
CURRENT SCIENCE—50 YEARS AGO

[From *Current Science*, 1933, Vol. 2, page 1]

A SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF GAME IN SOUTH INDIA

WE extend our enthusiastic support to the proposals for the establishment of an association for the preservation of wild life in South India. It seems to us that the adoption of measures for the protection of fish is equally imperative. With the exception of the United Provinces the other parts of India do not have a central organisation commanding sufficient prestige to impose restraints on the indiscriminate slaughter of wild animals, some of which have been brought to the verge of extinction. As an instance of the grievous loss which science has sustained through the uninstructed zeal of sportsmen, we may mention the case of the Dutch settlers in Mauritius, who taking unchivalrous advantage of the half-fledged wings and short legs of Dodo (*Didus ineptus*), succeeded within a comparatively short-time in clearing the island of this extremely interesting and rare pigeon. In the interests of science and wider humanity, enlightened governments have recognised the need of imposing restrictions, by the promulgation of game laws and other protective regulations, on the excess of sportsmen and native shikaris. Wherever there is abundance of sylvan fauna, the temptation for the free use of fire arms becomes irresistible and epidemic and in the excitement, it is not uncommon for men to forget all the commandments both divine and human.

The unassisted efforts of government are not adequate to meet the exigencies of the case, and they have to be supported by private association whose influential position, in public life ought to invest them with authority for exerting control on the destructive proclivities of sportsmen and ignorant native shikaris.

From Helen of Troy down to butterflies, the wearer of beauty has always been subjected to persecution and for the gratification of human vanity or pleasurable excitement or under pretexts of protection of human life and crops, large numbers of animals are annually killed, which in minds not sportively inclined evoke feelings of kindness, sympathy and admiration. Attributes such as strength, courage and dignified independence which embellish man's character confer no immunity upon lower animals possessing them. Departure from the doctrine of *Ahimsa* and the impact of historical influences have diminished in India reverence for animal life and in the next phase of human progress it is hoped that our concept of the sanctity of life, occurring in the Amoeba or the Archbishop of Canterbury will receive a new orientation. But the urgent need is a complete revision of the ethics of sport as pursued at present. We cannot discover heroism, much less righteousness and fairplay, in enticing animals by playing cruelly on the most fundamental and universal appetite, paralysing them with the dazzling brilliance of torchlight and shattering their shoulder blades by firing with magazine rifles from an elevated place of concealment. Compared with this the mode of hunting the offending lion practised by the African tribes has all the good qualities of sport giving, as it does, the hunted beast all reasonable chances to escape and making the hunters oppose skill, strength and daring to the fury of the animal in a battle royal. In a sport it is unmanly to evade the risk and secure the spoils in a manner other than by courage. We have to humanise sport. We should not countenance slaughter without provocation.

* * *