



Loomis Day

There is always a man (or woman), who is responsible for everything we take for granted today. Neither he nor we could have seen the long term effects of what he had done, for many things had to come after it for what he designed to come to pass. In the fullness of time, the creation of the 'wireless telegraph' has utterly changed the world, and it took an American dentist in 1896 to set it all in motion. Loomis Day celebrates Mahlon Loomis, a humble dentist who created something amazing and changed the world.

The Prey, the Poachers and The Politics

#FROM THE DIARY OF A FORESTER



Siliberi jungle is favourite home of tigers.

earning job but duty-bound as I was, I could not afford to keep people happy at the cost of the reserve. As anticipated, scuffles between the reserve personnel and the mischief mongers increased. Many a times our staff faced wrath of these villagers. Also, people who were fond of wild meat were growing restless as strict patrolling had marred their chances of killing animals for their pot. I was aware of the growing tension and held several meetings with these villagers and advised them to get their charnaut (village grazing lands) vacated from the illegal occupants. I also requested the district collector to evict the encroachers but everybody seemed helpless against these muscle men intoxicated with political power.

On the contrary these encroachers instigated the villagers to graze their cattle forestfully in the reserve forest resulting in to our regular scuffles with them. This led a section of these people to approach the court at Alwar. Unfortunately, they succeeded in getting temporary relief also from the court.

It was a matter of serious concern for us as this rampant grazing could ruin the tiger land. Fortunately, we did seek relief from the high court of Rajasthan, which remanded the case back to the Alwar court for proper hearing. Now we succeeded in getting the earlier decision reversed. This tug of war had added fuel to fire which could not be extinguished in spite of

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Settling Score
In the meantime, one evening, Battu Lal Meena, in-charge of this Siliberi chowki got a secret message through an informer that a shikari (hunter) had entered the Deori forest, on a plateau not very far from here.

Battu Lal was a strong young man, full of enthusiasm and dedication. It took him and his two friends more than an hour to reach Deori plateau. This plateau on its western side joins Bhenotsa plateau which further leads to Kalighati. On its southern side it drains in to plains of Jahaj forest and Nadu village leading to Tehla. On its east, a luxuriant forest of 'Kaimala plateau' has a 6 km stretch, till it drains in to plains of Boretha, situated towards Rajgarh township and villages.

This dare devil shikari belonged



Wild boar is most sought after shikar by shikaris for pot.

to this eastern side and had climbed this plateau all alone. The experienced Battu Lal decided to wait for him at this exit to Kaimala forest. After a patient wait, they saw the stout middle-aged shikari Khyali Lal carrying a headload of meat of the slain wild boar, wrapped in a cloth-potli. After searching for some time when the shikari was found, Battu Lal asked him to surrender. This took Khyali by surprise but he instantly gathered courage and tried to flee away to evade the arrest. The dedicated officials chased him. Now realizing the trap, Khyali played a trick. He entered a pond and throwing the headload away took out the butcher knife-like sharp-edged weapon and asked the raiders to disperse, threatening to slit his own throat. Though this unexpected move took Battu and party by surprise but he did not lose courage and started moving inch by inch towards the poacher. Understanding that escape was not possible, Khyali slit his throat.

Blood started oozing from the slit throat. This sudden act of slitting his throat shocked Battu Lal and the guards momentarily but soon they gathered their wits. They offered him medical aid and pleaded to cooperate but the poacher did not allow them to come closer. Khyali Lal still holding the weapon close to his throat was persistently threatening to kill himself. The officials got really scared. They decided to leave the site immediately lest the revengeful poacher really kills himself to get these officials implicated in the murder or a police case. They also hid the incident from their superiors including their range officer. Secretly they were following the developments in this case, through some personal sources. It was only on the third day that they learned that the poacher had survived but lodged a complaint against them in the police station of Tehla.



Cattle grazing is chief area of conflict between villagers & Park Management.

ing hard to contact them but they were untraceable. Apparently, the poacher had cut his throat but very cleverly had saved the wind pipe. So, it turned out to be a minor injury and under no condition could be termed fatal. But initially he did not intentionally go for treatment in order to make a strong criminal case against the reserve staff. And later on, his family members and other villagers tried to settle score with the reserve personnel by depriving him of medical treatment.

I narrated the facts to the superintendent of police in Alwar who showed all sympathy with the reserve personnel but could not do much except delaying the arrest for some time. Eventually the poacher developed a septic in the throat region. Had he died, no one could have saved my staff. I deputed some efficient staff personnel to get the poacher admitted in the hospital and to get him the best possible treatment to ensure his safety. It was not less than a miracle that my officers succeeded in getting him admitted in the government hospital of Alwar and ensured proper treatment. I met the concerned medical officers in person who assured me of fully curing the patient. We were bearing all the medical expenses also.

Encashing The Situation

A bunch of reserve personnel were deputed in this hospital to attend and keep an eye on the poacher round the clock. Fortunately, this arrangement worked well and the poacher's condition started improving. I was assured by the medical team that Khyali would be all right with few more days of treatment. But the very next day I got the shocking news that the preceding night itself Khyali had fled from the hospital with the aid of his kinsmen, leaving the treatment incomplete. It was clear that his relatives and other villagers did not want him cured lest it dilutes the case

onize these agitators at this sensitive time when the seriously ill Khyali was still being used by them to mobilize people against us. By now Khyali had understood the situation better than earlier but the people surrounding him won't let him have medical aid as their interest was vested in his death and not his life.

His death meant arrest and murder trial against the reserve staff. That would in turn demoralize our work force forever, leading to chances of unrestrictive use of forest resources including poaching of wild animals. Khyali's brothers would have hugely benefited by grabbing his 10 bigha land.

Protecting The Morale

Day by day his condition was deteriorating. I left no stone unturned to persuade the district administration to rescue Khyali and in writing made it clear that had Khyali died, the district administration would be chiefly responsible for his death and the aftermath. Ironically, we were pushed on the backfoot for no fault of ours as we were merely discharging our duties with sincerity. Khyali was being killed by the greedy brothers and the villagers for their personal gains. The entire



Siliberi nullah is lifeline of this area.

government machinery but for our department was witnessing this as a mute spectator, as if they had nothing to do with the safety of Khyali or the tiger land and its protectors.

On our end at state level and also through the chief wildlife warden, all possible efforts were on to pressurize the concerned authorities to rescue Khyali. Ultimately, we succeeded in waking up the district administration and the sub divisional officer and deputy superintendent of police, Rajgarh were deputed for this rescue operation. They camped at the site and finally with persistent efforts that lasted for about 18 hours, they succeeded in the mission. Later that night the victim was admitted in the govern-

ment hospital of Alwar from where he was transferred to the government hospital in Jaipur under police custody. This time, I deputed a bunch of more effective personnel lest the last episode gets repeated. Our team stayed there till Khyali got fully cured and discharge certificate was issued duly signed by the authorized doctor.

Our staff took leave from this duty only after Khyali's safe delivery at his home in the presence of several villagers and the local police officials.

Still the pending police case against our personnel had to be contested. Though the concerned villagers through their leaders were pressurizing the police officials, but this time they could not enjoy any favour from police as Khyali was not cooperating with them. Now they resorted to organize a huge public meeting close to Siliberi. Fortunately, this time the district administration showed cooperation by deploying enough police force at the meeting site, under command of the SDO and Dy S.Rajgarh. In the meeting the local leaders mounted huge pressure upon us to allow grazing in the area but it could not deter us from our commitment to save the critical tiger habitat. The crowd instigated by these politicians' showed resentment and threatened of dire consequences but as a custodian of the tiger land, I did not bow down to their demands.

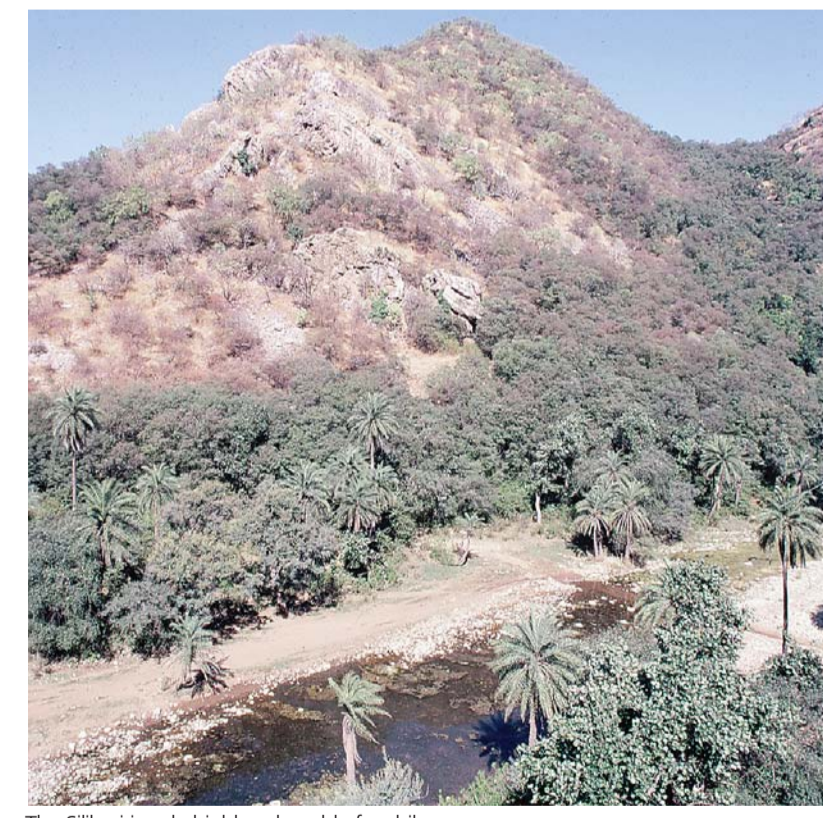
As anticipated, the meeting got dismissed without any result. Though scuffles with the mischief mongers could not be stopped thereafter but despite the immense pressure on police, after some time we succeeded in getting the criminal case dropped against Battu Lal and the other personnel. Thereafter we also succeeded in building back the broken boundary wall at Siliberi, sealing illicit grazing once again in this valley. That evening we had a little bonfire celebration at Siliberi with the chowki staff. The daring, committed boys deserved a pat on their back.

Though in those six months we had to undergo real bad times due to this shikar incidence but the best part was that despite of all kinds of pressures, not only could we protect the morale of our personnel, working under such harsh conditions and with little or no resources, but also succeeded in demoralizing the shikaris and other mischief mongers.

Those living in cities and other urban areas may not be able to appreciate as to how challenging is the job of dedicated forest personnel especially in the wildlife reserves.

But today when I look back at these incidents, I feel proud to have played my part with utmost satisfaction to contribute to the pious cause of nature conservation.

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The Siliberi jungle highly vulnerable for shikar.

Rambagh Palace: World's No. 1 Hotel

Rambagh Palace has been rated as the World's No. 1 Hotel in the coveted 2023 Travellers' Choice Awards by TripAdvisor, the world's largest travel site.



#AWARD
Tusharika Singh
Freelancer
writer and city blogger

Originally built in 1835, Rambagh Palace, has stepped gracefully through many royal transitions from the home of the queen's favourite handmaiden, to royal guesthouse and hunting lodge, and later as the residence of the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II and his queen, Maharani Gayatri Devi. This 'Jewel of Jaipur', often hailed as the epitome of luxury and grandeur, has recently added another feather to its cap by winning a prestigious award. Rambagh Palace has been rated as the World's No. 1 Hotel in the coveted 2023 Travellers' Choice Awards by TripAdvisor, the world's largest travel site. The Travellers' Choice Awards honour travellers' favourite destinations, hotels, restaurants, things to do, and beyond, based on the reviews and opinions collected from travellers and diners around the world on TripAdvisor over a 12-month period.

On the occasion, Ashok Rathore, Area Director – Rajasthan, and General Manager, Rambagh Palace, Jaipur, said, "We are delighted and humbled that Rambagh Palace, Jaipur has been recognised as the No.1 Hotel in the World by TripAdvisor's Travellers' Choice Awards 2023. This global honour is a true reflection of world class hospitality in an authentic palace setting brought to life by the iconic brand Taj and a testament to the trust our guests have placed in us over the years. We remain committed to delighting our guests and spreading the magic of 'Tajness' in the times to come."

Further adding to the sentiment, he remarked at a recent presser organized at hotel: "Despite having received numerous awards in the past, this particular achievement is special and unique. It holds great significance for us, setting us apart from others. Rambagh Palace is a living testament to our legacy."

Delving deeper into the intract of this award on the state, he emphasized the wide-ranging benefits it would bring. "Winning this award will not only benefit the state of Rajasthan in terms of increased tourist arrivals but also the entire country," he explained. "We are the only Indian hotel featured among the top 25 on this list, and foreign tourist arrivals will see a much needed boost after the pandemic. We are already getting several queries for celebrity weddings etc."



Ashok Rathore with the team of Rambagh Palace.

What role does forest play in politics? It becomes the guinea pig of the politicians and poachers who leave no stone unturned to encroach and exploit it. What can a forest officer do to save his forest? Keep running from the pillar to the post!



Sunayan Sharma
IFS (Retd.), Ex field
director project tiger
Sariska & Kooladoo
national park,
Bharatpur

Sariska is a huge reserve with lots of dense forest wealth in the form of grasses, herbs, shrubs and trees. In the entire Rajasthan it is the only area which has very dense forest and that too to the tune of 14 sq.km. Anogeissus pendula (Dhok) is the dominant tree species covering over 90 per cent of the reserve's area. Salar and Gurjan grow in rocky patches. Khair (Kattha), though rare in pure patches, is found commonly in valleys. Bamboo, though spread over the entire reserve, can be seen along springs and moist hills. Some valleys support Ber (Zizyphusmauritiana) trees.

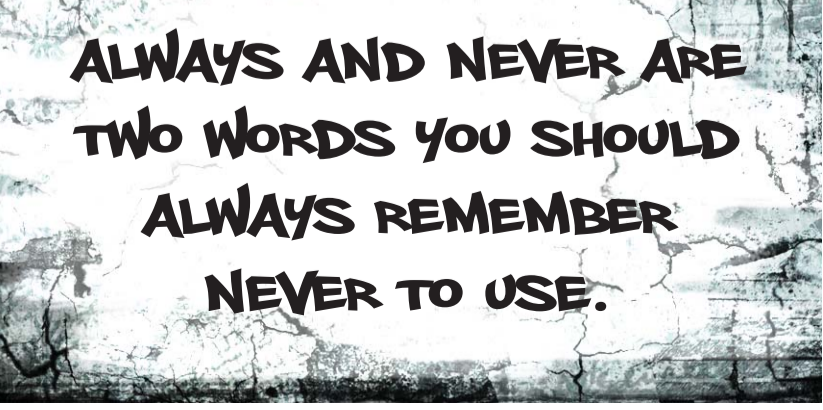
During summer when most of the grasses become dry and non-palatable, the dry leaves of dhonk fall from trees on the forest floor and provide the best possible nutritious food to sambar, spotted deer and blue bull. Capparisppalso plays an important role in providing green fodder to animals during the peak summer when most other plants dry up.

Fifty five species of grass enrich the important ground flora of Sariska. These are scattered over the entire reserve and play an important role in the distribution of wildlife. From floral richness's point of view, the main Sariska-Kalighati-Slopka and Umari-Siliberi valleys deserve special mention. Richness of faunal species in these valleys attribute to

Preserving the legacy

As Rambagh Palace continues to evolve and embrace its role as a custodian of heritage and sustainability, it remains an enchanting destination that embodies the grandeur and cultural richness of Rajasthan. Over the years, Rambagh Palace has hosted celebrities like Queen Elizabeth II, Lord Mountbatten, former US President Bill Clinton and family, and ex-Twitter boss Jack Dorsey, among many others. "The USP of this property is that there is no renovation, but only restoration; we have preserved the legacy of the erstwhile royals", Rathore said.

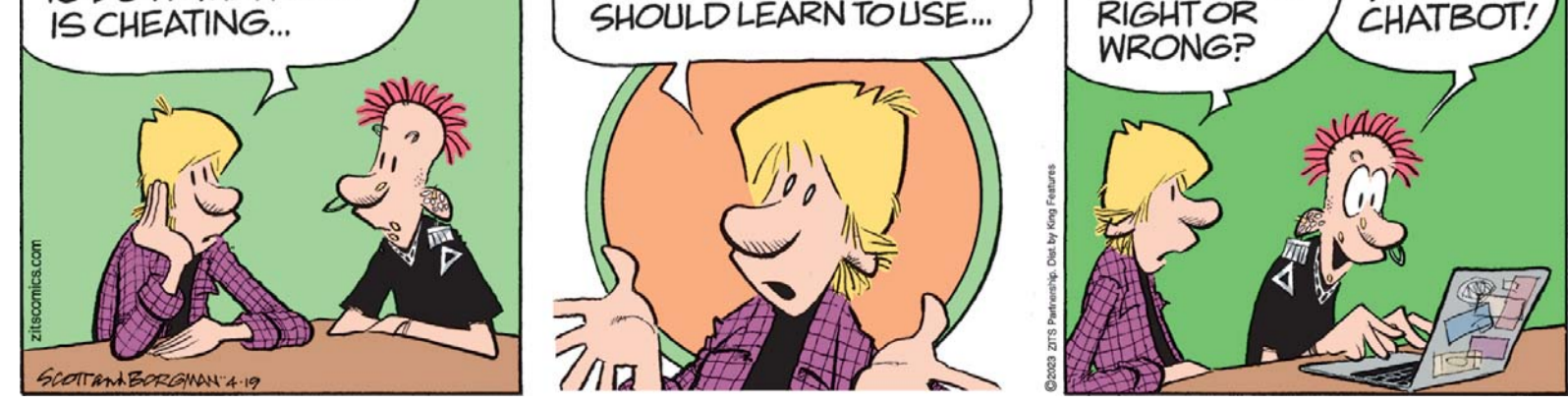
THE WALL



BABY BLUES



ZITS



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman