

## **Beyond the Anthropocentric and Mythopoeic: Representation of Animals in Post-90s Indian Poetry in English**

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We only hate what we don't understand. (Jo Knowles 74)

Of all the beings that are, presumably the most difficult to think about are living creatures, because on the one hand they are in a certain way most closely related to us, and on the other are at the same time separated from our ek-sistent essence by an abyss. (Heidegger "Letter on Humanism" 89)

Whether approached with the tools of rationality or those of imagination [...] the lives of animals as currently configured generally resist meaningful cultural visitation on any significant scale. The search is therefore on, in the arts and the humanities, to identify new means of seeing, showing, and knowing the animals. (Una Chaughuri "(De)Facing the Animals: Zooësis and Performance" 10)

Animals find themselves caged in zoos, homes, and even the ever-contracting wild spaces. Yet intriguingly, the violence against animals on many fronts can actually be the result of an acute shortage of efforts to understand the animals themselves. The lack of comprehensive descriptions of animals creates blank spaces, which the human mind tends to fill with anthropocentric discourses (Latour *Reassembling the Social* 146).<sup>1</sup> Since the differences perceived in non-human animals are not respectfully acknowledged, these animals are flung down the power structure, bundled as muted resources meant for exploitation. Automatically 'other-ed', animals suffer the same fate as all those who are rendered unprivileged and are hence subjugated.<sup>2</sup> So, it is vital to uncover and acknowledge the remarkable efforts, if any, being made in bringing forth descriptions that create space for utmost reality of all beings and celebrate differences in a non-hierarchical manner.

The animals freely occupy natural spaces in the post-90s Indian poetry in English. The neon, the infrared – the distinct night vision of the animal world comes alive in poetry and reveals other paths that biological life has taken. Like oracles of old or trans-mediums these poets take up the task of making the

animals come alive on paper and seem anything but humble. All stamped demarcations of *a priori* identity and discourses of being are erased or retraced to revise and qualify their status. In a mosaic network formed by all the poems, the real animals might be found gazing back. Outside the poetic canvas, animals are indistinguishably other-ed in light of the humanist modes of judgment.

It is true that animals do not speak, reason, think, plan, and reminisce like humans. Yet the standards by which the animals' differences of being, push them into an unprivileged position that seem to be utterly illogical and biased in an anthropocentric way. With the absence of similar intellectual traits, we must not deduce an utter vacuum. We again risk being presumptuous. John Muckelbauer in "Domesticating Animal Theory" stresses on the "attempt to take the animal seriously" while delineating what an animal rhetoric could be:

[...] What could an *animal rhetoric* look like? What I am thinking of here is neither a "rhetoric of animals" (analyzing how people talk or write about animals) nor simply an analysis of how animals persuade or identify or use some protosymbol systems (which would tend to position animals at some early stage of evolutionary development). Instead this *animal rhetoric* could be simply a diagnosis of forces and effects, responses and reactions- one that doesn't presume to know what a 'species' is in advance (or the 'human' or 'rhetoric'). (Muckelbauer 99)

A descriptive animal rhetoric freely delineates animals which are neither homogenous among themselves nor empty anthropocentric chambers vacated of human capacities. The post-90s Indian poetry in English celebrates and acknowledges the meaningful and zoocentrally resourceful differences that animals bring to the world.

The description of animals as beings with an agency different from our own must necessarily invite experimental speculation in addition to flat (non-hierarchical) yet rhizomatic (branching) detailing.<sup>3</sup> The dangers of the supramental sentiment of "Not only...but also" must be acknowledged while reliable detailing is appreciated.<sup>4</sup> The subjective stance of the poems situated necessarily in language poses a danger of humanist speculation, yet the multilayered description offered by these poems is a step beyond our foundationalist discourses on animals. Though the persona throughout these poems remains that of the human observer and speculator, these poems mark the descriptive stance where the observer has finally decided to pay closer attention to the real animals.

Identity must always be “an effect rather than a cause” (Love 379). Such a realization calls for a tabula rasa state of being to differentiate the essence of a being from the a priori appropriations of its pre-identification. Kimberly W. Benston states in “Experimenting at the Threshold: Sacrifice, Anthropomorphism, and the Aims of (Critical) Animal Studies”:

[R]ecent work on the philosophical import of human/animal relations has argued the need to view “the question of the animal” and “the question of the human” as reciprocal conundrums, recognizing that further insight into material, historical, and ethical features of these questions can no longer bracket metaphysical concerns; rather it must place them at the heart of animal studies’ analytic and pragmatic agenda. (550)

Further, the “metaphysical concerns” never exist separately from the “material, historical and ethical features” provided that there is an ontological vision myopically at work. The static acceptance of the preordained must be microscopically challenged as Benston goes on to point to the critical animal studies’ recognition of the need “to historicize and to radicalize ‘the human’ and ‘the animal’ as diacritical figurations that, far from being granted to research as stable or prefabricated beings, must be continuously reimagined and reconstituted.” (Benston 551) The very quality of ‘animality’ calls for an ontological tracing. Yet contrary to this, animals find themselves nailed on the crucifix of popular representation in a human centric world. Before stating the effectiveness and descriptive powers of these poems in bringing forth the real animals, it is imperative to transmogrify ourselves into myopic ants<sup>5</sup> and observe the specific instances of description at work in studying the poems themselves. The trajectory that we must follow as we enter the post-90s Indian poetic scene is also “not just from philosophy to poetry but also from one kind of poetry to another” (Chaudhuri 10).

Over the ages, animals have either suffered at the hands of anthropocentric discourses or been limited as symbolic deities entangled in humanist metaphysics. In a country like India where the anthropological reality is greatly influenced by religious and mythical practices, the question of animal representation gains immense significance. In Indian (especially Hindu) mythology, animals are ubiquitous in terms of their symbolic and mythopoeic values and functions. Monkeys become the mythical representations of Hanuman. Elephants remind one of Ganesha, the Hindu deity donning the head of an elephant. Snakes are

worshipped as Shiva's pets. Bulls, tigers, and rats are considered holy as symbolic vehicles for gods and goddesses. Indian representation of animals has been deeply tangled amidst such metaphysical trappings. Yet, the contemporary Indian poetry, mediated by a deep understanding of modernism and postmodernism, reverses the mythopoeic deification and humanist anthropomorphism of animals, unleashing their wilderness of being. Poets like Sujata Bhatt in poems like "Understanding the Ramayana", "What Happened to the Elephant", "The First Meeting", and "In the End"; Tabish Khair in "Snakes, Outside the First Book of Moses"; Rukhmini Bhaya Nair in "Gomata"; et cetera, aid animals to break free of their conventional associations. These poems summon us to journey into the wilderness and domestic spaces to discover monkeys that serve as slaves enacting Ramayana, monkeys that are not like Hanuman, the commonplace elephant's carcass left behind by Shiva at the murder site ("Who is the true elephant?"), the real Cobra that refuses to be moved by offerings of milk or "bulging pipes", the heterogeneous species of snakes that escape Hindu deification, and real cows that are found chewing the garbage on Indian streets.

The fabrications of the human mind create organisms that retain mythical presence in our imaginative art forms and forms of belief. Chattarji states, "We lent them our best traits/ and expected them to teach us something/ in return" (61). Here something much more complex is at work. Delineating the inside logic behind anthropomorphizing tendencies of humans, Benston talks about "the idealism of anthropomorphization through which the ambiguities of animality (is it mere existence or a secret repository of meaning shaping capacities) would be dissolved into the certainties of human identity" (552). Hence, if linguistically, psychologically, and culturally, animals get described in the ways of humans then what we witness taking shape is the biased form of our own perception. In "Alphabestiary", a bestiary by H. Masud Taj, an oral poet and Bruce Myers, one finds almost all the components of a traditional bestiary. But unlike traditional bestiaries, which provide "the religious and moral lessons which the animal's [supposed] behavior can teach" (Collins 2), this bestiary keeps the animals at the center and makes human beings realize the significance of acknowledging differences for new ethical and logical insights. Yet the lessons are not arrived at through the animals. The sight we behold becomes the living lesson. The animals come alphabetically and like alphabets are to language, we realize, animals are to our world and our co-dependent existence.

Taj strays outside the realm of real animals that have a corporeal presence on our planet to include the mythical beings like dragons into the bestiary. In

bringing these mythical animals alive, Taj touches the sensitive yet potent regions of human mind. The myth of dragons has prevailed in Western as well as Eastern traditions. As forces of enlightenment or destruction, the mythical dragons roam the literary and artistic skies of the human mind. As the descriptive lens focuses and zooms in, the myth gives way to the myth maker. With keen self-reflexivity, the poet succeeds in informing the human race of the deeper psychological stakes and insecurities that lie under a human mind's myth making tendencies. Yet it takes a mythical dragon to make the declaration. In Taj's "Dragon", the mythical beast refuses to be a myth for it is the infelicitous reality of human life. The myth is the mighty dragon slayer, a spectral manifestation of humanity's insecurity regarding its worth and strength, "To cope with dragon-reality/ You conjure a white mythology/ Of dragon-slayers" (Taj 44). By conquering the gigantic, abysmal yet imaginary beast, humanity fulfills its self-proclaimed prophecy of ruling the world. Our outward projections echo our inward status. The poem reveals how the mind enjoys mythically slaying self-created problems by conjuring "a white mythology of dragon-slayers" (Taj 44). No amount of myths can change the problems of human condition until a self-cognizance is arrived at. By considering the dragon-reality a myth, humanity ends up snuffed in a helical hell where real problems are "Doomed to an unforgiving unforgetting" and "grow larger with time" (Taj 44).

Often the mythopoeic tendencies translate badly for the real animals. Humans tend to misuse the powers of animals for their amusement. Yet inherently, animals unmask human frailties and insecurities, hence emerging out stronger and nobler. The newt as delineated by Taj in the poem "Newt" renders all human acts of mutilation impotent in the face of its regenerative capacity:

My creation destroys  
Your destruction.  
You turn believer,  
Believe that I am forever. (Taj 64)

The newts strive towards a stubborn completeness that suffers no amputation. The newt does not crave for immortality like humans rather feels and strives to be forever complete. As victims of human mythology, newts suffer a lot as humans follow the misconstrued lore. As humans misuse their own sense of strength against the seemingly meek, they betray their own sense of insecurity and weakness. As Bruce Meyer writes: "What newts tell us is that even in

frailty, and in retreat from the overpowering presence of man, nature remains courageous and still finds a way to fight back” (Meyer 65).

Cats who “answer to no one” emit an obvious willfulness that cannot be tamed (Meyer 43). This attribute makes them recurring subjects of various poetical compositions. Though cats, especially kittens, are known to be playful, the negative connotations associated with cats stem mainly from the human inability to fully know them and hence to tame them. As Meyer writes, “Folklore tells us that to look into cat’s eyes is to gaze into an eternal dark mystery that functions not according to the rules of the world, but to the call of its own nature” (43). The unknown and the “inexplicable” presences of some animals “haunt us without speaking to us” (43). Hence, the cats find themselves associated with black magic. Yet their utility in killing rodents makes them harmless domestic animals for humans to keep. Further, by trimming out projected utility and belief systems which remain limited to anthropocentric interests, we reach the core of what makes a cat a cat. Taj brings forward attributes that bring forth their own specific standards. The cats’ night vision power depicted in another one of Taj’s *Alphabestiary* poems called “Cat” brings alive the “dreadful gleam” of their eyes, rendering the night world into a map of highlighted prey traces and “darkness defined by the coordinates/ Of other cats’ eyes”, and evoking a feeling of vulnerability in the human mind (Taj 42). The optical radius shifts into the eyes of the cat transforming the nature of sight into what is experienced by a nocturnal cat. The night sky becomes “the cat’s night sky” (42). The poet reasserts that we are traversing unfamiliar terrains. The physiological overturning of vision is description enough for the human mind to acknowledge the difference of a cat’s being as well as question the mind’s tendency to homogenize the world into humanist semantic islands. As new standards are raised, humans come across as beings that lack night vision and are handicapped in other ways. It is strange that though animals’ lack of intelligence is reasserted in making all hierarchical classifications and justifying humanist possessions of animals, nobody ponders over the multiple ways in which *Homo sapiens* are rendered vulnerable and juvenile in a wild space.

In Sujata Bhatt’s “Understanding the Ramayana” we are made to realize how myth and imaginative fascination overtake our take on reality which is muted most of the time. The monkeys used as slaved puppets are so effective in entertaining from behind an industry of entertainment that makes all injustice

seem make-believe, natural, and worth it. The poem descriptively pricks this desensitized lull.

So absorbed were we  
[...] we didn't pay much attention  
to the chains around the delicate  
monkey feet- preventing them  
from jumping very far. (123, 86-96)

The monkeys are so articulate in their gestures that it is well into the middle of the poem one realizes that *The Ramayana* is being performed by monkeys: "So it didn't matter/ that none of them could speak" (122). In an act of semantic breakdown of static meanings, the poet senses that the monkeys inhabit very humane characteristics among them, "Monkeys more humane/ than anyone" (123).

Sujata Bhatt's brilliant poem "What Happened to the Elephant?" speaks about the neglected animal of the other side of the mythical story, the narrative of which went unrecorded. The child is curious as to what happened to the elephant that had to give its head for Ganesh. Ironically, some Gods and demi-gods are born out of the deaths of the innocent. Looking through the eyes of children, a just perspective emerges.

What happened to the elephant,  
the one whose head Shiva stole  
to bring his son Ganesh  
back to life? (116, 1-4)

To the tabula rasa mind of a child unaffected by the ideological and emotive presuppositions of the world, Shiva and Ganesh are as important as the elephant-no more and no less. The power play is challenged in the child's curious yet lucidly elemental mind. Ethically, the saving of one life at the cost of another seems to be a bad bargain. Strikingly, the complex philosophical question of identity is raised by the child, making this a positive case of descriptive way of thought, "Who is the true elephant?" (116). For the poet, the contents of the postcard of Ganesh grow as the logical speculation of the mind to include the "rotting carcass/ of a beheaded elephant/ lying crumpled up/ on its side" (117). There is pathos in the depiction of the mute sorrow of the elephants "with their slow swaying sadness [...]" (117). The child wishes to "believe the fantasy" and also refuses "to accept Shiva's carelessness/ and searches for a solution/ without death" (116).

Animals usually find themselves, either actively or passively, marginalized or turned into holy symbols with either mythical or debasing appendages. In the poem “The First Meeting” by Sujata Bhatt, the King Cobra does not wish to be worshipped or enslaved. All efforts to understand their nature add up to either scientific recording or else romanticization. The effort to understand their relative nature must be highly situational and subjective. Poetry comes closest to decoding the animal DNA. The human poet remains self-aware and self-reflexive and hence we come closer to the landscape and the animals roaming in it, brushing close to humans. In the literary and the real world animals are expected to behave according to fantastical mythology conceived inside the human mind. As the King Cobra says in “The First Meeting”, “as if their bulging pipes could move us” (21). Academic appendages in theory too are born out of this tendency to wrap ideological and essentializing meanings around everything through an almost involuntarily compulsive and unnatural instinct. Nothing is self-explanatory inside the human world. Human mind inevitably feels the need to weave a discourse around everything and in doing so ends up creating a false discourse that asserts its pseudo-self-proclaiming worth. Moreover losing the ontological vision capable of seeing the nature of things, beings and situations as they are is an immense loss in itself.

When animals are situated in religious and mythical contexts – spun by the wild human imagination out of the fear of the unknown, they lose their fluid identity. In Bhatt’s “Only the Blackest Stones”, there is religious awe one feels brought forth by animals frozen into meaning. A very mysterious aura reigns in the poem. The awe-inspiring snakes frozen into sculptures create an atmosphere of silence that no one but the pure hearted children can feel free to slice into as Mythologizing freezes and cryoanesthetizes living animals into fetishized beings. Yet these poems brilliantly melt away the myth to reveal the (real) animals. In the poem “In the End” by Bhatt we witness the last resort when the snakes on Medusa’s head are talked to directly. “But who has ever bothered/ to listen to their story?” (528). Here we find Medusa’s snakes not as unreal myths but as animals, “as they are” within their natural element.

The poem “Snakes, Outside the First Book of Moses” in Tabish Khair’s *Where Parallel Lines Meet* (2000) brings out a demarcation between the mythical, religious, and bookish cultural connotations that are assigned to all things and beings on this planet. The Book of Moses becomes something very distant in which snakes are seen as mythical anti-beings which are masquerading in the real time world. They do not seek recognition on the basis of myths, or

allegories. They want to be implicitly respected for who they are. The snake must not be killed because it is a snake. If it is killed, it must be killed for a reason. It must earn its death. The Indian connotation of snake is not the biblical connotation of snake. The hooded cobra would get a bowl of milk from the chanting housewives. This becomes anthropologically connected with a way of life. Snakes are not free of myth but their heterogeneous presence and anthropological interaction with humans cannot go unrecorded. The snakes are heterogeneous. They are poisonous and non-poisonous snakes. The specificity of situation too plays out its role. In a situation where a poisonous snake has entered your home and is threateningly located near a child, defensive violence becomes justifiable. The threat involved brings to activation the right to kill the snake. The predetermining religious and cultural connotations are swept aside. The snake has in its specificity of nature and location been acknowledged, recognized and killed. These are the real snakes outside books. These are the snakes outside the first book of Moses, and hence are outside all connotations that are pinned down on them. The Snake with a capital 'S' is questioned and its subverted identity is broken down to a more honest description. This act is descriptive in coming closer to reality rather than passing right through it.

The "Viper" by Masud Taj depicts the consuming nature of the viper in a blood chilling manner which is surprisingly no different from our consumerist way of life. The human flesh offers itself in the form of "earthly delights/ A gourmet's paradise,/ Las Vagas of fast-food joints" (82). Our response to the poem depicts our double standards as humans, in the sense that we are so naturalized to the violence we commit and so shocked at another animals' moderate way of life. The human body becomes "[f]resh food with a perishable heart/ Pulsating to keep my cadaver fresh" (82). The consumerist society's deadly nature stands out in the viper's detailed description of its nightly meal. In this scenario, sheer description shreds the complacent human righteousness that has turned numb to all questioning and rethinking. In a 360 degree overturning, the viper states, "I believe in a consumer society./ For I am the consumer/ You, the consumed." (82) It is easy to support a consumer society when one is not being consumed. Our own consumerist way of life is nothing but "an orgy of choices" (82).

Of all the poems in the unit "Animulae" in Rukhmini Bhaya Nair's *Ayodhya Cantos: Poems*, "Gomata" stands out as the masterful archetype. This poem on cow becomes "another poem" for the cow itself is a living poem, "O cow against the yellow calendula/ you do not need another poem" (79). The physical

shapes and contours of the body descriptively becomes the living expression of its emotional verbiage,

so why would you need a poem, cow?  
 you are the soul of any lyric  
 you are a poem  
 yourself, swayambhu (79, 13-16).

The cow carries along its mythological associations: "[...] it was with you in the Gita and when you ambled with Yajnavalkya/ all through the Brihadaranyaka, making legend/ and it is with you now." (80) Today the cow can be seen walking amid the traffic like a "grandmother" or a "great matriarch" wearing "black patent high-heeled pumps" (80). And yet the old associations remain. Gopala, the man leading the cow still sings his poems: "his poems still lilt through the boulders of your mind/ agonize in its leafy groves, whispering/ nothing has changed" (81). The archetypes evolve yet their strong essence stays on through generations. The poetic description is at its best in one of the brilliant stanzas in the poem. The poet explores the nexus between the realistic, mythical, emotive and subjective. The biological situation of the cow is at loggerheads with its religious significance. Yet it survives the paradox. The stanza brilliantly records the same:

though you march with the herd, you are alone  
 though you are sacred, you are not beloved  
 thrusting your nose into city garbage  
 unembarrassed, a fly-blown beggar  
 driven from the dusty villages  
 how do you stand it, cow? (81, 46-51)

The muted nature of animals turns them into palimpsests for the fulfillment of human mind's mythopoeic tendencies. In such myth making, the real animals find themselves neglected and fetishized. Many of the myths being arbitrary and lacking ontological truths, land as heavy weights on the animals as the human mind loses its sense of distinction between the real and the unreal. Hence, though cows might be worshipped, we can still find them straying and "thrusting" their "nose into city garbage" (81). Newts suffer mutilation while monkeys are turned into performers in the country that worships the monkey-God Hanuman. Mythologically, salamanders are supposed to survive fire because fire is their deriving element. All animals are given to their connotations which determine in the form of sheer lore their existence and conditions of survival. In

Aimee Nezhukumatathil's "Thanksgiving" one finds how even physicists, engineers, philosophers, poets and harpists far from realizing the meaning of "Thanksgiving" would rather wish to find out the truth of the statement that "A cricket won't burn if it is thrown into the fire" (39). The man who grew quiet with concern, the man the poet would marry was "The kind of guy who would've fished the cricket out of the flame" (39). In Nezhukumatathil's "Four Amulets for a Frightened Farmer", eels and snakes have to die to cater to humans' baseless superstitions. The eel's head contains a stone and snakes have nails concealed under their tails. Both become detached objects of consumption. In religion too, animals play their part in terms of mythical symbolism.

Animals are our biological doppelgängers here on earth. Animals appear and reappear in the human mind. Early Homo-sapiens made sketches of animals on their cave walls. Animals have been painted, written about, dramatized and sung about. Without indulging in humanist epistemological methods, the ways and forms in which animals appear reveal a lot about us and our relation with them. Thinking about animals necessarily evokes the unconscious. An objective and relativistic description of animals requires a charting of our unconscious terrains and mythopoeic tendencies. Rather, beyond what humanist tendencies would have us believe, one must seek the cosmic unity in all beings that stand, at the same time, firmly by their peculiar natures.

Over the years one feels the need for the problematization of the literary metaphoric anthropomorphism of animals and refurbishing their portrayal which till now has been "as the repressed Other of the subject, identity, logos [...]" (Wolfe x). Animals cannot stay bound into metaphoric packs. These sealed stale packs need to be opened and rendered complex to suit the changing sensibilities and the atmosphere of enhanced consciousness of these sensibilities. The humanists traversing the world find themselves dancing with the hollow specters of animals while the real animals, though abound, almost stay invisible to the eye. The diverse operational ways animals find themselves sauntering on must be explored. Sometimes, what may or may not emerge within the human fold emerges in a mirror like projection and escape from identity and responsibility, as in the tendency to pack animals into bundles and render them stereotypical. "Those creatures live in our imagination as much as they live with us on this tiny blue planet." (Taj, Meyer 14). But imagination involves the human mind and mind becomes the site for ideological constructions through the creation of myth and culture. Animals share this planet with humans. In literature and other art forms, animals stand personified. Further, often an animal

almost becomes the alter-ego of the human. In an essentialized way, the animal-human binary between nature and culture is created.

Cosmic systems, weather, and animals are obstinately out of human control and yet have an automatic instinctual accuracy with an involuntary inclination to maintain the natural balance. It is this accuracy that demands trust in all its organic perfection. Hence, imagery becomes descriptively important and animals become the carriers of thought that need not be dissected beyond the animal in all its organic completion. In facing the animal, in looking into the eyes of Taj's Xolo, we face our fundamental nature beyond all beliefs and disbeliefs. All our cultural constructs dissolve away in its eyes. But thinking outside the humanist interpretative tendencies, we actually take steps toward making flexible the searching vision which cannot forever have humans at the center. By considering animals as vessels rather than beings in their own right a lot of violence is done to the very attributes that we would otherwise find profitable in decoding ourselves. Derrida stresses on the realness of his cat in "The Animal That Therefore I am", "[T]he cat I am talking about is a real cat, truly, believe me, a little cat. It isn't the figure of a cat. It doesn't silently enter the room as an allegory for all the cats on the earth, the felines that traverse myths and religions, literatures and fables" (374).

Our mind comes in the way and projects itself distorting the animals into anthropomorphic prototypes. A "good" description frees the animals from being carriers of human consciousness and experience and arranges for a complex and interesting descriptive interactive session among them (Latour *Reassembling the Social* 146). Here the animal and the human enter the scene through behavioral and action based viewpoints, "I do, therefore/ Unmindfully, I am" (Taj 36). As animals enter the scene enhancing our self-reflexivity, a complete overhauling can be expected where humans see themselves in a new light. The humanist central throne is shaken as a reassessment of self takes place in the human mind. The humanist pluralism stretches to take on a universal pluralism with the revelation that all identities, including ours, remain in a constructing and deconstructing flux. Animals do not bring the off-tracking abstract ideologies with them, helping us in understanding their interaction in a better way. This is especially effective in cases where the subject cannot linguistically assert itself and is blissfully free of the linguistic baggage. The subject in such cases can assert itself only through its being, its body and its actions. Everything else is projection of the linguistically strong party blundering through the linguistic traps of the mind.

Animals retain a great significance as embodiments of a certain natural completeness. We can never perfect nature for nature is already perfect and animals are doing what they have to, following behavioral instincts. Poetry can only record and utilize these perfections to point to the unsaid of the already created. Here, the poet is the “humble analyst and observer” (Love 381). Reification and ideological preconception come natural to language. To escape that, an objective observation of animal and human nature through a record of actions, behaviors and situations becomes the most effective way to record the unsaid nuances. To think clearly we must start afresh. The dehumanizing tendency of the descriptive turn is especially helpful in another way. To understand our true nature we need to step out of our solipsist castles. The surplus of subjective response is significant as far as descriptive accuracy goes. Stepping beyond the specificity of ‘self’ and ‘now’ becomes the breeding ground for the preconceived abstractions that cloud over the objective thought process. As the observant attitude is placed beyond the margins, the other and the center merge on an equalized platform. Subjectivity, once acknowledged and located, is objective in situating the subject. Looking at animals as an act is at the centre of the post-90s Indian poetry. Description here refers to the un-assumed analytical product of observant thought. In a cross and trans-cultural cross-section, it is polysemic and multidimensional. In a rational rethinking from the scratch: observing the here and now, it opens up life in all its organicity. Unexpectedly we find that our “aspirations toward something more: a nuanced understanding” actually finds fulfillment. What we arrive at, is the “unillusioned view” through “accurate reportage” which requires a certain reorganization of the mind (Ravinthiran 359). Poetic description is not irresponsible. It may be “an unlikely fusion of the subjective and the objective, difficult to validate” but it is also a creative yet “a responsible accounting of the world” (Ravinthiran 359).

### End Notes

- 1) A good description, according to Bruno Latour, is a description which requires no explanations for it is complete in itself and self-revelatory in stating ontological truths (a quality one can find in all great works of literature). In that sense, a good description comes as a corrective tool for those unnecessarily misled by suspicion and those convoluted by presumptions put forth by inorganic and manufactured discourses. All descriptive attempts mark the turn to the real and the unassuming yet critical depiction of the real. We must not at any cost assume pseudocycesistic depth following the “hermeneutics of suspicion” and must move from

“metaphysics to ontology” (Love Close 382, 377). Heather Love borrows the terminology given by Silvan Tompkins and states: “strong theory can organize vast amounts of territory and tell big truths, it misses the descriptive richness of weak theory. Weak theory stays local, gives up on hypervigilance for attentiveness; instead of powerful reductions, it prefers acts of noticing, being affected, taking joy, and making whole” (Love *Truth and Consequences* 238). Further, anthropocentricism (humanocentricism/ human supremacy) is the belief that humans are the center of everything. The term finds usage to pinpoint the belief that *Homo sapiens* are the most superior species on the planet and exceed other beings in terms of value or moral status.

- 2) ‘Othering’ is a marginalizing process in which the mainstream identifies and separates those who are different from the mainstream by reasserting the power discourse.
- 3) Deleuze and Guattari use the term “rhizomatic” to describe a non-hierarchical mode of representation that allows for multiplicity and diversity.
- 4) “P: See? That’s the inevitable trap: ‘Not only. . . but also’. Either you extend the argument to everything, but then it becomes useless— ‘interpretation’ becomes another synonym for ‘objectivity’—or else you limit it to one aspect of reality, the human, and then you are stuck—since objectivity is always on the other side of the fence. And it makes no difference if the other side is considered richer or poorer; it’s out of reach anyway” (Latour *Reassembling* 145).
- 5) “[...] someone pointed out to me that the acronym A.N.T. was perfectly fit for a blind, myopic, workaholic, trail-sniffing, and collective traveler. An ant writing for other ants, this fits my project very well!” (Latour *Reassembling* 9).

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