



Deconstructing Ranvijay Singh's Character in *Animal* through Alfred Adler's Theory of the Inferiority Complex Traditions

¹Amol Jaware & ²Suyog Sonar

^{1&2}Assistant Professor, Department of English, Pratap College (A), Amalner, Maharashtra



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Abstract

*This paper examines Ranvijay Singh, the protagonist of Sandeep Reddy Vanga's *Animal* (2023), through Alfred Adler's Inferiority Complex theory, which centers on how childhood emotional neglect shapes his destructive behavior. Ranvijay's strained relationship with his distant father fosters profound inadequacy. This navigates compensatory acts of violence and dominance, as looked in his aggressive confrontations and patriarchal control over family. Adler's concepts of striving for superiority and fictional final goals which explains Ranvijay's hyper-aggressive persona as a mask for vulnerability, which is not inherently cruel. This analysis reveals how unresolved inferiority isolates him, which explores Adler's notion of social interest and that strains familial bonds. Situating the film within Indian cinema's contemporary trends, the paper studies repression leads to aggressive behaviour. In the paper applying, Adlerian psychology, it tries to uncover how Ranvijay's destructive path highlights broader societal issues. It supports for therapeutic approaches embedded in Adler's principles to address such behaviours, which promotes authentic self-worth over harmful compensation. This analysis combines psychoanalytic theory and film studies, which provide crucial insights into character motivation and cultural narratives.*

Keywords: inferiority complex, Alfred Adler, Ranvijay Singh, animal, hyper-aggression

Introduction

Most of the contemporary Indian cinema focuses on blockbusters and profit margins, which often results in less authentic portrayals of society and individuals. Recently, there has been a trend where violence and action have become the key themes that drive commercial success in the modern Indian cinema. Modernity itself frequently breeds frustration and anger, which converts into aggression and violence. These emotions are widely experienced by the masses and the disillusioned youth of the country. Now filmmakers identify this tendency and project it on the big screen profit. This also acts a catalyst to satisfy their own hidden and mostly unconscious repressions.

One such filmmaker is Sandeep Reddy Vanga. He is known for films that on primary reading, may appear artificial, misogynistic and even Calvinistic. Yet, detail study of his character reveals pressing social issues that demand attention. *Animal* (2023) is one such film. Which features a complex, troubled protagonist, Ranvijay, whose violent behaviour and obvious repression exposes serious psychological conflicts. While much of the critical reception has centered on the film's hypermasculine aesthetics, casual misogyny and familial drama, Ranvijay's character also offers fertile ground for engagement with psychological theory. Alfred Adler's concept of the Inferiority Complex, which explains how in early life can drive overcompensation, ambition and destructive behavior, that provides a valuable lens



through which one can deconstruct Ranvijay's psyche.

This paper, therefore, examines how Ranvijay Singh represents Adlerian notions of Inferiority and overcompensation. Through such an analysis, *Animal* can be located within broader academic conversations at the confluence of character psychology and cinema.

Alfred Adler's Theory of Inferior Complex

Adler's theory states that all humans are born with innate feelings of inferiority due to our initial helplessness as infants. Individual is inherently dependent on caregivers, which creates a natural sense of dependence and insecurity. These early feelings are universal and serve as a motivational force, which drive individuals toward "striving for superiority" or personal improvement to compensate for ascertained shortcomings. Yet, when these feelings become exaggerated or unresolved, they generally evolve into an inferiority complex, where the individual feels constantly overwhelmed by their sense of weakness.

Adler distinguished between normal inferiority feelings, which are adaptive and encourage growth, and the pathological inferiority complex, which arises from subjective interpretations of one's limitations. He introduced the idea of "organ inferiority," in which a physical weakness or perceived bodily defect (e.g., poor eyesight or a chronic illness) becomes a focal point for unbearable feelings of "not being enough", that directly triggers in the body part most prone to illness. This concept extends beyond the physical to psychological and social realms, influenced by environmental factors like family dynamics or societal pressures. The inferiority complex is not an objective reality but a "fiction" or self-constructed narrative based on early experiences and interpretations, which Adler believed individuals creatively use to navigate life.

Alfred Adler emphasized that early parental interactions notably shape a child's sense of self. And overly critical, neglectful, or pampering parenting styles lead to feelings of inadequacy. Constant comparisons to siblings or peers can ingrain a belief

of being not enough. Failures, rejections, or abuses during early years can intensify these feelings. This leads to individual fixing them into one's self-concept. Adler noted that these causes connect with an individual's "style of life," a unique behavioural pattern developed to cope with realized inferiorities.

Context of the Film

At its core of Adler's theory lies the concept of inferiority feelings, which he saw as universal experiences stemming from childhood vulnerabilities. These generally arise from family dynamics or social comparisons, that prompts individuals to aim for superiority as a form of compensation. When this feeling becomes intense, it transforms as an inferiority complex. Adler pressed that such complexes are not innate flaws but adaptive responses shaped by early environments, which often lead to distorted life goals if unresolved.

With respect to the film *Animal*, this framework highlights the psychological landscape of the protagonist, Ranvijay. Ranvijay emerges as a figure driven by deep-seated emotional wounds. He is a son of Balbir Singh, a powerful industrialist. Ranvijay grows up in a world of privilege but profound neglect. His father, preoccupied with business and distant in affection, overlooks Ranvijay's attempts for validation. His father's indifference fosters a sense of void in Ranvijay from a young age, which consistently erodes his self-worth and which in turn transforms into questionable behaviours later in his life. Ranvijay's relationships also reflect this mental struggles. With his father, the bond is one of obsession and affection mixed with resentment. He idolizes Balbir but interprets every slight as confirmation of his unworthiness. Toward his family, including his wife Geetanjali and siblings, he assumes a hyper-protective role, often veering into possessiveness that hints at underlying fears of abandonment. Interactions with outsiders reveal aggression, as he positions himself as an unyielding 'alpha male' to mask his vulnerabilities. These dynamics suggest a man not merely violent by nature, but one compensating for perceived weaknesses through dominance.



Psychologically, Ranvijay's development traces a path from primary inferiority in childhood. This is rooted in emotional neglect by his father and secondary inferiority in adulthood. Adler's theory would showcase that Ranvijay's early experiences create a "fictional final goal" of absolute power and taking Swastik, his father's industry to next level. And also gaining his father's love. These goals supersede any other ambitions in his life. The nuances lie in Ranvijay's moments of self-analysis, look of self-doubt surface. This explains an unhealed child beneath his bravado. In Ranvijay, we see the tragic subtext: unchecked inferiority not only warps the individual but ripples through relationships, that perpetuate cycles of pain.

Analysis of Ranvijay's Character through Theory of Inferiority Complex

In the opening scenes of *Animal*, Ranvijay is punished in school for disturbing the class and requesting leave to attend his father's birthday. His intense reaction can be seen. Looking at the film's song lyrics and music score, they clearly indicate his childhood obsession with his father. It soon becomes evident that Balbir, a business-oriented man, devotes does not spend time to him. This emotional neglect plants the seeds of tension from a very early age. This is not foreseen by his father, or its long-term consequences. From his school days, Ranvijay feels the need to constantly prove his love for his father. Thinking that his love will grow with time.

In the scene where Ranvijay's father slaps him after he fires a gun at the school, to scare the students that bully his sister. This extreme behavior reflects the deep impact of both social and personal impact on his psyche. He does it to showcase the authority and position of his father in his absence. Later in the film, instead of guiding him constructively, his father responds with punishment. This approach fuels Ranvijay's sense of rejection and triggers an even higher level of aggressive behavior.

Ranvijay is deeply obsessed with a distorted notion of the term *Alpha*. This is seen clearly in the scene where he explains to Geetanjali his concept of love and partner selection. His dialogue shows how

unsettled and disillusioned his mindset have become. For him, love is measured not through emotions or mutual respect, but through some kind of Darwinian biology. In the following sequence, his objectification of Geetanjali further exposes this disturbed outlook, which reduces them to biological functions with remarks such as valuing "big pelvis" to "accommodate healthy babies." These moments show how Ranvijay's understanding of relationships is shaped by a fixation on power, masculinity, and control, rather than emotional connection.

On his father's 60th birthday, Ranvijay's brother-in-law Varun receives praise for his professional success and on the other hand Ranvijay, upon presenting a gift of his hair cut to his father, receives only suggestions for improvement instead of appreciation. This unequal treatment becomes the first clear instance where the Inferiority Complex begins to operate at an unconscious level. The contrast between recognition given to Varun and the dismissive response toward Ranvijay intensifies his feelings of inadequacy.

Further evidence of this complex emerges when Varun insists on meeting the Chief Minister. Ranvijay's refusal is an expression of his hurt ego. His aggressive behavior showcases Adler's theory of overcompensation, where the individual responds to feelings of inferiority which displays dominance, power, and wealth. By rejecting Varun's request, he satisfies his ego.

During an intense conversation with his brother-in-law, Ranvijay's inferiority is directly exposed. When challenged with the remark that "Business Administration is not your domain," Ranvijay lashes out by insulting Varun and comparing him to a monkey. His refusal to apologize shows his inability to tolerate criticism. Instead of engaging rationally, Ranvijay redirects his frustration into displays of dominance, taking matters such as his sister's marriage according to his own comfort, that eliminates her agency. He also forces decisions upon others without considering their perspectives.

Ranvijay uncontrolled behaviour as he openly threatens violence, including death threats, to assert



control. When his father instructs him to apologize, Ranvijay resists by defending his perspective,

But instead of understanding Ranvijay's perspective, his father dismisses him with the retort: "*Don't teach me how to run business.*" Which hurt Ranvijay the most. More importantly, it reveals the unconscious thoughts of his inferiority complex. Unable to bridge the gap between his emotional wounds and his longing for acknowledgement, Ranvijay expresses his frustration into destructive actions that gradually erupt in aggression, violence, and chaos.

In the climax of his conflict with his father, Ranvijay once again faces comparison with his brother-in-law, who is described as disciplined and self-controlled. His father misinterprets Ranvijay's emotional turmoil, assuming that his bitterness come from material concerns such as the decision to entrust responsibilities to his brother-in-law rather than to him. What the father fails to recognize is that Ranvijay's anguish stems not from issues of inheritance or authority, but from years of emotional neglect, detachment, and the absence of paternal love. Overcome by this misunderstanding, Ranvijay's anger erupts as he bitterly declares, "*Your brother-in-law is your real son, and I am the bastard son.*" Which in response, father slapping him, a moment that intensifies his feelings of rejection and increase his fractured state of mind.

When Ranvijay experiences a complete emotional breakdown, he seeks refuge in a relationship with Geetanjali that somehow sustains his repression. His repression erupts when his father narrowly survives an assassination attempt and is left severely wounded. At this point, Ranvijay's long-suppressed inferiority complex transforms into violence, ultimately driving him toward acts of killing.

In the end, when his father finally acknowledges his mistakes, it is already too late. The years of neglect and unresolved emotional conflict have taken their toll, leaving Ranvijay defeated, estranged, and destructive, with broken relationships as the final outcome of his tragic psychological journey.

Conclusion

While deconstructing Ranvijay's character, several key points emerge. From childhood, he experiences neglect and a lack of attention from his father. Those early warning signs that shape his psychological development. As he grows older, the absence of love and validation of his father increases his aggression and violent tendencies. He internalises this and begins to perceive as natural and justified. This sense of hurt prevents him from forming genuine emotional connections with anyone. This leads him to rely on rigid, hyper-masculine notions. Through *Animal*, it becomes evident that childhood neglect and mistreatment can foster repression and unresolved inferiority. Ranvijay's trajectory makes it apparent that how unresolved psychological wounds not only destroy individual relationships but also pose a broader threat to society, as personal violence and emotional disconnection spill into collective harm, as is seen in the brutal conclusion of the film. Ultimately, *Animal* serves as a tale of caution. And there is need for reflection on the long-term impacts of childhood mistreatment. This study thus contributes to broader academic discourses on how portrayals of certain characters can expose hidden repressions.

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