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## Shadows of Tradition: Unfolding the Enigmatic World of Ritual Hunting in Bengal

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### Abstract:

*Whether for leisure or ritual, hunting has been a common practice since the time immemorial. In this article, I have tried to examine the genesis, cultural significance, development, socioeconomic ramifications and contemporary ideas behind mass slaughtering of animals on the pretext of customary ritual. After the advent of colonial rule, the hunting scenes in India changed and its profound impact was felt by the forest dwellers. The enforcement of new laws like wildlife protection, property confiscations and reservations aimed at conservation and control. Some choose to pursue different forms of employment while retaining aspects of their hunting culture through customs and traditional knowledge. In the collective memory the concept of ceremonial hunting is very much present as evidenced by folk songs, religious events, and oral traditions. The constant tussle between saving culture and protecting nature is best expressed in the process of ritual hunting. Through historical narratives, recent news and archaeological evidence, I have tried to provide an overview about the hunting practice in Bengal.*

**Keywords:** Hunting, Bengal, Nature, Tradition, Animals, Forest

### Introduction:

Hunting has a long history that may perhaps predate the origins of humanity. Evidence carved into prehistoric rock paintings depicts our ancestors in the ape-like act of seeking food. Beautiful cave paintings of Bhimbetka (India) and Lascaux (France) portray the primitive hunting practices of animals. Weaponry has developed with human civilization, starting with the primitive stone tools of the Paleolithic period and ending with the complex firearms of the contemporary age. Humans have used chariots, carts, and horses and elephants as mounts, among other modes of transportation, to traverse these vast terrains. Dogs are by far the most common and essential assistance animals.<sup>i</sup>

There has been a long standing debate over the disruption of the Indian environment due to colonial forest policies. Ramchandra Guha in his seminal work "*The Unquiet Woods*," emphasises

how the imperial strategies ignored conventional ecological knowledge, leading to ecological imbalances and destruction.<sup>ii</sup>In "*This Fissured Land*," Madhav Gadgil highlights the harm that colonial exploitation has caused to indigenous communities, affecting their livelihood. The British had divided the forest into 3 categories - reserved, protected and village forests, where only the village forest could be utilized by the local populace for fuel and fodder. Arguably, these laws were one of the first attempts to barricade the hunting practices by indigenous communities.

### **Hunting in India:**

In India, hunting has always been revered as seen in the stories of gods and other mythological characters who go hunting. The Hindu god, Shiva is often revered as '*Mrigavyadha*,' which acknowledges his accomplishment as a deer hunter. Legendary epics such as the Mahabharata and the Ramayana have vivid descriptions of hunting. The tradition of hunting continues as a pleasure game for the feudal lords and colonial officers. For instance, Emperor Akbar employed experienced professional hunters as *Shikaris*. Due to rapid loss in flora and fauna, growing urbanization and spreading of conservation ideas, motivated the Indian government to ban hunting under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. A hunting portrait (from Murshidabad school of painting) of Bengal Nawab Alivardi Khan silently tells us the importance of hunting in diplomacy. It was meticulously choreographed to showcase the royal sovereignty, discipline and masculinity. Alivardi Khan's hunting in Rajmahal over the winters was most likely a planned diversion from the ongoing Maratha raids, demonstrating his capacity to keep cool and control even during political instability.<sup>iii</sup> By retaining this practice, he strengthened his image as a ruler who kept courtly customs and governance, implying that the interruptions of war had not jeopardized the stability or dignity of his regime. Later on this practice was passed on to the Britishers. Scholars such as Monica Juneja and Shah Parpia showed in their work how hunting scenes included an image of public welfare in order to create cultivable land and royal hunting as a representation of the king's divine aura. Saving people from the hands of terrifying beasts was considered as a part of divine intervention by the god and the savior was valiantly portrayed no less than a hero. Shah Parpia had extended this theme and showed various intentions and propaganda of justice had been embedded in royal hunting.<sup>iv</sup> Multiple testimonies of contemporary chronicles and paintings of hunting support this. Monica Juneja in her study had discussed the concept of utopia in Mughal paintings. Akbar's hunting was a way of patrolling his own empire and this is a part of giving subjects justice through supervision.<sup>v</sup>

### **Iconography of hunting scenes in the temples of Bengal:**

From the early 17<sup>th</sup> to late 18<sup>th</sup> century, Bengal was undoubtedly the richest province of the subcontinent. The fertile lands, multi-cropping and growth of textiles created a class of wealthy landlords / merchants. These affluent classes donated heavily for building temples across their lands. This led to the migration of builders and artisans from different places, who eventually settled near

the construction site (temple). Naturally, painters were encouraged by the zamindars (and merchants who gave them funding) to create hunting scenes in the temple art. In the temple decorations, bas relief terracotta plaques were mostly used, followed by woodcarving, stonework, and stucco. Other than the portrayal of native hunters, artistry depicting European hunters wearing a hunt and killing tigers were also there. This shows that some artworks were made after the arrival of the British and hence have their influence too. Temples like the Krishnachandra temple in Kalna, Purva Bardhaman district, and the Gopinath temple in Dasghara, Hooghly district, are notable instances of the latter. The hunters are commonly seen either on foot (for example : Radhakrishna temple in Ula-Birnagar, Nadia district, and the Nabaratna Shiva temple in Panchthupi, Murshidabad district) or mounted on an animal like elephant or horse (some accompanied by a royal procession as well). A peculiar aspect of these temples are absence of hunting vehicles like carts and chariots. Notably, a picture of European troops on foot using a lance or spear to pursue a tiger may be found in the Krishnachandra temple in Kalna. The *spear or lance* appears to be the most popular weapon among hunters because it is depicted prominently in nearly all temple scenes. The artisans has beautifully crafted, hunters who are riding elephants, horses and walking with spears. The second most popular hunting tool is a *sword*, which is frequently used to hunt tigers and lions. *Daggers* are not very long, thus they are not the best weapon for hunting, although they are sometimes seen in scenes with bears and tigers as the target. The Mughal era saw the introduction of *firearms*, which are also seen in temple decorations. In a number of temples, like Krishnachandraji in Kalna and Charbangla in Baranagar, the usage of muskets by the hunters are depicted.<sup>vi</sup> Certain decorations found in temples illustrate the dangers of hunting by showing scenes in which untamed animals assault. Illustrations of bears ambushing hunters may be found in the Charbangla temple and the Lakshmi Janardan temple in Ghurisha. In Guptipara's Ramchandra temple, scenes of tigers attacking a group of hunters can be still seen today. In the Gangeshwar temple clay plaques are there where a wild elephant killing a man is shown. One can also see terracotta panels in that temple with the drawings of animals like rhinoceros, bear, and tigers.<sup>vii</sup> While similar panels from the Jorbangla temple in Bishnupur show two tigers mauling a man, perhaps a hunter.



(Fig: Hunting scene, Charbangla Temple Complex. Source: Self- Clicked Image)



The Charbanga Temple Complex in Baranagar attributed to Rani Bhabani depicts men and women engaging in different entertainments, groups of hunters hunting and chasing animals, a procession of animals, fighting scenes, and others.<sup>8</sup> Another interesting set of narrative panels can be seen on the basal friezes of the southern wall, and in niches of the western temple, pertaining to secular themes. One of these depictions pertain to a group hunting scene, where a group of armed men can be seen hiding behind a forest grove. All of them can be seen wearing hats, coats and trousers. They can be seen targeting rhinoceros deep inside the forest, which also says that such rhino's were a part of the local habitat in earlier times. If we look at the other part of the forest, we can notice two elephants. An armed man, riding on a horse pointing his swords towards an animal can be seen on the extreme left side of the panel. The following hunting scenes are silent reminders of control and exploitation of forest resources.

### **Hunting in Bengali literature:**

There is a longstanding relationship between ecology and literature in Bangla literary writings. Hunting was a common point of interest for several authors and cinema directors. Rabindranath Tagore's "*Shesher Kobita*" (The Last Poem) tells us about the protagonist named Amit who was involved in hunts during his visits to forest. However, it doesn't differentiate between the aim of hunting, whether it was for pleasure or ritual. Although it's not the main subject, Tagore explores the bond between humans and animals. Perhaps, one of the biggest references about the enigmatic world of ritual hunting can be found in the story "The Hunt" by Mahasweta Devi. Broader themes of resistance, power and justice are reflected in this story. The backdrop of ritual spring hunting provides both a real and symbolic setting for Mary Oraon's act of retaliation against Collector Singh, who harasses her.

The following is one of the story's most important quotes that sums up the hunt's significance; "*Last night the Spring festival fire burned very high and reddened the sky for quite some time. Today from first light the men are wild with drink and songs and color. The old women are looking after the children. For twelve years men go for the hunt. Now comes the women's time. Similar to the men, these ladies go deep inside the forest for hunt with bows and arrows like men. They kill deer, rabbits, birds, lizards whatever they can get. After a successful hunt, they gather at a place, drink liquor, dance, sing and return home at night. They do exactly what the men do once in every twelve years*"<sup>viii</sup>

In this plot, the ritual hunting in the above lines is performed by women, which comes after an interval of every 12 years. This also shows us how the gender roles are reversed in hunting. After the hunt while everyone was celebrating killing, Mary was full of joy too, as she murdered the 'biggest beast', Collector. '*Mary laughed and held him, laid him on the ground. Collector is laughing, Mary lifts the machete, lowers it, hits, lowers. A few million moons pass. Mary stands up.*

*Blood? On her clothes?'. Mary's murder is a recovery of power through an indigenous custom as well as a kind of personal retaliation. Mahasweta Devi transforms hunting from a need of survival to a symbolic act of defiance against tyranny by equating her deed with the hunt. The way that oral traditions and indigenous activities may be reinterpreted to challenge structural power systems is demonstrated by this junction of ritual hunting and writing. Although Jibanananda Das's poem 'Shikar' or hunting, doesn't specifically tell us about ritual hunting but silently it says the effect of hunting and associated customs. The poem contains strong imagery that contrasts the abrupt, violent act of hunting with the gentle beauty of morning. Lines like :*

‘একটা অদ্ভুত শব্দ।

নদীর জল মচকাফুলেরে পাপড়ি মতো লাল।

আগুন জ্বললো আবার— উষ্ণ লাল হরিগিরে মাংস তৈরি হ'য়ে এলো।’<sup>ix</sup>

( Translation : A strange sound , The river water turned red like the petals of the Machka flower , Fire burned again—the warm red flesh of the deer was prepared )

A sense of tranquility is created by the dawn, the mist, and the grazing deer, but it is broken by the hunt. The meat of the deer was cooked after the hunt for consumption as done in the ritual hunts. "নক্ষত্রেরে নচি ঘাসরে বহিনায় ব'সে অনকে পুরানো শশিরিভজো গল্প;" (*Under the stars, on a bed of grass, old dew-laden stories are told*) *These lines tells us how after a fulfilling hunt and feast, a gathering happens under the sky where the hunters sit and relax for sometime. The ritualistic tradition of storytelling happens where post hunt remembrance and transmission of hunting knowledge happens. In this community gathering one often claims how they have once killed a large animal like a tiger or bear. In Balai Chand Mukhopadhyay's prose 'Hate Bazar' (In the Market), hunting is depicted as a sporadic means of subsistence for rural communities.*<sup>x</sup> *Satyajit Ray also explores hunting through his detective novel series Feluda's 'Royal Bengal Rohosho' (Mystery of Royal Bengal Tiger).*

#### Recent reports of hunting:

A sense of pity prevails when we hear about hunting in the news. During the 2021 Bengal legislative assembly election when the primary focus of media outlets were into the voting and political rallies, some poachers silently killed a deer for a feast in their community. This incident occurred in the Alipurduar district of West Bengal and was reported by Ei Samay, a Bengali newspaper.<sup>xi</sup> Folodharini Kali puja is celebrated on the day of *amavarsya* (mostly in June, Bengali month of Jaistho). Amidst the ongoing puja celebration some local villagers had the audacity of boarding a local train from Howrah to Medinipur along with the body of hunted animals. This

incident was reported by HEAL (Human and Environment Alliance League), a community initiative to protect wildlife.<sup>xii</sup> The district police chief incharges was summoned by Calcutta high court on 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2023 in response to a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) case filed by HEAL activists. The PIL alleged that the police officers were reluctant to stop ceremonial slaughtering of wild animals and neglected the matter.<sup>xiii</sup> Another instance was cited by the petitioner in which the claim was that in the month of April (4<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>) large scale hunting was carried out. A number of animals were brutally slaughtered and shapelessly publicly displayed as trophies. The World Wide Fund for Nature & TRAFFIC (Trade Records Analysis of Flora & Fauna in Commerce) published a report about the illegal hunting of sharks along the Bengal coast in Kakdwip and Digha.<sup>xiv</sup> Especially, in the covid pandemic when the government supervision was limited more sharks and other endangered fishes were caught by the locals for sale and recreational fun. According to a news article by Times Network, approximately 2500 people gathered in the Jhargram annual animal fair area in April 2021 for buying wild animal meats.(Some even cooked the meat and consumed it in the fair itself).<sup>xv</sup> However, this hunting is primarily focused more on economy and high cost of shark's body parts rather than any religious significance.

#### What are the “*hunting festivals*” of South Bengal:

The festival that happens during the month of Baisakh is known as “*Disum Sendra*” or “*Shikar Parab*”. Some tribes celebrate this during Budh Purnima, which completely shatters the non violence preaching of Lord Budhha against animal slaughter. The Hindu newspaper was informed by S. Kulandaivel, Chief Conservator of Forests, WB, that ritualistic slaughter is practiced around the full and new moons (amavasya and purnima), especially “*Jyestha Amavasya*”.<sup>xvi</sup> Hunt festivals are frequently arranged by village officials like gram pradhans using pamphlets or loudspeakers to advertise, involving the males of the household. Individual hunts can also happen depending on the will. Ritual hunting is practiced by various tribes in India with different given names, like in Jharkhand's Dalma wildlife sanctuary it is known as ‘Vishu Shikar’, ‘Sendra’, or ‘Jani Shikar’.<sup>xvii</sup>



# JHIS

(Fig: Hunters carrying weapons in the arid deciduous forests of western Bengal. Source: Ananya Barua, <https://www.thebetterindia.com>)

Ritualistic hunting is noticeable especially in the districts of Purulia, Jhargram, Bankura, and West Medinipur - *Jangalmahal* region. These regions are home to wolves, hyenas, pangolins, elephants, and fishing cats (baghrol - which is also the State Animal of West Bengal)—species that are



critically endangered worldwide.<sup>xviii</sup> In between the agricultural areas and villages are these regions' scattered deciduous forests, wetlands, and scrub lands that are a hub of biodiversity. Mostly these forest lands are targeted by the hunters as it is easily accessible by local transports. Overall 53 distinct species of animals are hunted - 36 common birds (67.9%), 11 species of mammals (20.8%), five reptiles (9.4%), and one insect (ants). The most desirable hunted animals are wild boar, hare, quail, jungle cat and monitor lizard. Some locals believe that consuming live ants will cure diseases.

### **Who are these hunters:**

Some non-Aryan tribes in northeastern and eastern India hold an annual ritual spring hunt that is happens at the beginning of the lunar year. Scholar Elwin has defined this time as a prosperous season for the growth of crops. The quest for hunting typically stretches from one day to two weeks, depending on the tribe. Individual community of tribes have their own form of hunting, so inter- village hunts were confined to the Chota Nagpur region only. As per the records, the hunts by Santals (*who contribute to 50% of Bengal's tribes*), Birhors, Juangs, Gadabas, and Bison Horn Marias tribes are patriarchal in nature where only men are allowed.<sup>xix</sup> Among the Oraons community, the young unmarried males are chiefly responsible for a successful hunt.<sup>xx</sup> Pakmaras are a group of tribes who only hunt birds and reside near the banks of river Ajay in Bardhaman district of West Bengal. *Satnoliis* is a special weapon used by the Pakmaras in western Bengal. The Lakshmi Janardan temple in Ghurisha and the Radhabinod temple in Joydev-Kenduli showcases these bird hunters. Herbert Hope Rizzle in his book *Tribes and Castes of Bengal* has beautifully described their stories and tactics used. He also mentions about other tribes like the Chirimar, Bede, and Minashikaris.<sup>xxi</sup> While documenting Pakhibandh Hunt fest in Jhargram HEAL organization found a sizable number of hunters from non-tribal communities. This hunting behavior isn't driven by need, unlike popular opinion but people from all walks of life like students, teachers, farmers, laborers, shopkeepers, and workers to participate. However, many might not know that the hunt festivities they attend have ceremonial origins, these so-called 'ritual' hunters frequently join together in raucous groups and hunt whatever wildlife they come across.<sup>xxii</sup> Following their hunts, hunters bring their game back to public areas where they slaughter, skin, and cook the animals in full view of onlookers. Camps are erected close to hunting grounds. Armed with weapons, hunters raid woodlands and divide their loot in gathering places. Multiple hunters use wooden spears (lathi), axes (tangi), guns, bows, and arrows (Kaar bansh/Teer dhonuk) to pursue animals at the same time, or strike them with bamboo clubs until they are dead. Skins and body parts are traded often, and carcasses are either processed on-site or sold.<sup>xxiii</sup>

### **Motive behind the hunt:**

Whenever questioned, hunters frequently said that they hunt for "*phurti*," or fun, viewing it as a pastime and a way to kill time. They acknowledge that hunting isn't motivated by need, despite

blaming religion and society, which has resulted in a fall in conventional morality such as abstaining from hunting young and pregnant animals.<sup>xxiv</sup> According to some hunters, the most common usage of dead animals is for consuming in large feast, while some claim spiritual usages as well. For example wild boar's teeth are used to ward off evil spirits around new born babies and bones of birds (kites, vultures and owls) are used for traditional medicines.<sup>xxv</sup> Monitor Lizards and Chameleon's skin is used for clothing and decorative items. The best selling animals are Russell viper, turtle and flying fox.<sup>xxvi</sup> Skulls of killed animals are hung outside the tribal houses in-order to showcase their glory and prestige. This practice is common in many affluent households, where even today one can find animal skulls hanging from the walls in the entrance or meeting room. Colorful feathers of birds are used to decorate houses in Bankura and worn as ornaments by the Santhal tribes during festivals, especially in the Northeast.<sup>xxvii</sup> Similar usage of animals are prevalent among other Indian tribes too. Meats and body parts of the animals were mostly used for local consumption.<sup>xxviii</sup> The price of Indian hare's meat is about 500 rupees per kilogram, while wild boars meat cost about 300 rupees and 150 for golden jackals.<sup>xxix</sup>

When entire animal families are attacked, it's clear that conservation is not being prioritized. Some hunters also participate in the illicit wildlife trade, taking advantage of creatures such as monitor lizards in order to make large sums of money.<sup>xxx</sup> Another specific conservation worry about the illicit wildlife trafficking in India is the expanding internet component of the wildlife product trade. For instance, the Indian-based '*hatha jodi*' trade targets monitor lizards, such as the yellow and Bengal monitors, for their dried hemipenes, which are fictitiously offered for sale online as rare and "holy" Himalayan plant roots that are said to have spiritual qualities in Buddhist and Chinese beliefs.<sup>xxxi</sup>

This highlights a worrying trend in which the pursuit of pleasure at the expense of moral and environmental issues leads to a decline in biodiversity. In Hunter's group, it's customary for young hunters to take down one endangered wild animal. As a means of competitiveness, hunters must take down a significant number of wild species.<sup>xxxii</sup> It is challenging to assess how ceremonial hunts affect the biodiversity of nearby forests. However, the quantity of participants and the variety of species targeted raise questions over the long-term potential of contributing to "defaunation," the sustainability of the accompanying offtake, and possible hazards to endangered and vulnerable species.<sup>xxxiii</sup> A cross-country study team performed an interview with ritual hunters. The majority of respondents who were asked how often they had participated in ritualistic hunting during the previous 12 months stated that they only did it once or twice. Some also claimed that they were involved in more frequent hunts.<sup>xxxiv</sup>





be a better alternative source of employment and enjoyment. This form of community behaviour is not a new phenomenon in India as since the 1990s Angami tribe of Nagaland's Khonoma village is practising it when they stopped the hunting of endangered bird Blyth tragopan.<sup>xli</sup> In another Northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh some tribal communities and village panchayats (councils) have self imposed hunting bans in their forest lands.<sup>xlii</sup> I would also suggest that instead of animal based traditional medicines, plant sourced products should be encouraged more in the market.

### Conclusion:

Ritual hunting is deeply ingrained in the minds, customs and cultures of Bengal. The longstanding debate over hunting in Southwestern Bengal indicates a complex interaction of sociological, ecological and legal factors that binds the hunt. Legally it is not permitted but if one speaks of culture then the practice of hunting is there. The dichotomy between protecting ecology and continuing culture reflects the struggle between human and nature. Although there is a ban on hunting but the tribes continue to disobey the rule and frequently venture into the forest for a hunt. A balance is required between conservation and ecology. When a place is deforested, we often hear more number of trees will be planted as a replacement. But in-case of animals its difficult to do as hunting takes place every year and animals need time to reproduce. Moreover, plants stand still but animals move from one place to another in search for food, making it difficult to keep a track. Some hunters also tried to justify their killing by saying even large animals hunt small prey for food and so we do. But this is not true because humans have better alternative source of food which the animals doesn't. Education and public awareness is the key to stop such practices. Rituals that hurts the mankind must be stopped. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, even the gatekeepers of religion was against the ban of sati and widow remarriage on the pretext of everlasting ritual. But it was countered with solid evidences. In this case, even if the law is their prevention and protection need to be more stringent.

### Notes and References:

<sup>i</sup>Different breeds of dogs, especially hounds, were & still are, used as an aid to the hunter to find, chase, and retrieve game, and sometimes to kill it.

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<sup>iii</sup>Das, A. K. (2020). A medley of forms and styles: Art in the eighteenth-century Bengal. In S. Bhattacharya (Ed.), *A comprehensive history of modern Bengal 1700–1950, Vol. I* (p. 541). The Asiatic Society, Kolkata: Primus Books.

<sup>iv</sup>Parpia, S. (2018). Hunting ground, agricultural land and the forest: Sustainable interdependency in Mughal India 1526–1707. *Landscape History*, 39(2), 25–29., <https://doi/full/10.1080/01433768.2018.1534456>

<sup>v</sup>Juneja, M. (2001). On the margins of utopia: One more look at Mughal painting. *The Medieval History Journal*, 4(2), 222–223, <https://doi.org/10.1177/097194580100400203>

<sup>vi</sup>[https://discover.hubpages.com/art/Hunting-Decorations-in-Temples-Of-WestBengal#:~:text=Ritualistic%20hunting%20in%20West%20Bengal&text=Tribal%20communitie s%20armed%20with%20bows,boars%20and%20several%20bird%20speci les.](https://discover.hubpages.com/art/Hunting-Decorations-in-Temples-Of-WestBengal#:~:text=Ritualistic%20hunting%20in%20West%20Bengal&text=Tribal%20communitie s%20armed%20with%20bows,boars%20and%20several%20bird%20speci les.,), Accessed Jan 18, 2025.

<sup>vii</sup>Chatterji, Shyamal. “Art and Architecture of the Temples of Baronagar, Murshidabad.” *Chitrolekha Journal on Art and Design* 2, no. 1(2012): 74–80.

<sup>viii</sup><https://kjrjgdc.ac.in/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/THE-HUNT-MATERIAL.pdf>

<sup>ix</sup><https://www.bangla-kobita.com/jibanananda/shikaar/>, Accessed Feb 24, 2025

<sup>x</sup><https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.454846/mode/2up>

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<sup>xii</sup><https://www.downtoearth.org.in/wildlife-biodiversity/some-200-wild-animals-killed-in-annual-tribal-hunting-season-in-bengal-last-month-76486?utm,> Accessed Feb 12, 2025.

<sup>xiii</sup><https://www.telegraphindia.com/my-kolkata/news/birds-animals-killed-in-paschim-medinipur-hunting-festival/cid/1859322>, Accessed Jan 24, 2025.

<sup>xiv</sup><https://sanctuarynaturefoundation.org/newsroom/heal-works-to-curb-hunting-festivals-in-west-bengal?utm>, Accessed Feb 08, 2025.

<sup>xv</sup>Times News Network (2021). Animals, birds hunted and cooked in the open at West Midinipur Fair.

<sup>xvi</sup><https://www.conservationindia.org/articles/hunting-festivals-of-west-bengal-an-untold-story-of-wildlife-massacre>, Accessed Feb 10, 2025.

<sup>xvii</sup>Sarkar, M., & Modak, B. K. (2022). Rituals and festivals of indigenous people of Chota Nagpur plateau of West Bengal: A positive correlation with the environment. In U. Chatterjee, A. Kashyap, M. Everard, G. K. Panda, & D. Mahata (Eds.), *Indigenous people and nature*, pp. 465–491. Elsevier. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-323-91603-5.00020-8>

<sup>xviii</sup>Chattopadhyay, P. (2018). Prosongyo Sikar Utsav. *Ekhon Aranyak*, *Regd. No. WBBEN/2011/41893*, ISSN 2451-1139.

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<sup>xx</sup> After a week of long hunt, the tribe Bisonhorn Marias of Bastar disctriect in Chhattisgarh, hold a ceremony in the district's principal town. Then the bows and arrows build from the forest woods are blessed by the local priests. It is a great affair for the Oraons. The *pagusendera*, which is ‘the sole common hunt’ for the Mundas, is required of ‘all able-bodied men and boys from the age of twelve’ on the first day.



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- <sup>xxii</sup> <https://healearth.in/page-3-ritual-hunting-interventions/>, Accessed Feb 20, 2025.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> <https://healearth.in/ritual-hunting/>, Accessed Feb 20, 2025.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> <https://thebetterindia.com/237460/west-bengal-woman-activist-wildlife-protection-act-1972-hunting-antipoaching-ngo-heal-india-ana79/>, Accessed Feb 15, 2025.
- <sup>xxv</sup> Wild boar's head is consumed during fever, fat is used as oil massages for joint pains.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Banerjee, D., & Chattopadhyay, P. (2024). Ritualistic hunts: Exploring the motivations and conservation implications in West Bengal. *Nature Conservation*, 56, p. 243–273. <https://doi.org/10.3897/natureconservation.56.132178>
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- <sup>xxviii</sup> Some of the hunters acknowledged that faunas like Tiger, deer, jungle cat, sloth bear and vultures have become rare.
- <sup>xxix</sup> Ibid. p. 256.
- <sup>xxx</sup> <https://www.eurekalert.org/news-releases/1067728>, Accessed Feb 16, 2025.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> D'Cruze, N., Assou, G. H., & Auliya, M. (2020). Snake oil and pangolin scales: Insights into wild animal use at “Marché des Fétiches” traditional medicine market, Togo. *Nature Conservation*, 39, p. 45–71. <https://doi.org/10.3897/natureconservation.39.47879>
- <sup>xxxii</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/org/science/article/pii/S1314694724000319>, Accessed Feb 14, 2025.
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> Poulsen, J. R., Maicher, V., Malinowski, H., & DeSisto, C. (2023). Situating defaunation in an operational framework to advance biodiversity conservation. *BioScience*, 73(10), p. 721–727. <https://doi.org/10.1093/biosci/biad079>
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> Banerjee, D., & Chattopadhyay, P. (2024). Ritualistic hunts: Exploring the motivations and conservation implications in West Bengal, India. *Nature Conservation*, 56, p.243–273. <https://doi.org/10.3897/natureconservation.56.132178>
- <sup>xxxv</sup> Even so, Section 3(l) grants traditional community rights in forests, excluding the rights of animals.
- <sup>xxxvi</sup> The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) was signed by India in 1976. CITES seeks to control lawful international commerce in order to prevent overexploitation of specific listed species.
- <sup>xxxvii</sup> <https://www.telegraphindia.com/west-bengal/hunting-festival-defies-court-order-over-130-birds-and-animals-slaughtered-in-east-burdwan/cid/2029152>, Accessed Feb 19, 2025.

<sup>xxxviii</sup>Kaul, S. K., Misra, M., & Kumar, A. (2023). *State of Madhya Pradesh v. Phoolchand Rathore*, 2023 LiveLaw (SC) 408. *LiveLaw.in*. Accessed April 28, 2024, from [https://www.livelaw.in/pdf\\_upload/408-state-of-madhya-pradesh-v-phoolchand-rathore-28-apr-2023-473313.pdf](https://www.livelaw.in/pdf_upload/408-state-of-madhya-pradesh-v-phoolchand-rathore-28-apr-2023-473313.pdf)

<sup>xxxix</sup>Banerjee, D. (n.d.). An unrevealed truth of wildlife hunting in West Bengal. In A. Chatterjee & D. Chakraborty (Eds.), *Environment paradigm* (pp. 70–77). Unique Publication House. ISBN 978-93-91615-02-

4.[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/356186708\\_An\\_unrevealed\\_truth\\_of\\_Wildlife\\_Hunting\\_in\\_West\\_Bengal](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/356186708_An_unrevealed_truth_of_Wildlife_Hunting_in_West_Bengal)

<sup>xl</sup><https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/west-bengal-forest-departments-campaign-against-ritualistic-hunting-pays-off/article65484718.ece> , Accessed Jan 31, 2025.

<sup>xli</sup>In 1998, the Khonoma Nature Conservation and Tragopan Sanctuary (KNCTS) was established as the country's first community-led conservation project.

<sup>xlii</sup>[https://vikalpsangam.org/wpcontent/uploads/migrate/Stories\\_PDFs/community\\_conservation\\_at\\_a\\_crossroads\\_in\\_khonoma.pdf](https://vikalpsangam.org/wpcontent/uploads/migrate/Stories_PDFs/community_conservation_at_a_crossroads_in_khonoma.pdf)

