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Rethinking Animal Subjectivity: Canid Umwelt in Mulk Raj Anand's *A Dog's Life*

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Abstract: This paper endeavours to explore the relationship between humans and animals in a short-story of Mulk Raj Anand titled as "A Dog's Life". The goal is to examine the multiple relationships of a dog in its Umwelt. The paper scrutinizes the capability of bodies to affect and be affected in a given or different context concerning the theory of Deleuze and Guattari and others. It mainly addresses the dog's ability to enter into multiple relationships from its environment. This paper is divided into three parts. At first, it discusses Mulk Raj Anand and his works regarding non-human animals. The next part ponders over how the dog affects the characters including the narrator of the text while he alive and vice-versa. And the third segment talks critically examine the dog's death and its 'affect'. The objective is to de/reterritorializes the dog's individuality and functionality to dismantle the anthropocentric or traditional way of perceiving non-human animals.

Keywords: Affect, Becoming, Dog, Non-Human Animals, Inter-Species Relationship, Cruelty, Compassion, Death

Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004) was born in Peshawar, India (now in Pakistan) and dies in Pune. He is a prominent Indian author of novels, short stories, and critical essays in English. He is considered as the pioneers of Indo-Anglican Fiction. His novels and short stories have been admired for its genuine portrayal of the perceptive and insight of the oppressed. And further for its analysis of impoverishment, exploitation and misfortune. Mulk Raj Anand's works have acquired the status of being classic works of modern Indian English literature. Moreover, he is notable for being the first writers to incorporate Punjabi and Hindustani idioms into English. He is a recipient of the civilian

honour of the Padma Bhushan (1968), Sahitya Akademi Award (1971) and International Peace Prize (1953).

Besides, Anand's being an eminent novelist, is a great short story writer too. His short stories evince the same depth and fecundity that characterizes his novels. It includes more than threescore and ten short stories and half a dozen collections. The brevity of his narrative, single action and thematic focus meets a worldwide reception. His short stories profoundly deal with the basic forms and themes of modern Indian literature written in English. Moreover, his socially conscious Short stories have shed keen insights on Indian affairs and enriched the country's literary heritage. Further, each of his stories illustrates a different mood and tone. In his half-humorous and half-ironic way, Anand versatile genius draws the attention to the plight of the marginalized and the poor. Some of his notable short stories are "The Barber's Trade Union", "The Lost Child", "Duty", "The Cobbler and the Machine", "A Confession", "the Gold Watch", etc. These prominent works of Anand depict themes like social or religious hypocrisy, untouchability, cruelty, violence, and negligence, etc. Such widespread evil practices collectively contribute as an instrument of exploitation in his writings.

Further, Anand widely expresses his resentment not only on the mistreatment of poor people but also on non-human animals. Such as the short story "The Maharaja and the Tortoise" depicts the false vanity and the indignation of taking revenge from a tortoise. That bites the big toe of the Hindu Maharaja Sir Ganga Singh. The king desires to trample upon him with his foot. Later, it emphasizes humans' sympathetic attitude towards the tortoise. The people of the kingdom get relieved of the unnecessary injustice when Pandit Ram Prasad comes forward to defend the tortoise. Next, "The Parrot in the Cage" is a story of an old woman with her pet animal, a parrot. He is the only companion of the old lady which whom she can interact. Added to it, the text "The Man Who Loved Monkeys More Than Human Beings" foregrounds the risk of applying human ethics and morality on non-human animals, like monkeys of the story. Through the text Anand wants his readers to be aware of the fact that approaching in the way would widen the disparity between the two even more. Anand sensibility and observation of the world is remarkable in his short stories. He skillfully represents what he perceives in the society. Thereby, he reflects his deep concern and effort to protect non-human animals from the resentment and injustice approach towards them in his works.

Among this, another such short story is "A Dog's Life" by Mulk Raj Anand. The text is one of the landmark stories written by him. This is republished in 2006 in a short story collection Mulk Raj Anand Selected Short Stories. The story is a fictional representation of an Indian "pariah" dog that is having a filthy, sordid and coarse existence. It is written in a first-person narrative. The narrator counts the life of two days of the dog named Spotty. Further, being alien to human language Mulk Raj Anand by his eloquent writing bestows Spotty a form of communication. The 'communication without words' he expresses with his pathetic, 'large painshot' and tender eyes. Karen Dalke quoting Smuts remarks "responsiveness is all about the eye(s): 'The truth or honesty of non-linguistic embodied communication depends on looking back'" (Dalke, 187). Besides, Donna Haraway discusses in her pamphlet about "the attention" that a dog is needed to be responded and paid attention. Spotty successfully draws the attention of the narrator. He notices that the dog "wagged his long tail at me gracefully." The tail is the first physical expression by the dog that draws the attention of the narrator at the very outset of the text. This two are the forms of the dog's "non-oral communication" (Dalke, 189).

Moreover, Mulk Raj Anand's subtle penetration into the dog's plight is remarkable. That is "a little less verbal and a little more visual" in his writing (Dalke, 188). More than depiction, Anand describes the possible subjective experiences of the disordered body that renders pain, being discomfort, unpleasant and connects too. Further, the physical state of Spotty entails indifferent and unconcerned attitude towards non-human animals. Moreover, the story too implies Spotty being individual ensue into multiple relations with humans. "... an animal, a thing, is never separable from its relations with the world" (Buchanan, 159). Snoopy is not a dog "with that of Heidegger's encircling rings or Merleau-Ponty's rings of finality". He is not portrayed as "a static or present-at-hand object". He is characterized in an "ever-changing plane" (Buchanan, 172) of 'becoming' and 'affect'. "Affects are becoming" (Buchanan, 158). According to Deleuze and Guattari, a thing as 'affective body' establishes a various indifferent relationship with its environment. Affect is both the capacity to affect and to be affected. It's an intervention or encounter between bodies.

"A Dog's Life" represents a starving homeless dog desperate for food and human sympathy. The narrative opens with a setting of "an edge of the road, under the shadow of one branch of a pipal tree..."

(Anand, 253). The dog has been described as "a mangy dog, spotted black and white, but with his hair eaten away here and there by the itch, so that one can't look at him without disgust" (Anand, 253). Further, he is mentioned having a "nearly leprous skin". Though his age is not stated he seems a half grown underprivileged and harmless dog. Further, being deprived and hungry, he is desperately waiting for a minimal sign of compassion. Everyone looks at him with disgust. In a similar way, he is not even being concerned for a scrap-food rather receives blow and atrocities. This implies the dog in a violent relationship with his environment.

A relationship of 'in between' the bodies can be 'maximum or minimum'. An affect or becoming may "either to destroy that body or be destroyed by it" (Buchana, 158). This is manifested in the encounter of Spotty with a vendor, a rickshaw-wallah, a boy on a bicycle, the Gurkha Watchman and a beggar. Moreover, the crowd is addressed in words such as 'possible rival' for the beggar, 'mischievous' boy, 'furious' stallkeeper and rikshaw-walla, 'sadist' watchman. It entails their intolerant attitude. And Spotty becomes the victim in the hand of these characters. The encounter exposes an unconstructive and dismal human-animal interface. It also reveals the socio-politics hypocrisy of looking at 'Other' from a superior position.

This manifests the hierarchy of violence. The epitome of oppressed and victims of Anand's notable works like Lakha, Bakha, Munnu, Bhiku, and others turns into an instrument of exploitation. The exploits become the exploiter of non-human animals. Moreover, they feel glad and appeased out of unnecessary infliction violence. Quote at length the reason for such general violence,

A Critical Perspective on Violence in *Advancing Critical Criminology: Theory and Application* discusses

"Traditionally, these explanations of general violence are associated with theories that locate the origins of violence within the person or the social environment. Concurrently, some ad hoc theories maintain that humans are naturally inclined to act violently, requiring little in the way of stimulation or motivation, and that violence is, ultimately, the product of a failure of constraint or control... Dialectically, however, it may very well be the case that various forms of violence are normative and aberrant at the same time; depending on

whether or not they are sanctioned or unsanctioned as culturally and socially appropriate or inappropriate.”
(Greggbarak: DeKeseredy n. pag)

Added to it, it further involves the Street violence and other, for example, are viewed as the products of an exaggerated ethos of masculinity or of machismo as characteristic of “lower class” society. This can be underlined in the irrational act of “the young boy on a cycle”.

Further, the relation foregrounds the hierarchy of violence. The priority is reversed here from less politically strong body to nonexistent body. This can be perceived in the deliberate ignorance of the existence of ‘the other being’ as viable. Physically, the dog is deformed, dirty, ragged and might be lice-ridden. He is physically weak and defenceless. He is afraid of moving anywhere besides the Pipal tree. And, mostly remains to sit under the tree. This is resultant of the enraged and unfair advancement toward him. He mostly receives furious behaviour. Such as the first blow at the hand of a vendor, for brushing the earth at a little distance with his tail to gain the attention of the narrator. However, he gets harshly abused in a shrill voice “hat, sala!”(Move, away). Thereby, he looks pathetically at the narrator for possible help. Being failed to get help instantly, the dog pushes himself back ‘to his original place.’

Next, he is spurned trivially by a ‘young boy on a cycle’ who “loosened a kick at Spotty with his left foot” (Anand, 253). Thought Spotty does not get any injury, but he gets kicked for no reason. Rather harm and ‘play mischief.’ This act “sent him yelping for fear of being hurt” (Anand, 253). And a moment later, comes a rickshaw-wallah pulling his vehicle inadequately shouts at him. All this abuse sends him into a strange state of fear and panic.

Further, though he faces contentment previously nevertheless summons his remaining strength to follow the narrator to ‘the free-kitchen’. “Spotty followed, a safe distance away” (Anand, 254). The word ‘safe’ here signifies an upcoming misfortune, next to him. Later, the plight he encounters breaks the ‘spine of his hind part.’ The pang and the sorrow are unbearable for him. He yelps and howls for help but of no use. Before the narrator reaches he is dropped with a free blow being caught from the behind by a Gurkha Watchman of ‘the free-kitchen’. Further, “The Gurkha turned back, swaggering, sweating and pleased at the successful hit on the target” (Anand, 254). Besides, being a diseased dog, he was not even touched by the narrator by his hand. While he tries to help Spotty thereby, the narrator says “I conquered my disgust

pushed him away with my right foot into the relative shade of a hedge" (Anand, 255). On the contrary, it suggests that Spotty affects or be affected indifferently if he were a healthy or a pet dog. Society would be comparatively less brutal and kind to him.

The wretched and melancholy existence of Spotty reaches its point of culmination with a Beggar's cruelty. The beggar dwells 'at the gate of the temple' see in the dog his enemy. "A beggar who sat at the gate of the shrine saw in the dog a possible rival and lifted his staff to the accompaniment of the foulest abuse" (Anand, 253). He does not appreciate the nod of kindness and sympathy of the narrator for Spotty. So, later, when he comes to know that Spotty is served water in his bowl and see that he is served biscuit, he mercilessly killed the dog. "... He raced up from the plinth and kicked Spotty" (Anand, 256). He strikes at the same place where his back is broken. Still, he is not satisfied and hit on his head that spread the blood around.

"Hat, sala!' (Move away) the beggar shouted and dealt one final blow with his staff on Spotty's head. The tender eyes of the dog smiled their last look of horror and were covered with the blood of the broken skull". Further "...the blood of the dog inspired the beggar to greater fury against his rival, and he belaboured Spotty with more blows". The beggar up to this fully contented to brutally take the life of his opponent.

In contrast to such furious approaches, the dog too gets connected to a constructive relationship. The narrator 'deterritorializes' the above hierarchy of violence. With Spotty he forms a distinct human-animal relationship. They affect and are affected "through their affinity with becoming". And "composing a more powerful body" while exchanging actions and passions (Buchanan,158). Moreover, the narrator enters into a process of "becoming animal". "Becoming animal is ... not an attempt to ultimately become the animal itself, but try and understand the animal from the middle of one's relation with it; from the middle of difference"(Dalke, 185). Next, "becoming aims to avoid looking at others from a dominant position of the self" (Dalke, 185). In a similar way, the narrator doesn't perceive the dog inferior and an object of an end. The narrator recognized a 'concurrent world' with the dog. The narrator sees Spotty underneath the banyan tree. How he is affected by Spotty? Is Spotty under the sacred banyan tree an emblem of hatred or unsavoury? He is a commencement of 'becoming animal. The narrator at several occasions tries to avert and not to look at him. At first, to look at the dog is unappealing and discouraging to him. Nevertheless, it is not resentful.

Moreover, at the same time he "partially ashamed not to look and see" (Anand, 253). He primarily notices Spotty's wagging tail that he finds expressive and communicative. Further, he beholds his scaly and leprous body. Afterwards, unconsciously, he names him: "I noticed that Spotty, as I instinctively called him, wagged his long tail at me gracefully, upturned his eyes with a most pathetic appeal, and waited to see if I would take notice of him" (Anand, 253).

A few days later, he turns to Spotty smiles and whistles at him while he talks to an acquaintance. Further, the narrator remarks "Spotty did not need any encouragement to arise from where he lay and come near me". The smile and whistle put a new life in him and 'being-in-the-world' in a relationship with the other being. This implies the capability of the two develops connectivity. Later on, when the narrator bents away and reverts his eyes to his acquaintance, Spotty lays down again, brushes the earth with his tail in order to express and get the attention. The dog reads the look of sympathy and cares that he longs for. Further, he starts following the narrator up to the free-kitchen. "Sensing a streak of sympathy in the second look...Spotty followed...seemed to understand that I was inclined to be kind to him..." (Anand, 254).The narrator feels to fetch biscuits for Spotty but delays it. Later, he is deeply moved to see the plight of Spotty and blames himself to make him follow up to the 'free-kitchen'. "I regretted my decision to come here first" (Anand, 253). He quickly resists the Gurkha Watchman to hit Spotty any further. He feels sorry and says – "I went towards Spotty and saw that he was making an effort to wag his tail at me, but could not because the spine of his hind part was broken. With large, pain shot eyes, and twisted body, he lays down, choon-chooning, then rising his voice again to shriek and later subsided with a moan" (Anand, 255). Seeing his deplorable condition, he provides him biscuits and water in beggar's bowl. And the next day too, he brings biscuits to him.

Further, the narrator builds the relationship in contrast with the other characters of the text. It is apparent that he is neither attracted to Spotty's physical appearance nor any emotional attachment is there between the two. Nevertheless, he behaves kindly and feels sorry for him. Moreover, he too feels "condescending to smile at Spotty as a gesture of ultimate practical goodwill" (Anand, 254). Further, the narrator tries to locate Spotty when he losses him at the free-kitchen. Even though, he finds his act, a foolish pursuit. "I feel a fool to be engaged in these irrelevant, indecisive thought and acts. And yet I

persisted in tracing him" (Anand, 253). He regrets all that happens in a split second that he can't save Spotty from it. Further, he even thinks of taking him to a veterinary surgeon if it were available. He too speculates to bring him at his rented home – "On the way home, I wondered what I could do for the incapacitated dog. There was no veterinary surgeon in Bodh Gaya. And I was in rented quarters, where a pariah dog would hardly be accepted" (Anand, 255). Besides, Spotty makes the narrator realize of his own self and incapacity, "I was beginning to know myself as a vacillating, do-gooding, vague man of sentiment, with no real capacity for suffering in the service of my fellowmen, not to speak of dogs" (Anand, 255). Being sensitive and kind-hearted, he suffers emotionally that he can't provide help either to the dog or to a helpless old man. The man needs to get a ration card because being an old and outsider he loses his job.

Further, it is not the narrator only being affected but the dog too. Spotty is too inclined towards the narrator in his own way. Deleuze and Guattari say that nothing is affected by a thing in the same way "compared one with the other do not have the same capacity to be affected" (Buchanan, 158). Spotty doesn't being affected like that of the narrator. Things affect him distinctively. The narrator cannot affect him in the same way as he to the others. The others can be humans or non-human animals. The encounter between the two entails a dissimilar significance to each other. Such as, Spotty senses the compassionate look in him. As the narrator points- "The dog followed me devotedly ..., wagging his tail the while, almost as though he understood my noble intention" (Anand, 254). Spotty is affected by the benign behaviour of the narrator towards him. He receives a considerate look. Besides, he is tended and fed. "He had been hungry for days and greedily assailed the biscuit" (Anand, 255). Further, the dog sees in the narrator a person who can understand his emotions. And who can soothe or lessen his pain and suffering? The narrator observes "Spotty had dragged himself to his location under 'the pipal tree' and sat there almost as though he was waiting for me. He could not wag his tail, but stirred it and moaned, moving his eyeballs in a manner which showed both gratitude and expectation" (Anand, 255). Spotty would not expect either for everlasting care or of any romantic attitude towards him. However, his need for affection and survival affects him to the narrator. This also entails the capability of bodies to 'affect or be affected' in an inter-species encounter. Added to this, they are being encountered outside

the frame of domestication and enter into a relationship of close proximity. This addresses to 'affect and be affected' physical space of a domesticated framework isn't essential.

Moreover, Spotty establishes 'a variety of relations' by his death too besides the time he alive. Spotty dies an unnatural death. That is more appalling than his life. He becomes the victim of the beggar's aggression. The beggar and the dog both are the epitomai of abject poverty. They both are in the grimy, squalid and murky state. However, the beggar acts more brutal and odious. The dog is killed mercilessly by him. He perceives the dog as his 'possible rival.' Thereby, a kick is launched severely at his back which is broken already beside his head. His skull gets full of blood. This delights the killer. His aggression and offensive drives affect the dog in the form of his demise. He is put into deliberate infliction of cruelty. His sadist and egoistic nature incite him to act deliriously.

On the contrary, the narrator moves by his sudden death and the way his death ceremony is performed. He says "My head reeled at the bloodshed and my neck was sweating from the confusion of helplessness, chagrin and anger" (Anand, 256). He is confused because he is upset and at the same time he feels a relief of his responsibility towards him. By stating this, the narrator seems somewhat selfish. He tries to rationalize the death of the dog. He insinuates that the death approaches for the good of the dog. The use of the word "siesta" appropriates that it would be like a peaceful sleep for the dog. Spotty is freed from his sordid and painful life. That the narrator himself wants to provide but can't capable to give it. He says, "I had myself been freed from the unbearable responsibility of looking after the dog, of my hope for its life, which I had half wanted to save, if only I could find some ways and means to do so and which I did not want to save because, at the best, he would drag his hind legs about for the rest of his sordid existence" (Anand, 256).

Further, for him, the responsibility is not unbearable but Spotty's condition is. Besides, he is repelled to see his corpse. The way death approaches him still preoccupies the narrator. Kari Weil discusses Richard Klein in his essay concerning a proper death to dogs, "A dog should die like a dog, not cruelly, but with a respectful matter-of-factness..." (Weil, 99). The narrator can't change the manner of his death. But by seeing his dead body, the narrator wishes at least a 'proper death ceremony' to the dog. The proper death ceremony is for

peace and providence in his afterlife. He imagines the vulture as a priest: "my eyes awakened from the after effect of the siesta to a new and strange vision. A great big vulture, looking like the high priest of the nearby temple, was sitting on the corpse of the dog, as though presiding on the death ceremony of Spotty, after it had eaten up all the flesh and entrails, leaving the skeleton intact" (Anand, 256).

Later, even though the dog is not virtually present beside his tail still the narrator is affected by him. By looking at his tail he recalls the previous day when they are both affected by each other. He commemorates Spotty – "I saw that the tail of the dog was almost intact, and lay in the curve in which it had first wagged at me. I pillaged with a sort of cold rage, the wreckage of my soft feelings for the curve of that tail, as it had swayed when the pariah first greeted me" (Anand, 256-257).

Jacques Derrida discusses death in his work *The Work of Mourning* (2001). He says that death is not a loss but finitude that remains in the memory of friends. And those who are left behind internalized who die and thus they exist within a person as a remembrance of the thing past. Similarly, the dog is still alive in the memory of the narrator. Further, it addresses that though the dog has a wretched life nevertheless he succeeds in establishing a relationship with the narrator after his life. "The tail" is a souvenir that is engraved in the narrator's memory and consciousness.

The story "A Dog's Life" from Mulk Raj Anand provides a kind of positive approach towards species to see in totality. The story depicts that a dog's life is not insignificant. Such as, he affects and is affected by his Umwelt indifferently. He is not static and ready-at-hand object. Though it would be a relation of hatred or compassionate nevertheless he successfully establishes an inter-species relationship. Being related to others he marks his presence. This grants him individuality. Thus, his 'territory' or 'expressive act' depart him outside his 'soap bubble' that "extend beyond any direct correlation to a specific type of action; there is a note of autonomy to the act" (Buchanan, 178). And this dismantles the Cartesian way of perceiving the encounter between human and non-human animals.

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