



Elements of Children's Literature in Pratap Sharma's Top dog Ranjha

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Introduction

Pratap Sharma used to write plays. He was also a novelist, with a number of children's books to his name. Pratap Sharma's work in Indian cinema is noteworthy, as he was a renowned actor and documentary filmmaker. His work has been produced and published in India, England, the United States, France, Denmark, Holland, and Canada, among other places. Two of his works are being put on stage in France right now, and Flammarion and Edition de Septembere in Paris are publishing his books there as well. As an actor, he has been the main character in five Hindi movies. In 1971, he won the National Award for his role in Phir Bhi. In the movie Nehru: The Jewel of India, he most recently played the part of Nehru. He has made several documentary films, including a series about history for Channel 4 Television in London. People know his voice from movies, TV, and radio because he is one of India's best commentators and storytellers. Pratap Sharma's most well-known works are as follows:

The Surangini Tales (1973)

Begum sumroo (2004)

Dog Detective Ranjha (1978)

The Little Master of the Elephant (1984)

Top Dog (1985)

Days of the Turban (1986)

A Touch of Brightness" (1964)

Zen Katha(2004)

Sammy

Elements of Children's literature

When we look at the past of children's literature, some of the best-received and most loved children's literature has featured animal characters. Children seem to have a special love for pets and animals in their hearts. When we look at some of the most famous cartoons in the world, you will find that most of them are based on animals or feature them. The world's most famous children's cartoons were made by Disney, and its most famous character at the time was Mickey Mouse. From that point on, the most loved children's animations had animals as their main characters. *Tom and Jerry*, the beloved show, featured a mouse and a cat. This show still has a



huge fan base among children. *The Pink Panther*, famous for its iconic soundtrack, is another instance where a panther is made pink in color so that his character can resonate with children. Some of the examples are the *Lion King* movies, which have dominated the box office twice in 20 years and featured almost all the animals of the jungle that behave like humans and have a civilization. Arguably the most famous children's literature of all time, *The Jungle Book*, which was created by Rudyard Kipling, tells the story of a boy who was raised by animals in the jungle and knew nothing of his own species. This book has become so popular that almost all the people in the world who have received an elementary education know about it. So, there must have been something in the idea of using animal characters that appealed to the innocent minds of children.

In India, almost every child born between 1990 and 2000 remembers the iconic song "Jungle Baat Chali Hai." This song was the theme song of a show adapted from *The Jungle Book*. This goes to show that, unlike detective fiction, children's literature, or rather, children's stories, has been popular in India since ancient times. Another excellent example of the success of the idea of using animals in children's literature is *Tarzan*, which is loosely based on the same idea. It shows a child lost in the jungle but being raised by wolves. Many adaptations have been made throughout the world, and almost all of them are hugely popular. When looking at detective fiction in children's literature, there are not many great examples, but there is a unique case in India. *Chacha Chaudhary*, which was a highly beloved comic book and then was adapted into a TV show, This TV show also garnered a huge audience. The idea of detective stories in children's literature is not new in India. Chacha Chaudhary also has a dog named "Rocket" that is used to help the protagonist in some of the cases. Woof's involvement in the stories cannot be forgotten, as he was the one who trained Ranjha and made him capable of doing things, which he did throughout the book. In one chapter, we become familiar with Ranjha's training, which was a different training method devised by Woof himself. He was helpful in solving some of the cases and deducing the clues brought by Ranjha. Without Woof, Ranjha couldn't have been able to do anything with the clues. We can see these types of friendship between humans and animals in different comics and cartoon animations, like *Chhota Bheem* and *Jaggu (monkeys)* and *Shinchan* and *Shiro (dogs)*. This became more evident when Woof went abroad and Ranjha was struggling to be understood. The intellectual side of the stories or the cases is often handled by the Woof, and due to Ranjha's narration and his inferior ability to describe human thinking, the reader is not able to see how the Woof uses his imagination to deduce the details of the cases or how he came to become an expert in dog training.

Like the other characters in various comics and animated serials, Ranjha and Woof were more like partners than a dog and his owner. Woof has always treated Ranjha with respect. It was their loyalty to each other and their common sense that allowed them to establish a special bond. This bond and their understanding of each other became evident when Ranjha and Woof were separated. It was this love and understanding that helped them solve the cases and become



heroes. Without each other, they were nothing more than a human and a dog, but together they made each other saviors and heroes. When Ranjha enters, everyone believes it is impossible because of the mystery that has been built up over the entire narrative. Ranjha employs his investigative skills to solve the crimes in this manner. However, the limitations of a dog are also demonstrated, as he is unable to comprehend humans and their languages, and it is at this point that his owner, Woof, enters the picture. He assists Ranjha in telling stories in the anthropoid culture. In exchange, Ranjha assists Woof in the investigation of mysteries. Pratap Sharma captures the essence of this dialogue between Ranjha and Woof in a lovely way.

So here we can also say that animals have played an essential role in children's literature. Animals of every spice can be found in all types of children's literature. Generally, animals in these stories behave like humans or are shown to have an intellect that can match a human. In children's literature, one common element that can be seen is that the protagonist or animals are placed in a social structure to which children can relate. This is one of the reasons these books appeal so much to children: They can relate to them because they live in a social setting. The first responsibility for authors of children's literature is to make their creations appealing to children. That's why authors use characters that behave like humans. This device is known as anthropomorphism, so these characters show a variety of human characteristics to varying degrees.

The bond that children and animals share in real life or in stories has many positive effects. It is one of the main reasons why psychologists and psychiatrists use animal figurines or toys to communicate with children. Ranjha is the story's narrator in the book *Top Dog*, Ranjha acts as the narrator of the story. He acts as a mediator, and he describes the situation so perfectly. Ranjha's characterization of all the characters in the story is certainly on point, establishing him as a worthy narrator. Another example of the narrator as a main character in a detective novel is Dr. Watson. But the difference between Ranjha and Watson is that Ranjha plays an active role, whereas Watson plays second fiddle to Sherlock Holmes. Ranjha is the hero, as well as the narrator and current observer of all the things hopping in the book. The narrator describes the story as a spectator to the happenings, but they rarely play the main character, as that would damage the credibility of the story. That is the key difference that Pratap Sharma's book presents, as Ranjha himself is involved in the incidents.

The writer of *Top Dog Ranjha* was very familiar with the above-mentioned concepts, which become evident throughout the book. The first point is anthropomorphism, where an animal behaves like a human or demonstrates superior intelligence to that expected of its species. The writer has used an anthropomorphism device where the character narrates the whole story. It can be seen that Ranjha thinks like a human or like a person who knows how to narrate a story. In the instances where Ranjha anticipates the moves of the culprit, in the first chapter, Ranjha clearly describes the streets of Bombay like a writer, but the writer often dismisses the idea that Ranjha is merely a dog, and he cannot often understand what is required of him without his



owner's word. At that time, Ranjha tells everyone that he is aware of his superior skills. This clearly shows Pratap Sharma's attempt to make the book child-friendly by having an animal as the protagonist of the story. Secondly, the atmosphere in Ranjha's life is filled with children, and he is often seen having a good time with them. He narrates his love for Woof's children. This is again an element of children's literature. In the last chapter of the book, Ranjha is left with Woof's neighbour, Mr. Tamhane, because Woof and his wife had to go abroad. Ranjha is surrounded by Tamhane's children. Children even played a crucial part in the climax. This helps young readers fall even more in love with the story, as they see Ranjha as a hero.

Another element of children's literature in the book *Top Dog Ranjha* is Pratap Sharma's almost non-existent use of violence. Pratap Sharma tried to use the minimum amount of violence, brutality, and bloodshed. This goes to show that the book was meant for children, as children of tender age should not be introduced to heinous crimes because they are easily susceptible to psychological or emotional episodes. It is very rare for detective fiction novels to not mention murder crimes involving violence and betrayal among families. But the writer has not used any of these typical mystery thriller tropes. Pratap Sharma only uses petty crimes like theft, bribery, and mild intimidation throughout the book. In the final chapters of the book, Tamhane's daughter is kidnapped, but the writer tries to show as little violence as possible. The book's main character, Ranjha, gives the reader a unique view of the genre. The story is engaging for children and contains enough mystery, thrill, and suspense to hold children's attention.

This is another feature in the book relating to children's reading; it is the nicely presented illustrations in the book. Picture books are part of children's literature. We are well aware that reading to children benefits their development and learning. The book's graphics and sentences promote conversation and might encourage other activities like calculating or color recognition. By discussing the story during or after it, you may genuinely include the child in what is going on and improve their communication abilities. Children may better understand the words and associate them with meaning through the picture if the visuals on the page are combined with the text. The drawings are not only decorative. They enhance the impact of the story and emotions. The context encourages a child to return to multiple photographs frequently, noting new details, understanding people's emotions and connections, and maybe further subplots provided alone in the photograph. In this book, there are many pictures in the text that help make the story captivating and understandable.



[Figure 1. *Top Dog Ranjha*, 7] [Figure 2. *Top Dog Ranjha*, 24]

Conclusion

Top Dog Ranjha is a book that falls into two different literary genres: children's literature and detective fiction. There are few cases where these two genres collide, but Pratap Sharma tries something that is both unique and grabs the reader's attention by appealing to the reader's curiosity. Although it is written for children, it may also be appreciated by adults. It provides enough mystery and intrigue to satisfy a grown man's hunger. Pratap Sharma takes a risk by portraying an animal as a narrator, which would require a great deal of ingenuity and effort. The narrator tells the narrative as a bystander, but they rarely play a major role since it would jeopardize the story's authenticity. That is the major distinction in Pratap Sharma's narrative, as *Ranjha* is directly involved in the events. This would restrict the experience because *Ranjha* can't describe what's going on around him when he's in a fight with criminals.

The *Woof* generally handles the intellectual part of the stories or situations, and the reader is unable to perceive how the *Woof* utilizes his imagination to determine the facts of the cases or how he got to be an expert in dog training owing to *Ranjha*'s narration and his weaker ability to convey human thought. *Ranjha*'s narration was competent for describing the stories and conveying what was going on to the reader, despite the fact that his limited talents as a dog only gave a partial explanation for some things. However, Pratap Sharma, or *Ranjha*, as a narrator, acknowledges this fact multiple times, stating that, as a dog, he is unable to fully convey the situation.



Woof and Ranjha were more like friends than a dog and his owner. Woof was always respectful of Ranjha. They were able to form a particular friendship because of their dedication to each other and their common sense. When Ranjha and Woof were separated, their relationship and understanding of each other became apparent. It was because of their love and understanding that they were able to solve the crimes and emerge as heroes. They were nothing more than a person and a canine without each other, yet together they became saviors and heroes. Children's fascination with these heroic things increases a lot, so we can truly say that *Top Dog Ranjha* can be included as a part of children's literature. The dog is also a narrator, which fascinates children's psychology.

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