

The Culture of Hunting Portrayed in Vikram Seth's A Suitable Boy

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Abstract:

The main focus of this article is to reveal the culture of hunting depicted in Vikram Seth's novel *A Suitable Boy*. Vikram Seth is among the most celebrated Indian novelists and poets. *A Suitable Boy* is a novel by Vikram Seth, published in 1993 with 1,535 pages and 591,552 words. *A Suitable Boy* is set in Post-Independence India. The novel follows the story of four families over a period of 19 months, and centres on Mrs. Rupa Mehra's efforts to arrange the marriage of her younger daughter, Lata, to a "suitable boy". Hunting has a legacy in India and we have a richly documented hunting tradition. In the novel *A Suitable Boy*, the author portrayed the scenes of wolf hunting and defects of deforestation in rural post-independence India. This paper attempts to portray how deforestation makes path for blood sports and the way that the author portrayed the culture of hunting in his novel *A Suitable Boy*.

Keywords: Post-Independence, Social Realism, Wolf-Hunting, Deforestation, Hindu Mythology

Introduction:

Vikram Seth is an Indian author and travel essayist, most popular for his epic novel *A Suitable Boy*. Vikram Seth was destined to Prem Seth and Leila Seth, on 20 June 1952, in Calcutta situated in the territory of West Bengal in India. He learned at the St. Michael's School, Patna, St. Xavier's School, Patna and therefore at The Doon School, Dehra Dun. From that point, he moved to England and finished his A-Levels from the Tonbridge School.

In the wake of moving on from secondary school, he examined Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Corpus Christi College, Oxford and graduated with a B. A. Degree in 1975. From 1975 to 1986, he sought after his Ph.D. at Stanford University, California, U.S.A. From 1980 to 1982, he was in China to his field research. He traversed China gathering material for a doctoral paper that he never composed. While in China, he examined old style Chinese verse. In 1986, his novel *The Golden Gate* was distributed which was extraordinary since the whole novel was written in refrain and managed the lives of individuals in Silicon Valley. In 1990, he distributed another book of verse named *All You Who Sleep Tonight*. In 1992, he came out with another assortment of sonnets *Three Chinese Poets*. In 1985, he won the Sahitya Akademi Award, an Indian artistic honor, for his book *The Golden Gate*. In 2001, he was made an Order of the British Empire.

The culture of hunting in India:

Hindu sacred texts portray hunting as a worthy occupation, just as a game of the royal. Indeed, even figures considered heavenly are depicted to have occupied with hunting. One of the names of the god Shiva is *Mrigavyadha*, which interprets as the deer tracker. The word *Mriga*, in numerous Indian dialects including Malayalam, represents deer, however for all creatures and creature senses. Shiva, as *Mrigavyadha*, is the person who devastates the creature impulses in individuals. In the epic Ramayana, Dasharatha, the dad of Rama, is said

to be able to chase in obscurity. During one of his hunting undertakings, he coincidentally slaughtered Shrivana, confusing him with game. During Rama's outcast in the backwoods, Ravana abducted his significant other, Sita, from their cabin, while Rama was asked by Sita to catch a brilliant deer, and his sibling Lakshman followed him.

Hunting has an inheritance in India and we have a luxuriously reported hunting custom. Be that as it may, this heritage has come at a substantial cost. The movement has caused enormous scope annihilation of untamed life assets, including eradication of numerous species. In Post-Independence India, hunting was prohibited by the administration under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, aside from determined purposes, for example, for self-preservation, to forestall crop harm, to counter vermin species and for logical or instructive reasons. Hunting for sport is restricted in India.

The Culture of Hunting Portrayed in Vikram Seth's A Suitable Boy:

Seth implants an honest image of the far-off Indian towns, where the word 'development' is unheard of in the beginning of freedom. Numerous towns in Rudhia area are invaded with wolves. There are stories where youngsters have been destroyed by the wolves. Locals' goats and dairy animals have been murdered. They can't rest in their hovels attributable to burning warmth and furthermore outside due to the wolves.

Sandeep Lahiri, the Sub Divisional Officer (SDO) comprehends the main driver of the issue. The spot had more extravagant timberland spread once, loaded with little untamed life so wolves could benefit from them. At that point there was an excess of logging, first in the war, at that point unlawfully after the war with the conspiracy of the woodland authorities. The natural life turned out to be scant and the wolves have nothing to eat, so they invade the human home, removing their goats and in the event that not, at that point their kids. The SDO effectively takes part in wolf hunting and gets fruitful to ingrain trust in the townspeople.

Like the fox and the coyote, the Indian wolf has gained notoriety for being shrewd. There are numerous accounts of their tricks told by local people, onlookers and shepherds. The individuals of Maharashtra would sing *Labad Landga Dhong Kartay*, which means Wolves are sharp creatures and will trick you with their shrewd strategies. Wolves are every so often referenced in Hindu folklore. In the Harivamsa, Krishna, to persuade the individuals of Vraja to move to Vrindavan, makes many wolves from his hairs, which terrify the occupants of Vraja into making the excursion. In the Rig Veda, Rjrsava is blinded by his dad as discipline for having given 101 of his family's sheep to a she-wolf, who thus implores the Ashvins to re-establish his sight. Bhima, the insatiable child of the god Vayu, is portrayed as Vrikodara, signifying wolf-tolerated.

In the novel *A Suitable Boy*, Maan is bored in the village and finds the Muslim lifestyle strange. Maan is caught up in political situations and conversations, but shows no real interest in them. He comes alive at the suggestion of a wolf hunt by SDO Sandeep Lahiri is depicted in the following lines;

... I have to do a bit of wolf-hunting myself: an activity, I should add, for which I am utterly untrained and unfit. But because I'm the SDO I have to be seen to be handling the menace myself.'

Maan's eyes lit up. 'Wolf-hunting?' he said. 'Do you really mean that?'

'Yes, indeed,' said the SDO. 'Tomorrow morning is when we go. Are you fond of hunting? Would you care to come along?'

'that would be wonderful,' said Mann with great enthusiasm. 'but I don't have anything except kurta-pyjamas to wear.'

‘oh, I should think we could get you toggled up if necessary,’ said the SDO. ‘anyway, it’s nothing formal- just a beat to try to flush out a few man-eating wolves that have been bothering some villages in my subdivision.’ (705)

Through his realistic narrative Seth has portrayed how the characters were prepared for hunting during the Post-Independence India. Maan who belongs to aristocratic family had an experience of hunting before meeting the SDO is also depicted as follows;

Sandeep had lent Maan a pair of khaki shorts, a khaki shirt, and a hat. Leaning against the door on Maan’s side was the rifle that was kept at the SDO’s bungalow. Sandeep had (with distaste) learned to fire it once but was not at all keen to fire it again. Maan could stand in for him.

Maan had gone hunting for nilgai and deer a number of times with friends from Banaras, had hunted wild boar too, and had once, without success, hunted for leopard. He had greatly enjoyed it. He had never hunted wolf before, and was not sure how exactly it would be managed presumably there would be beaters. (708)

India is home to a huge assortment of creatures. The Indian wolf is a subspecies of dark wolf that ranges from Southwest Asia to the Indian Subcontinent. The Indian fields wolf is hereditarily basal to all other surviving Wolf separated from the more established genealogy Himalayan wolf, with both proposed as discrete species. The Indian wolf goes in littler packs and is less vocal than different variations of the dim wolf, and has gained notoriety for being tricky. Indian wolves have a past filled with going after youngsters, a term called child lifting. The kids were taken fundamentally in the late spring time frame at night hours, and regularly inside human settlements. These occurrences additionally penned by Seth in A Suitable Boy as follows;

Maan asked him about the background to the problem.

‘aren’t wolves normally scared of the villagers?’ He asked.

‘that’s what I thought too,’ said Sandeep. ‘we don’t have so many wolves left anyway, and people don’t have permission to go around shooting them unless they become a menace. But I’ve seen children who’ve been mauled by wolves, and even the remains of children killed and eaten by wolves. It’s really terrible. The people of these villages are absolutely terrified. I suppose they are inclined to exaggerate, but the forest officers have confirmed from pug-marks and so on that it’s wolves we’re talking about, not leopards or hyenas or anything else. (708-709)

Indian wolves will benefit from domesticated animals when regular prey is scant. This causes human-wolf clashes and wolf oppression since human populace thickness is high in these territories. Among homegrown creatures, goats are the essential objective for Indian wolves, containing 66% of wolf assaults around the Jhelum region, with sheep following at 27%. Wolves are additionally more inclined to going after domesticated animals during denning periods and with puppies under 5–6 months old. It isn't unprecedented for local people to misrepresent the greatness of Indian wolf ravaging and tell stories of their ruthless wiles, adding to contempt of the creature.

When they got back into the car, Sandeep said nothing more than ‘very sad, very sad. Sad for the villagers, sad for the wolves.’

‘sad for the wolves?’ said Maan, startled.

‘well, you know,’ said Sandeep, taking off his sola topi and mopping his forehead, ‘though this area looks very bare now, there used to be a lot of forest cover once- Sal,

Mahua and so on – and it supported a lot of small wildlife that the wolves preyed on. But there has been so much logging, first in the war because it was needed, and then, illegally, after the war – often, I’m afraid, with the connivance of the forest officers themselves – and also the villagers, who want more land for their fields. Anyway, the wolves have been crowded into smaller and smaller areas and have more and more desperate. The summer’s worst time because everything is dry and there’s nothing to eat- hardly any land-crabs or frogs or other small animals. That’s when they are driven by hunger to attack the villager’s goats-and when they can’t get at the goats, they attack the villagers’ children. (709-710)

The above lines from the novel *A Suitable Boy* portrays the reason for the conflict between animals and human beings. Here the author penned that the major cause for the wolves’ attack was deforestation. Due to deforestation animals were affected by scarcity of food and water and they infringed into the human inhabited areas.

Conclusion:

Vikram Seth has used social realism as his prominent theme in all his novels. In his second novel *A Suitable Boy*, he has portrayed the real picture of post-independence India. The major theme of this paper is to reveal how Vikram Seth depicted the hunting and its features in post-independence India. Vikram Seth narrated various incidents such as Zamindari abolition act, Hindu Muslim conflict, English language, shoe makings and so on in this novel. He has also portrayed the culture of hunting and the reason for human beings’- animals’ conflicts through his fictional characters in the novel *A Suitable Boy*. Through the character Sandeep Lahiri, Seth vividly stated that the reason for the animal attacks is deforestation. Thus, the readers can get the real picture of post-independence India and the culture of hunting by reading this novel.

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