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Deconstructing Anthropocentrism: A Posthumanist Reading of Mulk Raj Anand's *The Parrot in the Cage*

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Abstract

This article examines the deconstruction of anthropocentrism in Mulk Raj Anand's *The Parrot in the Cage* through a Posthumanist perspective. Drawing on the theoretical insights of Charles Darwin, Jacques Derrida and Giorgio Agamben, this paper interrogates the conventional human/nonhuman dichotomy and advocates for a symbiotic relationship between them. Humans and nonhuman beings are often positioned in conflicting relationships, leading to domination, exploitation, consumption, and even extinction. From wild to tamed, aquatic to terrestrial, small to large, and strong to weak, nonhuman beings are compelled to exist in a state of perpetual defense, while humans, by contrast, exert aggressive control over them. The notion that humans possess inherent privileges over nonhuman entities is a construct of human culture, and the ongoing struggle between them emerges as a self-destructive conflict. Since all organisms rely on interdependent relationships for survival, symbiosis becomes an ecological and ethical necessity. This study, therefore, highlights the inherent proximity between humans and nonhumans despite their differences and advocates for a reconceptualization of their relationship. By re-examining and redrawing the boundaries between human and animal nature, the article seeks to foster a more sustainable and non-hierarchical understanding of life forms.

Keywords: Anthropocentrism, deconstruct, discourse, human, nonhuman, symbiosis

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Introduction

The human-nonhuman dichotomy has been validated since antiquity by presupposing human superiority and animal inferiority. Moreover, Western philosophical tradition has privileged the human subject, reducing nonhuman entities to mere objects of utility, devoid of their intrinsic value. This anthropocentric worldview, which places human beings at the center of the universe, has shaped much of literary discourse. In such narratives, birds, animals, plants and even marginalized human groups often find themselves positioned at the periphery, whose voices have been dominated and distorted. However, recent critical paradigms, especially posthumanism, have called for a radical review of the human centered views, questioning anthropocentric narratives and promoting co-existence and more inclusive understanding of nature.

In *What is Posthumanism* (2009)? Cary Wolfe critically examines the limitations of traditional humanism and argues for a posthumanist perspective that separates ethical and philosophical thought from anthropocentrism. Drawing on philosophers like Derrida, Foucault, and Luhmann, Wolfe interrogates the centrality of the autonomous, rational human subject, instead proposing a framework that recognizes the interconnectedness of human and nonhuman systems—biological, technological, and ecological. Wolfe gives a clear definition of what he means by “posthumanism,” and how it contrasts with others’ usage. He distinguishes posthumanism from both transhumanism and anti-humanism, emphasizing not the enhancement of human capabilities through technology but the deconstruction of human exceptionalism. Wolfe’s work ultimately calls for a more inclusive ethical model that emphasizes the complex interplay between humans, animals, and machines. For Wolfe; “Posthumanism is the set of questions confronting us, and way of dealing with those questions, when we can no longer rely on the human as an autonomous, rational being who provides an Archimedean point for knowing about the world” (qtd. in Pollock, p. 235). Posthumanism for Wolfe, arises when we can no longer assume that humans are independent rational beings who stand outside the world to objectively understand it. Instead, we must find new ways of thinking that recognize our entanglement with other systems—biological, technological, and ecological.

Greg Pollock asserts that Wolfe’s posthumanism should be taken as “after humanism” rather than the -ism form of a substantive being called “the posthuman.” Both traditional humanism and the techno-ecstasy of “the posthuman” or “transhuman,” Wolfe argues, lead to “an intensification of humanism” because they retain the fundamental gesture of leaving behind constraint in liberating their real selves (xv). Pollock views that all humanisms share some conception of freedom—autonomy, agency, intention, and rationality—that secures exceptional ontological value for humans through nonhuman lack. Pollock observes that the thinkers aligned with Wolfe’s views are mostly missing from *What is Posthumanism?*, where Derrida and Luhmann are the main theoretical

influences. Wolfe's blending of different traditions is refreshing; by pairing Derrida's deconstruction with second-order systems theory, he brings out the original radical edge of Derrida's work—especially since systems theory is often overlooked in U.S. literature studies.

Like Wolfe, Donna Haraway, Bruno Latour, and Niklas Luhmann offer significant but varied contributions to posthumanist theory. Haraway (1991), in her influential *Cyborg Manifesto*, challenges rigid boundaries between human, animal, and machine by introducing the cyborg as a metaphor for hybrid identities, critiquing traditional humanism and patriarchal ideologies. Latour (2005), through Actor-Network Theory, redefines agency by showing how both human and nonhuman actors—such as technologies, animals, and objects—interact to shape social realities, thus undermining the anthropocentric assumptions of modern thought. Luhmann (1995) contributes to posthumanism via systems theory, asserting that social systems are operationally closed and relate to the world through self-generated distinctions rather than direct environmental interaction. For example, in the legal system, concepts like “legal” and “illegal” are internally defined within the system's own logic. Together, these thinkers help shift the focus of posthumanism beyond the autonomous human subject, emphasizing relationality, hybridity, and systemic complexity.

Haraway explains that scientists have the ability to reshape elements from the scientifically constructed category of nature—including society—so that they reflect “in the image of a generally acceptable ideal”[ii]. Introducing the possibility of nature's re-invention by socialist-feminist scientists as a response to the “acceptable ideal,” therefore, becomes central to a set of powerful analyses by Haraway, which she uses to investigate the possibility of the female, or the other, being able to author her or its own existence. Her evaluation of the history of specific scientific experiments provides a ground for developing workable means for women's production and reproduction of their lives. By reinterpreting scientific work that stands as objective, her analysis constitutes and engenders a re-invention of the Marxist concept of “re-appropriating knowledge as a revolutionary practice”[iii]. Haraway argues that science has historically reshaped nature—and by extension, society—according to dominant ideals, but she also sees the potential for socialist-feminist scientists to reinvent nature in empowering ways. By reinterpreting scientific experiments and challenging the notion of objectivity, she advocates for women's ability to reclaim knowledge and author their own existence, reimagining Marxist concepts as tools for feminist liberation.

Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory (ANT) fundamentally challenges the anthropocentric bias of traditional social theory by asserting that non-human entities play an equally significant role in the constitution of the social. He critiques the notion that “the social” is a pre-existing domain, arguing instead that it is not “something specific,

something a priori,” but a set of associations that must be traced (Latour, p. 4). In this framework, both humans and non-humans are treated as *actants*—entities that contribute to action within networks. Latour insists that “objects too have agency; they are not mere intermediaries but mediators that transform, translate, distort and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry” (p.39). This repositioning of objects as *quasi-objects*—neither fully inert nor autonomous—disrupts the subject/object binary that underlies much of modern social theory. Moreover, Latour redefines agency itself by stating that “an ‘actor’ in ANT is not the source of an action but the moving target of a vast array of entities swarming toward it” (p.46). In this way, ANT provides a relational and distributive model of social causality that accounts for the entanglement of humans and things in the production of social realities.

Niklas Luhmann’s systems theory offers crucial resources for posthumanist critique by radically decentering the human subject from the core of social theory. In *Social Systems* (1995), Luhmann refuses to ground society in individual consciousness or action, instead defining social systems as composed solely of communication. He writes: “Only communication can communicate. Not human beings, not actions, not ‘meanings’” (p. 160). This move aligns with posthumanism’s challenge to the Cartesian subject by dismantling the assumption that humans are the central agents of meaning and social organization. Luhmann further explains that “a system constitutes itself by the difference between system and environment” (p.12), a formulation that resists fixed identities and affirms the relational ontology central to posthumanist thought. By foregrounding *autopoiesis*—the system’s capacity for self-reproduction through its own operations—he offers a model of sociality that is not grounded in human will or intentionality: “Social systems use communication as their particular mode of autopoietic reproduction. Their elements are communications which are produced and reproduced by a network of communications” (p.137). In doing so, Luhmann not only subverts anthropocentric paradigms but also paves the way for understanding complex, distributed agencies that resonate with posthumanist concerns about the entanglement of humans, technologies, and non-human actors. His work anticipates a posthuman social theory in which meaning, agency, and identity emerge from systems of recursive, non-human operations rather than individual subjects.

Mulk Raj Anand’s *The Parrot in the Cage* (1938) stands as a powerful illustration of literature that critiques institutionalized oppression, yet its engagement with biocentrism offers a unique vantage point for exploring posthumanist concerns. On the surface, Anand’s story tells a tale of a parrot imprisoned in a cage, an emblematic symbol of bureaucratic subjugation. However, the text also explores deeper philosophical questions about the nature of captivity, the intersections of human and animal suffering, and the limits of human understanding in the face of nonhuman experiences. In this

regard, *The Parrot in the Cage* can be read not only as a critique of systemic violence but also as an invitation to deconstruct the anthropocentric assumptions that legitimize human dominance over the nonhuman world.

Posthumanism, is a theoretical framework that counters the essentialism and human-centeredness of traditional humanism. It posits that the human subject is not isolated or exceptional but interconnected with other forms of life, including birds, animals, and even nature. Posthumanism emphasizes the need to recognize the agency, subjectivity, and autonomy of nonhuman entities, rejecting the hierarchical categories that place humans above all other beings. This perspective encourages an interrogation of the ways in which human narratives marginalize or exploit nonhuman beings. Posthumanism provides a useful lens to analyze Anand's work. By reading *A Parrot in the Cage* through this lens, this article seeks to contribute to ongoing debates in animal studies, offering a unique understanding of how literature can challenge the dominance of humanism and suggest more ethical ways of relating to the nonhuman world. In doing so, it aims to illuminate the broader relevance of posthumanist thought in reimagining our relationship with all flora and fauna in nature.

Research Methodology

This study employs a posthumanist theoretical framework to analyze Mulk Raj Anand's *The Parrot in the Cage*, particularly focusing on the deconstruction of anthropocentrism. Posthumanism critiques the human-centric worldview that privileges human agency over nonhuman entities. The methodology involves a close reading of Anand's narrative, examining how the story problematizes human-nonhuman binaries and counters the hierarchical positioning of species. The primary text has been interpreted and analyzed through the perspective of posthumanism. By engaging with Jacques Derrida's concept of "animot," Giorgio Agamben's *Taxonomies* and Peter Singer's *Practical Ethics* this paper interrogates the ways in which *The Parrot in the Cage* disrupts anthropocentric discourse.

This study is qualitative in nature, relying on textual analysis as the primary research method. The analysis is structured around key aspects such as narrative structure and voice, language and representation, and ethical and philosophical undertones. The investigation focuses on how the parrot's perspective serves as a counterpoint to human-centric storytelling, examining linguistic choices that construct or deconstruct the human-animal divide. It also assesses how the text critiques speciesism and questions the moral superiority of humans over animals. *The Parrot in the Cage*, serves as the primary data source. Secondary materials, including critical essays on posthumanism and ecocriticism, are employed to support the interpretive framework. A hermeneutic approach is adopted to uncover layers of meaning, recognizing the interplay between human and nonhuman

agency in the text. Additional sources such as Charles Darwin's *On The Origin of Species*, John Burroughs' *Human Traits in the Animal*, and Jack London's *The Other Animals* provide historical and scientific perspectives on human-animal relations.

Basically, this study focuses on *The Parrot in the Cage*, without extending its analysis to Anand's other narratives. The posthumanist approach provides a thorough reading; however, alternative theoretical perspectives, such as ecofeminism or new materialism, remain beyond the scope of this paper. By deconstructing anthropocentrism in Anand's narrative, this study contributes to the growing discourse on posthumanism in South Asian literature, offering insights into how literary texts can reframe human-nonhuman relationships.

Results and Discussion

Mulk Raj Anand in *The Parrot in the Cage* excavates the theme of alienation and suffering through the help of its major characters: Rukmaniai and her pet bird the parrot. Rukmaniai is an old lady who has become victim of partition violence which takes place aftermath of the Indian independence from British colonialism. She is relying on Deputy Sahib for food and shelter, but he remains totally indifferent to her suffering. In such situation of despair, the only sense of solace for her is her pet bird; the parrot in the cage. The parrot frequently talks to her and shows his concern to her. Though they are two different symbionts, their frequent talks reveal the obligatory nature of symbiosis. Rukmaniai loses her kith and kin in Lahore because of the partition; and there remains only a parrot that accompanies her by providing emotional support. By the same token, the parrot depends on Rukmaniai for food and shelter. Both the parrot and Rukmaniai struggle endlessly to emancipate themselves from their entrapment. Rukmaniai being caught in the state of helplessness struggles relentlessly to alter her situation. And, the caged bird in similar vein, attempts to liberate himself from his cage. They are hapless and hopeless as there is little hope or no hope for them.

The hierarchy between human and nonhuman is an outcome of human civilization; even though, there are some seminal differences between them. Superiority of man and inferiority of animal is a socially constructed discourse of anthropocentrism and this anthropocentric discourse of binary opposition is a product of power relations. Human beings as the centre of power construct knowledge by defining animal as the secondary species of being and thus, justify the subjugation of nonhuman species. This strategy has been put into practice since time immemorial; however, this is superficial and illogical. Anand wants to deconstruct this age-old concept of superiority via the parrot who can communicate in human language.

The parrot in the cage, keeps on talking to his mistress Rukmaniai, which in turn, inspires her to respond his call. In spite of their distinct biological being,

they communicate to each other in a comprehensive manner. "RUKMANIAI NI RUKMANIAI" (p.53)! The bird calls in the same way Rukmaniai's friends used to call her. The parrot continues to cry until she answers. "Han, bête, han... (tell son tell)" the old woman says wearily to respond his call. Rukmaniai is forsaken by human community; she does not find any human company to express her anxiety and boredom. In such a condition, the caged bird provides her company by showing his concern to her. "Ni tun kithe hain (where are you)? The parrot cried out another cry" (p.54). She says, "Son I don't know where I am..." (p.54). The communication between Rukmaniai and her pet bird reveals that their relationship is very much intimate like mother and son. It also shows that as the members of the same biotic community, animals share some features of human beings in terms of instincts and behaviors. And, these common traits fosters symbiotic relationship between them.

All lives on the earth emanated from a common ancestry; hence, all living things are related to one another. Commenting on human- animal proximity; Charles Darwin in his seminal work, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859) states that "besides love and sympathy animals exhibit other qualities connected with the social instinct which in us would be called morality" (p.183). Darwin presupposes that like human beings, the animals also possess the inner traits of love and sympathy which are often defined as exclusively human prerogatives from the anthropocentric point of view. Darwin's scientific observation reveals that the creatures evolve over the ages through the natural selection. The origin of all human as well as non human species was the same and in the long run of evolution, the hierarchy among the species emerged. For Darwin; "man in his arrogance thinks himself a great work, worthy of the interposition of deity. More humble, and I believe truer to consider him created from animal" (Darwin, 1859, p.220). He argues that the superficial superiority of human equalizing to the God is merely a narcissistic discourse of anthropomorphism which is constructed to legitimize human exploitation over nonhuman beings.

Another common trait which brings human/nonhuman closer is the feeling of pleasure and pain. Pleasure and pain are neither uniquely human nor animal experiences, rather both human and animals equally feel pain and pleasure. Interaction between Rukmaniai and the parrot exposes that both of them are aware of each other's plights. The caged bird assimilates the suffering of Rukmaniai when she nearly falls on to the ground after the baton charge by the police. "Rukmaniai! Tun kithe hain (where are you Rukmaniai)?" cries the parrot "as he fluttered his wings in panic at the voices and the hurting feet" (p.57). Likewise, Rukmaniai also worries about her pet when police start lathi charge for dispersing the masses of refugees. "Rukmaniai clung to the handle of the cage in which her parrot sat as she lay moaning in suppressed helpless whisper" (p.57). At the chaotic crowd, both the parrot and the old lady are unprotected and they are the

most vulnerable characters among the crowd. Rukmaniai is unable to rescue herself in the crowd because of her old age; similarly, being a caged bird, the parrot is unable to fly to save his life. Yet, both of them are concerned about each other's suffering.

Animals' ability to feel pain and pleasure is further revealed by Peter Singer arguing that human alone cannot be greater than the animal on the basis of ability to feel pain and pleasure. "There is no fundamental difference between man and animals in their ability to feel pleasure and pain, happiness and misery" (Singer, 1979, p.308). It marks the presence of necessity of reciprocity of the inner traits in both of the species. The power of judgment on the basis of pleasure and pain is inherited by every individual being. Animals and humans for Singer have interconnected similarities. The earth is shared by various species and they contribute to smooth running of ecosystem of the earth. But, human activities are bullying to the status of non human beings. Singer's idea of equality and equity proposes the respect to the animal's position and role from ethical-moral point of view. The following lines of Singer display the proximity between human/nonhuman beings in terms of pain and pleasure:

Vertebrate animals have nervous system broadly similar to our own and behave in ways that resemble our own pain behavior when subjected to stimuli that we would found painful; so the influence that vertebrates are capable of feeling pain is reasonable one, though not as strong as it is if limited to the mammals and birds... As for plants, though there have been sensational claims that plants are not only conscious but even psychic, there is no hard evidence that supports even more modest claims. (p.57)

Singer extends bio-physical consideration to the nonhumans including plants. They reciprocate the physical make up of the body along with the overlapped sensory perceptions. His idea of plant psychology is interesting to support nonhuman position with the humans. The construction of human and animal body, functions of these body parts and their sensitivity in maintaining the life of them are based on the similar theory of biology. That is why, the proximity of animals to human is reasonable.

The pain and pleasure of each others have been felt by both the parrot and Rukmaniai. In many ways, the parrot in the cage mirrors Rukmaniai. Like the parrot, Rukmaniai is entangled in a vicious circle of hardships without any place to go and nothing to do. Both of them have been traumatized by the outbreak of violence during the partition. Biologically, they are two distinct creatures but their psychological condition is very much similar. There is no physical proximity between them; however, both of them suffer from alienation and despair. Rukmaniai is a victim of partition and her only companion is parrot in the cage. Many people during the partition lose their livelihood, relatives and friends, property and nationhood. Rukmaniai loses her livelihood in

Pakistan, but she does not like to lose her only livestock: the parrot in the cage, which internalizes her traumatic experience and empathizes her pain as his own pain. Like other refugees of partition violence, Rukmaniai departs from Pakistan and, crosses the Indian boarder in order to avoid war, violence, conflict or persecution. She expects safety and shelter there; however, Indian officials like deputy sahib are completely indifferent to her. She becomes awfully disillusioned and utterly frustrated as the police arrive on the scene and start beating and battering the people. She herself becomes the victim of police brutality and does not get any help from any human being; rather her parrot flutters its wings in panic while looking at the plight of his mistress in the state of distress. A gram seller provides some foods for her parrot which makes her extremely happy.

The parrot's fluttering wings in panic and their frequent talks with each other suggests some sorts of kinship between human and animal. Moreover, Rukmaniai's utterance of the words "son" and "beta" while responding to parrot and their loving bond shows intimate human-animal relationship. Aligning with Darwin's idea of "common descent" Jack London asserts that "you must not deny your relatives, the other animals. Their history is your history, and if you kick them to the bottom of the abyss you go yourself. By them you stand or fall"(London, 1910, p.120). London questions the political motives of human beings who try to maintain and legitimize hierarchy. A pet in the family has historical attachment with human beings, so it should be treated as a family member. Furthermore, the naïve and carefree life of animal is an immense source of pleasure. Animals should not be treated with hostility because they provide love and recreation to human beings.

The history of human-animal relations has been shaped by an anthropocentric and logocentric perspective, positioning humans as the "logos" at the center while relegating animals to the margins. This hierarchy grants humans special privileges, reinforcing a center-seeking tendency rooted in binary oppositions. The notion of self and other is a fundamental principle of Western metaphysics, which perceives, interprets, and defines existence through differential relations. In his influencing work, *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2002), Jacques Derrida deconstructs this anthropocentric centrality, challenging the exclusionary framework of Western thought. Traditionally, metaphysics has revolved around human concerns—rationality (mind), ethics (responsibility), ontology (being), epistemology (knowledge), and psychology—while systematically excluding nonhuman beings. Philosophers from René Descartes to Emmanuel Levinas, Martin Heidegger, and Jacques Lacan have all positioned animals as the "other," defining human identity in contrast to them. Their discourse continually reinforces the human-animal divide, shaping a worldview that privileges human existence at the expense of the nonhuman.

When these philosophers define and discuss human-animal relationship, they

prioritize human rationality, ethics, existence and psychology. In their discriminatory discourse of human-animal relationship, they exclude animal from human. Derrida contends that the absence of animal, a binary part of the philosophy of mind and morality are incomplete. And, the generalization of hundreds of animal species to the single animal is questionable. He further asserts that human existence is inherently conditioned by the animal existence. Derrida writes:

The animal is therefore before me, there close to me, there in front of me- I who am after it. And also therefore, since it is before me, it is behind me. It surrounds me and from the vantage of this being- there before – me it can allow itself to be looked at, no doubt but also- something that philosophy perhaps forgets, perhaps being this calculated forgetting itself-it can look at me. It has its point of view regarding me. (p.380)

Derrida reveals that the human existence of I has been determined by the presence of the animal. Human is surrounded by the animal in terms of giving meaning to it. The differential relation with the animal is the way to derive existential, rational and psychological distinctness of human, even though the philosophers have ignored it. He asserts that just as humans have perspectives from which they observe, define, and interact with animals, animals too possess a similar viewpoint toward humans. This shared outlook underscores the fundamental interdependence of their existence.

In similar line to Derrida, Mulk Raj Anand deconstructs the dichotomy between human/animal relationship by providing human agency to the parrot and vice-versa. The parrot speaks in human language and it also comprehends human sentiment and emotion. The parrot notices that his mistress is in the state of distress thus; to console her he keeps on talking to her. “Rukmaniaini! Rukmaniai” (p.55). The parrot calls her time and again. And, his constant call does not make her angry: “Her answer to his metallic, shrill nasal cries didn’t irritate her anymore, but relieved the heavy pressure of the demons of the dreadful night on her head”(p.55). Everything is bizarre for Rukmaniai: she has become a refugee in the old age; the chaotic condition around her and the brutality of bureaucracy disappoints her. Deputy Sahib, the police and other officials turn her hope upside down. In such an ugly situation, her pet bird, the parrot in the cage inspires her to go ahead.

There is not as vast difference between man and animal as anthropocentric discourse tries to show. The word “animal” originally denotes positive sense to mean ‘having breath’, but, the human behavior and practice on it connotes negative sense. The connotation of the word is problematic. At this point, Derrida puts forward: “The animal! What a word! The animal is a word, it is an appellation that men have instituted, a name they have given themselves the right and the authority of giving to the living others”(Derrida, 2008, p.23). Derrida bridges the gap between men and animals with this

logic. Human beings have coined the word “animal” to preserve more rights and authority than animals. Otherwise the linguistic signifier is not discriminatory in it. Therefore, it is the problem of human mentality and intention that puts the species apart.

The earth had been already shared by a number of living and non-living species before the speciation of human beings. This heterogeneity of the species is the fundamental feature of earth's creation. And, the organization of the relation of these species, are the regulatory factors of the world ecosystem since its genesis. In this context, Derrida writes:

Beyond the age of so- called humans, beyond it but no means on single opposing side, rather than the animal or animal life, there is already a heterogeneous multiplicity of the living or more precisely; a multiplicity of organization of relation. Their relations are at once inter-wined and abyssal and they can never be objectified. (p.31)

Derrida explores the organic relationship of living and non-living; as well as, human and animal in the formation of earth. The human-animal relations are organized in such a way that they cannot be measured, speculated by the superficial anthropocentric efforts. The depth of this inter connectivity denotes the deep ecology which believes that all living things have intrinsic value and that human have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital human needs.

One of the charges of human to nonhumans is about their dumbness and lack of responding. Men believe that animals should be placed in a secondary category because they lack the ability to speak. They cannot show any linguistic reaction to the situations nor, do they have ability to understand voice. In spite of all these human accusations, Anand, exhibits that even some nonhuman beings can communicate in human languages. In the story, the parrot performs its ability to speak and understand human language. Despite their distinct biological beings, symbiotic relationship has been established between the parrot and his mistress. They do not only understand each other's language rather, they do understand each other's pain and pleasure. Rukmaniai recognizes the feeling of parrot and so does parrot in turn. Both are in a state of dilemma: what to do? Where to go? And; how to cope with a critical time? Their present is horrific and there is a bleak picture of future in front of them. Yet, they are aware about each other's problem. The old lady, though tired, hungry, and thirsty, cares little for herself. Her only worry is providing food and shelter to her parrot. Likewise, the parrot, trapped in a cage, also suffers from hunger and thirst. But, he forgets his personal pain and his only concern is how to provide emotional support to her mistress.

Humans and animals share a remarkable proximity in both origin and evolution. Their association dates back to prehistoric times, as Giorgio Agamben notes:

And in general, in the Ancient Regime the boundaries of men are much uncertain and fluctuating than they will appear in the nineteenth century after the development of the human sciences. Up until the eighteenth century, language which would become man's identifying characteristic par excellence- jumps across orders and classes, for it is supposed that even birds can talk. (Agamben, 2004, p. 24)

Agamben opines that the boundaries between humans and animals were not always rigidly defined, and it is human science that has created this separation. His observation of birds' ability to use language supports the idea of a symbiotic relationship between humans and non-human beings. Thus, there exists a synthetic connection between the two species, with overlapping and adjoining traits that allow us to conceptualize them as two sides of the same coin. Agamben's claim regarding the bird's capacity to speak is further validated by Anand's story.

The natural relationship of love and respect between the parrot and Rukmaniai bring them closer. Both of them have forgotten their distinct biological beings and they assimilate each others. The parrot becomes a man and the old lady becomes a bird in terms of their empathy and compassion for each others. The presence of human nature in animals can be substantiated with the idea of John Burrough who says:

That there is a deal of human nature in the lower animals is a very obvious fact, or we may turn the proposition around and say with equal truth, that there is a deal of animal nature in us human. We are all made up of stuff, the function of our bodies are particularly the same and working of instincts and our emotional and involuntary natures are in many ways identical: bundles of instincts, impulses, predilections, race and family affinities and antagonism. (Burrough, 2001, p. 37)

The interchangeability of the instincts like love, emotion and anger bring both of the species together. The involuntary nature of humans' means the angry, emotional, sentimental or sudden abnormalities which are generally associated to animal traits; prevail in the civilized human beings too. By the use of reason, they try to delay or postpone anger or aggression. However, they cannot get rid of it as it is the inborn nature. There are certain inborn features that human share with the animals and these traits are: curiosity, jealousy, joy, sex, maternal and paternal instinct, the instinct of fear, self-preservation and so forth.

Anthropocentric discourse privileges human beings in terms of their rationality, and, this concept of rationality has been subverted by Anand's story. In the story, human beings perform irrationality by perpetrating violence: the extremists of both sides commit communal riot in the name of Hindu and Muslim; likewise, Deputy Sahib, the police and other officials are guided by irrationality. On the other hand, parrot in the cage performs

rationality and maturity by taking care of his mistress. Against the claim about reasoning power of humans, Burroughs equalizes them showing their unreasoning and irresistible instinct like that of animals:

Our blind unreasoning animal anger is excited by whatever opposes or baffles us. Of course, when we yield to the anger, we do not act as reasonable being but as the unreasoning animals. It is hard for one to control this feeling when in opposition comes from some living creatures (p. 39).

Burroughs dismantles the anthropocentric notion of human rationality. Regardless of the categories, the causal expression of the original nature by all is inevitable phenomena. In such situation, human and animal both are subjected to submission. If the appearance and disappearance of the instinctual but unintentional behaviors are conditioned by the external stimulants, no species can escape it because the external factors are equally applicable to them. So, it can be argued that the distinctions of human-animals are illusory concept of anthropocentrism.

Rukmaniai's condition in the new land is dire; she loses everything she had in Pakistan, and in India, she must burn the midnight oil to survive. Her confidence is shattered, and she must rebuild it in this unfamiliar place, surrounded by strangers. Throughout this struggle, the parrot in the cage continuously boosts her morale. "Rukmaniai, Rukmaniai! Tun kithe hain? Tun ki karni hai?" (Where are you, Rukmaniai, and what are you doing?) asks the parrot, urging her to lift her spirits. "Han han son! Han, my son!... I don't know where I am! I don't know..." (p. 58). It seems as if Rukmaniai has grown weary of her life and no longer wants to endure such degradation. Yet, the parrot's unwavering emotional support provides her with the strength to persist, helping her continue the fight to overcome the harsh realities of partition and the ensuing chaos.

Conclusion

The Parrot in the Cage offers a profound critique of anthropocentrism through its depiction of the symbiotic relationship between humans and non-human beings, particularly the parrot. By exploring the emotional and symbolic connection between Rukmaniai and her pet bird, Anand deconstructs the traditional boundaries that separate humans from non human animals. The parrot is not merely a passive companion; it acts as a catalyst for Rukmaniai's survival, offering her emotional support and dismantling the logo-centric worldview that places animals in the periphery and humans at the centre. This symbiotic relationship highlights the potential for a posthumanist reading, where the human-animal division is blurred, and both are seen as integral part of ecosystem.

Anand's narrative challenges anthropocentrism, urging readers to embrace biocentrism through the lens of symbiotic relationships. In addition, Anand critiques human-animal binary arguing that such a binary is not only unjust but also reductive. The

parrot's role in empowering Rukmaniai signifies the possibility of a more harmonious coexistence, where both humans and nonhumans play active roles in shaping each other's lives. Through this perspective, the story encourages a shift away from anthropocentric thinking, proposing instead a more egalitarian and compassionate view of life that transcends the limitations imposed by human exceptionalism. In this way, *The Parrot in the Cage* serves as both a critique of humanism and a call for a more inclusive and liberal understanding of the animal-human relationship in the context of posthumanist thought.

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