3. Exploring the themes of Freedom and Confinement through the lens of Anthropomorphism in Carol Ann Duffy's The Dolphins

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Abstract

Animals since ages have presented a glimpse of the human condition through the kind of life and living they receive on this earth, which evidently showcases human nature and the kind of life they are able to afford for themselves. Carol Ann Duffy's poem, The Dolphins deals with the world of Dolphins, an endangered species, where she asks the world to look from their perspective, where humans are too finding themselves in the same position and conditions. This paper aims to bring forth the anthropomorphic lens with aspects of confinement and confinement where the personification of dolphins, confined in aquarium is used as a metaphor to critique humanitarian discourse of oppression and give special attention to the human-like consciousness and emotions of those confined dolphins that present a similar condition, life and suffering of humans as well.

Key words

- Freedom
- Confinement
- Anthropomorphism
- Psychological impact of oppression

Introduction

Humans have been viewed from the perspective and of the ways in which they treat animals. The life of humans and animals have been looked at through various lenses. Earth, a place which was always dreamt to be a safe space for the whole of human community is now merely a place that terrifies the souls to an unimaginable extent and people who dreamt of creating a place for themselves in this exploitative and claustrophobic place have been trampled down to their ashes just for the sake of surviving.

Carol Ann Duffy born on 23rd December ,1955 is a Scottish poet and playwright. She is well known for her marvellous works, such as Standing Female Nudes (1985), Feminine Gospels (2002) and The Hat (2007). The Dolphins isa poem from the collection Standing Female Nudes (1985). The Dolphin presents the issue of complexities of human experiences by employing anthropomorphism to highlight the themes of freedom and confinement. Carol Ann Duffy utilizes the figure of The Dolphin to depict the reality of both the human world and the animal world. The voice given to The Dolphin to voice out their suffering and pain, captures the essence of human sufferings. This mirrors the human struggle for autonomy and freedom, raising the question about ethical implications of confinement, both in human societies and the animal world. The personification of Dolphins with human characteristics enables the humans to emotionally connect with their pain and suffering and to engage with the complex emotional and philosophical question about the whole idea of human existence. This perspective dives into the aspect of human intervention in other living organism's lives that stands as a testament to the impact of human activities on the world as a whole. The society should be more inclusive, adaptive and act in accordance with the laws of humanity which takes into consideration all the lives existing. The idea is not only to show the value of freedom, but the profound effect of its absence on one's psyche and identity, which is often affected by the hidden psychological impact of captivity. This research paper aims to examine how dolphins, a friendly animal, has been used as an image of inter-connected experiences of freedom and confinement, highlighting the poem's relevance to a larger social and ethical discussion on the exploitation of human lives and emotions.

The exploring aspect of confinement reflects human experiences of oppression and the use of Anthropomorphism acts as a cover that bridges the gap between human and non-human experiences simultaneously making an effort to rebuild and relate Freedom in context of human identity, social expectations and individual desires. The use of anthropomorphism enhances the portrayal of a more humane approach towards the outlook of people in how they perceive the world around them. Anthropomorphism has been used as an instrument in literature that bridges the gap between animal and human experiences, with the sole reason to give a voice to animal and nature, but now is seen as an attempt to remind humans of their lost innocence and sensitivity. This article describes a theory to explain when people are likely to anthropomorphize and when they are not, focused on three psychological determinants--the accessibility and applicability of anthropocentric knowledge (Epley and Waytz) .Human society has become more and more mechanical and materialistic, that has a sole purpose of gaining immense power and strength as compared to other humans so as to get their ways and on this road ,they have lost their humanity and innocence. This concept is so engraved in the mindset of the humans that they are unable to find any fault or defect in this perception of theirs. The theoretical framework of this study incorporates two main approaches on which this poem has been dealt with and they are:

Anthropomorphism and Eco Criticism. These different theoretical frameworks offer different perspectives on human relationships with their environment and its surroundings. On one hand, Anthropomorphism can be explained as an ideology that gives the attribution of human traits, emotions, or intentions to non-human entities such as animals. This literary device is used to make these non-human entities relatable and understandable for human perspectives. It is not only limited to animals in the modern century but to humans as well and to collectively build a society that is sensitive and considerate towards all forms of life. By attributing human-like emotions and consciousness to these lives, that challenges the boundary between humans and animals. Evidence suggests that cultural shift due to modernization increases anthropomorphic attributions which leads to seeing wildlife as more human-like.

This provides a foundation for a shift in values from domination, in which wildlife is for human uses, to mutualism in which wildlife is seen as part of one's social community (Manfredo et al.). As the dolphins voice their state of confinement and their desire for freedom, with an aim to make people aware of their actions which have consequences. This framework deals with the motive to encourage humans to empathize with not just non-humans but also with humans, thereby questioning the whole concept of confinement as a state of mind, not just on a physical basis but on a sychological level as well. Whereas Eco-criticism studies how literature showcases the relationship between humans and their environment, focusing on nature, ecological concerns and how human actions and steps impact the natural world even if it has to be concerned with humans themselves. This framework in this paper explores how humans for the sake of their entertainment and amusement has not only exploited animals but also humans whom they merely take as to that is object, revealing the human tendency of control and manipulation, where they disregard and ignore the well-being of sentiments of creatures, be it animals or humans for their selfish gain. This study takes up the dolphin's captivity and their treatment for exploring the human controlled treatments of humans themselves.

The anthropomorphism in 'The Dolphins' serves as a powerful source for exploring the themes of freedom and confinement, by giving dolphins human-like qualities that further reinforces themes of powerlessness, marginalization and exploitation, while the contrast between the dolphin's past and present emphasizes the emotional toll of confinement. The current society has based and diverted all their focus on extracting the last drop of self motive from all the humans they come in contact with. "We are in our element but we are not free", showcases that despite having the virtue of being a human, they are devoid of equal respect and are treated as mere objects to satisfy other's demands and the work requirements of the materialistic society that humans have turned this earth into.

There is a need to draw attention to the issues human faces when their freedom is

turned into confinement, not just physically, but mentally also, by showing confinement as a state of mind. In this poem, the dolphins talk about their awareness of being trapped under human dominance, which somewhat mirrors the cage of confinement of the humans as well in a world that is now purely being ruled and run by materialistic means. The erasure of humanity from human society is the evidence itself that we have forgotten the very reason for our existence and that was to spread love and peaceful space for everyone to thrive and survive. Humanitarian approaches itself are now being led by the idea of self satisfaction rather than for the society. The world of today is only on paper a peaceful nation but on the contrary is the most violent and dehumanizing place that has ever been seen to exist.

The humanistic capability of exploring the deeper ends of the world has oftentimes led them to unquestionable approaches that alters their mentality and makes them take actions that are harmful as much as for them as it is for others. The idea of confinement and freedom go apart from each other in the aspect that one holds your ideas and dream when the other gave you the very idea of dreaming and this is presented with the help of the dolphins, who no longer dream of a free world because they are exploited and dominated by the humans, which has gone to an extend of humans as well.

The poem displays the dolphin's human-like awareness and understanding of their captivity, making them appear more like humans who are oppressed and trapped in the system beyond their control. Just like the dolphins who are suffering under the human oppression, the humans as well crumbled under the political and social oppression, while being aware of their lack of freedom and this awareness makes their confinement even more painful.

As per the changing times, humans have adopted ways that make them feel superior from their fellow beings, completely ignoring the fact that humans have always being social animals and need and require each other in order to survive and that is something which can't be obtained by excluding others and dehumanizing them. Many instances of animal cruelty, dehumanization of humans on various levels, the mistreating of people based on their race, colour and other entities, has confirmed that as per the changing times and making immense progress in the field of science and humanities we have left behind the empathy that was necessary for the human development. On the contrary all the developments are done for humans, but a major aspect of empathy and freedom has been left behind, that is acting as an issue in the course of overall development of humans.

In 'The Dolphins', Confinement is not only displayed as a physical condition but also as a mental and emotional experience that is somewhere guided by the expectations of the society. The dolphins are physically trapped in a small tank, but they also suffer

mentally as they remember the freedom they once held so dear to their heart. The lines, "We have found no truth in these waters, "(line 7) (Duffy), shows how the dolphin's world has shrunken since they were captured. This shrinking of their habitation mirrors the way people feel when their opportunities and freedoms are restricted by external forces. This further presents how the captivity of one's mind set can restrict the creativity and the will to live. The extent of the psychological captivity and confinement is to the extent that people have forgotten what it felt like to live freely without the pressure of being mentally captivated.

Humans have been made to feel claustrophobic not by their incapability but by the mental and psychological restrictions imposed by the society on them in the form of societal, political and economical conditions. This psychological aspect further leads to the incapability of human desire and advancements, that are guided and over ruled by the political aspects of the state that they are living in. People have been constantly fighting the need to free themselves from the restraints of the dominating society, which has been treating them no better than animals. The damage produced by the male subjugation over the female and other species is reflected in the themes and forms of her poetry (Tisha and Rahman). The further argument arises when the humans fail to acknowledge the fact that they too are humans and are over a few steps away from being exploited and oppressed themselves if someone crosses their position Duffy's presentation of dolphins' mental confinement showcases how people are trapped in the vicious cycle of exploitation, even though they are physically free.

Similarly, the marginalized sections of the society are made to feel that their freedom is enough when they have no physical restrictions, but they often miss out the fact that they still are being ruled and governed over though not physically but surely on a psychological level. Like Duffy's dolphins, who long for freedom, represents the universal desire for freedom from oppression and confinement.

The poem also critiques the power dynamics between humans and animals, which can be seen as a metaphor for human domination and exploitation. In the poem, 'The Dolphins', the humans are in control of the dolphins, very similar to the human's lives. The dolphin comment that "There is no hope." (Line 22) (Duffy), highlights the human power over not just animals but on human lives as well. This imbalance in power dynamics and human mentality that they are better than the other species of this planet has given them a false sense of superiority. Through the lens of anthropomorphism, the poem has tried to comment on how humans have given themselves a false sense of control and authority to rule and manage both human and animal life, without considering the moral implications of the control on anyone's ability. Man for their own business, forces the dolphins to perform tricks with different types of props under water and are forced to balance themselves on coloured balls (Biswas 8). This text extensively explores the complexities of human society by using animals, those

innocent beings as an example to critique and correct the vices of the society. Dolphins, though animals, are given human qualities that make them a powerful symbol for the struggle that humans face and their ability to express emotions like sadness, fear, and the longing for freedom. This poem highlights the emotional and psychological toll that confinement and oppression take on individual lives. The lines "We are in our elements but we are not free." (Line 2) (Duffy), expresses the dolphin' sense of loss and hopelessness, a feeling that is shared by many humans who experience marginalization in their own lives. The feeling of being lost in the very own personal space that one built to save themselves has now become a place that is haunting their very own existence. The earth which once belonged to all the living organism, now belongs to those capitalists who manipulate the earth, its resources and the living creatures present on earth, all for their selfish motive.

'The Dolphins' uses anthropomorphism to explore the themes of Freedom and Confinement, showing how these ideas are related to the broader concepts and problems of marginalization, exploitation, and oppression. The anthropomorphized aspect of dolphins further showcases the fact that even the animals which represents freedom and a free spirit, is no longer a free soul as it has been exploited and marginalized under the lens of humans and as taken into consideration only when they are in need and was meant to be exploited for the benefit of others. The anthropomorphized dolphins represent human beings who are struggling for freedom and gaining control over their own lives, but are confined under the system of control. The use of human-like dolphins encourages the human race to empathize with their pain and recognize their parallels between animals and humans suffering. This poem offers a critique on the exploitation and dehumanization treatment of humans through the symbolic representation of a peaceful and loving creature, Dolphins. However, using the dolphins as an anthropomorphized image to allow a deeper emotional engagement with the poem, it could also be argued that this human centric approach risks overshadowing and ignoring the actual experiences of the animals who are actually in captivity.

Conclusion

Carol Ann Duffy's 'The Dolphins' sets a diverse exploration on the themes of freedom and confinement through the lens of anthropomorphism, that allowed the dolphins to voice their long-existing confinement with the similar case with humans under the dominance of the human race itself. It does not only critique the conditions of the dolphins and animal cruelty but also serves as a metaphor for the human experience of oppression and loss of control over their own lives. The implication of this study aimed to suggest that the literary device of anthropomorphism can be used as a powerful device to explore the issues of ethics, freedom, and control. By humanizing the dolphins, this paper tries to empathize with the sufferings of all beings and to question

the moral implications of captivity of themselves under the dominance of their own forms, which reveals the confinement as a state of mind that is not only physical but also psychological. The dolphin's captivity mirrors the confinement experienced by the vulnerable and marginalized human population and the earth itself under the pressure of human activities. Thus, The Dolphins by Carol Ann Duffy, serves as deep-seated evidence of the destructive nature of confinement imposed by humans on both animals and human world's freedom, critiquing the human nature of exploitation, through the image of dolphins.

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About the Author

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