



# Anthropocentrism and Ethical Blindness in Keki N Daruwalla's Hawk and Wolf

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**Abstract**— Keki N Daruwalla is one of the very well known modern India poets writing in English whose poems gives a picture of plethora of ideas of ecological consciousness. Hawk and Wolf are his very striking poems which suggest how anthropocentric activities by man without any ethical considerations have continued to create a havoc in the ecological system. The excess of anthropocentric desires overlooked intrinsic value and worth of non human life. The paper will attempt to draw attention to the anthropocentrism with lack of ethical considerations in context of poems Hawk and Wolf. It reveals an ethical necessity and the requirement of a biocentric worldview.



**Keywords**— Ecological consciousness, Anthropocentrism, Ethical considerations, Biocentrism

Literature has always admired the beauty and power of nature. However, in the present scenario, the environmental concerns and the threat due to the anthropocentric over usage by man has been the subject matter of writers. The reference of this gave rise to Eco criticism. Indian poets like Toru Dutt, AK Ramanujan, Jayant Mahapatra, Keki N Daruwalla have contributed much to the field. Keki N Daruwalla was conferred the Sahitya Akademy Award in 1984 for his poetry collection, The Keeper Of the Dead. His poetries covered a broad range of themes like ecological consciousness, multi ethnicity of Indian experience, communal conflicts, social injustices, nature vs modernity. About his poetry, he rightly holds the view: "I am not an urban writer and my poems are rooted in rural landscape. My poetry is earthly and I like to consciously keep it that way, shunning sophistication which, while adding grass, takes away from the power of verse" ( Naikar 30) . Daruwalla is profoundly influenced by Ted Hughes and has some similarities of his animal depiction. He has used animal imageries to show the human being having no ethical considerations and lack of care for other beings. He used it to depict the disharmony in human-nature relationship.

Hawk is a poem which shows the gradual transformation from a wild bird catching prey just in case of necessity to a

tool for human pleasure. Wolf depicts how human encroachment have led to presence of wolves in myths rather than reality. It talks about the need for preserving animals, autonomy, their natural instincts and the emphasis on biocentrism. Keki Daruwalla asserts that this desire and nature of human is the cause of replacement of their natural instincts. 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, text or piece of land. For Campbell, Biocentrism is 'the conviction that humans are neither better nor worse than other creatures' (128). Thus it means humans are a part of nature and there's nothing like any sanctioned right due to hierarchical reason to exert over nature or any other organisms. Anthropocentrism is the view that human beings are at centre of existence, holding special importance or superiority over other organisms and legitimises domination. Thus, biocentrism stands anti-thesis to anthropocentrism. Thus, as a critique to man centric universe, eco critical theory proposes a biocentric approach where man and other biotic and abiotic things are in a shared harmony to one other. The poems of Keki Daruwalla draws attention to these topics. He portrays the plight and exploitation of animals in terms taming hawk as well as poaching of wolves.

Wolf is a striking poem of Daruwalla with anthropocentric and ethical blindness thoughts. The poem is based on half myth and half reality and a contrast of beliefs between two generations. The poet speaker believed the bedtime stories about wolves by his mother which was enough to create a terror in the minds of children those days. In contrast, his daughter is no longer fearful about it. The gun barrel signifies that the modern inventions have made man feel superior than others. Daruwalla exposes the anthropocentric views of man and hopes for a moral re-awakening and ethical considerations. The poem evokes a question who the real predator is - the wolf who kills for survival or the man who kills for pleasure. The first stanza of the poem reflects the nostalgic remembrances of the poet. And his description of the presence of wolves as half myth, where the existence of wolves is brought in parallel with the fragmented memories. His recollections of the fear which led people not to step out at night, the sound of the wolf created awe in the minds of people. The wolf nudged into the poet's consciousness. The cries of the wolf scared the children. The descriptions of the wolf as 'prowler', 'wind sniffer', 'throat catcher', he can 'sniff out approaching dreams' gives insights into the majestic Wolf. He contrasts it when he mentions 'The wolves have been slaughtered now'. The descriptions of the wolf scenes now no longer scares the modern generations for whom, the existence of wolves is mythical and not real. The surrounding Daruwalla is grown up in, i.e. a village in the forest edge makes him believe the existence of wolves and the daughter being born in a city and in a generation which has advanced in scientific innovations believes that the wolf can be shot with just a gun shot and there's nothing to fear about it. It is no longer a fear factor.

Keki N Daruwalla uses the as a figure of "wolf" as a significant symbol to expose the anthropocentric values of Man and the lack of ethical considerations. The poem critiques human's tendency to view entire Surrounding through a lens which makes humans feel superior and gives them an authoritative power. This anthropocentric perspective has led to the slaughter of the wolves and their lives are in such danger that it may lead to existence in myths and not in reality anymore. This blinds the ecological consciousness and ethical considerations of man who instead co-existing have resorted to domination. This anthropocentric views of man reflects how humanity justifies and positions itself above god's creation as well as nature owing to progress and it has led to distortion.

Hawk is another striking poem highly symbolic of Keki N Daruwalla which is highly symbolical and also ironical. Hawk is a bird of prey. The poem is located in the background of art of hawking which is a mere pleasure activity for the wealthy. Daruwalla brings in the

anthropocentric views of man who extends cruelty and superiority to the animal world. He expresses that just for pleasures, Man captures hawk, tames it, domesticates it and this way, the will, freedom and intentions of Hawk is neglected. The Hawk who preys only out of hunger is made to prey for Man's pleasure against will. Giving expressions of the ways Man traps Hawk, he mentions,

"But he was lost in the momentum  
of his own gyre,  
a frustrated parricide  
on the kill

The fuse of his hate was burning still": (7-12). It hints the readers that hatred burns in the Hawk and it is not passion as the Hawk now preys out of compulsion by the master and this action against will suffocates him and the burp has to come out. The interruptions by man can be traced in the lines,

"The tamed one is worse for he is  
touched by man  
when snared in the woods....  
and he is broken to the hood...

perforated..". Man, for his own desires of domesticating a Hawk and getting its prey done violates and goes against all the ethical considerations. The Hawk's lids are sewn with silk, he's momentarily blinded and starved - depicting the cruelty of man to such extent. After bearing the torture, the Hawk has lost its natural momentum. Man, for whom it's an interesting game; on the other hand its painful extortion of Hawk.

"Hawking is turned to a ritual, the  
Predator's

passion honed to an art". The craftsmanship of man, of beautifully taming the Hawk one step at a time have disregarded the art of bird as well as its passion. Man's expertise is such one doesn't realise when did he get tamed. The Hawk is tamed to an extent its eyelids "burn with thwarted vision". Both the poems show with minute scrutiny the anthropocentric desires man & the ethical blindness to the sufferings of animals.

In both the poems, Hawk and Wolf, Keki N. Daruwalla exposes the ecological imbalances, injustices to the biological world due to anthropocentric view and lack of ethical considerations of mankind. Man fails to co exist and value the intrinsic value and equality of non-human life. The wolf, which is a significant animal; whose descriptions were enough to scare a child in those days is now no more to be seen plentifully due to the slaughter of wolves. The gunshots depict the inventions which humans use to show

its superiority over other's lives. The Hawk, which preys only for satisfaction of hunger is now tamed, domesticated by man in painful ways to hunt for man's pleasure. It disregards the equal right of animals. Ultimately, his poetry calls for a ethical considerations and the need for equal treatment beyond exploitation and co-existence. The poems are reminders that the animals have their own space in the ecosystem and it is the responsibility of man to look at it in a humble and compassionate way.

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