

**Use of the Animal Imagery in Adiga's The White Tiger****Dr. Zia Ahmed<sup>1</sup>****Ms Rabia Rafique<sup>2</sup>**

**Abstract:** *This article attempts to explore the use of animal imagery Adiga's novel "The White Tiger" in the context of Post modernism. English literature is replete with the images of animals which have been used by the writers as symbols in order to represent nature and human life. These images are both vicious as well as benevolent which help the writer convey their point of implicitly as well as explicitly. Adiga's novel portrays images to convey the carnivorous side of human psyche which attempt to destroy every obstruction of the way to gain what is hankered after, especially as a postmodern man. These images range from tiger to black crows and buffalos and Boars to describe the devouring nature of postmodern man. These images change their shape and kind as soon as the action of the novel proceeds or the psyche of the hero changes. The images of in the novel are analysed and interpreted to deconstruct their use.*

Human beings are the rational beings, superior to the other species on this very planet. Animals in comparison to man are subservient to man and in certain ways inferior to man. The basic difference that makes human beings superior is their power to become learned, cultured and well-mannered by virtue of their faculty of being rational. They possess moral values which are necessary for a civilized and progressive society. They work constructively to develop their culture and society. On the other hand, animals do not have any set of moralities to follow; they do not give explanations for their actions to justify themselves. They kill each other randomly for food or other minor reasons; they do not obey any rules of morality and if they ever do they have their own rules and their own prices.

Considering the Darwinian view point, human beings are the evolved off-springs from apes. (Darwin 185). Today the developed living style of human beings makes it difficult to discover any social relation between them and animals, however human beings share their animal instincts with other their other companions on the planet. The animalistic personas are deep rooted in them. These instincts are expressed through their animalistic actions of killing, fighting, stealing, unethical desires, selfishness and finally their race for the capital. All these incidents happen because they want more than they have. To fulfil the desire of more and more they steal from others, thinking nothing about morality and good deeds. Just like animals, they kill each other for money to fill their hungry bellies. It takes us to the view that the human beings are the tamed animals; tamed through the religion, ethical rules, social norms, and their cultures.

However, when they catch a chance to get wild, they do not miss it and express their inert instincts which are the animal instincts.

Literature is a mirror that shows the reflection of human life. Literary work consists of figurative language that is full of images and symbols. Imagery is built up through the repeated use of the same images in a literary work. According to Earl J. Wilcox “imagery, in its basic sense, is a product of literary language. Simply defined, imagery is the impression or impressions, we receive when one or more of our senses are stimulated by language” (Wilcox 186). Usually, the authors repeat an image continuously to make the readers aware of the subject matter of their writings. Imagery obtains the readers’ attention and guides them towards the view point of the authors.

The use of animal imagery in the literature is in practice among the writers from the primeval times, as it can be witnessed in the writing of Egyptian Pharaohs that is considered as the most ancient literature found today. The writers use the recurring images of different animals to present the inert traits of their characters. They symbolically associate certain animalistic personas with the human beings to indicate the real human nature. Typically, the writers use unswervingly the animal titles for the characters, which are supposed to be alike, as seen in Shakespeare’s *The Tragedy of King Lear* (Shakespeare 53). At times, the writers inscribe the allegory in which the human beings behave like animals and both are related to each other symbolically, as in Bano Qudisia’s *Raja Gidh* (Bano 34). Some authors have used the animal imagery in their work by simply mentioning different animal tricksters that are doing better or worse than human beings, as witnessed in the ancient African folklores of Anansi (Haase). In few writings, authors show their characters obtaining the physical form of animals or insects by some reason, as described in Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* (Kafka 1).

Frye, a literary critic, discussed the use of animal imagery in literature with the biblical references in his renowned work *Anatomy of Criticism* (Frye 131). He wrote four essays related to four theories respectively.

In his third essay, Frye offered the theory of myths that is related to the animal imagery with the Biblical references. In this essay Frye has discussed the archetypal criticism, which means to interpret a literary work by noticing the frequently occurred myth. Frye noticed a return to myth in literary work of his contemporary writers, so he focused on the deformed myths presented in today’s literature. The folklore of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* carries the example of Biblical myth by describing a poisonous apple (Ryken and Wilhoit). Frye presented the higher form of his theory here as he combined diverse aspects into an organic whole that is organized around a metaphor of chain of beings as divine, human, animal, vegetable, and mineral. At one side, he put the apocalyptic imagery that prophesying the complete destruction of the world (Ryken and Wilhoit), but it can be saved by a saviour like Christ. The fulfilment of human desire can be achieved through innocence that is shown by the animal lamb. Lamb is a

sacred and innocent animal mentioned in Bible. At the opposite side, Frye described the demonic imagery that is directly contradictory to the apocalyptic imagery. Here, the unfulfillment of human desire is described and the world is destroyed by an anti-Christ, tyranny is practised everywhere. The animal is a marauder e.g. a lion that is a beast identified in Bible. At the third side, we have the combination of the both above mentioned the apocalyptic and the demonic imageries. Frye suggested that the third state consisted of the analogical imagery; he offered two analogies here e.g. analogy of innocence and analogy of experience. In the innocence analogy we have the apocalyptic images as the saviour Christ and the figure of innocent animal lamb. While, in the analogy of experience is consisted on the demonic imagery as the destroyer anti-christ and the predator lion. Though Frye has given the biblical references for this use of animal imagery his examples are purely religious in nature, yet we can have animal imagery in the secular writings as well. Many writers have used this imagery in their literary works to create certain environment. Later discussion in this essay is related to the four seasons consisted on four genres of comedy, romance, tragedy, and irony or satire.

With the help of Frye's classification of myths and imagery we can analyze any literary work. He offered the structure of analysis for the animal imagery used in literature, as it can be apocalyptic, demonic, or the analogical.

The use of symbolic images is a common practice among the artists and authors. Through symbols they can communicate more than direct description. "Symbol is an object, animate or inanimate, which represents or stands for something else" (Cuddon). A dove, for example, symbolizes peace; the tiger, power and courage; the rose, beauty; the owl, intellect; the moon, purity and beauty, white colour, peace. A symbol contains many layers of meanings; it can refer to many things at the same instant. These layers of meanings are identified with the three basic associations a symbol possesses; which can be personal, cultural and universal. Dog, for instance, presents all the three symbolic associations: as its personal association shows it is an animal; dog is a symbol of impurity in Islamic culture but Chinese consider it as a symbol of devotion and courage, this is the cultural association; the universal association applies the symbol of dog to human beings as the traits of a dog are transferred to humans (Cirlot).

Symbolists tend to agree with Arthur Symons when he says "Without symbolism there can be no literature; indeed, not even language. What are words themselves but symbols" (Symons 1). The symbolist movement in literature started in the late nineteenth century in France, poets like Mallarme, Valery, Verlaine, Rimbaud are considered as the pioneers of this movement. Arthur Symons talks about the symbolist writers and painters in his work *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* published in 1899. This movement mainly suggests that the symbols are the essential part of human life so literature must contain the symbolic figures in it. The symbolists believe that the reality of this world should be presented with the help of words and images to imply and signify. The basic precept of symbolist movement is to preserve the

mystery of human life by creating the indirect references to the reality instead of giving the descriptions.

Aristotle also advocates the use of symbols in a literary work. In *Organon*, his essay named *Posterior Analytics* shows his views about symbolic logic. Aristotle initiated the idea of logic; he introduced the symbolic logic as its branch. He divides the symbolic logic into two categories: first is the propositional logic, concerned with the mathematical theorems and equations; second is the predicate logic, related to the formal features of logical inference. Predicate logic is associated with the formal system of First-order logic. First-order logic is a formal system used in Mathematics, linguistics and philosophy; it studies the discourse, syntax and semantics of a language. Aristotle was well aware of the inferential use of language (Hamilton 124).

In literature the examples of symbolic language are enormous, particularly W. B. Yeats and T. S. Eliot show more tendency towards the discussed subject. T. S. Eliot uses the symbol of fire in his poem *The Waste Land*, it is the symbol of purification as well as of damnation at the same time (Eliot 132). In *Hamlet* the nights are the symbol of ignorance and evil (Shakespeare 1). *King Lear* contains the storm scene as the symbol of chaotic world around us (Shakespeare 122). Killing of Albatross in *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, written by S.T. Coleridge, is a symbol of all sin and disrespect for Nature (Coleridge 16). In Kafka's *Metamorphosis* the transformation of a human being into an insect is the symbol of deformation of human values (Kafka 1). *Moth Smoke* by Mohsin Hamid employs the symbolic patterns as the very novel starts with a prologue that was in vogue during the sixteenth century literature. Moreover, Hamid demonstrates the symbolic characters here which are identical to the ancient Muslims kings, not only the names but the nature and the fate of both are resembled as well (Hamid 1).

Aravind Adiga, in his novel *The White Tiger* has used a vast imagery of animals. Animal imagery is used in literature to present the hidden associations of human beings and the animals. Adiga has portrayed the inner souls of his characters by giving them animal titles, which can show their animalistic instincts. *The White Tiger* is the story of an Indian slave, who fulfils his desire of a rich living by slitting the throat of his master and stealing his capital. Though he knows his family will be treated ruthlessly by his masters afterwards, yet he goes for the rich living by hook or by crook. This is the major trait of his character turning him into a real white tiger.

Adiga has presented his protagonist, Balram, as a White Tiger in the novel; even the very title of the novel is suggesting this relation between the both. The White Tiger is famous for its lonely bloody hunts. It cannot run as fast as the other tigers but it is a very good swimmer and climber. It usually hunts at night, remains alone and quiet, does not make friends and likes to stay alone.

If we closely take a look on the whole life story of Balram, told by his own self; as a child, he was seen as an intelligent child, the son of an honest rickshaw-puller. However, growing up, he was exposed into a lot of corruption and immoral behavior, such as the time when his mother was being burnt and it looked as though her foot was resisting the fire. His childhood molded the person he was going to become in the future. Balram ends up doing anything to get himself into a higher caste and into the light. Balram becomes very selfish; many of his actions were ambiguous in nature. Surprisingly, it is not just Balram who has indulged himself in this immoral path to get money but almost all the characters of the novel present this very phenomenon of the current postmodern culture. At least animals cannot be blamed for not trying to overcome their animal instinct that is the reason of a human's behaving like an animal.

The images used for Balram are of weak and meek animals when he is poor. But as he is a different person from his lot and becomes a capitalist afterwards that is why the title of a white tiger is attached to his character. Throughout the novel, there are references to how Balram is very different from those back in his home environment. A white tiger symbolizes power and in East Asian cultures, such as in Vietnam, it is also a symbol of freedom and individuality (Warness). Balram is seen as different from those he grew up with. He is the one who got out of the Darkness and found his way into the Light.

As Balram says

“The journey from Darkness to the Light is not smooth...only a White Tiger can do this” (Adiga250).

He also says

“A White Tiger keeps no friends” (Adiga302).

White tiger never hunts in groups because it cannot share its prey with the others. The description of the white tigers continues throughout the narrative side by side. At the end of the novel, Balram decides to open a school for the poor children and they will be given the education to become white tigers as well to destroy the rich of the country.

Different animals carry different meanings related to their titles. These meanings are usually associated with the social norms and interpretations of a specific paradigm. Various readers from the diverse societies conceive assorted meanings from the titles of the animals e.g. an owl is a symbol of wisdom in the West but in Eastern milieu it does not carry the akin meaning indeed a converse one.

To show the selfishness and ruthlessness of his characters, Adiga has used the animal imagery very explicitly in the narrative. The actual and true nature of all the characters is

introduced through a direct or indirect reference to certain animalistic traits. Different characters are been called by the animal titles, or certain situations have been portrayed with the presence of animals to express the concealed meanings. The distinction between the social classes does exist in India. Adiga portrays this class difference explicitly in the novel by associating different animal images to different social classes. His focus indeed is on the killing aspects of the uncultivated and dangerous animals. He has associated the destructive and brutal traits of the wild animals with the high class, whereas the low class is shown as the imprudent, meek and foolish animals. The cunning natures of the rich characters express that they are more wild and destructive in nature than the poor ones. However, the novel presents the postmodern aspect of the late capitalism in the present era by conveying the message that if a poor wants to become the rich, s/he must has to adopt the malice and cruelty of the elite to get the goal.

Capital is the biggest power now and a person can do anything to get more and more powerful. The traditional morality no longer exists in this scenario. This is a kind of predator-prey relationship developed by the author among the characters. The most benevolent predator-prey relationship was between Balram and his master Mr. Ashok, as both tries to control the life of the other in a savage and beastly manner.

In Indian social distinctive classes people are divided crudely into the high and low castes. Adiga has used diverse imagery for the distinctive social classes to present the inner nature of the rich and the poor. He basically emphasizes the wild emotions of the postmodern human beings who crave for the capital. They are ready to do whatever things to snatch it from others, so that they would be capable of controlling the lives of the poor.

Adiga has used certain wild animals' titles for the characters of his novel; following is a list of such images used by him.

#### The Landlords

There is the description of the four landlords from Balram's local village, who are rich enough to control the lives of the poor habitants with the help of money.

“All four of the animals lived in high-walled mansions...” (Adiga25).

The animal names of these landlords are:

Buffalo

Wild bear

The stork

### The raven

All the four rich landlords are savage and wild animals. The true nature of them is same as well, they all destructive and bestial.

“The Buffalo was greediest of the lot. He had eaten up the rickshaws and the roads. So, if you ran a rikshaw, or used the road, you had to pay him feed\_ one-third of whatever you earned, no loss” (Adiga24).

The images used for “the Buffalo” clearly relate to the animal buffalo, which is greedy and hungry in nature; we have to “feed” it continuously.

“If you wanted to work on his (Wild Bear) lands, you had to bow down to his feet, and touch the dust under his feet...” (Adiga25).

“The Stork was a fat man with a fat moustache, thick and curved and pointy as the tips...he took a cut of every catch of fish caught by every fisherman in the river...” (Adiga24).

“(The Raven) took a cut from the goatherds who went up there to graze with their folks. If they didn’t have their money, he liked to dip his beak into their backsides, so they called him the Raven” (Adiga25).

All the traits of above mentioned landlords are resembled to the worst wild animals, which are killing in their nature.

### Animal title of Mukesh

Besides this, Adiga gives the title of “Mongoose” and “Lamb” to Mukesh, who is the son of Stork.

### The Socialist

The rich politician of LaxamanGharh, The Socialist, is a corrupt person, who takes bribes. Adiga has described him as a person with “Bull neck” (Adiga 65). Again, bull is a dangerous animal.

When Balram took his dying father to the hospital where the doctors were absent because the Socilaist took bribe from them and made them free from their attendance at the hospital. There is a symbolic description of a “cat who has tasted blood” and has become a great danger for the patients. This cat represents the Socialist,who has a lust for capital and power now and is harmful for the common people.

### The Lizard in the School

Balram is so scared of lizards, especially in the childhood he does not go to the school because of a big poisonous lizard. As the lizard keeps him away from his studies, same as the landlords do not want him to study or to make any type of progress. So, here the “lizard” represents the rich landlords.

“Only flicking its red tongue in and out of its mouth- the lizard came closer and closer to my face” (Adiga28).

### The image of bulls

When Balram finalizes his plan of killing his master Mr. Ashok, he sees a dream of a bull that is very dangerous and terrifying. This “bull” represents the rich people who continuously terrifying the poor people throughout their lives.

### Balram’s animalistic instinct

Throughout the novel Balram is called by different animal titles. When he is poor his friends call him “the dog” who is a loyal animal. His grandma said

“He is as greedy as a pig” (Adiga56).

Balram himself calls him a donkey when he is working as a driver. The other drivers call him Country Mouse. All these titles show that he is a referred to the weak animals time and again. He himself says about him

“I was grinning like a donkey” (Adiga228).

### The poor people

Balram calls the poor people dogs and donkeys repeatedly in the novel. He calls the other drivers donkeys many times. He also says

“The Poor live like weak animals in a forest” (Adiga169).

“They (the poor drivers) were crouching and jabbering like monkeys”(Adiga200).

“They’re (the poor prostitutes) like parrots in a cage” (Adiga251).

“One of the human spiders dropped a wet rag on the floor...” (Adiga265).

### The rooster coop

Adiga frequently mentions the rooster coop while describing the situation or characteristics of the servant class in India and Balram also defends himself for murdering his master through the concept of rooster coop. The author first describes how the rooster coop looks like in the market in Old Delhi, in order to give the visualization to the readers.

However, he noticed that the chickens are not trying to escape from the poor-constructed cage. Hence, the author compares those chickens living in a miserable condition with the poor class in India.

“The very same thing is done with human beings in this country” (Adiga174).

According to his philosophy, individual action is the key to break out of the rooster coop and the servants are self-trapping. He validates his evil actions to his master by saying

“I think the Rooster Coop needs people like me to break out of it. It needs masters like Mr. Ashok – who, for all his numerous virtues, was not much of a master – to be weeded out, and exceptional servants like me to replace them” (Adiga177).

### Character of Balram’s father

Balram’s father is a rickshaw puller in India, poor but an honest man. As Balram says about him

“He was a man of honour and courage” (Adiga23).

But still his father dies with trouble and has no respect in the society. Though he is honest yet no honour is given to the poor as a norm of the society. His father says

“My whole life, I have been treated like a donkey. All I want is that one son of mine at least one-should live like a man” (Adiga30).

### Cockroaches in Balram’s room

There is an image of cockroaches presented by Adiga here, while working as a driver Balram’s room remains full of cockroaches and he kills these cockroaches ruthlessly. This killing signifies the change in his character. He decides to kill his rich master and wants to become so powerful like rich, as he kills the small cockroaches he wishes to control the other people’s lives as well.

### Interpretation of the novel in the light of Frye's theory of myths

Frye's theory of myths consists of the archetypal criticism as discussed earlier in this paper. He has classified the myths into different categories. According to him the myths are presented in the literary works in the form of certain imageries. He presented three types of imageries, which are apocalyptic, demonic and analogical imageries. The analogical imagery further has two main classes analogy of innocence and the analogy of experience. Analogy of innocence consists of the apocalyptic imagery in which everything goes very well and the tyranny is vanished through a noble protagonist at the end. The spirituality and chastity spread in the society through good deeds. The animals represent this analogy is gentle and pet animals like lamb. According to Frye the mode of comedy also comes under the Analogy of innocence as comedy has happy ending (Frye 157). On the other hand, the analogy of experience consists of the demonic imagery in which the nobility, spirituality and morality fade away from the society. The tyranny prevails everywhere by the brutal human beings. Moral values befall useless and selfishness turns out to be the base of the society. As Frye says "Divine and spiritual beings have little functional place in low mimetic fiction" (Frye 154). The mode of low mimetic comes under this analogy of experience. The animal imagery used here is predators and dangerous animals like tigers and apes (Frye 154).

If we closely notice the categories of myth imageries, we can observe that the novel *The White Tiger* falls under the analogy of experience. The demonic imagery is used here and the mode of this novel is low mimetic. It tells us the story of a person, Balram, who wants to fulfil his desires at any rate. Spirituality and morality have no value in this scenario. The brutal acts of Balram are been justified by him in his narrative. Instead of realizing his sin and imperfection he considers himself a triumphant who is unbeaten by the false virtues and religious limits. He kills his master hitherto he feels no sorry for this vicious act. His lethal thoughts move around the profits and gains. As Frye says about the analogy of experience "To this extent it is a moral and plausible displacement of the bitter resentments that humanity feels against all obstacles to its desires (Frye 157).

The animals images used in the novels are mostly the predator animals. Balram is called the white tiger here, image of bulls, monkeys, bloody cat all are related to the analogy of experience.

Symbolic images in the novel:

The novel contains many symbolic images, especially that of animals. 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 a tiger declares that he is a 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 of his country so indirectly the writer

ensures us that brutality is expected from him. Aristotle and Arthur Symons have advocated this sort of inference and symbols to enhance the effects of the literary writings.

## Conclusion

Balram says in the novel

“Sometimes the most animal in a man may be the best thing in him” (Adiga251).

Human beings are called social animals, means they are animals indeed but social and tamed. 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 can dug out themselves from the inner tombs of the human mannerism any time depends upon the chances 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 and we get the chance to expose this wild instinct we become aliens for our own selves. Through the literary writings contained these animal images, the writers want us to recognize our inner selves. In the characters of the novel we can find out our own animal instinct. This makes us realize the true inner human being lies in the depth of our soul. We become conscious of our unconscious deeds.

There is a big gap between the rich and the poor classes of India, it is not just a socially created gap but the religion also divided the society into high and low castes. The race for the capital between the both classes continues and no one knows where it will be ended.

We will agree with Adiga when he says

"A rich man's body is like a premium cotton pillow, white and soft and blank.... The story of a poor man's life is written on his body, in a sharp pen," replete with "cuts and nicks and scars, like little whip marks in his flesh" (Adiga 22).

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