ecology of indigenous hunting practices knowledge. Hunting was socialized as an exchange between nature and culture as a form of colonial cultural project and hunting was fraught with internal inconsistencies and contradictions that could only be resolved through perpetuating and creating unfair and hence unjust social relations in the wider society.¹⁵ Despite tension and condescension between the British and the Indian hunting partners, hunting of the princess of the native states was a concerted effort of British-Indian partnerships in the jungles wherein the indigenous moral was largely compromised.

In 18th Century English society, using beaters for driving beasts close to the shooter was seen as unfair, unbecoming of a ruler sportsman spirit. With the development of sophisticated guns and other artificial methods, hunters did have convenience to close down the animals in a much more convenient way. In response to these changes, the guide books written in England by game-keepers started providing instructions to sportsmen emphasizing the fairness of the chase and authenticity of the natural experience.¹⁶ These instruction taking altogether formed hunting codes which made a clear distinction between hunting as a sport built upon physical and moral character of a sportsman, and as a subsistence activity, hence inferior use of animals which the lower class practiced. In English sportsmanship, in pursuit of the animals became more important than the animal itself. What is considered as a fair game is to abide by the hunting ideals in the shape of rules of one class of hunters over another. The contest was of between the shooters and animals. In this way spirit of hunting claimed compounded separation of the elite class from the commoners. Hunting was thus associated as much with physical and moral character as with social status and the exertion of control of the colonialist over the forest land.

Acquiring trophy heads was not the only purpose of hunting for the British sportsmen. Hunting was treated as a promise of its unique and aesthetically pleasing experience. However, hunting certainly had become a means for the sportsman with ideals of a masculine identity of the British hunter.¹⁷ The shikar (hunting) club was established in 1908 in England to view hunting in the colonies as a real sport in pursuit of wild animals. It was within this context of regeneration of a masculine national identity that British hunting came to the colonies as an adventure sport. The gentleman hunting had become an extension of the playing prowess of colonialism over the colonized forest land. Initially, the British hunted in Indian forests with the indigenous ruling classes, often emulating their methods, which, according to the English hunting code, could not be considered as fair. The British attitude towards the indigenous Indian hunting changed dramatically since the second half of the 19th Century. It has been seen that a constant avenue of collaboration and interaction between the colonized and the colonizer while hunting in Indian forests had become the common practice.

Immediately after 1870, three important changes did occur that separated colonial hunting from that of the Indian practices. Firstly, the development of a new technology, making firearms; second, the Forest Act of 1878 that made the forest inaccessible to the indigenous hunters and finally, pomp with game to be associated with the Raj. Since that period, the British sportsmen, especially those hunting tigers started to view the hunting methods of the local princess and Rajas with disdain because they lacked the sporting element so crucial to their new sportsmanlike hunting ethos.¹⁸ The experience suggests that despite such disdain, the British sportsmen, while hunting in India, used to take support from suitable shikari or experienced hunting guides, people for food carrier and largely relied on local villagers who accompanied hunters on the shooting trips. Towards the end of the 19th Century, the Indian shikaries regularly served in the emerging shooting industry driven by the British sportsmen. The experience and local

knowledge of the shikaries could not be denied by the British sportsmen. The hunting party used to be constituted by a group of personnel accompanied by cooks, helpers, elephant riders, experienced shikaries etc. Thus it was an arrangement of not less than a hundred people to form a hunting party in India.¹⁹

The British sportsman having commitment to the masculinity did restrain themselves from shooting female beasts and baby game. The huge male trophy was the ultimate purpose of the sports duly recognized by the game rules. Such game rules were absent among the Indian shikaries. When natives felt guilt and understood their wrong doings, it represented the success of the British masculinity mission. Photography of the hunted animals depicting hunt as a grand experience and that was the documentation of symbolic representation of British control over nature. The most common hunting post was one in which the foot of the British hunters was placed over the animal's carcass prior to the screening process.

More relevant for our purpose, various Indian monarchies, including several of the Mughal emperors, hunted tigers as a major way to demonstrate their power over nature. Tiger has different meaning in such cases, the British sought to emulate the purpose of the Mughal, tiger hunts as the symbol of prowess, masculinity and authority. While hunting tigers during the period, the British drew upon two powerful meanings, both associated with Indian Kingship. On the one hand, the British emulated the Mughals and other Indian rulers by killing tigers and on the other hand, in the course of destroying these animals, they were also symbolically stating the defeat of the Indian rulers who dared to get rid of imperial conquest of India. With an extension of idea, it can be argued that British tiger hunting represented imperial domination not only on India's politics but also of its natural environment. Establishing control over India's natural environment, principally over forests, the British undertook hunting as an extended part of the British

imperial, political-economic power project. This included the resources of the forests to be extracted unquestionably, which culminated in the promulgation of the Forest Act of 1878. Over-archaic Forest Act could bring control over 1/5th of the landmass of South Asia directly under British control, making them the largest land manager in the sub-continent and also one of the largest forestry enterprises in the world, as explained by Rangarajan.²⁰

Thus, hunting as a masculine power project helped Britain for exploiting the process of colonization by the imperial sway over the natural world.²¹ Amidst British imperialism in the Indian subcontinent, big game hunting had remained a central point of attention, which symbolized the imperial dominance of the environment and was also important, as MacKenzie argues, over the construction of imperial masculinity.²² W.K. Storey argues, “the triumph of culture over nature and of the colonizer over colonized.”²³ The imperial scholarship has provided much useful information on colonial hunting practices during the late 19th and early 20th centuries and has drawn many more important connections between hunting, imperialism and masculinity. However, there had been a thorough transformation of the methods of hunting. During the late years of imperialism, the weapons for hunting tigers were very different from the earlier period. Thomas Rice observes: “the smooth-bore, muzzle-loading muskets used prior to the 1870s were considered as very light, inferior and inefficient compared with the then new velocity hunting rifles. Hunters before the 1870s shot at charging tigers with weapons that had typical ranges of only 50 to 100 yards, which greatly affected both the precision and the penetrating power.”²⁴ With the coming of new technology, tiger hunting during the late 19th century became “one of the sites on which the colonial project tried to construct and affirm the difference between its superior self and the inferior native other”.²⁵

In fact, three major changes which occurred during the period that fundamentally changed the nature of tiger hunting: (i) the weapons revolution that made shooting large animals significantly easier and safer for hunters but deadlier for the animals; (ii) the increased pomp of colonialism from the mid-1870s onward and finally, the Forest Act which more directly involved the colonial state in hunting.²⁶ The colonial rulers asserted that the Indian rulers and native shikaries are weak and timid, which reflect effeminate characters of the natives, and expressed that they could be relied upon to protect people from these dangerous beasts by killing them. However, the single handed notion of masculinity has been largely contested by the Indian scholars who thought that hunting in Indian land did remain always a corroboration between the British and the Indian native hunters. What the British could do be relegating the Indians, discarding their names in most of the hunting books published from England, which approved to show the pro-active British hunter most masculine and the Indians native as helpless effeminate. However, there are references in many of the hunting books that have acknowledged the collaborative hunting with native shikaris became indispensable to the hunt in a variety of different ways and thus the credit of masculinity in hunting in Indian forests, arguably, should not match with the British hunters only.

Objectives of the Study:

The followings constitute the specific objectives of the proposed study -

- To trace the impact of colonial masculinity as an anthropocentric model of colonial hunting on the bio-centric mode of hunting of the princely state of Cooch Behar.
- To explore the evolution of hunting from a practice of leisure to the pride of a sportsman establishing paternal role to order the forests and to save people from the carnivorous and to extract obedience and legitimacy of people.

- To trace the role of hunting as an instrument of collaboration, accommodation and compromise between colonial masters and Indian princes, primarily to realise generation of revenues by way of forest clearance, reclamation of ploughable land and extinction of predators from forest.
- To explore the role of women hunters in the so-called masculine world of hunting as a step forward to modernity as cherished by the coloniser.
- To trace the role of hunting as a medium of maintaining a social distinction between the ruler and the ruled at different layers and stairs.
- To examine the gradual evolution of different forms of hunting, mutually shared and contested, practiced and followed by the rulers of princely Cooch Behar.
- To evaluate the ecological consequences of hunting.

Overview of Literature:

Hunting as a subfield of studies in India's Environmental History has gained the focus of the scholars of South Asian Environmental History for over decades. Environmental history studies human interaction with the natural world and how nature influences human affairs over time.²⁷ The environment has two primary constituents: living and nonliving. The forests are one of the significant living constituents of environmental history. The forests also have essential components, i.e., wildlife and trees. Wildlife also has a substantial contribution to history writing. Over time, humans have killed wildlife in the name of mrigaya, shikar, hunting, game shooting, netting, caging, trapping, spearing, sports, etc. The most used term for killing wildlife is hunting. Such activities impacted the existence of wildlife. Now, questions may arise here: Why have humans killed wildlife? Did every society kill wildlife? What were the impacts of wildlife

destruction? Why have humans conserved them also? Several researchers have invested their precious time in studying various dimensions of hunting.

Here, our focus will be mainly on South Asia. In the context of India, the researchers have focused mainly on colonial hunting or shooting. The researchers have primarily analysed the following questions: What was the motive and nature of hunting in India? How far was colonial hunting different from pre-colonial India? Did hunting influence forest conservation? What were the impacts of colonial hunting? What was the nature of hunting in the princely states? Several researchers have focused on different viewpoints on studying hunting in India.

Scott Bennett was among the first researchers to invest in hunting-related studies. He highlighted in his article 'Shikar and the Raj' (1984) that hunting was 'an innocent amusement'.²⁸ John M. MacKenzie's work 'The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism' (1988) may be considered one of the first significant contribution to the history of hunting in India. According to John M. MacKenzie, hunting was an activity to display 'white dominance' over nature and inferior social class.²⁹ The British government established a firm relationship with the Indian elite classes to dominate the inferior social classes in India. He adds hunting was also a form of sport in colonial India.³⁰ Ramchandra Guha and Madhav Gadgil (1989) showed that the conflict between the industrial modes and settled cultivator mode of resource use resulted in the commercialisation of forest species, which displaced wild animals.³¹ William Storey (1991) opines colonial big-game hunting displayed Western power and dominance over nature and natives or colonised.³² This work supports John M. MacKenzie's opinion. Richard H. Grove (1997) says colonial conservation was a measure for keeping large animals for 'exclusive European delectation' or for recreational hunting or commercial interest.³³ Rosalind O'Hanlon (1997), in her research, has

pointed out fighting animals as one of the masculine qualities essential for a successful ruler, military commander, ally and warrior.³⁴ Mahesh Rangarajan (1998) has pointed out that agricultural expansion led to the destruction of wildlife in India.³⁵ K. Sivaramakrishnan (1999) highlights the extension of the colonial empire into the forest regions and establishing symbolic affirmation of colonial rule over the areas of their colonies as reasons for colonial hunting. He has also seen hunting as a character-building sport. A good hunter will potentially be a good soldier, leader, explorer and pioneer.³⁶ According to M. S. S. Pandian (1998), colonial hunting wanted to affirm and construct the ideology of superior self and inferior native other. The British presented themselves as super masculine, risk-taking and preserving. Conversely, natives were shown as effeminate and utilitarian.³⁷ According to C. MaKenzie (2000), the colonisers made hunting a masculine identity in India.³⁸ Anand S. Pandian (2001) has seen hunting as a colonial sport.³⁹ The first significant contribution to the study of Indian wildlife history is 'India's Wildlife History' (2001) by Mahesh Rangarajan. Mahesh Rangarajan says the practice of hunting was common in pre-colonial India. Then, there was no motive for the complete destruction or eradication of wildlife. However, colonial rule in India brought a drastic change in wildlife destruction. The British intention was to complete the eradication of wildlife. The colonial agricultural expansion policy into the forest tracts was motivated to generate more revenue for the British treasury. Moreover, British forest conservation was an act to perennial timber supply for railway sleepers and other necessary activities. The conversation of the forest had almost nothing to do with the wildlife. The British government didn't pay enough attention to game preservation.⁴⁰ Boria Majumdar (2005) pointed out that for the British upper classes, hunting was a symbol of status.⁴¹ Joseph Sramek (2006) has shown hunting as a major symbol of British imperial and masculine identities.⁴² According to William Beinart Rhodes and Lotte Hughes (2007), hunting was a favourite leisure pursuit.⁴³ Kevin Kannan (2007)

also has emphasised hunting as a leisure activity.⁴⁴ Ranjan Chakrabarti (2009) highlights in his research paper 'Local People and the Global Tiger: An Environmental History of the Sundarbans' that the agricultural expansion into the Sundarbans led to hunting. It created a confrontation with the tigers. The British government offered a reward for the killing of tigers.⁴⁵ Swati Shresth (2009) opines colonial hunting was a new ideology of dominance. It also created a racial difference between the rulers and the ruled.⁴⁶ According to Shafqat Hussain (2010), colonial sports hunting was a mechanism to establish an identity through the fairness or code of sportsmanship.⁴⁷ Fiona Mani (2012) has mainly focused on masculinity in hunting.⁴⁸ Shafqat Hussain (2012) has observed that colonial hunting was a practice to save life and bring civilisation into nature.⁴⁹ Vijaya Ramadas Mandala (2015) has pointed out that extending political hegemony in the marginal areas for expanding revenues by extracting forest resources gave impetus to hunting and shooting.⁵⁰ An important contribution to wildlife history in India, especially the history of hunting, is Vijaya Ramadas Mandala's 'Shooting a Tiger: Big-Game Hunting and Conservation in Colonial India' (2019). According to him, hunting in colonial India was an integral aspect of 'colonial governance.' In his words, hunting 'served as a political, practical, and symbolic apparatus in the consolidation of power and rule.'⁵¹ The latest publication, "Colonialism and Wildlife: An Environmental History of Modern India" (1st Ed., 2023) by Velayutham Saravanan, is a crucial addition to the wildlife history of colonial India. This book has emphasised the economic utility of wild animals. The colonisers saw wildlife as a profitable commodity. Several wildlife resources had a massive demand in the internal and external markets. Colonial hunting and wildlife conservation policies had a commercial motive. The colonisers implemented forest and wildlife laws to protect their commercial interests by imposing state control over the resources.⁵²

In the matter of princely states' hunting Mahesh Rangarajan (1999) opines the British, Indian elites and the Indian princes hunted for glory. They want to prove their prowess at arms and skills. They also hunted for pleasure and leisure.⁵³ According to Barbara N. Ramusack (2008), 'Hunting was a form of preparation for battle, a display of physical courage, and occasionally an effort to protect one's subjects from destructive animals, particularly tigers.'⁵⁴ The first dedicated contribution to the hunting in the princely states of India is 'Animal Kingdoms: Hunting, the Environment, and Power in the Indian Princely States' (2013) by Julie E. Hughes. Hughes has analysed hunting from the perspective of the princely royals. She opines the royals (especially the Rajputs) of the princely state established meaningful links with their ancestors and historically glorified battlefields through hunting. Hunting was not a colonial stereotyping but a natural activity that was coming out of the cultural and socio-political background of the Rajputana princely states. She adds that Indian princely royals (Rajputs) saw hunting or shikar as a sport by which they wanted to explore their martial heritage, masculinity, personal status, power, heroism, etc. It paved the way for bonding with their subjects and the colonial government.⁵⁵ Julie E. Hughes indirectly supports the viewpoints of Barbara N. Ramusack on hunting. According to Barbara N. Ramusack (2008), 'Hunting was a form of preparation for battle, a display of physical courage, and occasionally an effort to protect one's subjects from destructive animals, particularly tigers.'⁵⁶ Nalini Ranjan Ray has pointed out princely hunting as martialism or Kshatriya hood.⁵⁷ M. Belliappa opines the princes participated in hunting due to some insecurities.⁵⁸ The study of Vijaya Ramadas Mandala (2019) opines the princes in colonial India were collaborators in the making of British rule and legitimised colonial overlordship over marginal landscapes in India. It was a power-making process where Indian princes enjoyed certain privileges.⁵⁹

The present research on Cooch Behar princely state doesn't wholly agree with some of the existing opinions of researchers based on current research findings. For example, the

latest publication, "Colonialism and Wildlife: An Environmental History of Modern India" (1st Ed., 2023) by Velayutham Saravanan, highlights the economic utility of wildlife. He has emphasised mainly the commodification of animals for economic benefits as a reason for hunting in colonial India. The colonial forest or wildlife conservation was also motivated by the economic benefits.⁶⁰ But in the case of the princely state of Cooch Behar, the royals would not consider wildlife resources for economic benefits. Though the only last Maharaja of Cooch Behar adopted Safari hunting or shooting after the independence of India, he didn't make the resources of dead wild animals a commodity for commercial purposes. The royals of Cooch Behar would give the trophies to their guests as gifts. Lord Galway was a big game shooting party member of Nripendra Narayan in 1889 (The 1st shoot for that year, which lasted from 12th February to 18th March, but he and some party members left the camp on 17th February). His sanctum at Serlby was decorated with tiger, bear and bison trophies from Cooch Behar.⁶¹ Nripendra Narayan gave many taxidermy specimens to Rowland Ward to maintain his world record books.⁶² Sometimes, they would provide lively animals as gifts to the zoo. Nripendra Narayan had given the best specimens of his shooting to the Natural History Museum.⁶³ The Cooch Behar royals did this without taking any economic benefit. The perennial supply of wild animals for hunting was one of the factors that encouraged forest and animal conservation in Cooch Behar. So, we can't say that royals participated in shooting or hunting to gain economic benefits by selling the wild animals they shot.

The princely states' hunting or shooting-related research also has limitations or gaps. The study of Julie E. Hughes (2013) has some shortcomings, like she has emphasised mainly on the Rajputana princely state (specifically 3 Rajputana princely states, i.e. Mewar, Orchha and Bikaner) of northwestern India.⁶⁴ It has ignored other princely states in India. The study of Vijaya Ramadas Mandala (2019) has emphasised almost all the pan-

Indian princely states. He opines that the princely royals across India were active collaborators in the making of a 'mutual politico-ritual philosophy' of hunting. The mutual collaboration and pivotal role played by the Indian princes in hunting paved the way for the British to legitimise colonial overlordship over marginal landscapes in India. It became a 'colonial politics of power-making'. Such collaboration enabled Indian princes to enjoy certain privileges.⁶⁵ But in Cooch Behar's case, the case was, of course, political, but it had economic and environmental perspectives too. The commissioners' rule in Cooch Behar adopted large-scale forest reclamation to increase agricultural lands. The main thrust of forest reclamation occurred during the youth of Nripendra Narayan. The abode of the wild animals had shrunk in such massive forest destruction. They also faced food shortages. So, in search of food and shelter, they shifted to other areas. In such migration, some animals migrated to the upper regions of the forests, and some came into the human settlements in many areas of Cooch Behar. Some of these beasts were very dangerous for the lives of the common people, cattle and crops. The killing of such animals was imperative to save life and property of the common people from them. So, the British administrators started hunting in Cooch Behar immediately before and during Nripendra Narayan's reign. The relationship of Cooch Behar was not too friendly till the reign of Harendra Narayan. He opposed the British authority in many ways. Shivendra Narayan and Narendra Narayan were pro-British.⁶⁶ Therefore, hunting became a regular practice after forest reclamation that was almost not too serious before the commissioners' rule in Cooch Behar due to the non-destruction of forests. The British government was the problem creator, and they acted as the protector.

The present micro-level study on the princely state of Cooch Behar shows various reasons contributed to the hunting by royals of the princely state. But overall, British education, guardianship and the ideological construction of masculinity brought Cooch Behar royals to masculine sports shooting.

The hunting in the princely state of Cooch Behar is an untouched area of research. Though some research papers have already been published, these are not self-sufficient in a broader framework.

According to Nalini Ranjan Ray, hunting of the princely state of Cooch Behar was an act to restore their pre-colonial martial or warrior-caste attributes.⁶⁷ This article mainly supports the study of Julie E. Hughes' 'Animal Kingdoms: Hunting, the Environment, and Power in the Indian Princely States' (2013). Indeed, the hunting followed by the royals of Cooch Behar was to restore their martial glory. Nalini R. Ray emphasises mainly the military or warrior caste perspective. But this article ignores economic, political, social and environmental perspectives of hunting. This article doesn't clarify some of the points on shooting, for example, what was the nature of the shooting after Nripendra Narayan's death? What was the role of the royal women in shooting? How far were royal masculine sports shooting different from the native hunting mode? Did shooting help to save life and property of the common people? What were the impacts of the shooting in Cooch Behar? Nalini Ranjan Ray argues that Anglicisation or Westernisation alienates Cooch Behar royals from 'locals'. So, as a British counterpart, Nripendra Narayan had to prove his martial credibility before the common people and the British. He took part in hunting to fulfil this. He adds there was a growing influence of the colonial officers over the people of Cooch Behar at the end of Nripendra Narayan's career. A young British officer became more weightful than the royals of Cooch Behar to the common people. (N.B. Here, he has mistakenly written 'Sumati Dwee' instead of 'Sunity Devee'.) Now the questions are: if mainly the lavish and frequent shooting of Nripendra Narayan reached its zenith between 1871 to 1911, then why did the influence of British officials increase over the common people of Cooch Behar at the end of his

career? It should be at the beginning of his career because he became Anglicised in childhood or adulthood. If so, then we have to say that shooting also alienates Cooch Behar royals from the common people of Cooch Behar. Why was Nripendra Narayan trained in shooting and horse riding in his childhood by the British? If it was alienating common people from Cooch Behar royals, then why did they take part and encourage the shooting? The British officials seemed too weightful because they wanted control over the affairs of Cooch Behar. The British officials had to take tough decisions to control the royals in Cooch Behar because of the economic and sovereign crisis of the Cooch Behar state. They imposed restrictions on frequent England tours due to the state's economic issues. The royals of the Cooch Behar were very frequent to England, and they intended to settle there. ⁶⁸ It was not acceptable to the British because of the absence of the royals in Cooch Behar; common people might revolt against the state of Cooch Behar. As Rozina Visram says, Lord Curzon saw Indian princely royals as ignorant, unruly, undisciplined schoolboys. His main concern was to increase the confidence of common people towards their ruler. He initiated a leave circular for the royals (frequent travellers) where they had to give earlier notice for the purpose of their trip to England. ⁶⁹ Nripendra learnt shooting from childhood as a part of the British mode of education, culture, belief and lifestyle. He was taught to participate in masculine sports to become a masculine man. The British encouraged him to take part in shooting from his childhood as a masculine sport. The British mode of honour or awards encouraged him to invest in shooting due to the close contact with the new Western people. The cultural affinity with the British and England tours made several new friends and acquaintances to him. However, most of them were the higher-ranked Britishers. The British government welcomed him warmly on every prestigious occasion. So, he was eager to return the hospitality received from Western society. In response, he arranged shooting for his hosts or other personalities in the society of the West as guests in Cooch Behar. Cooch

Behar had almost nothing to offer except such big-game shooting. It was a big game shooting in which Cooch Behar was famous. He followed the sportsmanship codes in his shooting, which made his shooting a distinct one from many others. The use of howdah elephants and beaters made Cooch Behar shooting a less dangerous sport than shooting on foot or a horse. The British bestowed the Cooch Behar throne to him when he came to adulthood. Nripendra Narayan had the intention to see his sons as British army officers. So, he demanded his son's officer commission, which was accepted based on the shooting. Shooting or hunting was considered a masculine and martial task. A big game shooter or hunter would be regarded suitable for military jobs. So, Nripendra Narayan adopted shooting as a masculine sport from childhood. He continued it as a masculine sport where he followed the code of sportsmanship.

The New England Review has published an article titled 'A Natural History of Colonialism' written by Mukund Belliappa, emphasising the insecurities of the Cooch Behar princely states which brought them to the arena of shooting. According to Mukund Belliappa, some insecurities of the Cooch Behar princely state brought them to hunting. He said, '....when the Indian royals, who were all beset by social, racial, and political insecurities, entered the field.'⁷⁰ The insecurity concept applies to the princely state of Cooch Behar in some cases, but it can not define all the princely states of India as a whole. Mukund Belliappa's article is also particular only to explore the reasons for participation in the shooting of the princely state of Cooch Behar by the royals (especially Nripendra Narayan)? It ignores other above-mentioned (Nalini Ranjan Ray's article) research questions on Cooch Behar. The princely state of Cooch Behar had social, political and racial insecurities, but these were not the only problems Mukund Belliappa highlights. First, Nripendra Narayan's reign saw an unprecedented popularity of shooting in Cooch Behar. The royals before Shivendra Narayan were not too friendly with the British government. Shooting was not as popular as it was during and after the

reign of Nripendra Narayan. The British government took responsibility for the education of Nripendra Narayan. He was taught shooting and horse riding in his childhood as a masculine project of the British Empire. He was encouraged to take part in other masculine sports also. The main impetus for his masculine sports shooting initially came from British endeavours, not from his familial background. So, we can't directly say that political, social and racial insecurities brought them directly to the shooting field. But we must say that these factors contributed significantly to giving an energetic impetus to his shooting later in his reign. One more addition is the economic factor that also contributed in some ways. The forest reclamation adopted mainly during the 1860s created a situation of vermin eradication in Cooch Behar. The environmental perspectives were also responsible for the increasing popularity of shooting in Cooch Behar. The geographical location of Cooch Behar made it an essential part of the country, with several animals that were naturally available.⁷¹ The availability of big games was a boon to Cooch Behar, for which it attracted several Western guests. Many princely states wanted to offer their best shooting opportunities to Western guests, but not all had plentiful and numerous wild animals. For example, Jaipur had few tigers to offer its guests to shoot.⁷² There were no tigers or leopards in Bikaner and Sirohi.⁷³

Dhananjay Bhattacharjee, in his article titled, 'Coochbeharer Maharaja Nripendra Narayaner Shikar Diary: Jibabaichitra Dhangser Ek Jibanta Dalil'(in Bengali) published by Paschim Banga Itihas Samsad has over emphasised on the negative criticism of Nripendra Narayan's diary. He has criticised Nripendra Narayan's shooting, saying it is an act of destruction of biodiversity. The writer has ignored the other impacts of the shooting.⁷⁴

The present study generalises the following observations on the shooting of the princely state of Cooch Behar. The British encouraged big game shooting in Cooch Behar

because they had some political and economic intentions. On the other hand, the royals of the princely state of Cooch Behar took part in masculine sports shooting endeavoured and encouraged by the British in the beginning and, in the later part, enthusiastically participated in such shooting due to some of their social, economic, political, racial etc. needs also. But overall, the concept of masculine sports shooting played a common role for the most part. This study represents shooting in the princely state of Cooch Behar from both points of view.

There was staged progress in the shooting of the princely state of Cooch Behar. Such staged changes influenced the factors of the shooting situations. For example, at the beginning of big game shooting in Cooch Behar, economic and political factors were much more pronounced. The commissioner's rule promoted shooting in Cooch Behar for revenue generation for the state. Nripendra Narayan was brought into the shooting arena in childhood as a part of sports education. There was an expectation of the British government that the qualities of masculine traits would be developed in him. The next stage was influenced by entertaining or hosting shooting parties for Western guests by Nripendra Narayan. The need to start a friendly relationship with the Western people was also a factor. A code of sportsmanship was also encouraged in such staged progress. Forming a world-famous trophy hunter or shooter identity was also a part of such staged progress in the shooting. In another stage, hunting was a medium to create martial and masculine identities. There were some shortcomings in Cooch Behar, which also promoted shooting in Cooch Behar royals. In the last part of the princely state of Cooch Behar, it was turned into a vital source of income by hosting shooting parties.

Research Gaps:

The above academic exploration of some of the seminal books on hunting entails the fact that social scientists in general and historians, in particular, have shown different

perspectives of hunting. However, none of the studies has explored the exclusive and inclusive relationship between hunting as a social culture of a princely state, at the one end, and nature, culture, colonialism, power space, masculinity and metamorphosis of transitions from tradition to modernity in perceiving hunting as the royal sports as well as an instrument of achieving loyalty, ranks and positions in British Army and subjugation of the commons to the princely rulers, at the one end, and showing unquestionable loyalty to the British by the princely rulers, on the other. No study has explored the academic possibility of providing linkages of hunting history connecting South Asian environmental history.

Research Questions:

1. How did hunting as a representation of colonial masculinity affect royal hunting in princely Cooch Behar?
2. How did 'leisure hunting' or 'hunting as a sport' develop under the influence of the colonizers?
3. How did hunting work as an instrument to make a deeper relationship with the British and the princely rulers Cooch Behar?
4. What was the real motive behind the enormous development of hunting during the reign of Maharaja Nripendra Narayan?
5. Were there any continuity and changes in hunting of Cooch Behar Palace during and after Maharaja Nripendra Narayan?
6. How did Royal and elite women hunters play role in hunting in Cooch Behar?
7. How did hunting create a difference between the ruler and the ruled in princely Cooch Behar?

8. What were the major differences between royal hunting, colonial mode of hunting and indigenous people's hunting in princely Cooch Behar and how did such conflicting modes of hunting get resolved through the process of sharing and contestation in the form of amalgamated hunting?
9. What were the impacts or ecological consequences of hunting?

Hypotheses:

1. The idea of colonial masculinity was injected into the minds of the rulers of Cooch Behar (Nripendra Narayan and after) through western values and culture.
2. During the colonial period hunting became a sport for the leisure of the Royals and Aristocracy, along with the expansion of colonialism, the princely rulers had initiated such hunting practices as a form of emulation to achieve positions and prestige in the colonial power structure.
3. Hunting became an instrument of social gathering augmenting social and political relationships between the British royals/ aristocracy and the princely state royal/ rulers of the peripheral zone of British India, at a time when the sense of animal life protection and forest conservation was at its nascent stage.
4. Creation of masculine identity, fame, reputation and establishment of a good relationship with the British were the principal motive of Maharajas of Cooch Behar.
5. After the death of Maharaja Nripendra Narayan, the pace of hunting got reduced due to restrictive legislation on forest conservation and protection of flora and founas.
6. Royal and aristocratic women, though few in number, were included in hunting as associates or as hunters in the masculine power project of hunting.

7. Hunting in princely Cooch Behar had undertaken different twists and turns in its nature and mode of operations.
8. The rulers adopted hunting to express their masculinity, royalty, braveness, uniqueness and prowess and paternity. But indigenous people's hunting took place due to religious and subsistence needs did not receive much attention.
9. Hunting by the princely rulers of Cooch Behar led to the decline of wildlife. Due to massive deforestation, conversion of forest land into cultivable land for generation of revenues, animal extinction had become the natural corollaries. Ruthless hunting caused desertification of forests, and had large negative impact on flora and fauna, food chains process had caused irreparable harm to natural ecosystem of the region.

Methodology:

Methods used in this study have been historical, empirical and analytical in nature, taking both primary and secondary sources of information into account. The primary source of information have been collected from archival documents, personal diary, autobiography, biography, travelogue, memoirs, government records, rules and proceedings, working plans, unpublished documents, dispatches, letters, acts, newspapers, census reports, gazetteers, personal interviews, forest reports, etc., while the secondary materials have been collected from the published academic materials such as books, articles, monographs, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, website materials and such other relevant academic materials.

History of Cooch Behar:

The geopolitical history of Cooch Behar relates it to the ancient region of Pragjyotish. The alluvial plain on the foothills of the sub-Himalayan mountain range from the Tista

River to the Brahmaputra River was known as Pragjyotish, Lauhitya, Kamata or Kamarupa in ancient times. The western part of Kamarupa came to be known as Cocho Bihar, Kamata Bihar, Cos Bhaar, Koch-Bihar, etc.⁷⁵

The native or feudatory or princely state of Cooch Behar is situated in present-day North Bengal, India. Now, it is a district of West Bengal state. The exact geographical location of Cooch Behar town was between 25° 58' & 26° 32' N and 88° 45' & 89° 52' E. The total area of Cooch Behar was 1306 square miles. It was a feudatory state under the charge of the lieutenant governor of Bengal. The treaty with Cooch Behar in 1773 made it pay a fixed annual tribute of Rs. 67700 to the British treasury. An English resident was placed in Cooch Behar since then in controlling or directing the administration of Cooch Behar. It had in the north the district of Jalpaiguri, in the south Rangpur, in the east Goalpara and the west Rangpur and Jalpaiguri bounded it.⁷⁶

The dynastic history of the princely state of Cooch Behar starts with Biswa Singh (1510-1533). The successive rulers were Naranarayan or Mallanarayan (1533-1587), Lakshminarayan (1587-1627), Birnarayan (1627-1632), Prannarayan (1632-1665), Mod Narayan (1665-1680). The reign of Mod Narayan saw Bhutanese influence over Cooch Behar. The subsequent rulers of Cooch Behar were: Vasudevnarayan (1680-1682), Mahindranarayan (1682-1693), Rupnarayan (1693-1714), Upendranarayan (1714-1763), Devendranarayan (1763-1765) and Dhairyendranarayan (1765-1770 & 1775-1783). Dhairyendranarayan's reign was a turning point in the history of Cooch Behar. The Bhutanese captured him. Then Rajendranarayan was installed on the throne. After his demise, Dharendranarayan (1772-1775) was seated on the throne. The Bhutanese were not satisfied with the coronation of Dharendranarayan, so they tried to capture the King and the Maharani. A Khasnabish of Dharendranarayan sought military help from the East India Company to eliminate the situation. The East India Company agreed to help Cooch

Behar. So, on April 5, 1773, a treaty was signed between Dharendranarayan and the East India Company. Through this treaty, Cooch Behar became a feudatory state of the British East India Company. Dhairyendranarayan (1775-1783) once again came to power for the second time after the defeat of the Bhutias by the East India Company. The successive rulers of Cooch Behar were: Harendra Narayan (1783-1839), Shibendra Narayan (1839-1847), and Narendra Narayan (1847-1863). Before the reign of Narendra Narayan, the relationship between the British government and the Maharajas of Cooch Behar was not too friendly. Nripendra Narayan (1863-1911) was installed on the throne after his father's death, though Nripendra Narayan was not the eldest among the heirs of his father. Nripendra Narayan was the most famous shooter and the harbinger of the modernisation of Cooch Behar. He married Sunity Devjee, daughter of Keshav Chandra Sen. After his death, the successive rulers of Cooch Behar were: Rajendra Narayan (1911-1913) and Jitendra Narayan (1913-1922). Jitendra Narayan married Indira Devi, the princess of Baroda. Gayatri Devi, who became the rajmata of Jaipur, was the daughter of Jitendra Narayan. Jagaddipendra Narayan (1922-1949) was the last Maharaja of Cooch Behar. His reign saw the surrender of the princely state of Cooch Behar to the Indian government on 12th September 1949.

Chapterisation:

1. Introduction.
2. A Brief Historiography of Colonial Hunting in South Asia.
3. Princely Hunting up to the Reign of Maharaja Nripendra Narayan.
4. Continuity and Changes in Hunting after Maharaja Nripendra Narayan.
5. Participation of Royal Women in the 'Masculine' Hunting of Cooch Behar (1773-1949)
6. Princely Hunting vs. Indigenous Shikar: The Debate.

7. Ecological and Cultural Impacts of Hunting.

8. Conclusion.

Chapter Summary:

The introductory chapter of the present work initiates with the statement of the research problem focusing specific academic thrust, principal concepts, literature review identifying research gaps, hypotheses, research questions extracting there from the objectives of the study cautiously dealt with by the methodology of research duly supported by both primary and secondary sources of historical information essentially relevant for the study.

The second chapter deals with the historiography of colonial hunting in South Asia. This chapter highlights the concept of masculinity, the mode of masculine fox hunting in England. The present research does not agree with Geetashree Singh's opinion, that 'The British were unfamiliar with the concept of hunting before coming to India.'⁵³ Actually the British were familiar with fox hunting in England. It was a very old practice of hunting in England. The first book on fox hunting was written between 1406-1413, titled 'The Masters of the Game' by Edward, second Duke of York.⁵⁴ In this chapter, the British practice of hunting in several South Asian countries (Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and India) has been elaborated. The epicentre of colonial rule and hunting activity was mainly in India. So, Indian hunting has been analysed in four sub-sections (Pre-Colonial hunting in India, Hunting in Colonial India: 1757-1857, Hunting in Colonial India: 1857-1947, Hunting in the Princely States). This chapter tries to say fox hunting in England was a masculine sport. Even royal hunting in pre-colonial India was regarded as a leisurely masculine activity. The British masculine hunting came with them in their colonies or influential places in a modified version. The British adopted several indigenous practices of hunting in their masculine sport. So,

hunting became a blending of both cultures. But the nature was the same: masculine. The studies of British hunting in several countries reveal that the geographical variations and the availability of animals had an adverse impact on the intensity and popularity of British hunting. If a country is not prosperous in wildlife, then, of course, it will not be able to provide British hunters with plentiful bags. So, the affluent wildlife areas attracted their attention. The mutiny of 1857 was a determining event in colonial India. The British government realised the importance of friendship with the royals and other elites in India. So, the British government extended their friendly gestures towards the Indian royals and other elites. The royals of the princely states also welcomed such good gestures because the suppression of the mutiny of 1857 proved the might of the British government. The bond between the both is firmly established by actively participating in hunting. British hunting gradually transformed itself into sports shooting. Sports shooting was a sophisticated practice of hunting that the colonists promoted to differentiate themselves from the indigenous people. In this mode of hunting, some code of sportsmanship had to be followed by the sportsman.

The third chapter discusses the hunting practices of the royals of Cooch Behar from 1510 to 1911. The reign of Maharaja Nripendra Narayan (1863-1911) was a deciding factor in Cooch Behar in hunting. So, this chapter analyses hunting in two parts. Part one, hunting before Nripendra Narayan (1510-1863) and masculine sports shooting during his reign (1863-1911). The first part shows that the Cooch Behar royals had followed hunting as a leisurely pastime activity. Perhaps it was a rare and not too popular activity due to constant engagement in wars and internal strife. The reign of Nripendra Narayan was a heyday for shooting in Cooch Behar. He began shooting in 1871 and continued it till 1910. The details of his shooting records have been focused on. His shooting developed and sophisticated with time and situation. The records of the shooting diary are not complete between 1871 to 1876. A significant impetus to the

shooting came after his invitation to join the Delhi Durbar in 1877. 1887 was crucial to shooting in Cooch Behar because this year, the competition of Cooch Behar palace took place, and Nripendra Narayan visited England. Both these events gave an enthusiastic move towards shooting. The game world record books had slightly changed their measurement process in 1898. This move also provided an essential contribution to the shooting of Nripendra Narayan. The lavishness, techniques, guests and places of his shooting have been analysed in separate sections. The lavishness of the Cooch Behar shooting reached its zenith during Nripendra Narayan. Almost all facilities had been provided to the guests. Better communication, Swiss tents, comfortable furniture, bathroom, good food etc. would be arranged for the guests. The shooting technique followed safety for the guests. The news of the presence of the beasts would be collected first. Then, the party with pad and howdah elephants marched to track the beasts. Several professional shikaris accompanied the party. The howdah elephants were for guests. The pad elephants mainly worked as beaters. The pad elephants drive the beasts towards the howdah elephants so that they can shoot the beasts. The servants would measure the beast after the kill. The majority of the guests of Nripendra Narayan were British officials. The Prince, Princess and some of the Viceroys also participated in his shooting parties.

The fourth chapter highlights the shooting after the death of Nripendra Narayan till the transfer of control of Cooch Behar to the government of India (1911-1949). The Cooch Behar Maharajas after Nripendra Naryan were Rajendra Narayan (1911-1913), Jitendra Narayan (1913-1922) & Jagaddipendra Narayan (1922-1949). Hunting in this period changed its characters in some ways. The Maharajas after Nripendra Narayan didn't adopt shooting as Nripendra Narayan did. The lavishness, popularity and frequency of hunting were gradually diminishing. All the successive Maharajas of Cooch Behar got English education and stayed in England. Rajendra Narayan and Jitendra Narayan started

participating in shooting mostly because of Nripendra Narayan. Nripendra Narayan drew his sons in the shooting arena to make them masculine. On the other hand, perhaps Jagaddipendra Narayan was motivated by his mother - Indira Devi. The last part of Jagaddipendra Narayan's shooting shows he drifted from the sportsmanship codes. He started safaris and turned shooting into an economic benefit. Such practice was absent before him. This chapter has two more sections that discuss the reasons for the diminishing popularity of shooting after the death of Nripendra Narayan and factors for popularity during his time. Factors like economic problems, withdrawal of Nripendra Narayan's sons from the Imperial Cadet Corps, shorter ruling periods of the Maharajas, adoption of other sports than shooting, lack of big games, protests against shooting, inception of the World Wars, etc. have been analysed here.

The fifth chapter is about the hunting by the royal women of Cooch Behar. The royal ladies of Cooch Behar had kept an outstanding imprint in hunting. Perhaps the royal women before Indira Devi (Wife of Maharaja Jitendra Narayan) did not participate in hunting due to the *Purdah* practice. The practice of *Purdah* was common among the royal women of Cooch Behar. The royal women had performed several vital tasks for the state. However, instances of hunting by the royal women were rare before the reign of Jitendra Narayan. The women during the time of Nripendra Narayan were in *Purdah* also, but it was not too rigid. They enjoyed freedom in several matters. They joined the shooting parties of Nripendra Narayan but didn't shoot. Sunity Degee joined several of the shooting camps of Nripendra Narayan but as a member, not as a shooter. There was a significant shift in women's active participation in masculine shooting during the time of Jitendra Narayan. Indira Devi (wife of Maharaja Jitendra Narayan) was the daughter of Gayakwad of Baroda. She had inherited her familial background of shooting. Indira Devi was the first royal woman in India who took part in fox hunting in England and also participated in shooting in Cooch Behar many times with her guests. The next crucial

royal woman was Gayatri Devi (daughter of Jitendra Narayan). She followed the shooting from her childhood in Cooch Behar and continued it to her husband Maharaja Sawai Man Singh (two) in Jaipur.

The sixth chapter discusses the debate over hunting in the princely state of Cooch Behar. In this chapter, three debates have been analysed. These are - Did shooting create a difference between the ruler and the ruled in the princely Cooch Behar? Did shooting an instrument save the lives and property of the common people? Were there differences between royal shooting and indigenous people's hunting in princely Cooch Behar? The present research opines for the first debate that shooting in Cooch Behar had created a distinction between the common people and the royals. The royals drew a line of power and privilege in the shooting field and deprived common people of various activities. The royals showed themselves as the protector of the common people by destroying the dangerous wild animals. The indigenous people of Cooch Behar acted as the spectator, helpers and news bearers in the shooting camps. They would be employed in different menial jobs in the camps but didn't get a chance to shoot any big game animals. The second debate shows shooting in Cooch Behar, adopted by the royals, became a primary task to save the life and property of the common people. The gradual forest reclamation in Cooch Behar, mainly during the youth of Nripendra Narayan, became a nightmare for the common people. The wild animals shifted to human settlements in search of food and shelter. The crops in the fields and cattle of the common people came under the threat of wild animals. There grew a situation of fear in the lives of people also. The British officials in Cooch Behar started big game shooting in Cooch Behar first, mainly after the death of Harendra Narayan. Nripendra Narayan and his successors continued the same tradition of shooting. The third debate highlights the hunting of the common people and the shooting of the royals of Cooch Behar was different from each other. The British construction of shooting and hunting was very distinct phenomenon. Shooting was a

sophisticated version of hunting. The concept of shooting had been developed to distinguish itself from the indigenous hunting practices. The practice of shooting followed several rules or codes for killing wild animals. On the other hand, hunting was an age-old practice of the indigenous people, even the royals in India. The royals of Cooch Behar princely state had pursued the British model of sports shooting and followed several codes of sportsmanship. In this situation, the royals differentiated themselves from the common people. The royal shooting was a masculine, lavish, elaborate and technologically advanced form of sports hunting than the common people's hunting. On the other hand, common people's hunting was less advanced, frugal and mainly ritualistic or subsistence-based.

The seventh chapter is about the impacts of hunting in Cooch Behar. Hunting in Cooch Behar had both positive and negative impacts. These impacts had their consequences on the society, environment, economy and polity of Cooch Behar from different perspectives. Mainly, three other points of view have been focused on analysing the impacts of shooting. The point of view of the princely state of Cooch Behar, the environment and the perspective of the common people have been analysed in this chapter. The positive impacts of hunting were as follows. Hunting developed and asserted masculine qualities among the royals of Cooch Behar. The Maharajas gained social privileges through shooting. Hunting helped in agricultural expansion in forested zones. The saving of the lives and property of the common people was another positive impact of the hunting. The hunting resulted in the reservation of Cooch Behar forests. The royals like Nripendra Narayan, Indira Devi, Jagaddipendra Narayan, and Gayatri Devi gained a worldwide reputation by shooting. Hunting prepared the ground for a good relationship with the British. It worked as a famine prevention mechanism in Cooch Behar. The shooting made several friends to the royals of Cooch Behar in the shooting field. The inclusion of Nripendra Narayan's sons in the I.C.C. or British Indian Forces

became an easy path on the way to their participation in shooting. Hunting had several negative impacts. The constant and frequent hunting decreased the numbers of animals; even some of the rare species had disappeared from the jungles. The clearing of shrubs and other trees in the forest with fire was a widespread practice in Cooch Behar. It was necessary to have easy access to the forest for shooting. This practice destroyed a wide variety of plant species in the jungles of Cooch Behar. Shooting in Cooch Behar was a very lavish and expensive sport. Nripendra Narayan's shooting camps would have enormous arrangements for the convenience of its guests. A guest of Maharaja described that the party in 1891 had 473 servants. They were mahouts, grooms, armourers, tailors, shoemakers, boatmen, a doctor and dispenser, Vinnese conductor, cooks, bakers, waiters, orchestra members (35 persons) and taxidermists.⁵⁵ The shooting camp arrangements of the Maharajas created economic problems in Cooch Behar. The Maharajas of Cooch Behar engaged themselves too much in the shooting. Most of the time of the year, they spent in shooting camps. So, they gradually became indifferent to the administration. The adoption of the British mode of sports shooting in Cooch Behar created a social division between common people and the royals of Cooch Behar.

The eighth chapter is the conclusion.

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