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## Human-Nature Interface and the allegory of anthropomorphism<sup>1</sup>: An Ecocritical study of Dhan Gopal Mukherji's *The Adventures of Sirdar: The Chief of the Herd* (1929)

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**Abstract:** Dhan Gopal Mukherji's *The Adventures of Sirdar: The Chief of the Herd* (1929) sketches the outline of a classic story of an Elephant, Sirdar, his herd and their adventures in the forest of India. Sirdar is a majestic young elephant who is the chief of the herd. The elephants are free and fearless - their only enemy is man, who will hunt them for their ivory or just for the joy of killing. Sirdar saves his herd from many dangers-floods, fires, hunters' traps and more. He is as noble as he is brave, a true leader who looks out for the weakest of creatures. Till one day, he has to face a great test of his leadership, when his family and herd will be in the gravest of dangers. Will Sirdar be able to save all those who look up to him for guidance?

Initially, the story mirrors the adventures of Sirdar, an elephant leader but underneath it is a story of the patterns of behaviours and that align with the human traits profoundly. It is all about the skillful delineation of Human-Nature interface in multiple layers. Most interestingly, it is an example of an allegory of anthropomorphism. Metaphorically, the story of Sirdar encapsulates the conception of the human-centric traits of power, leadership, enmity, love, sacrifice, heroism etc. At first, this paper excavates how the story reflected the nuanced human-nature interconnection(s) and dichotomies(s) and secondly, how this human-nature interconnection(s) and dichotomies(s) weaved the allegory of anthropomorphism. At the outset, the story appears as if it is a story of an eponymous character called Sirdar, an elephant and his herd and their arduous adventures and heroism. Metaphorically, it is a delineation of the concept of power-structure, how power dictates and manifests in different forms, how the concept of power and its ramifications that energized human society, can also dictate the world of nonhumans, how the gender dynamics are operating in the domain of the nonhumans. These themes automatically direct to the theme of allegory of anthropomorphism where the identical parametres are meticulously streamlined amongst nonhumans. Some pertinent questions arise in this context: Does this allegory of anthropomorphism direct attention to the nonhumans only as Hamlet, the eponymous character of William Shakespeare, formulated the renaissance concept of human as 'the paragon of animals? Or is this allegory of anthropomorphism a direct onslaught or satire over 'the paragon of animals? or is it a strategic ploy to bring them together both on the same platter by demolishing the dualism of nature-culture binary in this age of planetary crisis? Or does this fictionalization of nonhumans pose a caveat to rethink who we are today and what it ought to be?

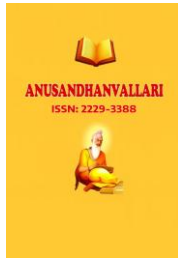
**Keywords:** Human-Nature interface, Allegory, Anthropomorphism, Ecocritical, Nature-Culture binary, Nonhumans.

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In *The Tragical History of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* (1623), William Shakespeare's immortal and eponymous character, Hamlet vociferously remarked:

*What a piece of work is a man*

*- how noble in reason; how infinite in faculties, in form*



*and moving; how express and admirable In action; how  
like an Angel in apprehension; how like a god; the  
beauty of the world; the paragon of animals.*

(Act 2, Scene -II, Lines 269-273)

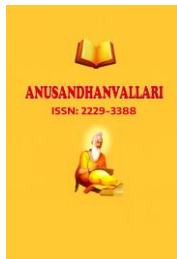
Hamlet's articulation mirrored the typical Renaissance concept of Man. This was perhaps the beginning of human-centric purview of the world and judgement. This pondering of human-centric worldview radiated through multiple branches such as, for example, Dr. Faustus was ready to stake his life for the sake of 'necromancy' to Mephistopheles in Marlowe's *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Dr. Faustus (1592)* or Ulysses' optimistic assertion in Matthew Arnold's poem "Ulysses" (1842), "*I will drink/ Life to the lees*"(p.30) or more recently George W. Bush, the ex- American President when on the campaign trail, said, "*Those who think we are powerless to do anything about the greenhouse effect forget about the 'White House effect.' As president, I intend to do something about it.*" (*Deseret News*, published: May 11, 1989) The President literally tries to handle the 'greenhouse effect' with that of the 'White house effect.'

All these pronouncements and assertions pinpointed the intrinsic scenario that the world should be perceived from the human-centric purview. This is possibly the best encomium and attribution that bestowed upon the single species of the earth, '*human being*'. This eulogization dictates the supreme autonomy and sovereignty of human being over the earth. This egoistic manifestation promptly proliferated the dichotomies of human/nonhuman, nature/culture, self/other and so on and so forth. Moreover, this human-centric phenomenon created two phases of the understanding of the world: *first*, it scripted and declared the central fact that human being is the 'prime mover' of this earth after God. Everything should be perceived and measured from the human points of view. This assumption overtly concretized the supreme human autonomy over everything. *Secondly*, this phenomenon mostly derived from the first proposition. All the other entities except human being (such as, nonhumans, organisms, animals etc.) are relegated to the stature of insubordination and secondary. They are passive, unintelligible and inert. They can be exploited, dominated and vanquished at any cost. This vista of *megalomania* immediately recalled the Saidian binary of Occident/Orient and the interplay of power structures in *Orientalism (1978)* which also premiered the famous quote of Karl Marx: "*They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented*" (Preface). How fascinatingly this phenomenon has catalyzed the human/nonhuman binary that the Renaissance Philosophy of Enlightenment highlighted and propagated!

On the other hand, the observations of the climate change experts and environmental humanists and scholars in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are alarming. They opined that we are running out of time to address the issue of climate change. The period of human history started about ten thousand years ago, as the planet moved from one geological period, (the last ice age or the Pleistocene) to the more recent and warmer Holocene. We are supposed to be in the Holocene period but due to our recent activities such as our numbers, the burning of the fossil fuel etc., we have become a 'geological agent' on the planet. This stunning proposal was first proposed by the Noble-winning Chemist Paul J. Crutzen and his collaborator, a Marine Science specialist, Eugene F. Stoermer. Crutzen elaborated the proposal in a short piece published in *Nature* in 2002:

...It seems appropriate to assign the term "Anthropocene" to the present...human-dominated, geographical epoch, supplementing the Holocene-the warm period of the past 10-12 millennia. The Anthropocene could be said to have started in the latter part of the eighteen century... (*The Climate of History*, p.209)

Again, the fatal apprehension of Alan Weisman's best-selling book, *The World Without Us* (2007):



Suppose the worst has happened. Human *extinction* is fait accompli...picture a world from which we all suddenly *vanished*...Might we have left some faint, *enduring mark* on the universe? ...Is it possible that, instead of having a huge biological sigh of relief, the world without us would *miss us*?... (Italics, my emphasis) (*The Climate of History*, p.197)

Moreover, at the end of the essay, “*The Climate of History: Four Theses*” (2009), Dipesh Chakrabarty acknowledges the brutal truth: *First*, we are confused and haunt our sense of the current crisis. *Second*, the wall between human and natural history has been dismantled.

In the first instance, what Crutzen has envisaged and explained is utterly true and feasible. We have already become a ‘geological agent’ on the planet and entered into a domain of ‘geological era,’ *Anthropocene*<sup>2</sup>, where we intervened immeasurably and thereby impacted over the earth terribly. Weisman’s book signaled a terrible alarm. The notable expressions -- ‘*extinction*’, ‘*vanished*’, ‘*enduring mark*’, ‘*miss us*’—pinpointed bleak future, dystopian vision, gripping suspicion, and enduring existential crisis. This crisis was beyond human perception and imagination; it remained clutched and entrenched in the heart of the human being. The flimsy barrier between the human and natural history has been collapsed.

Naturally some of the trenchant questions sprout about the ontological dilemmas of the *human being*: Are we now all floating on the same platter or maintaining the binary contradiction? Why does ‘the paragon of animals’ with all his potentialities and divinity shiver from dystopian vision, gripping suspicion and enduring existential crisis? Why is this god like being so perplexing and haunting in his sense of the current crises? Why do the audacity and angel like apprehension that animated them to overpower the earth, will not shelter them from this burgeoning crisis? Will they not envisage the prophetic doom with their Tiresias’ introspection and prophecy? Why don’t their noble reasons and infinite faculties operate that could promptly dethrone the fatal vision of apocalypticism? Why does their ‘express and admirable action’ paralyze in front of the catastrophic natural calamities that eventually create an internal tremor and freeze the congenial flow of hubris? Why does the sense of ‘fading away’ lurk in the minds of the human beings that are considered to be the ‘beauty of the world’?

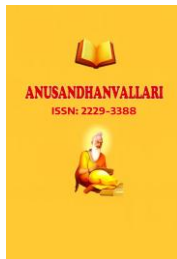
These two contradictory yet inseparable philosophical and ontological positions of *humans* and *other than humans (or nonhumans)* need to be reconciled in a newer paradigm(s) in this era of *Anthropocene*. Some environmental humanists agree that climate crisis is a ‘*a crisis of imagination*’ (Hartman, Marshall, Skrimshire), Rob Nixon and Rachel Carson pointed out that environmental change can be ‘*imperceptible*’, it proceeds gradually, only occasionally producing ‘*explosive and spectacular*’ events. Amitav Ghosh- an anthropologist and novelist- in his 2016 polemic *The Great Derangement* talks about the relationship between imagination and environmental management and argues that humans have failed to respond to climate change at least in part because fiction fails to believably represent it. But Ghosh again in his renowned essay, ‘Wild Fictions’ (2006) offers hope with the beginning line:

“If there is anything distinctive about human beings, as a species, it consists, I believe, in our ability to experience the world through stories.” (p.1)

This conviction becomes more sophisticated and palpable when Ghosh asserted the same strategy in his *The Nutmeg’s Curse* (2021):

It follows, then, that if those nonhuman voices are to be restored to their proper place, then it must be, in the first instance, through the medium of stories...As with all the most important artistic endeavours in human history, this is a task that is at once aesthetic and political—and because of the magnitude of the crisis that besets the planet, it is now freighted with the most pressing moral urgency. (p.204)

Again,



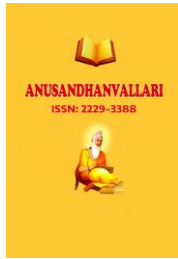
What the story highlights is the faculty of empathy, which humans share with many kinds of animals, and which may even, in the end, provide us with a path to salvation. (Emphasis added) (p.244)

This method of 'storytelling' is one of the most viable methods of enlivening the voices and agencies of the nonhumans in this age of unprecedented planetary crisis. This tradition was very popular in Indian subcontinent where people lived in pure synchronization with the nature. This relationship is mostly relational and respectful. Hence, an eco-cosmopolitan<sup>3</sup> existence is purely envisaged and tenable.

Now we will move on to Dhan Gopal Mukherji's retitled and reissued book *The Adventures of Sirdar: The Chief of the Herd* which was originally published in 1929 in the United States of America. Dhan Gopal Mukherji (1890-1936) was the first and only Indian-born-American author and playwright who was awarded the most prestigious "Newbery Medal" in 1928 for his immortal tale, *Gayneck: The Story of Pigeon* (1927) where it was embossed: "For the most distinguished Contribution to American Literature for Children" (Google Wikipedia). He grew up in Bengal before he moved to Japan and the United States. In the US, he started his writing career and went on to win much acclaim for his books for children. His books on children include *Kari the Elephant* (1922); *Hari the Jungle Lad* (1924); *Ghond the Hunter* (1928); *Hindu Fables* (1929); *Fierce Face* (1936), among others. His books also present the forests of India as a magical place where the creatures communicate with each other, where animals not just live and die, but where they understand that they are part of a 'web of life' that connects them all.

Since the original story of *The Adventures of Sirdar: The Chief of the Herd* was published in 1929 in America, the backdrop of the story is purely situated in Bengal and it explores the different world of Elephants (Hathis). Dhan Gopal Mukherji's *The Adventures of Sirdar: The Chief of the Herd* (1929) sketches the outline of a classic story of an Elephant, Sirdar, his herd and their adventures in the forest of India. Sirdar is a majestic young elephant who is the chief of the herd. The elephants are free and fearless -their only enemy is man, who will hunt them for their ivory or just for the joy of killing. Sirdar saves his herd from many dangers-floods, fires, hunters' traps and more. He is as noble as he is brave, a true leader who looks out for the weakest of creatures. Till one day, he has to face a great test of his leadership, when his family and herd will be in the gravest of dangers. Apparently, the storyline very simple and lucid but it excavates and investigates a different spectrum of connotations and ideologies which are very much pertinent and suggestive in this era of Anthropocene. Dhan Gopal Mukherji has created a different world of nonhumans (here, the world of Elephants, Hathis) which resonates with multiple spectrums of ontological dynamics, human-nonhuman (nature) interconnection(s), dichotomies, philosophical introspections, gender dynamics, complicated and conflicted power structures and the allegory of anthropomorphism. In this masterpiece, Mukherji weaves a magical story of animals, the enchantment of the forests and the creatures who live free in them and creates the unforgettable character of Sirdar-the mightiest and noblest of all elephants.

In nutshell, the story mirrors the adventures of Sirdar, an elephant leader but underneath it is a story of the patterns of behaviours that align with the human traits profoundly. It is all about the skillful delineation of Human-nature interface in multiple layers. Most interestingly, it is an example of an allegory of anthropomorphism. Metaphorically, the story of Sirdar encapsulates the conception of the human-centric traits of power, leadership, enmity, love, sacrifice, heroism etc. At the outset, the story appears as if it is a story of an eponymous character called Sirdar, an elephant and his herd and their arduous adventures and heroism. Symbolically, it is a chronologicalization of the concept of power-structure, how power dictates and manifests in different forms, how the concept of power and its ramifications that energized human society, can also dictate the world of nonhumans; how the gender dynamics are operating in the domain of the nonhumans. These themes automatically direct to the theme of 'allegory of anthropomorphism' where the identical parametres are meticulously streamlined amongst nonhumans.



Mukherji has created a peculiar but wonderful world of nonhumans (here elephants) which defines formal conceptualization of it. Under the garb of a wonderful fictionalization of animals, it rather unravels a convoluted and topsy-turvy nexus of interconnection(s) and dichotomies between the human and the nonhuman. At the outset, the world is permeated with elephants and animals, their adventures, patterns of behaviours, heroism, love, sacrifice, romance etc. We first encounter the human-nature interface in the form of the complicated relationship between the Mahout and the elephants (here, the parents of Sirdar and Sirdar himself): 'of all the elephants of the flock, he (Sirdar) was the one that had the largest contact with man. For when he was nineteen months old his father was killed for ivory and his mother was captured to do work in the teak woods for a company of lumbermen'. (*The Adventures of Sirdar*, p.13) This master-slave dynamics appear palpably when Sirdar reveals that an exhausted elephant with extreme hunger can submit to anyone who satisfies the hunger. Sirdar is also very instinctive and critical of this asymmetrical liaison: 'Think of a biped, no better than a monkey, patting an elephant's trunk!' (p.14) or 'but thank the gods of elephants that captivity taught me what men are and how they act... (p.14). Sirdar has developed the nuanced sense of odours of man and his village: 'If man was happy and unafraid he smelt like tress- nice and friendly; if he was angry and afraid -- anger and fear go together -- man gave forth the odour of dead things'. (p.14) This sensitivity and clinical gaze of Sirdar is compatible of Caliban's outlook towards his masters Prospero and Miranda in *The Tempest*:

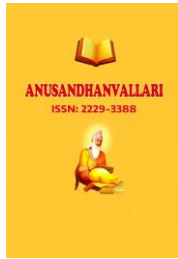
You taught me language, and my profit on't  
Is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you  
For learning me your language.

(1.2, pp.364-66)

Perhaps Sirdar adopts the mechanism of "mimicry" (as Caliban effectively hurls at) as a potent weapon of postcolonial criticism to counteract and register his voice and agency here.

The bitter sarcasm and antagonistic sentimentality of the nonhumans have been exposed in the tone of Sirdar when he compares the nonhumans with that of the 'city-born ape without tail, man': '...other beasts are harmless but he who is armed with guns is the deadliest. "Man is an animal with a gun." What horror!' (p.33), or 'Man to an elephant spells death.' (p.50). The most trenchant and penetrating critique of human suffering and downfall from overweening pride comes from the introspection of Sirdar when he elaborates the misery of Mahout who has lost his elephant, Radha, in the jungle with Sirdar and Ajit, his friend. When the Mahout returns to his town, he is castigated and severely scolded by the villagers. Sirdar deplores over the fate of the poor Mahout: 'Such is the life of a Mahout. If he preserves his hathi he is admired; if he loses it, he is cursed. What a life!' (p.64)

What is more surprising about this human –nonhuman interconnections and glitches is that everywhere Sirdar looks at man from the perspective of an 'animal'. He also mentions and alludes them on *animal terms*, whether it is a method of comparisons or contradictions. Man is 'the paragon of animals' (Act 2, Scene -II, line 273) which has been reflected thorough their vaunted intelligence, egoistic panorama, overweening hubris and its superficial manifestations such as guns, weapons, intimidating tendency, inflicting torture, tendency to be civilized, craze for sophistication etc. Unfortunately, they cannot elude the intrinsic garb of 'animality' which is very strategically put forward by Shakespeare's Hamlet. Nowhere in the entire book or the version of Sirdar defy or contradict this elemental truth. They are on the same pedestal *ontologically*. Like Human world, elephants also maintain a rigorous principle of choosing the partner by showcasing the credibility and agility. It also demands the final sanction of the herd, as Sirdar mentions, 'The more one studies the conduct of elephants the better one realizes that not only man, but also his lesser brothers, all work for quality. A human group or a drove of hathis seeks to create not



quantity but descendants whose mettle is above reproach' (p.50). The world of the elephant is permeated with a religion and the adoration of the Almighty. This religion is 'natural' to them. They rest their beliefs on the elemental force of nature like the sun, the moon and so on. In pondering over the elephant's religion, Sirdar ruminates, 'you know that no living creature exists who does not bathe. It is also true that no creature can live without adoring the gods...For instance, every dawn and every sun-down, for one moment of silence, every animal stands still' (p.36). Sirdar's introspective pondering also reflects the nuanced 'difference' between the religions of beast and man: 'what is the difference between the religions of beast and man? The former worships the visible god, the sun, while the latter prays to the God behind the visible. No matter who, he feels better for having performed an act of adoration' (p.58).

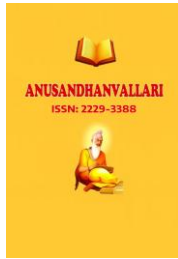
Apart from human-nonhuman spectrum, the story describes the sojourn of the leader, Sirdar and his fellows. The story of Sirdar evolved in different phases as Mukherji enumerated at the end of the book:

first as a child, second as a youth, third as a leader, fourth as a husband and father, and last of all as a selfless person Who is ready to give up himself for others. In one word, the story of true leadership, whether amongst men or animals, is one of the gradual loss of self. Selflessness is the rock on which a leader's life is built. Egotism, vanity and fear should be as alien to the nature of a leader as life is to death (p.158).

Here, Mukherji actually creates a world of the nonhumans in a picturesque manner. But the subtext of the story reveals that it is originally an 'allegory of anthropomorphism' where the beliefs, practices, virtues, value systems etc. have been attributed to the nonhumans. Now some pertinent questions may rise in this context: Does this allegory of anthropomorphism direct our attention to the nonhumans only as Hamletian articulation of the Renaissance concept of human as 'the paragon of animals? Or is this 'allegory of anthropomorphism' a direct onslaught or satire over 'the paragon of animals? Or is it a strategic ploy to bring them together both on the same platter by demolishing the dualism of nature-culture binary in this age of planetary crisis? Or does this fictionalization of nonhumans pose a lethal caveat to rethink who we are today and what it ought to be?

Most interestingly, Mukherji has carefully created the narrative world of the nonhumans (here primarily *elephants*) and their typical mechanisms, whims, rhetoric of fear, heroism, marriage, self-sacrifice, signaling signs, animal language, introspection, experience, expertise, sensing capability, avenging instincts, 'mahaprasthan' etc. with a meticulous accuracy and fastidious details. Critical reading of the text reveals another possibility. This possibility is 'prime mover' of the plot. The story is thoroughly permeated with the human-centric sensibilities which catalyze the entire texture. As a consequence, what appears is that nonhuman sensibilities are smeared with that of the sensibilities. Why does the author/writer want to direct our attention to this dimension? This may open up multiple avenues of understanding the story: *first*, the author wanted to create the possibility where the delineation of an allegorical narrative of anthropomorphism can bring both the humans and nonhumans on the same pedestal-this crucial philosophical understanding is the cornerstone in this age of planetary crisis. In this scheme, the binaries - such as nature/culture, human/nonhumans, noble/profane- are deconstructed and a common ground is created which Amitav Ghosh has articulated with his penetrating and systematic logic in his phenomenal essay, "Wild Fictions" (2006):

It is my belief that only fiction can provide a canvas broad enough to address this relationship in all its dimensions; only in fiction can a reconciliation be affected between Bono Bibi and Saint-Pierre's recluse, between the quest of a scientist determined to prevent the disappearance of a species and the needs of a fisherman who must hunt in order to live. It follows then that if nature is to be re-imagined in such a way as to restore the human presence within it-not as predator but as partner- then this too must be told as a story (p. 23).



*Second*, the author carefully denigrated human-centric biasedness by presenting a story of the nonhumans. The writer has devised a 'newer world of nonhumans' in order to counteract and mock the epistemological and ontological supremacy of the human world. This mechanism is an oblique thrust to the evolutionary hubris of human being. The *third* possibility would be even more *sinister* in intent. Here the empowerment of the nonhumans in the storyline can pose a potential caveat to the present ontology of the human being. It directly presupposes the concept of apocalypticism and an impending doom. At first, human being has demarcated the human history from that of the nonhumans as Dipesh Chakraborty has highlighted in his essay, *The Climate of History: Four Theses* (2009):

The Viconian-Hobbesian idea that we, humans, could have proper knowledge of only civil and political institutions because we made them, while nature remains God's work and ultimately inscrutable to man (p. 201).

Now with the emergence of the idea Anthropocene, human being has turned into *geological agent* from *biological agent* as Dipesh Chakraborty continues:

To call human beings geological agents is to scale up our imagination of the human. Humans are biological agents both collectively and as individuals. They have always been so. There was no pint in human history when humans were not biological agents. But we can become geological agents only historically and collectively, that is, when we have reached numbers and invented technologies that are on a scale large enough to have an impact on the planet itself' (pp.207-08).

This is something alarming in the history of human civilization. It poses serious caveat of human existence today to rethink the very ontological question: who are we today? Perhaps this is the salient message that has been expressed through the narrative.

Another possibility might be that earth has come alive. *Nature* has been depicted at the prominent place in the text. It is very much proactive in its own organization, mechanisms and character. This is no longer the 'sleeping earth' that can be bullied, objectified and neglected. As Bruno Latour in his groundbreaking essay, "Agency at the Time of the Anthropocene" (2014) warned us:

...the Earth has now taken back all the characteristics of a full-fledged *actor*. Indeed, as Dipesh Chakraborty has proposed, it has become once again an *agent of history*, or rather, an agent of what I have proposed to call our common *geostory*. The problem for all of us in philosophy, science, or literature becomes: how do we tell such a story?... the prefix "geo" in geostory does not stand for the return to nature, but for the return of object and subject back to the ground- the "metamorphic zone" – they had both believed it possible to escape: one by deanimation, the other by overanimation (p.5, 16).

As Sirdar reveals one day that when the Mahout is dismayed, he inflicts enormous pain on the elephants as if he tried to channelize his fear by hurting the powerless. It eventually satisfies his sadistic self. The excessive torture and hardship pushed the elephants to the threshold of their fortitude. They have decided to leave the Mahout and go to the jungle. Their instinctive derive is coincided simultaneously with the call of Nature. Here, *Nature* appears a living entity like Gaia as James Lovelock coined it. The summon of Nature cannot be refuted as Latour characterizes: 'Gaia, a very ticklish sort of goddess' (p.3). As in the text, the narrator mentions: 'the witchery of the wood entered their eyes, their ears, their very souls' (p.16). or

Nature put her lips to their aching ears and whispered, 'Flee, flee flee to freedom. Leave this man to his wood-piling. You are in the depths of the forest; if run a mile away to the east he

can never find you. Fly’ or ‘Run, run, run, whispered the breeze. (p.16) or Even the grass under his feet said, ‘Run, you are free, you are free (p.17).

The only viable method of recuperating nonhuman agency or to give them the subjective agency, is to tell the *geostory* in this era of Anthropocene. As Latour succinctly opines, ‘to be a subject is not to act autonomously in front of an objective background but *to share agency with other subjects that have also lost their autonomy*’ (p.15). This is the tricky zone where *The Adventures of Sirdar* is located with all its philosophical and epistemological undertones. To underscore the significance of the ‘story’ by underscoring another mesmerizing work of Salman Rushdie, *Languages of Truth: Essays 2003-2020* (2021), where Rushdie universalizes the truth:

We are born wanting food, shelter, love, song and story. Our need for the last two is not less than our need for the first three...Perhaps, we, who are language animals, possess a song and story instinct; we need and move towards stories and songs not because we are taught to do so but because it is in our nature to need them. And while there are other creatures on earth who might be described as singing...the trills of song birds, the howling of wolves, the long slow song of the whale in the ocean’s deep- there is nothing that swims, crawls, walks or flies that tells stories. *Man alone is the storytelling animal* (my emphasis, p. 21).

Dipesh Chakraborty in his essay, “Postcolonial Studies and the Challenge of the Climate Change” (2007) outlines that art and fiction in Anthropocene might allow us to “to extend our understanding to those who in future may suffer after the impact of the geophysical force that is the human” (p. 12). Alexa Weik von Mossner in her essay, “Imagining Geological Agency: Storytelling in the Anthropocene” (2016) adds another dimension of *storytelling* by asserting the fact that “it can help us to imagine *imaginatively experience* the impact of that geophysical force that is the human” (p. 84). Dhan Gopal Mukherji’s *The Adventures of Sirdar* (1929) weaves a storytelling method which captures both the tenets of the impact the geophysical force in Anthropocene. Apparently, the storyline may seem linear but the ‘allegory of anthropomorphism’ as a narrative ploy, grapples with the dimensions of Anthropocene scenario succinctly. Regarding the crucial aspect of *storytelling* about the Anthropocene, Alexa Weik von Mossner hopes that:

And yet the very idea of the Anthropocene...continues to be immensely productive for storytelling, inspiring artists to look for innovative and more adequate modes and media for conveying what it means-and what it can mean-when humans wield a geological force. Over time, the creative energy involved in the production and mental performance of such stories might bring us at least a little closer to scaling up our imagination of the human (“Imagining Geological Agency”, p. 88).

Dhan Gopal’s *storytelling* in the novella ‘scales up’ the similar kind of imagination about the fragility of the human condition in Anthropocene by creating an ‘allegory of anthropomorphism’ that brings both the human being and the nonhumans (elephants) on the same pedestal and essentially pinpoints to the essential brittleness of human-centric ideologies and hubris.

#### Notes:

1. Anthropomorphism is literally the attribution of human traits, emotions, intentions, or behaviours to non-human entities, such as animals, objects, or natural phenomena. Derived from the Greek *anthropos* (“human”) and *morphe* (“form”), the term was first used to refer to the attribution of human physical or mental features to deities. Refer to Guthrie, Stewart Elliott. *Faces in the Clouds: A New Theory of Religion*. Oxford University Press, 1993.
2. Anthropocene is a term that has been used to refer to the period of time during which humanity has become a planetary force of change. It appears in scientific and social discourse, especially with respect

to accelerating geophysical and biochemical changes that characterize the 20th and 21st centuries on Earth. Originally it is a proposal for a new geological epoch following the Holocene. Refer to Dipesh Chakrabarty's essay "The Climate of History: Four Theses" (2009).

3. Eco-cosmopolitan is a concept propounded by Ursula K. Heise in her book, *Sense of Place, Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (2008) where she said that as a concept, 'eco-cosmopolitanism' conceives of an 'environmental world citizenship' by upholding the vision of a 'planetary imagined community' comprising both human and non-human members.

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