
Kenneth Anderson and the South Indian Crime: Experiences of A White Hunter in the Dark Domain of the Jungle Land

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ABSTRACT

Through the eyes of Kenneth Anderson, a well-known European hunter who resided in South India from 1910 to 1974, this study explores the complex relationship between criminality and the cultural landscape of colonial and post-colonial India. The goal of the study is to understand Mr. Kenneth Anderson's views on a range of criminal activities, including organised crime, low-level theft, suicides, and social injustices, by examining his written works, based on his real-life experiences. The dacoit Selvaraj, also called "Mumptyvayan," who was admired by the impoverished for his Robin Hood-like actions, is one of the prominent cases highlighted in this work. It also discusses the intricacies of Indian criminal law, specifically about femicide cases and the socioeconomic factors that impact crime and retaliation between various social classes. The study highlights how Kenneth Anderson's observations and experiences provide important insights into the moral complexities and societal standards of the era, ultimately advancing our understanding of the historical context of crime in India. This study not only reflects on the impact of crime in colonial times but also invites further discourse on the evolution of criminality in post-colonial India.

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Introduction - Hunting was a popular and adventurous activity in colonial India, continuing into the post-colonial era until it was banned by the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972. Mr. Kenneth Anderson, a



notable white hunter from South India, was born on March 8, 1910, in Bolarum, Andhra Pradesh.¹ After India gained independence in 1947, he chose to remain in the country until he died in 1974. Throughout his life, he witnessed various events related to colonial and post-colonial crime in South India. This research paper will explore Anderson's views and how his experiences influenced the understanding of crime in India. By studying his writings, we aim to reveal insights about the impact of British rule and the experiences of individuals like him in India.

Research Methodology - Given the complexity and narrative character of the source material, this research study, which focuses on Kenneth Anderson's narratives of crime in colonial and postcolonial South India, necessitates an approach to qualitative research that is both historically based and analytically complex. This research explores the genesis of crime and its perception via the lived experiences and writings of Kenneth Anderson, a prominent colonial personality. Historical qualitative analysis is best suited for interpreting subtle socio-cultural and legal changes throughout time.

Large Organised Crime like Banditry – According to Kenneth Anderson, large-scale organised crime was unusual in India.² The article talks about organised crime in India, with a particular emphasis on two dacoits, one of whom, Selvaraj, later popularised among the police and the people in the nickname of 'Mumptyvayan' because he was a man with a mouth like a *Mumpty* (Shovel). Following a family argument, his neighbours killed his father, and he turned to crime. Mumptyvayan and his brother retaliated by killing nine members of the murder family. After that, he became a criminal and sought refuge in the woods since the cops prevented him from going back to his former life. Mumptyvayan, despite being a criminal who stole money, was commonly perceived as similar to Robin Hood in South India. He preyed upon affluent landlords and merchants, stealing from them to help the poor. The majority of the funds were used to help the needy, the ill, and the hungry, while he retained a portion of it for himself. Consequently, the majority of the poor, especially farmers, loved him, while the wealthy and law enforcement looked upon him with dread and contempt. Using informants among the populace to find affluent targets, he ran his business throughout a large portion of South India. He would go to these residences at night, threatening the residents with a pistol or knife to get money. He also demanded 50 rupees from timber thieves in exchange for keeping quiet about their unlawful behaviour. By using this approach, he was able to enforce his orders to prevent problems for people engaged in timber theft. His life, generally speaking, was a mix of criminality and a warped sense of morality, mirroring how others saw the nuances of his personality. Mumptyvayan preferred a jungle base close to the Cauvery River's Hogenaikal Waterfalls. At first, Kenneth Anderson felt sorry for Mumptyvayan after hearing



numerous stories about his exploits. But when Anderson discovered the kinds of offences Mumptyvayan often committed, this compassion vanished. After learning about Mumptyvayan's humour and bravery, he became curious about his character, even if he occasionally saw him as a total rebel. Anderson and Mumptyvayan had a conversation in Hogenaikal one night that lasted until dawn. Mumptyvayan recounted his life narrative and offered sincere apologies for his previous deeds. Kenneth Anderson attempted to assist him in breaking free from his criminal way of life. Mumptyvayan got rid of his weapons and shaved his hair and moustache into a large pool known as "Big Bannu," by Anderson's strategy. After that, he changed his appearance to look like a beggar named Omkrishna and made his way to Anderson's residence in Bangalore. To avoid being recognised by the authorities, Anderson suggested that he relocate to Hyderabad or farther north. Mumptyvayan followed this counsel and departed. The word of Mumptyvayan's death broke out two months later. Even though he had come back to a woman he loved, she betrayed him by poisoning his favourite meal. He passed away soon after finishing his meal. Mumptyvayan was shot by the woman's brother, who then took the reward of Rs. 500 and five acres of land that the Madras government had offered. His remains were brought to Dharmapuri, where a large crowd assembled for his funeral.³

Kenneth Anderson wrote another book where he highlighted Man Singh, a well-known dacoit from the Chambal valley of Central and Northern India. According to Anderson, he was both a criminal and a person of moral fibre. Dacoit Man Singh waged war against the police and informants, focusing on the wealthy. He never stole from the underprivileged or hurt women and children, and he had a lot of pals among them. He is remembered for his kindness, bravery, and resilience in the face of adversity, much like Robin Hood, even if his crimes were wrong.⁴

Committing Suicides – In India, it is illegal to try to kill oneself. According to Kenneth Anderson, people commit suicide frequently for a variety of reasons. He thinks Indians are easily moved and emotionally volatile.⁵ If Indians gave more consideration to their well-being before acting, Kenneth Anderson thinks that the suicide problem could be solved.

Low-Level Crimes like Pilfering - Theft, minor cheating, and pickpocketing were viewed as minor offences, according to Kenneth Anderson. He thought that if the chance presented itself, Indian neighbours were prone to deceive one another, particularly if one was not astute enough to do so first.⁶

Whitefield, close to Bangalore, is where Kenneth Anderson lived and where he was exposed to India's Anglo-Indian population. On a half-acre lot, he purchased a comfortable cottage home for his own and



his beloved wife. However, after it was left unoccupied for some time, the residents of the village began to consider it as their own, using the land for grazing goats and cattle, collecting firewood, and congregating there. The villagers simply grew more astute, visiting at night, in spite of his efforts to put an end to these behaviours. As a result, Anderson sought help from the police and attempted to speak with the residents face-to-face, but they opted to strike back at him. Gipsy, Anderson's dog, stayed indoors throughout the night. Gipsy's growl at the bathroom door brought him out of bed at 3:10 a.m. in one night. Gipsy raced ahead and barked at the closed outside door as he cautiously opened it. Anderson thought there could be a snake there, but he quickly noticed a gang of eleven armed men outside, prepared to retaliate against him for his stringent rules about the property. Anderson quietly grabbed his shotgun while one of the guys scaled the roof to break in. At first, he considered firing at their legs to frighten them away, but he changed his mind, recognising that this might cause major issues and legal repercussions. Instead, to scare them, he chose to fire a blank round over their heads. This strategy was effective, and the invaders fled immediately. Kenneth Anderson searched for the intruders after the confrontation but could not find any evidence of them. But he picked up some of the things that were left behind, such as two pairs of *chappals* (traditional rough sandals popular in India), a wooden club, and three bamboo sticks. He intended to sell the sandals the following day for a little gain via his fruit and vegetable providers. Even though he questioned whether the males who came to purchase the chappals were the genuine owners, the trespassers seemed to have vanished for good, and no further attempts were made to break into his cabin after that.⁷

According to Kenneth Anderson's writings, timber theft and livestock theft, like grain and cattle robbery, are prevalent problems close to human communities in South India. These robbers are occasionally confronted by wild animals, such as a rogue elephant, but these incidents are unusual coincidences. In general, there is an increase in unlawful behaviour in the woods and nearby areas.⁸

The labyrinth of Legislation against Cow Slaughter - The unconventional and simultaneously conservationist approach of Kenneth Anderson to caring for wild animals of South India, including his pet hyena Jackie, who had to consume copious amounts of meat daily (eight to ten pounds), resulted in legal challenges under Indian criminal law in Whitefield, India. The cost of raw beef in Whitefield was less than in Bangalore, thus Anderson decided to keep Jackie there. Two neighbourhood butchers who provided Jackie with the required meat became his friends. Nevertheless, because Hindus regard cows as holy, cow killing was prohibited in places like Whitefield and Bangalore at the time. Selling fresh raw beef in Whitefield was difficult, even if it wasn't against the law to consume meat brought in from



outside locations where slaughtering animals was prohibited. The police raided the butchers' houses on the assumption that they were killing cattle there. Jackie was hungry as a result of this raid, which disrupted his meat supply. Anderson risked everything to rescue Jackie. He stole raw beef while evading the police by breaking into locked butchers' houses late at night. Even though he was covered in blood, he managed to collect enough meat to feed Jackie for a week. He was fortunate not to be found since he may have been accused of murder if he had been apprehended. The police learned that the beef originated in Madras rather than Whitefield, and the butchers were exonerated.⁹ Although the incident concluded, it brought attention to problems in India's legislation that have an impact on both the local indigenous community and privileged white citizens like Kenneth Anderson.

Femicides - Kenneth Anderson shared his experiences with crime and Indian law, particularly during a hunt for a panther in Gummalapur, near Bangalore, with his friend Deva Sundaram. While hunting, they found the body of a murdered Indian woman tied to a bamboo pole. Despite attempts to find out how she died, the presence of vultures made it impossible to gather evidence. The woman still wore valuable jewellery, indicating that robbery was not the motive for her murder. Kenneth speculated that the killers had planned to leave her body there, knowing that the vultures would eat it quickly, leaving little evidence behind. Concerned about the crime, Anderson and his friends reported the incident to the Patel of Gummalapur and later sent a formal report to the police in Bangalore. However, they faced significant confusion and frustration due to the complexities of Indian criminal law, as their report was sent back to the Madras police for jurisdictional reasons. Throughout the investigation, Anderson and his friend were harassed by police officers from different states, who viewed them with suspicion. Despite explaining that he was merely fulfilling his civic duty, he found that the local police had not yet visited the scene due to bureaucratic delays. After some days, the police, along with Anderson, went back to Gummalapur to search for the woman's body, but it was no longer there. Instead, Anderson found a broken glass bangle and strands of hair, which further raised the police's scepticism toward him. They questioned how he could find these items and began to suspect his involvement in the crime. Frustrated by the investigation, Anderson said he would only respond through his lawyer, which made the police more doubtful about his innocence. It took almost three months for Anderson and his friend to show that they did nothing wrong. The Madras police decided that a murder had happened in Mysore state, and the body was taken to the jungles of Madras. So, finally, Kenneth Anderson felt relieved from the complicated Indian criminal law.¹⁰



Several years later, while returning home from a coffee plantation at late night, Anderson, his son Donald, and two companions discovered the body of a young girl, lying in the dense jungle covered motor road, who had been brutally raped. However, recalling his previous experience with the authorities, Anderson chose not to report this crime, leaving the girl behind. Although this decision spared him and his companions from legal troubles, he faced a heavy burden of regret for abandoning the victim to her fate.¹¹

Criminal Vendetta between Rich and Poor - Kenneth Anderson recounted a frightening event in Panapatti, home to the 'Poojarees,' a tribe of herders. Kaiyara, a herder from this tribe, worked for a wealthy landlord, Gopaswamy, who owned many cattle. Gopaswamy's son, Sathynarayan, visited Panapatti for business and met Kaiyara's daughter, Mardee. He became infatuated with her and eventually got her pregnant. When their affair was exposed, Sathynarayan refused to marry Mardee, citing his wealth and higher caste. Mardee then vanished, and it was rumoured that Sathynarayan, with help from his driver, had abducted and killed her, which left Kaiyara believing his daughter was kidnapped and murdered, though he stayed silent about it. Gopalswamy and Sathynarayan were very rich men who could harm Kaiyara without consequence. They had the power to hire hooligans or falsely accuse him of crimes, which could lead to his torture in jail. However, Kaiyara, a father and a respected black magician in his community, sought revenge. On the darkest night of the month (*Amavasa*), he appeared as a terrifying sorcerer and cursed Sathynarayan's family. After that night, Kaiyara vanished and was never seen again. Six months later, during the Pongal festival, Sathynarayan, his wife, and their young son visited Panapatti with Gopalswamy. While returning home, an incident occurred on the jungle track. Sathynarayan and Gopalswamy were walking ahead, while the wife and child followed. Suddenly, a tiger attacked. Sathynarayan and his father heard a snarl, turned around, and saw the tiger with the child in its mouth, striking the mother. The next morning, their remains were found, untouched by the tiger. In a strange twist, the tiger left no tracks on the ground. Das, the driver of Sathynarayan, died by drowning in a fatal car wreck into a tank two months after the incident. After these incidents, Sathynarayan's mental health worsened. He believed he was cursed by Kaiyara. Eventually, he was placed in a mental asylum, but did not improve and was taken home for care. One morning, he went missing, and four days later, his body was found in Panapatti, also untouched by the tiger. The cause of these tragedies remains unclear, whether a mere coincidence, a magical tiger's spirit, or a father's revenge for his lost daughter.¹² The moral reality was that several crimes were perpetrated in South India's forests. The poor indigenous people of India were usually



annoyed by the police and criminal law, because they were hegemonised by the upper strata of Indian society.

Conclusion - In conclusion of our extensive examination of Kenneth Anderson's perspective on Indian crime, it is clear that his special experiences and insights have given us a fascinating lens through which to see colonial and post-colonial India. The jungles and diverse regions of South India were explored by Mr. Anderson, resulting in an unforgettable lifetime experience. His insights enable us to delve into the often-neglected lives of individuals who were caught up in India's intricate tapestry. Kenneth Anderson's story shows how history is shaped by personal experiences, biases, and viewpoints. It highlights the importance of understanding different perspectives in shaping our understanding of the past. Even if it occasionally feels complex, confusing or perplexing, trying something new can be beneficial. As we continue our conversation, we may ask additional questions about the crime against India, as detailed by Kenneth Anderson. After all, it is the most efficient way to study the past, understand the present, and influence the course of crime in India in the future.

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