

Summary of the Minor Research Project Submitted to UGC, Titled

**POSTMODERNITY AND THE NONHUMAN ANIMAL:
A SEARCH FOR A PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK FOR
ANIMALS IN THREE 20thCENTURY NOVELS**

Poststructuralism valorizes nothing though it celebrates the end of a host of entities such as God, author, philosophy, man and humanism. Since their cognate –man-refuses to be silenced, poststructuralism was mainly a paeon to humanist creeds in terms of gender, race, class, and special interests. In leading poststructuralist thinkers such as Derrida and Foucault, a humanist ethical turn is palpable.

It is surprising to note that Continental philosophy has not seriously approached the animal question. It has spoken mostly about human beings. Continental philosophers have left unspoken the traditional other of man: the animal. While it is true biologically speaking that human beings are animals, all philosophers maintain the distinction between humans and animals. Aristotle believed in the superior capacity of human reason to guide his conduct whereas animal has only its instinct. . Kant argued that as animals lacked will, they were not autonomous, with any intrinsic value. Descartes denied the animal of consciousness. Exceptions to this include Montaigne, Hume, Bentham, Mill and Sidgwick. Montaigne accused human arrogance while Hume regarded animals as deserving more gentle behaviour. Bentham went to the extent of anticipating a day when animals will be recognized as having rights. They claim that

animals have rights. Their attempt is to connect the ethical bridge that exists between human species and other such species and the priority of human interests is rejected as speciesism.

Levinas is a singular voice in favour of the philosophy of humanist ethics. He considers traditional humanism less than human and becomes a humanist par excellence by transcending humanism. He claims that the being of animals is a struggle for life and that human life is characterized by its relation to the need of the other. All indigenous traditional societies truthfully endorse the awareness of the dependence of the human upon the nonhuman and this is best illustrated in the aboriginal totem.

Evidently there is the possibility of a postmodern sacrality and interdependence of the nonhuman in three twentieth century novels .Yann Martel's novel *Life of Pi*, Ernest Hemingway's novel *The Old Man and the Sea* and Franz Kafka's novel *The Metamorphosis* are three novels that portray the nonhuman in three distinct status. In the first, there is no identification between the human and the nonhuman. The nonhuman is at par and at times superior to the human. In the second, there is fraternity between the two equal adversaries , the human develops respect for the nonhuman whereas there is coexistence and fusion of the two in Franz Kafka's novel *The Metamorphosis* where the nonhuman is a bug ,far inferior, isolated and abominated by the superior humans.

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