



**ANIMALITY AND HUMAN IDENTITY IN ARVIND ADIGA'S
THE WHITE TIGER**

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ABSTRACT

Literature has incorporated animal- human fusions since the ancient written work. An enormous collection of literature has discovered human identity by approaching the apparently non-human grounds of the animals and their animality in the human beings. The writers have used the fusions to gain or express an understanding of human identity by representing the human beings owning the features of animal. The Number of literary texts unfolds the combination of animality and human identity as it is better known as the use of animal imagery in literature. The present research purports to illustrate the varying treatment of the animality to human beings as their real identity in Arvind Adiga's novel The White Tiger. It also explores the significance of the effective use of animal imagery to strengthen the purpose of bringing the attention of literary world towards the hidden, neglected realities and false claims of developments.

Keywords- *animality, human identity, animal imagery*

Animals have been holding a prominent place in all kinds of literatures since thousands of years. Until present times, animals have been extensively used to describe the situations, individual natures or conveying messages etc. This is because of existence of each animal species even in this world has a kind of specialty in their nature. The world of animals is full of free expressions of their feelings as living beings. Each animal is a representative of what kind of nature they have in their species. It is revealed through the extensive study that the animal survive in this world because of their nature- sometimes aggressive, attacking, greedy, self-contained and loyal.

Human beings are sensible creatures in comparison with other animals. They are also called as social animals. The history of human evolution says that the human beings have been transforming the whole world by their intellectuality and innovative brains. They differ themselves from animals as they have thinking ability, passions, emotions, expressions, ambitions, living styles and feelings. Their behaviour could be changed because of the situation in which they suffer. They act in the particular situation accordingly to be superior to the others.



Generally, all kinds of literatures are nothing but the mirror of their contemporary society. It reflects what kind of society was there at that time. To indicate the picture through the use of figurative and symbolic language, the writers come up with extraordinary mastery in using the well-known symbols which are even indicative in minimum investment of words and language. Human beings study and experience the world of animals in their surrounding- their nature, acts, expressions, behavior, feelings, sounds. One clear understanding is there that it is sufficed to human beings to imitate the animals' nature, voice, movements and behavior but animals don't because they are placid and self-contained. As Walt Whitman, in his poem Song of Myself, expresses;

*I think I could turn and live with animals;
they are so placid and self-contained.*

The practice of animal imagery in literature is the recurrent exercise among the literary writers since human progression. According to critics, the operative use of animal imagery purports to designate animality in human nature. In literature, use of animal imagery and human beings are commonly described in three ways- image, essence and behavior. The writers use the habitual images of different animals to present the sluggish qualities of their characters. They symbolically associate certain animalistic personas with human beings to indicate the real human nature. Typically the writers use staunchly the animal titles for their characters which are supposed to be identical. They metaphorically signify human characters' act in the particular circumstances. It shows a kind of identity of the characters the writers give to them. In recent literatures, an issue of identity has been focused by many writers to comprehend human existence and space.

Arvind Adiga, a Man Booker Prize Winner novelist for his debut novel *The White Tiger*, has introduced extensive use of animal world and animal representative in the façade of human characters. The principal use of the animal imagery in *The White Tiger* is to seek or display an identity of the major and minor characters. The current novel is full of animal imagery. Number of animals existed ever in the novel but still there are so many characters depicting the animals through their nature and behaviour. The numbers of animals are exposed by the novelist through the character depiction.

Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger* can be seen in different lights. The world of critics acclaimed with criticism as the novel comments on the number of social issues and current affairs which stand in front of Indian society. It is a commentary on a voice of underclass, political system, Indian democracy, poverty, landlordship, hypocrisy in marriage system, casteism and communalism, corruption, education system, urban-rural differences, a false claim of development, prostitution, criminal world and slavery. Maximum themes have been



transported by the writer with the use of animal imagery and animality in characters' nature that also tries to seek and show identity of each character in the novel. The present research purports to identify the use of animal imagery as animality in the characters as there subordinate identity.

The White Tiger is the story associated with its narrator Balram Halwai who born and brought up in the poor jungles of Laxmangarh near Bodhgaya, Bihar. The very beginning of the novel displays that the Chinese Premier is willing to visit Bangalore- a most developed city in India. Balram Halwai writes a series of letters to express his views regarding the other side of the nation that relates and suffers in the Darkness. He abruptly flinches narrating his story how he emerged from childhood to a successful entrepreneur of Bangalore. The title of the novel itself is suggestive as it relates directly with Balram- a half-baked, a half-educated person. Balram contemplates himself as a white Tiger as he receives his name from the assertion of the School Inspector who comes to visit his school. He, pointing out straight at him, says;

You, young man, are an intellectual, honest, vivacious fellow in this crowd of thugs and idiots. In any jungle, what is the rarest of animals-the creature that comes along only once in a generation? (Adiga 35)

Balram was praised by the School Inspector in front of his teachers and fellow students being called a White Tiger. This is what he obtains his symbolic pen-name which indicates completely a new side and his new position at school and outside too. Throughout the novel he performs and shows like accordingly. His journey as a poor boy to a successful entrepreneur symbolizes a journey from Darkness to the Light. As he once says:

The journey from Darkness to the Light is not smooth.....only a White Tiger can do this. (Adiga 250)

Even an entire narration in the novel shows that he had no friends, companions so far. He says

A White Tiger keeps no friends. It's too dangerous. (Adiga 302)

At the opening of the novel his name is Munna. The closing lines even advocate that he changes his name as Ashok Sharma instead of Balram Halwai but he keeps his symbolic name The White Tiger as it is. As he writes complimentary close to conclude his letter;

*Yours for ever
Ashok Sharma*



The White Tiger
Of Bangalore
boss@whitetiger-technologydriver.com
(Adiga 302)

It means his journey begins with his childhood name Munna to Balram and ends as Mr. Ashok Sharma, a name he steals from his master. But he never abandons his name The White Tiger. His materialistic life changes but animality as a White Tiger within him from boyhood to a successful entrepreneur remains as it is even he becomes more matured one. Even he had few other identities like a dog, a donkey, a pig.

As an animality and human identity is the soul of this research, it explores how Arvind Adiga has introduced his characters as animals. The novel is full of the characters with animality. The other characters who stand in front of the narrator, Balram, are nothing but hold their identity as the animals. Adiga has given them the direct identity as animals.

The Mongoose

Mr. Mukesh, a son of a stork who is a rich landlord in the village, is better known as Mongoose. He has that all features a Mongoose carry within it. He always yells and abuses people just as a Mongoose is always ready to attack on a snake.

The Four Animals

There were for landlords in a village Laxmangarh. They are better identifies as the four animals in the village because of their nature. They all had got their names from their peculiarities of appetite that had been detected in them.

The stork was a fat man with a fat moustache, thick and curved and a pointy at the tips. He owned the river that flowed outside the village, and he took a cut of every catch of fish caught by every fisherman in the river to come to their village.

The Wild Boar was the brother of the Stork. This fellow owned all the good agricultural land around Laxamangarh, if anybody had to bow down to his feet, and touch the dust under his slippers, and agree to swallow his day wages. He had two of his long teeth on either side of his nose curved like little tusks.



The Raven owned the worst land, which was dry, rocky hillside around the fort, and took a cut from the goatherds who went up there to graze their flocks. If they did not have their money, he liked to dip his beak into their backside, so they called him Raven.

The buffalo was the greediest of the lot. He had eaten up the rickshaws and the roads. So if anyone ran a rickshaw, or used the road, he had to pay him his feed-one third of whatever he earned, no less.

The Bull

The Socialist was really a rich and corrupt politician of Laxmangarh. Arvind Adiga shows him as a person with Bull neck who is dangerous animal. He gets and gives bribes. The bull neck stands for the Socialist. When Balram completes his mission of murdering his master Mr. Ashok, he sees a bull in his dream as the rich people throughout their lives. It identifies rich people.

The Rooster Coop and the Chickens

Arvind Adiga introduces the Rooster Coop throughout the whole novel unfolding the poor people as the chickens severely stuffed in the narrow place called the Rooster Coop where only survival is existed. The chickens just try to take breath to survive but they all do not even ruminate to breakdown the Rooster Coop. They tolerate everything there as a slave of rich people.

The Lizards

In childhood days in Laxmangarh, Balram does not go to school every day because he afraid of the poisonous Lizards who always, he thinks, look upon him not to sit in the school as the landlords in the village do not like Balram and other children going to schools. Therefore the Lizards give identity to rich landlords as Lizards who always looks like watching the others.

The Cockroaches

While working as a driver to Mr. Ashok, Balram,s room was full of Cockroaches. He always used to kill them all ruthlessly indicating the change within him to kill his master and as he is now controlling the lives of others.

The animal images used in the novels are typically the hunter animals. Balram is called the White Tiger here, image of bulls, monkeys, bloody cat at all are related to the analogy of experience. He says;

But sometimes what is most animal in a man may be the best thing in him.

(Adiga 251)

The novel contains many symbolic images, especially that of animal. For instance, the symbol of white tiger is repeatedly occurred here, which tells us about the true soul of the protagonist Balram. The mere image of tiger declares that he is vicious character with a little kindness. The darkness of India is described in the novel; the darkness itself is the symbol of ignorance and brutality. Balram comes from the darkness so indirectly brutality is there in him.

The human beings, sometimes, forget how to live life like the rational beings. They awake animals exist within them and accept an animality to show their identity even they are human beings. As Samuel Butler, in his *The Way of All Flesh*, says;

All animals, except man, know that the principal business of life is to enjoy.

To conclude, the human beings are called social animals. The animalistic persona is found in their nature but to survive in a social set up they try to control this animal instinct. However these animal traits dug out themselves from the inner tomb of the human mannerism many time depends upon the chance and instances. As the readers, animal imagery can help us to recognize things in our behaviours. We are so much indulge in our daily routine lives that we hardly think about this tamed inner nature of ourselves. When the time comes to expose this wild instinct we become animals. Through the literary writings contained this animality to give their true identity to the characters, the writer wants us to recognize our inner selves. In the characters of the novel we can find out our own animal instinct.

Arvind Adiga's novel *The White Tiger* explores the use of animal imagery and human quality seeking to reexamine our severe descriptions of animality and human identity in literature.

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