

Delineation of Myth: An Ecocritical Reading of Keki N Darualla's poems, *Hawk and Wolf*.

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Abstract: Keki N Darualla is one of the notable poets of Indian English Literature. His remarkable animal poems *Hawk* and *Wolf* bear the notion of the conflict between man and nature. By using his strong imagistic brilliance Darualla juxtaposes both the mythical primitive world and the present world where animals have been killed mercilessly. Moreover, the poem *Wolf* vividly portrays the Indian superstitious society where parents make use of various myths in order to discipline their children. The speaker asserts that human murders nature for their own desire. This greedy nature of human being is responsible for the deplorable plight of the animals. When we look at the relationship between man and nature, it is always assumed that man is the owner who has the 'right' over nature and this greed or anthropocentric behaviour of mankind is reflected in these poems, *Hawk* and *Wolf*. The hawk is a predator that must kill to eat but, man makes the hawk kill for his own anthropocentric desire by replacing its own natural instincts. Man has made hawking a fine art and ritual. Thus, these poems bear a note that if animals are wiped out continuously, our future generations will have to face its consequences.

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Myth plays a significant role in the formation of moral values of an individual. They are predominantly based on the man-nature relationship. In these poems *Hawk* and *Wolf*, the speaker depicts this juxtaposition of both biocentric and anthropocentric world in a vivid way. Sue Ellen Campbell in her essay, *The Land and Language of Desire* draws the concept of 'Biocentrism' in order to question the man centric universe (128). Here, the image of the wolf engrosses the mind of the poetic persona but, in the course of time, the existence of the wolf in his village almost metamorphoses into a myth. When we look at the relationship between men and environment it is always assumed that man is the owner or who has the 'right' over the environment and this greed or anthropocentric behaviour of mankind is reflected in the poem *Wolf*.

The opening line of the poem *Wolf* bears a hypnotic impact on the mind of the reader as the speaker says, "Fire lit/half silhouette and half myth" (Darualla 1-2). The greedy nature of human being is responsible for the deplorable plight of the animals. Earlier there were more jungles as the poetic persona was influenced by the wolf in his childhood. Here, the reader can find two moves, one is temporal and the other is spatial. It is worthy to note that the temporal move indicates looking back at past or what we can call analepsis. On the other hand, spatial move indicates looking forward at future or prolepsis. Here, the poetic persona's analeptic return to his childhood captures one of the central themes in diasporic writing.

In the poem *Wolf*, the poetic persona uses various synonyms of wolf such as prowler, wild sniffer, throat-catcher in order to scare the children. He makes use of past tense as he recollects his childhood which is preoccupied with various narratives related to wolf. His memory of the wolf is so strong that it has encircling his entire past. Earlier, child's nights were filled with such kind of narration as the poetic persona depicts, "My mother said/his ears stand up/at the fall of dew/he can sense a shadow (Darualla, 15-18). Moreover, the poetic persona by using a proleptic move says that it is very difficult to discipline a child now as there is lack of tales, animals as well as forests and despite of wolf's cries, the image of smoking gun barrels are ringing in his daughter's mind. Therefore, the poetic persona is getting emotional as he is not able to discipline his own child by narrating the old bed-time stories of wolf. Moreover, in the poem *Hawk*, Darualla also uses various adjectives and phrases to depict the powerful predator hawk. The hawk can drill the sky without any fear. It is worthy to note that where the first stanza of the poem, *Hawk* depicts the nature of the hawk which is wild but the second stanza portrays a contrasting picture of the hawk as this stanza bears the image of a domesticated hawk.

Here, the hawk by falling under the shadow of man becomes a monster, created by man solely for their own purpose.

Our bodies and minds are made up of natural elements. It works well when we maintain nature or its laws but, the moment we violate them, it directly affects our physical as well as mental state. In this poem *Wolf*, with the act of destroying nature and animals, human beings also in a way, loses all their moral and spiritual values which leads them to a mechanized individual. Moreover, in the poem *Hawk*, man tries to challenge the laws of nature by blinding the captured hawk as the speaker says, "When snared in the woods/his eyelids are sewn with silk" (Darualla, 22-23). Here, the reader can locate the notable imagery of predator/prey as it starts with a vivid depiction of the hawk as a ruthless predator but, this ruthless predator or the hunter has become hunted in the hands of man and turned to a vulnerable prey. Similarly, in the poem *Wolf*, the poetic persona states that earlier memory of the wolf has been encircled the mind of the children but, these wolves are constantly slaughtered by men for their own profit. In *Hawk* Darualla says that the tamed hawk is more ferocious than the previous hawk as the speaker says, "The tamed one is worse, for he is touched by man" (Darualla 21). The hawk is a predator that must kill to eat but, man makes the hawk kill for his own anthropocentric desire by replacing its natural instincts. The speaker also depicts how a hawk is trained to hunt which is extremely painful. Man has made hawking a fine art and ritual. Darualla in this poems *Hawk* and *Wolf* by depicting the cruelties of man wants to portray the immoral qualities of modern man. In away, these poems contrast the notion of Nature and Culture. While human cultural practices deal with chasing rewards, material gains and other anthropocentric measures, nature remains as a self-contained, self-regulated and an undemanding provider. In these poems, *Hawk* and *Wolf* the speaker portrays how man has destroyed the nature and its creatures for their own desire. However, these poems bear a note that if nature and its creatures are wiped out ruthlessly, the future generations will never know the significance of nature to mankind.

For Darualla, the geographical space is a limiting factor. When we read his poetry we can visualize his capacity to move from one place to another. For instance, Darualla in the very beginning of his poem *Wolf* gives a description of a primitive or mythical world as he says, "Fire lit/half silhouette and half myth" (Darualla 1-2). In this context, it is worthy to note that by using the phrase "half myth" the speaker perhaps wants to project his fragmented memories, encircled by wolf. Moreover, the very phrase can also indicate the notion of myth versus truth. For instance, as a child the poetic persona does not able to trace the distinction between myth and reality or in a way, he is not sure about the existence of wolf. Therefore, the poetic persona remains in dilemma, which helps the poet's mother to discipline him. From a closed reading of the poem the reader can assert that the poem *Wolf* juxtaposes both the celebration wolf and its power to terrorize children and the contemporary condition where, wolves have been slaughtered mercilessly. Moreover, the poem *Wolf* vividly reflects our Indian superstitious society where parents make use of various myths or stories in order to discipline their children.

The wolf in this poem encircles the mind of the poetic persona as the very 'presence' of the wolf is haunted his childhood and its 'absence' bothers him. These two poems *Hawk* and *Wolf* portray the poet's disgust at human activities such as hawking and slaughtering of the wolf. Darualla in two of these poems portrays animals as universal. Animals possess certain traits. For instance, in *Panchatantra* and *Aesop's Fable* the reader come across certain qualities which are associated with various animals. Even, in *Kamasutra* written by Maharishi Vatsyayana where various sexual positions are inspired from animals. Moreover, in the poem *Hawk* Darualla has used the pronoun 'he' for the hawk, providing it a kind of human identity or what we can call 'personification'. In a way, the reader can take the hawk as a destructive instinct in mankind.

In the first stanza of the poem *Hawk*, the speaker says, "...but he was lost/in the momentum of his own gyre" (Darualla 6-7), reflecting the notion of lack of control. In this context, the reader can compare this line with W. B. Yeats' masterpiece, *The Second Coming*, where the speaker depicts a nightmarish scene. Here, turning in a widening gyre, the falcon just like Darualla's hawk cannot hear the falconer. On the other hand, the poem *Wolf* also bears the same issue of lack of control as all these poems reflect the upcoming danger or the consequences of the cruelty of mankind upon nature and animals.

From a close reading of Keki N. Darualla's poems, the reader can assert that like Ted Hughes, Darualla's poems also focus on the innocent savagery of animals. It is worth mentioning that Ted Hughes in his poem, *Relic* depicts the notion of prey and predator. While Darualla portrays this very notion of prey and predator in the poem *Hawk*, Hughes uses this very theme in *Relic* to draw the Darwinian view of cyclic life. Moreover, one can compare this poem *Wolf* with Ted Hughes' poems, *An Otter* and *The Howling of Wolves* as these poems of Hughes portray the poetic persona's disgust at human activities such as killing animals purposelessly. It is notable that Cheryll Glotfelty in *The Ecocriticism Reader* talks about wilderness and says that human culture is related to ecocriticism, affecting it and affected by it (19). Thus, we can say that if animals such as wolf are killed relentlessly, our future generation have to face its grim consequences.

Remarkable ecocritic, Sue Ellen Campbell in her essay *Land and Language of Desire* asserts that there is no such thing called private piece of property, nor a person, nor a text, nor a piece of land. For Campbell, biocentrism is "the conviction that humans are neither better nor worse than other creatures" (128). Thus, human

being is only a participant and is not someone who has a kind of natural 'right' over the environment; he is rather a participant like other forms of lives such as trees, plants and other biotic or abiotic entities. Therefore, the concept of biocentrism is something that is antithetical to the position which is known as anthropocentric. Anthropocentrism is a man centric position that provides a kind of legitimacy of domination of man over the nature. Thus, in questioning the man centric universe, ecocriticism or ecocritical theory tries to propose a biocentric ecophilosophical position where man along with other forms of life are caught in a chain of shared responsibility or a complementary to one another and the poems of Keki N Darualla bear this motif of ecocriticism or nature writing in a remarkable manner. Darualla draws the grim condition of animals as he talks about slaughtering of wolves, domestication of wild hawk and so on.

To conclude, these animal poems written by Keki N. Darualla reflect the issues of conflict between man and nature. In the poem *Wolf* he is talking about myth and juxtaposes it with the primitive natural world in contrast to the present chaotic, mechanized world where animals have been killed mercilessly. Darualla asserts that human murders nature for mere commodification. One can compare this relationship of man and nature with the notion of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, propounded by Deleuze and Guattari as in these poems the nature or animal word is continuously deterritorialized by man for their own desire and never allows it to go through the process of reterritorialization. Thus, the sequence of rhizome is seen to be broken and Darualla through his animal poems tries to depict this burning issue in a vivid way.

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