

Depiction of life through Dogs in literature

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Abstract

Animals play a vital role in our life. They are the part of our language. Different writers have used different animals symbolically to denote the actuality of life. Dogs have been prominently used from the evolution of literature as a symbol of vigilance and loyalty. The symbolic representation of dogs for some writers in different cultural and religious contexts is extremely complex with linking the dog to death, hell and underworld. The intent of the present paper is to highlight the perspectives of many writers from Plato to modern age in the portrayal of dogs in their respective works.

Keywords: Plato, Prominently, Symbolic, Evolution, Cultural, Underworld, Vigilance.

Introduction

Apt is the writer when he says in a Sanskrit Shylok:

Kaak chestha bako dhyanam

Swan nindra tathaiya cha

Swalpahari, grithyaagi

Vidhyarthi panch lakshman

The above shylok depicts the animals as a part of life and teaches us 5 values of living a good life. Efforts should be made similar to a thirsty crow which tries to drink the water from a pot while placing pieces of stones to raise the water level, Concentration of swan must be applied, sleeping like a dog, light eaters and less involvement in home affairs. Dr Sir Mohammad Iqbal a renowned Urdu poet gives a reference related to Nietzsche theory of Uber Mash (Super man theory) by insisting people to follow the actions of Shaheen (Eagle) in the following stanza:

Nahin tera Nasheman Qasr Sultan Ke Gumband par.

Too Shaheen Hai Basera Kar Pahadu Ke Chataanu Par.

Your Abode is not on the dome of a royal palace; you are an eagle and should live on the rocks of the mountains. If you want to become something different from others you need to follow the actions of Eagle which flies alone in the sky unlike other birds.

Role of Dogs in Literature: A Historical Survey.

Plato in his famous work *The Republic*, Chapter 5 took the first reference of Dog. His perspective is feministic in nature as he talks about a woman and says that a female dog equally participates in the work when the male dog goes for hunting. The female dog takes care of its puppies. Homer in *Odyssey* has given the reference of a pet and loyal dog of Ulysses named as Argos. As Ulysses was participating in the war of Troy, he fought for ten years there. When he was returning back to his native place Kingdom of Ithaca he lost his way and lost in an unknown ocean for next ten years. After twenty years of his adventure he returned back and found his wife Penelope in stress and disguise as lot of men forced her to marry in the absence of Ulysses. Ulysses goes there in disguise and found his pet dog Argos in a very dillapated condition. Argos is basically very old suffering from Lyses and infection and nobody is actually taking care of it and is neglected by all. Argos becomes the only person in the kingdom of Ithaca to find and identify the Ulysses. Homer delineates the human and animal relationship by pointing out that Argos was on the death bed and when it finds Ulysses in disguise and depression it starts to wag its tail as a close intimation with its master. Ulysses left and goes pass by with a tear and Argos ultimately dies as a loyal pet.

William Shakespeare was fond of using the imagery of dog in his writings and there has been a proper study that Shakespeare hated the dogs. William Shakespeare used the word Dog or dogs over two hundred times in his works. He was the first to use compound noun 'Watchdog' in his play *The Tempest* and also coined the term "Dogs will have his day" which means everyone will be successful or lucky at some time in their life. It is an expression of encouragement for the failures that are not having any success in their life.

Shakespeare in *Midsummer Night's Dream* says, "Bull dogs are adorably with faces like toads that have been sat of". In *Julius Ceaser* when Cassius blames Brutus of having offended him condemning Lucia Pella for taking bribes from the Sardians, in spite of Cassius letters in his defence. Brutus replies that Cassius should not have written defending such a cause and blames him with having an Itching palm. Brutus reminds Cassius that they have killed Ceaser for the sake of justice and says, "He would rather be

a dog and buy the moon” than be a Roman who would sell his honour for money and fame. In *King Lear* when king losses his kingdom he then realises that king is just a title. He realises that power is everything and says that everyone will be king if they are powerful. Even a dog will be respected and obeyed by people if they fear its strength. He says, “Thou hast seen the farmers dog bark at a beggar” it means that distribution of power in a society is random, unfair and meaningless. In *The Merchant of Venice* the conversation between Antonio and Shylock where Shylock keeps on saying that Antonio hates me and calls me publicly a dog.

Alexander Pope has delineated the attachment or inclination of 18th century fashionable woman towards the pet dogs. This inclination towards the dog has been depicted through the Belinda’s pet dog named as Shock in his famous poem, *The Rape of lock*, “No longer shrieks pitying heaven are cast when their husbands or when lapdogs breathe their last”. Alexander Pope has also written a great work related to dog, *Epigram engraved on the Collar for Dog*. He says, “I am of his highness, dog at knew, pray tell me sir, whose dogs are you”. The work is actually written on the collar of a dog that Pope gave to the Prince of Wales in 1738. The writer tries to convey the message that we all belong to somebody, we are loved, cared, owned, and governed by someone who is supreme power at global level, which means that we are somebody’s dog.

Virginia Woolf is the only writer who has written a biography from the perspective of a dog. She has taken the concept from Elizabeth Barrette Browning, a 19th century Victorian writer. She wrote a famous work *To Flush my Dog*, is a collection of poetry named after her pet dog named as Flush. Virginia Woolf got inspired and wrote a novel, *Flush: A Biography*. She has involved a mindset that Flush is actually a dog of Elizabeth Barrette Browning who didn’t like Robert Browning. The story has been set in early year when Elizabeth Barrette Browning came in contact of Robert Browning. Robert Browning fell in love with Elizabeth Barrette Browning. Flush the pet dog could understand their love at first sight and felt jealous and started to hate Robert Browning, in fact Flush thought he is male and Elizabeth Barrette Browning is female and Robert Browning is third person who interferes in their love. Once a while Flush tried to bite Robert Browning then flush gets lost and abducted and Robert Browning in return goes to save him by giving some money. This resulted in turning of Flush into affection, love with Robert Browning and indicates that a dog can be made pet by a smile.

W.H Auden and Christopher Isherwood in collaboration with another have written a great work where is Frances subtitled as *The Dog Beneath the Skin* is also inspired by a real story of Alan Norman who is in search of Sir Frances Crew the missing heir of honey pot Hall in Crew. His pursuit has taken him on a satiric journey through

Europe and England accompanied by a faithful and loyal large dog, who proves to be sir Frances in disguise.

Oliver Goldsmith has written a famous work, *An Elegy on the Death of a Mad Dog*. It is a story of a gentleman who was roaming and wandering in a city and was bitten by a mad dog. The mad dog dies instead of a gentleman. Oliver Goldsmith has ironically depicted that humans are more lethal than non humans in modern day society. The same incident was taken under consideration by another famous writer Sir Walter Raleigh who said, “To a Lady with ill manner dog, who has bitten many nobleman gentlemen. Franz Kafka in his famous work *The Trial* when Mr. Tace has been punished and has been murdered brutally. in last line he says, “ Like a Dog”

Conclusion:

To sum up the whole discussion it is well known fact that the depiction of life through dogs in literature has evolved from the beginning of literature. Dogs are known for being a man’s best companion and loyal. There are so many other writers who have not been discussed above and have used the Dog from time to time. Robinson Crusoe and Rudyard Kipling have written a work on Dog. William Faulkner in his famous work *The Sound and Fury* has used the character of Dog named as Blue. Charles Dickens in his famous work *Oliver Twist* has given a name to his dog as Bulls Eye. Crab in *Two Gentleman of Verona*, Diogenes in *Dombey and Sons*, Gyp in *Adam Bede*, Jip in *David Copperfield*, Nana in *Peter Pan* and Pilot Dog in *Jane Eyre* have been used by different writers from time to time in their different respective works.

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