



Anthropomorphism and philozoic attributes in selected short stories of ruskin bond and manoj das: A posthumanist perspective analysis

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Abstract

The present paper aims at critically analyzing some of the well-known stories of Ruskin Bond and Manoj Das in the light of the posthumanist perspectives specifically relating to animal psychology, anthromorphism and philozoic attributes in case of both pet and wild animals, and basically focuses on how both the authors' focus on animal qualities subtly reflected in human behavior and vice versa and the love of humans for the non-human creatures. In their writings, it is reflected that just like the sensible human, animals also have feelings, memory, actions and reactions; and can distinguish between virtue and evil or for that matter tenderness and rudeness and similar such attributes. The literatures of almost all the languages have dealt with this concept but these two writers Ruskin Bond and Manoj Das develop unique and natural approaches through their stories. In this context, Ruskin Bond's A Crow for All Seasons, Tiger, Tiger, Burning Bright, The White Elephant and Manoj Das' A Turtle from the Blue, A Crocodile's Lady, the Bull of Babulpur have been taken for in-depth analysis.

Keywords: animal psychology, animalis, non-human creature, anthropomorphism, philozoic, fantasies, posthumanist

Introduction

In recent years, many disciplines within the humanities have become increasingly concerned with non-human actors and entities. The environment, animals, machines, objects, weather, and other non-human beings and things have taken center stage to challenge assumptions about what we have traditionally called 'the human.' Informed by theoretical approaches like posthumanism, the new materialisms, ecocriticism, and critical animal studies, such scholarship has got a scope of emerging importance.

Animal, coming from the Latin origin 'Animalis', which means breath or having soul refers to all the non-human living organisms related to nature. To study the behaviors and cognitive processes of these creatures comes under the field of animal psychology. 1882 was the birth year of the term animal psychology with the publication of 'Animal Intelligence' which compared the behaviors of animals with that of human beings. The Animal Psychology or Comparative Psychology is related to the actions, behaviors and mental process of the non-human creatures. As animals have a significant role in the literature of any era, they unveil a hidden message to the readers through their actions in any writing. Including all the languages the literature in general has the touch of animism and animal psychology and the Indian writers and their creations are of no exception in this regard. The images of animals in any writing present the state of mind, the thought process, the happy and sad emotions of the entire animal kingdom and these are better expressed in the writings of Anglo-Indian writers Ruskin Bond (1934-) and Manoj Das (1934-2021). Both of them have written stories for children and put the birds and animals as the characters of their stories to bring out a sense of silliness, innocence, and incongruity and to make the stories painful, powerful as well as enjoyable. All most all the writings of these two writers are full of nature, natural entities, animal behavior and their state of mind. Just

like David Smith's The Most Dangerous Animal, Laurel Braitman's Animal Madness, H.S. Gundevia's A Textbook of Animal Behaviour, Agarwal V.K.'s Animal Behaviour and many more. Likewise these two senior have created remarkable works by bringing together both human and non-human creatures creating a natural ambiance where humans as well as the birds and animals are interdependent, interrelated, and interconnected as a provision of nature psychologically and ecologically.

Literature Review

According to Maha Mohamed Hosny (2015), animal-standpoint criticism looks for 'literature in which animals are taken seriously, not ignored or silenced, but with their realities empathetically imagined and in which specialist ideology—that holds animals are but objects for human use—is broken through, discarded, in favor of a view that respects their subjectivity, their souls.' (Donovan, 2009). Referring to the writings of W. Bruce Cameron's A Dog's Purpose and Edward Owen's Anthill, he says that instead of aesthetics, they assert their subjectivity and agency in their world as well as the humans' world. Both writers adopt the non-human point of view to emphasizing their experiences feelings and consciousness and to render non-human species as equal to the human species. They, moreover, emphasize that thinking through the concept of 'the animal' as well as through human animal material relationship is indispensable for grasping what it means to be human. This is because the concept 'animal' has always been the ground for production of the 'human' and second because it makes humans aware of their practices against and oppression of other species as well as other human beings. In this way animal-centric criticism enable the readers to understand the role of literature in ethical and intellectual life.

Khairulnazrin Nasir *et al.* (2019) ^[5]'s article discusses the theory of animism through a preliminary study of

comparison between the perspective of the Prophet's Sunnah and Western anthropologists. Animism theory was established in the 19th century by Edward Burnett Tylor (William H. Swatos & Peter Kivistö, 1998: 528 and Paul A. Erickson & Liam D. Murphy, 2013: 29). According to him, animism reflects the beliefs of primitive societies. The theory of animism has been introduced by E.B. Tylor in his book 'Primitive Culture: Research into Development Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom,' which was first published on April 1871.

This theory is built on E.B. Tylor's observations to the beliefs that existed in the primitive communities. As a result, he has found two significant theories. Firstly, the belief is that primitive humans are characterized by animism. Secondly, the evolution of religious theory says that animism is the oldest belief and the basis of the religions in the world. In this article, the authors chose several aspects in animism to see the similarities and differences between Sunnah and Western anthropologists' perspective. This topic is important because it highlights the perspective of Islam through the Prophet's Sunnah in discussing the knowledge of sociology, particularly in anthropology.

Dr. Lara in her article 'Anthropomorphism in Childrens Literature' is of the opinion that children's books exist for several purposes: mainly literacy education, moral education and pleasure. The most popular are a smart combination of all three – offering the pleasure of an engaging story, with adult-pleasing lesson having underlying benefit of literacy enhancement. May Gibbs' creative tales are a stellar example of this type of three-pronged impact.

She adds that Gumnut Gossip characters, Animals as characters, therefore, can bring silliness and incongruity, making a story more enjoyable. But they also add to a degree of emotional height for the reader, which is important when the story message is personal, painful or powerful.

Quoting Burke and Copenhaver, she says, 'Having animals do the acting and mistake-making allows the face-saving emotional distance often needed to be able to join the conversation.' When the 'Three Little Pigs' (English Fairy Tales) lose house after house, we roll along with the rhyme; the same situation involving homeless children is far less palatable. 'The Ugly Duckling' (By H.C.Anderson) draws gentle empathy, whilst 'The Ugly Child' would be frightening and confronting.

Many children's stories also use the trope of absent adults as a strategy. Disney tales include orphans a-plenty. Blyton sends The Famous Five off on camping adventures so they can learn from each other away from the gaze of moralising adults. This story device is balanced, however, by watchful animals. Disney's anthropomorphised woodland creatures follow their wards around, offering wisdom and comfort.

Scholars as well as critics have been slowly but profoundly delving deep into the anthropomorphic outlook in terms of ecocriticism and posthumanism which have been greatly understood by Ruskin Bond and Manoj Das through humanics and animism.

Focus on Animals in Ruskin Bond and Manoj Das

The Anglo-Indian writer and story-teller Ruskin Bond is a kin observer of nature, natural objects and the perspective of human and non-human beings as he was brought up in a natural set up of Dehradun. Though he mainly writes for the

younger generation, especially children, yet his stories brim with exceptional ideas and themes, which the grownups enjoy as well as learn while reading. So is the case with the notable Manoj Das. Being born and brought up in a coastal area of Odisha, he was always directly associated with nature, birds, animals, rivers, greenery of fields and so on. With the passing time, he becomes a saintly person; and these two phases of his life have great impact on his writings. The most valuable of his messages are projected through the innocence and silliness of the characters of birds and animals. The titles of the collection of stories and poems of both the writers are animal-centric. For instance, in Ruskin Bond's story collection, The Jungle Omnibus where we find the stories like No Room for a Leopard, Panther's Moon, A Crow for All Seasons, The Tiger in the Tunnel and many more. Similarly, in the story collection The Bridge in the Moonlit Night and Other Stories the short story A Turtle from the Blue, Bhola Grandpa and the Tiger, The Crocodile's Lady, A Tiger in the House and others by Manoj Das display the behavior, thought and state of mind of animals from different perspectives in the best possible dramatic way.

The Four Stories of Bond and Das

These two writers have dealt with the behavior and mindset of different animals quite perfectly. How the animals feel, react and understand every situation and incident and its impact on their lives are best expressed by them.

Ruskin Bond's 'A Crow for All Seasons' is a story of all the crows in general through humorous as well as sarcastic way. What the crows go through in this so called sophisticated world, how they feel it, deal with it and most importantly what impact both crows and humans have on each other's life. The human being, though the most sensible and wise creature, yet has the least sense of care for the surrounding and environment, while a neglected and unappreciated creature like crow is much concerned about that. The story begins with the proverb 'Early to bed and early to rise makes a crow healthy, wealthy and wise'. The crow is always concerned for the betterment of the environment; it collects and uses the garbage thrown by the humans. The crow after finding so many faults in human never forgets to praise the humans for any of their good deeds. But the humans are always cold and asympathetic towards them and goes on hurting them for nothing rather we are busy in ruining their lives. The picture of Speedy, the crow, the protagonist of the story is a calm and reliable bird. After being hurt again and again by the family of a Colonel Sahib especially Junior Sahib, he has never got hostile towards them. Here we may quote Speedy's dialogue in this context: 'What can one say about humans? I do my best to defend them from all kinds of criticism, and this is what I get for my pains.' ('A Crow for All Seasons', The Jungle Omnibus, 61)

It shows the patience and kindness of the bird. In the story we find that Speedy gets nothing but the orange peel thrown by the cook of Colonel Sahib from the kitchen window to make him fly away. This represents the entire crow species and how badly they are treated for their effort in making the world clean. Though it is a story, yet it is the saddest and bitter truth. In fact it is not the story of Speedy or the crow species only, rather each and every non-human creature face such situation. We somehow torture the innocent animals for no reason. Towards the end of the story because of so

much inhumanity the crow becomes rebellious and Junior Sahib realizes that the crow is a part and parcel of their everyday life. This is the case with our society too. As we are so are they- they are an inevitable part of the world and without them the world is incomplete and impossible. Though we never understand their problems, needs and behaviors, they very well understand all. In the conclusion part of the story we find a good bond being made between Speedy and Junior Sahib and so should be the image of the world. The greatest message the story conveys is to be kind and friendly to all the creatures as they also have senses and thoughts.

In his story *Tiger, Tiger, Burning Bright*, the mental state as well as the actions of the dignified king of the forest, its wildlife and its reaction to humans and their activities have been beautifully delineated. Though the title of the story is extracted from William Blake's poem 'The Tyger', it is set up in the Indian scenario. The story suggests the self-control of the tiger to not kill the buffalos until he is starving, because he is aware of the fact that if he kills any of the buffalos the villagers will not spare him. Unlike other animals he is never in a hurry while eating or drinking as he is the king of the forest and has his dignity and respect. He even knows his boundary and keeps its distance from the village while preying. In fact this is the case with all the animals, they won't get into our premises if we spare theirs. In this particular story along with the tiger we get the images of rats and mongooses, how they are prepared and have sharp eyes on their food and enemy. These thoughts and activities of the rats and mongooses are displayed through the following lines of the story: '...when the two large furry visitors suddenly bobbed up from behind a stone, the rats squealed with fright, abandoned the egg, and fled for their lives.' ('Tiger, Tiger, Burning Bright', *The Jungle Omnibus*, 176).

Here Bond wants to make a point that human beings should co-exist with nature. In *The Young Vagrants* Bond describes an incident where he encounters a tiger which does not harm him because he has no evil intentions. From these incidents it is very clear to envision Bond's love for animals. Not only the domestic variety but the wild beasts have a soft corner in his heart. He deals with animal subjects in a lighter vein depicting children's play and their thoughts about animals in his works *Grandfather's Private Zoo* (1967), *Tigers forever* (1983), *Night of the Leopard* (1979) and many more. Bond uses this beautiful description of the tiger by Blake to fictionalize the character of the tiger to form a thought provoking story of a lone tiger's battle for survival.

Manoj Das is also of this bent of mind as this is witnessed in his story *A Turtle from the Blue*, where he has presented the ambition, thought and desire of a mere turtle. The small four legged animal wishes to climb high, fly and see the world. It is anxious and ambitious about the scenic beauty of the green fields and blue water. Every time it comes to the shore, fantasizes about the views. Though he is a mere turtle, yet he has the sense of beauty and appreciation. His love for natural beauty is picturised by strange imagination like: '...dancing trees, musical mountains, blue rivers falling perpendicularly from the clouds, men and monkeys assembled in magnificent halls debating the virtues of the tail.' ('A Turtle from the Blue', *The Bridge in the Moonlit Night*, 298).

Kambugriva, the turtle has the thirst for knowing the unknown and finally his thirst of discovering the unknown

is quenched by his two swan friends, who help him fly by holding the two ends of a stick their beaks and the middle of the stick hold by the mouth of the turtle. In spite of several warnings by the swans, the turtle tries to open its mouth to comment on a person and eventually dies. No one on the earth was bothered for his death nor anyone had interest, rather it made a good delicious meal for the king, on whose terrace it died. This image of the swans and turtle presented animal psychology perfectly. The friendship and reliability the writer has picturized between the swans and the turtle is worth praising. The ambition and desire of the turtle, the cynic and judging nature of other birds who saw Kambugriva in such a flying condition are life like. These pictures prove not only the humans, but non-human creatures also have mind set, thought process, ambition and desire.

Among Das' beautiful stories, 'The Crocodile's Lady' deals with this concept of animal psychology where we find the behaviors and activities of a crocodile, his emotions and thoughts. The narrator tells us about a nonagenarian lady, who is believed to have spent a decade with a crocodile by the villagers. The animal had a soft corner for the beautiful damsel for which he was in love with her and could not kill her. There were mantras to transform a crocodile into a lady and vice versa which was known to the crocodile. This human attribute of magic and miracle is given to the crocodile here and that is very much evident from the following dialogues of the crocodile himself. At last the melancholy crocodile told her: '...well, then, take this mantra. Whenever you recite it thrice, you will resume your human form...' ('The Crocodile's Lady' *The Bridge in the Moonlit Night and Other Stories*, 20).

He had allowed the lady to travel many holy places and once when she desired to return to her parents the crocodile wept and the lady promised to return. Finally after two days when she did not return, the crocodile came to the shore in spite of knowing that the villagers would kill him. He did this out of emotions and was finally killed. In spite of being a carnivorous, he had utmost control over himself, and nor he was so selfish to betray his native place and people for which he never transformed himself into a handsome man.

Though the stories have humans as the characters, yet the protagonists as well as themes are based on non-humans. The crow, the turtle, the crocodile and the tiger all are different in species, bearing distinct figures and nature, still all have their own way of life, thought process and livelihood. All of them can understand, realize and have their own attitude towards every situation. We see how the crow Speedy has the understanding of every matter, how Kambugriva reacts to the comment by the emissary and eventually falls, again in the case with the tiger we find a sense of dignity and finally the crocodile has its feelings and emotions. All the four stories present animal psychology flawlessly.

In the story 'The Tiger and the Traveller,' Manoj Das has been reminded of a picture when he was the student of primary education. It is one of the stories from *The Panchatantra* and written in the first person narration as if it is a personal experience of the short story writer. The story depicts how the traveler turns into a tiger when he shows his lust for the gold bangle. The traveler enters into the pond, not for the gold bangle, but to lose his life slowly but finally finds his human shape changing into a tiger when he beholds the gold bangle. The moral of the story is that the

traveler will have no liberation until he succeeds in handing over the bangle to some other traveler in this lonely forest.

'Story of a Strange Last Journey' is the next story in this collection written in the first person narration and the narrator acts as a reporter reporting to his editor of his investigation. He hopes that he has done justice to the assignment. It is all about the animal's revolution in the Luvurva forest. Manoj Das, as a true revolutionist, since his youthfulness, knows the anthem of revolution and therefore, he has created a revolutionary story, which shows his great love for performing art in this manner. This story also brings out a supplement on the epoch-making episodes in the Luvurva forest. Manoj Das also calls the story 'a great supernatural journey' and wants to prove jackal as the shrewdest animal among others in this forest. Because Jackal senior makes the president dead in his living state, and it is his cleverness that ousts the president from the forest. He finally rises to power and occupies the throne to become in Manoj Das's terms, "the de facto boss of the Luvurva forest." In connection with the story, Manoj Das clarifies in the Preface:

"By the way, Orwell's Animal Farm when I wrote 'The Story of a Strange Last Journey.' Even though the theme of my story is quite different – the development leading to the predicament of the 'President'-probably I would not have used this technique had I read the Former." (xi).

In the next story, 'He Who Rode the Tiger,' the short story writer describes about the show of false pride of the royal officials in connection with riding a tiger. What Manoj Das wants to say in this story is that none is less arrogant including the king, his commander, minister and other officers. The event related to riding a tiger finally takes a dramatic turn. A tiger from the jungle has intruded the royal orchard and a mali (gardener) spreads this news all over the grand kingdom. Therefore, the king, the prince, other ranking officials and even common people gather in the royal orchard. The high officials not only enjoy there but also do not hesitate to show their false ability to capture the tiger. Besides, they take much credit in explaining each one's forefathers with their bravery to domesticate tigers as their pets. However, no one dares to face and bring the tiger to captivity. Finally, the king, in a show of pride, announces that the prince would ride the tiger. The prince at last rides the tiger and the wild beast gradually lead in him to the jungle, never to return. When the king orders the commander to return his son, the crowd there melts away and after two hours the commander along with his soldiers return with only a piece of the prince's garment. The story thus reveals how the proud king unnecessarily loses his son and pays a heavy price for his own foolishness.

Anthropomorphism in the Stories of Bond and Das

The very nature and purpose of anthropomorphic writing is to create fantasies through theme and characters and involving animals into it. To bring and attribute human nature, characteristics, feelings and emotions in the non-human creatures of the writing are the sole purpose of the writer. They are bestowed with human attributes more than the humans and this is why the characters represent the life as well as the world in its true sense. This concept is evident from the ancient writings like 'The Hawk and the Nightingale', 'Works and Days', Aesop's Fables, Jataka Tales, The Panchatantra and so on. Similarly it is vibrant today mostly in the writings of Ruskin Bond and Manoj

Das. They both have personified the inanimate objects and attributed human qualities to the non-humans. Their non-human characters can talk, sing, judge, love, feel, understand, express and react just like humans or even more than that. In this context Ruskin Bond's story 'A Crow for All Seasons' and Manoj Das' 'A Turtle from the Blue' are remarkable. In the former story, we find the crow Speedy is talking, composing and singing poems by himself, appreciating and commenting and sometimes even forgiving the cruelty of the humans. For instance we may take one of his poems here: 'Oh, for the life of a crow! ...' (69).

The crow is fantasized to be a poet and the concept of anthropomorphism is portrayed here. He is concerned for the cleanliness of the surrounding and puts great effort in doing this. He mourns the death of his cousin Charm. Again once he becomes rebellious against the misdeeds of humans. The crow has its own perspective and way of understanding different matters. So is the case with the story 'A Turtle from the Blue.' Just as humans, the turtle also has its thoughts, ambitions and desires; desire to see the beauty of the world and desire to unveil the hidden things. The story also throws light on the trust and friendship the turtle and the swans share, which the humans even lack sometimes. Then we find the judging kites and sparrows and the cynic crow who comment sarcastically to see the turtle hanging from the middle of the stick, which was held by the two swans. These things are visualized through following lines of the story: An old cynic among the crows observed, 'I had prophesied more than once that the future of our sky is bleak. This invasion of the sky by a turtle surely marks the beginning of the end.' ('A Turtle from the Blue', *The Bridge in the Moonlit Night and Other Stories*, 299.). All the above events of the two stories project anthropomorphism as the key to the conceptualization of the story.

6. Philozoic Concept in the Writings of Bond and Das

Philozoic writing refers to the works, where the non-humans have been sympathized, loved and most importantly their pain, suffering, emotions and conditions have been realized and understood by the humans. In this regard, the two eminent children writers Ruskin Bond and Manoj Das have no competitors. The White Elephant by Ruskin Bond is a story based on philozoic concept. Fantastically, the entire elephant squad can talk and there is a rare white elephant. The elephant has a blind old mother. Once the white elephant is caught and sent to the palace and it becomes the favorite one of the king. After some days, the elephant denies to eat feels disheartened for his poor blind mother. But the king feels his pain, understands the difficulties of the mother elephant. Though it was his dearest elephant, yet he left it free and let it go, because he was sympathetic towards both the son and the mother elephant and the following dialogue of the king proves it: "The king was a good king and although he badly wanted the elephant for himself, he said at once, 'Noble animal, your goodness puts mankind to shame. I give you your freedom to return to your mother at once.'" ('The White Elephant', *The Big Book of Animal Stories*, 136.)

The mother elephant had the notion that the humans are treacherous, but with the kind gesture of the king it is proved wrong. Here the story fulfills the criteria of a philozoic writing. Similarly in Manoj Das' story 'The Bull of Babulpur' we find the care, support and devotion for the bull shown by the villagers of Babulpur. In the very beginning, Mr. Baral, the highly-respected and reputed

advocate is seen. While entering into the village, his car is obstructed by the giant bull. He is angered and furious and asks the villagers to call the owner of the bull and even reaches the police station to get the bull arrested. But the villagers are very much in love and support of the bull. Their love for the bull is reflected through the lines below: 'The bull had been an intrinsic part of the history and geography of Babulpur. Be it this bull or its late venerable sire, a bull was inevitably there ...' ('The Bull of Babulpur', *The Bridge in the Moonlit Night and Other Stories*, 224).

They feed the bull and even worship him, which is picturised through the scene where a window puts a jasmine garland around his neck, a man comes with some sandalwood paste which the Brahmin smeared on the forehead of the bull and another man offered the bull a pair of watermelon to eat. Though there is a sense of spiritualism, yet the villagers have great love for the bull and for them it is a member of their village or even more than that. Finally we see a great transformation in the advocate himself when he hails the bull.

7. Conclusion: Focus on the Posthumanist Perspective

The analysis of the stories of both the authors can be presented in terms of posthumanist perspective. In fact, as known so far there are two main tendencies identified in the posthuman discourses: techno or cyborg posthumanism and animal posthumanism. Both tendencies have found their way to fiction. The first gives birth to the techno-centric fiction accommodated by dystopian and cyberpunk science fiction, while the second boosts the emergence of a new category of animal fiction in which animals are not incidental but are treated as unique subjects.

So far as the stories of both Ruskin Bond and Manoj Das are concerned, they are rich in reflecting the mental and emotional lives of animals; the complexity of their forms of communication and interactions. Reflection of the conscience of the crow in Bond's 'A Crow for all Seasons'; the traits of self-control as displayed by the tiger in his 'Tiger, Tiger, Burning Bright'; the thirst for knowledge and erratic judgment in Das' 'A Turtle from the Blue'; the human attributes and feelings, magic and miracle in his 'The Crocodile's Lady'; representation of tiger variously as domesticated or at times royal character or at times represents human brutality; animals representing community feeling and family bond; some animals' struggle for keeping the independent reality as well as individuality intact and finally some people's love for animals. Although several standpoint critics have objected to the 'aesthetic exploitation of animals' (Donovan 2009: 39) by using animals as symbols of humans or metaphor for human emotions, still then the writings of both Bond and Das seem to be natural aiming at establishing befitting environments of the stories. Along the same line, Simons is of the opinion that what is needed is a new kind of literary study that includes "animal rights" as "priority" analyzing the "cultural text" for "tracks of animals" (2002: 5) which are evident in the stories of both the writers.

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