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THE ENIGMAS OF POWER; A FOLK OUTLOOK: PARALLEL TO THE APPROACH IN GEORGE ORWELL'S ANIMAL FARM

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ABSTRACT

The paper attempts to study a Rajasthani folktale *A Hound's Pride* by Vijaydan Detha as an allegorical-folk literary expression. The themes and plot are parallel to George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. The devices of anthropomorphism and symbolism are efficiently applied to portray the paradoxes of revolution and autocracy.

INTRODUCTION

Vijaydan Detha (1926-2013) the recipient of Padma Shri(2007), Katha Chudamani (2005), Sahitya Akademi Fellowship (2004), Sahitya Akademi(1974) and many more prestigious honours, remains an emblematic figure in contemporary literature. His fourteen volume tour de force *Baatan ri Phulwadi* is a milestone manoeuvre towards revitalizing the rich oral tradition of Rajasthan. With his literary fervour and wisdom he has embellished the worn out structures of folk literature.

A Hound's Pride is a tale that unravels the paradoxical denouements of exploitation, freedom and power. Once a wealthy Seth bought a ferocious and sturdy dog to guard his vast wealth and symbolizing its name Nahar (Lion) the dog grew into a vigorous beast. Nahar was such an attentive and fearsome watchdog that no thief or dacoit even dreamt of coming near the Seth's house. The stingy Seth's son conspires against him and one night before Nahar could realize one of his own master's fraud; the son draws a wire mesh muzzle on Nahar's mouth and ties his legs as he empties his father's vault

and flees. In the morning when the Seth acknowledges the robbery he doubts Nahar's loyalty and punishes him, beats him mercilessly and leaves him to die of hunger. Nahar pleads his innocence;

"What have I done to deserve this? You are unleashing your anger at your son's misdeeds on me!... the disgrace I have suffered will haunt me until my dying day. I never would have expected this from you, o master... I'd rather starve to death. But I refuse to leave with your accusations stinking in my tracks." (Detha 89). Milan Kundera appositely remarks;

Humanity's true moral test, its fundamental test, consists of its attitude towards those who are at its mercy: animals. And in this respect humankind has suffered a fundamental debacle, a debacle so fundamental that others stem from it. (Kundera 289) However the expression remains symbolic of the misery of the exploited class on account of false accusations by the employers. Intensely hurt by his master's behaviour and the suffering incurred upon him for his honesty he exclaims,

"For ages, dogs have been man's most loyal servants. And what we get in return? Kicks and abuses. We have silently swallowed every insult inflicted upon us. We have tolerated all manner of injustice. Although I was innocent, the curses you hurled at me ripped through me like daggers. Today I'm taking an oath: I will never again set foot in a man's house as long as I live. And so help me O Vidhata (God). I will see to it that no other dog ever takes my place, lapping at any man's heels. My entire life will be devoted to delivering my downtrodden race from servitude. (Detha 90)

His master mocks his ideas and says that if dogs united and did not fight amongst themselves they would have made a pilgrimage to the Ganga River. The above expression is voice of the exploited classes over the globe who have suffered atrocities at the hands of the dominant forces. Since the very beginning the story develops as the struggle between the exploited and the exploiters using the device of anthropomorphism and this plot is phenomenally explored by George Orwell in his masterpiece *Animal Farm*. The rising conflict in the above extract from the text harmonizes with the expression from *Animal Farm*,

Man is the only creature that consumes without producing. He does not give milk... he is too weak to pull the plough, he cannot run fast enough to catch rabbits. Yet he is lord of all the animals. He sets them to work, he gives back to them the bare minimum that will prevent them from starving, and the rest he keeps for himself... and all your labour in the fields, what have you ever had except your bare rations and a stall. (Orwell 4)

Karl Marx invades this depositing resentment against the mediums of disparaged exploitation as he remarks, *"Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. (Moran 198).*

With the revolutionary spirit in his heart Nahar bids adieu to his master and meditates on the plight of dogs and the modes to overcome it. His community initially shudders at the thought to stand against the invincible man and as to how would they survive in the absence of their involvement in their lives but Nahar's zeal, dedication and determination for a better future in the dawn of FREEDOM convince the dogs to unite and strive for justice. Karl Marx renders this spirit in his iconic phrase *...Workers of the world unite; you have nothing to lose but your chains.*

They were eleven thousand dogs in all. They had built their new basti in no time. The leaders held counsel and decided that the basti should be named after him: Nahargarh... The ways of dogs seemed to have altered miraculously... (Detha 92)

There is an onset of a new era as the fresh passionate thoughts of unity, efficiency and faith strive towards a better future. The dialogue reminds of the lines from *Animal Farm*,

Then Snowball... took a brush between the two kuckels of his trotter, painted out MANOR FARM ... in its place painted

ANIMAL FARM. This was to be the name from now onwards. (Orwell 15)

For Nahar it was just the beginning, as; *He wanted to put their comradeship to test by taking them down the Ganga to bathe. On the way there, not one dog barked, snapped or growled... As the journey wore on the dogs' respect for Nahar grew... Men... made anxious preparations to welcome them... resented the harmony they witnessed among dogs. (Detha 92)* United and disciplined the dogs reach Haridwar and carry out the bath in the holy Ganga at the precise commands of Nahar and on their way back to the basti, with their combined strength and strategy they fight and kill the attacking hyenas. So, Nahar emerges as a powerful leader who carries out an unendurable task once mocked by his master. This incident draws the virtues of organization, faith and discipline.

...emphasis on ability to plan (and so improve) our activity is the ultimate reason Marx's philosophy is looked upon as a philosophy of liberation. Human work involves having a plan in our mind ahead of time... we can change the way we do our work... in short we are capable of progress. That progress shows up in two ways. First as our ways of working improve we gradually get an edge over nature, and so secure greater freedom for ourselves. Second... we discover how to make our work itself, and the ways in which we relate to one another... So work should be... the road to freedom and fulfillment. (Brown 281)

In the light of the above philosophy the united dog community strives towards its execution through proper planning and discipline. And Nahar summons men representatives from all the nearby villages and calls out;

Looking after a new basti is no joke. Open your ears and listen carefully: for the next five years all we need to eat, drink and keep warm will be your responsibility... watchdogs have been exploited for ages and ages. And now it's our turn for compensation... all the villages take turn month by month... and beware the person who speaks ill of us – he will end up worse than ill." (Detha 93-94) Strength of number and might scared the men as they; built separate hut for each dog, a fort in the centre of the basti, cloaks to guard from winter and healthy food.

The dialogue serves an inspiration to those who with their faith in inner instinct fight against the injustices and dream of a new beginning. It takes honesty, organization and unity to break the shackles of a horrid past and live with dignity.

The dogs were forbidden from coupling with more than one chosen mate... every full moon he called an assembly. And every full moon he said the same thing: "there is no danger greater than man... you won't meet a creature as ignoble and ungracious as man... it is fear that forces him to comply with our demands... be careful. Collude with them and sow the seeds of chaos and destruction in every home." (95)

Every new venture must accompany certain rules to be carried upon and so Nahar also lays down some conditions that every citizen should abide by for a harmonious existence. The juncture is reminiscent of the seven commandments in *Animal Farm* written in great white letters. They ran thus:

The Seven Commandments

- **Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy.**
- *Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend.*
- *No animal shall wear clothes.*
- *No animal shall sleep in a bed.*
- *No animal shall drink alcohol.*
- *No animal shall kill any other animal.*
- *All animals are equal.* (Orwell 15)

Some months pass by abiding by the rules and in perfect harmony but as time moves Nahar's leadership dissolves into dictatorship and he himself no more followed the rules laid down for harmony and raised sycophants to flatter him all the time.

Inevitably, the taint of dictatorship soon seeped into every pore of his body without him even being aware of it... for the survival of the basti, he must remain the ruler of Nahargarh, he told himself... there is no greater glory than being the leader of a hundred thousand dogs... such vanity could crack a boulder... he told himself that even these forces of nature depended on him... It certainly was an agonizing job watching out for the welfare of the basti, this was no joke... Nahar's spies reported everything to him, with extra pepper and spice added... Bark! Bark!... (Detha 95-97)

The population became uncontrolled, living standards deteriorated and after being fed for so long with vegan diet the dogs craved for meat. Nahar ordered no family could keep more than one pup and all others were slaughtered for meat. Anyone who disobeys an order was publically executed. Nahar's trusted army controlled any commotion. The very reason of the revolution is disturbed and lust for authority dominated mutual harmony. This rising action is parallel to Orwell's portrayal of the rise of Napoleon – the pig as a dictator,

Comrades," he said, "I trust that every animal here appreciates the sacrifice that Comrade Napoleon has made in taking this extra labour upon himself. Do not imagine, comrades, that leadership is a pleasure! On the contrary, it is a deep and heavy responsibility. No one believes more firmly than Comrade Napoleon that all animals are equal. He would be only too happy to let you make your decisions for yourselves. But sometimes you might make the wrong decisions, comrades, and then where should we be? (Orwell 37)

F. Nietzsche observes this shift of interest from general happiness to individual power in his expression, *'Man, become master over the forces of nature, master over his own savagery and licentiousness (the desires have learned to obey and be useful) – man in comparison with a pre-man represents a tremendous quantum of power – not an increase in "happiness"! How can one claim that one has striven for happiness?'* (Brown 345)

Gradually a constant war like atmosphere strolls about the basti as proclamation from the leader; 'BEWARE! Man may attack any moment BEWARE! was roared all the time. One of the dogs named Heliya soon developed a dislike towards the dictatorial regime and some others followed him in the rise of a new wing against the unexplained actions of their ruler. Nahar was informed by his fawners about Heliya and his

supporters. Akin to his self-pride and their faulty account he thought to get rid of Heliya.

One morning a bullock cart was seen approaching the basti carrying a bale of thorny brush. Nahar...began to shout authoritatively: "The danger we have feared so long has finally arrived! To show our invincible strength and unity, I beg of you bark everyone bark! Bark with all your might!"... That human has filled his cart with dark, foul smelling death and brought it close to us... Heliya looked and realized what was going on ... and suggested politely: "It seems you have overlooked one point. This is merely a heap of dry jujube branches. Men use these for fencing. This should present no threat to us." (Detha 98)

Rather than genuinely pondering over Heliya's view, Nahar took his point of view as a derogatory remark on his authority and ordered his citizens to Bark! Bark! Bark! In this perspective Detha highlights that with time, complete authority over something ruins one's wisdom and any idea other than one's own outlook appears a critique or challenge to one's righteousness and this in turn places pride above the pedestal of wisdom. In the loud barking the voice of Heliya subsides; this incident marks how in the garb of uncontrolled authority one summons logic with force rather than convincing the argument or seeking the advice.

Friedrich Nietzsche writes in *Beyond Good and Evil; Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And if you gaze long enough into an abyss, the abyss will gaze back into you.*

Drenched in the lust of power Nahar aimed at establishing his superiority of opinion and so he ran after the bullock cart. After walking a while along its side he duck between the wheels just beneath the bullock cart; as the cart halted at the signal of his driver so did Nahar and as the cart moved Nahar kept a pace with it. But when self triumphs above reason, the result is misleading and this is relevant to Nahar as he thought that the cart stopped because of him and moved only when he moved. The hound's pride now knew no limits as the old saying goes; *'The hound walks under the cart and thinks that it starts and stops at his will'* (Detha 100) This vice of authority is pondered by F. Bacon in his essay of Vain-glory; he remarks,

IT was prettily devised of Aesop, The fly sat upon the axle-tree of the chariot wheel, and said, What a dust do I raise! So are there some vain persons, that whatsoever goeth alone or moveth upon greater means, if they have never so little hand in it, they think it is they that carry it. They that are glorious must needs be factious; for all bravery stands upon comparisons. They must needs be violent, to make good their own vaunts. (Bacon 174).

At last Nahar returns to Nahargarh and mounts on a platform and declares: *"As long as I am alive you will have no cause for fear. With your support there is nothing I cannot accomplish. I had a good look at the bullock cart... It moves only under my power, and halts only when I will to it."* (101) Heliya stood up and asked, *"When you are sitting with us in Nahargarh, how is it that the bullock cart had the power to move along the road? And now that you have returned, how do its wheels continue to roll? Dispel this small doubt of mine and I'll never question you again."* (100).

Nahar had decided to get rid of the troublemaker and this was an opportune time so he declares that Heliya was a traitor who is trying to mislead and provoke the citizens and orders to get rid of him and his henchmen right away. At their commander's orders all the dogs pounced on Heliya and his allies and tore them to death. As they fed themselves on their meat, Nahar roared, 'Beware if you eat the brain of this traitor, your mind will also rot'... everyone drew back from the head.' (100)

Heliya was tagged as a traitor forever and the whole episode casted an impression that any perspective however logical-reasonable or beneficial but questions the faults in an authoritative rule will end miserably. It reminds of the exit of Snowball in *Animal Farm*,

At this there was a terrible sound outside. And nine enormous dogs... came bounding into the barn. They dashed straight for snowball... he slipped through a hole in the hedge and was seen no more. (Orwell 35-36)

Lord Acton- the British politician-writer once truly remarked...*Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.* The skull of Heliya laid there in the ground between the basti and remained an object of curiosity for all as to how infectious could it be and really was it truly an infection. The memorable phrase from *Animal Farm* parallels this tragic failure of the established ideals of equality, peace and justice and the rise of Nahar as an unquestioned monarch superior to all;

Are the Seven Commandments the same as they used to be... he read out to her what was written on the wall. There was nothing there now except a single Commandment. It ran:

***All Animals Are Equal But Some Animals Are More Equal Than Others!* (90)**

The final expression of the tale, 'And a thunderous roar rips through the sky: Beware! Beware!' (Detha 101) draws an ironic statement as the author wants to guard the readers against the lust for unquestionable power. Thus, the tale vindicates the concept of understanding the consequences of power and freedom in order to maintain their sagacity and establishes the notion that carrying out a revolution is the attribute of the zealous but to sustain its intentions is a further onerous task. Orwell himself observed analyzing *Animal Farm*, "Of course I intended it primarily as a satire on the Russian revolution...(and) that kind of revolution (violent conspiratorial revolution, led by unconsciously power hungry people) can only lead to a change of masters (-) revolutions only effect a radical improvement when the masses are alert." (Sheldon 371)

The relevance of *The hound's Pride* has been precisely remarked in the following observation of this narrative; *In the story 'A hound's pride' name of any exploited class can be applied in the place of dogs and the main story will progress in the established form. This precise symbolism from the panorama of the folks is the creative impact of Detha that does not dissolve the reality but rather absorbs it with its innate complexities... in the flask of Detha's creativity how a Rajasthani folktale becomes a myth of the contemporary Indian scenario, is what we discover in the tale 'A hound's pride'.* (trans. Detha Roonkh, 580)

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