

## THE CONCEPTUAL USE OF ANIMAL METAPHORS IN THE REPRESENTATION OF HUMANS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK PROVERBS

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## INGLIZ VA O‘ZBEK MAQOLLARIDA INSON OBRAZINI IFODALASHDA HAYVONGA OID METAFORALARINING KONSEPTUAL QO‘LLANILISHI

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## КОНЦЕПТУАЛЬНОЕ ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ МЕТАФОР ЖИВОТНЫХ В ИЗОБРАЖЕНИИ ЧЕЛОВЕКА В АНГЛИЙСКИХ И УЗБЕКСКИХ ПОСЛОВИЦАХ

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**Abstract.** Proverbs hold significant cultural value as succinct expressions of collective wisdom, reflecting the attitudes, beliefs, and values of a society. Embedded within these short, memorable sayings are insights into cultural norms, social hierarchies, and the human condition. Proverbs serve as a window into the cultural psyche, offering glimpses into societal perceptions of morality, gender roles, and interpersonal relationships. Animal metaphors are a common feature of proverbs across cultures, serving as powerful symbolic representations of human qualities, behaviors, and characteristics. Animals embody a rich array of cultural meanings and associations, making them potent vehicles for conveying complex ideas and cultural values. In proverbs, animal metaphors are employed to illustrate virtues, vices, and universal truths about human nature, providing vivid imagery that resonates with audiences. The purpose of this article is to undertake a comparative analysis of the conceptual use of animal metaphors in English and Uzbek proverbs to represent humans. By examining the underlying conceptual frameworks and cognitive associations embedded within these metaphors, this study aims to elucidate how animal imagery is employed to convey cultural perceptions of human behavior, identity, and social dynamics. Through this analysis, we seek to deepen our understanding of the cultural significance of animal metaphors in proverbs and their role in shaping cultural attitudes and beliefs about humanity.

**Keywords:** conceptual metaphors; humans; animals; source domain; target domain.

**Annotatsiya.** Maqollar jamiyatning munosabatlari, e'tiqodlari va qadriyatlarini aks ettiruvchi jamoaviy donolikning qisqa ifodasi sifatida muhim madaniy ahamiyatga ega. Ushbu qisqa, esda qolarli so'zlar madaniy me'yorlar, ijtimoiy ierarxiyalar va insoniy holat haqidagi tushunchalarni o'z ichiga oladi. Maqollar madaniy ruhiyatning oynasi bo'lib xizmat qiladi, jamiyatda axloq, gender rollari va shaxslararo munosabatlar haqidagi tasavvurlarni ko'rish imkonini beradi. Hayvonlarga oid metaforalar turli madaniyatlarda maqollarning umumiy xususiyati bo'lib, insoniy fazilatlar, xulq-atvor va xususiyatlarning kuchli ramziy ifodasi sifatida xizmat qiladi. Hayvonlar boy madaniy ma'nolar va uyushmalarni o'zida mujassam etgan bo'lib, ularni murakkab g'oyalar va madaniy qadriyatlarni etkazish uchun kuchli vositaga aylantiradi. Maqollarda hayvonlar metaforalari inson tabiatiga oid fazilatlar, illatlar va umumbashariy haqiqatlarni tasvirlash uchun ishlatiladi va tomoshabinlar bilan rezonanslashadigan yorqin tasvirlarni beradi. Maqolaning maqsadi ingliz va o'zbek maqollarida hayvonlar metaforalarining insonni ifodalashda konseptual ishlatilishini qiyosiy tahlil qilishdan iborat. Ushbu metaforalarga kiritilgan asosiy kontseptual asoslar va kognitiv assotsiatsiyalarni o'rganib, ushbu tadqiqot inson xatti-harakati, o'ziga xosligi va ijtimoiy dinamikasi haqidagi madaniy tasavvurlarni etkazish uchun hayvonlar tasviri qanday qo'llanilishini aniqlashga qaratilgan. Ushbu tahlil orqali biz maqollardagi hayvon metaforalarining madaniy ahamiyati va ularning insoniyat haqidagi madaniy munosabat va e'tiqodlarni shakllantirishdagi o'rni haqida tushunchamizni chuqurlashtirishga intilamiz.

**Kalit so'zlar:** kontseptual metafora; odamlar; hayvonlar; manba sohasi; maqsad sohasi.

**Аннотация.** Пословицы имеют важное культурное значение как краткое выражение коллективной мудрости, отражающее взгляды, убеждения и ценности общества. Эти короткие, запоминающиеся слова содержат понимание культурных норм, социальных иерархий и условий жизни человека. Пословицы служат окном в культурную психику, позволяя понять общественное восприятие морали, гендерных ролей и межличностных отношений. Метафоры животных являются общей чертой пословиц в разных культурах и служат мощным символическим выражением человеческих качеств, поведения и характеристик. Животные воплощают богатые культурные значения и ассоциации, что делает их мощным средством передачи сложных идей и культурных ценностей. В пословицах метафоры животных используются для описания добродетелей, пороков и универсальных истин о человеческой природе, при этом создаются образы, которые находят отклик у аудитории. Цель статьи — сравнительный анализ концептуального использования метафор животных для изображения людей в английских и узбекских пословицах. Изучая основные концептуальные рамки и когнитивные ассоциации, заложенные в этих метафорах, данное исследование направлено на изучение того, как образы животных используются для передачи культурных представлений о человеческом поведении, идентичности и социальной динамике. Посредством этого анализа мы стремимся углубить наше понимание культурного значения метафор животных в пословицах и их роли в формировании культурных взглядов и представлений о человечестве.

**Ключевые слова:** концептуальная метафора; люди; животные; исходная область; целевая область.

### Introduction

Every culture has its own unique perspective on the world, shaped by its history, values, and shared experiences. Despite these differences, there are often commonalities that transcend cultural boundaries. Many societies rely on metaphors to articulate and comprehend abstract concepts, drawing on universal human experiences. One prevalent set of metaphors involves the use of animals to symbolize human characteristics or behaviors. These metaphors offer insights into the complexities of human nature and provide a lens through which cultural attitudes and beliefs can be understood.

The representation of human behavior frequently draws upon the widely recognized conceptual metaphor equating PEOPLE with ANIMALS (2; 3; 1). According to the cognitive perspective on metaphor, these linguistic devices serve not only as rhetorical tools but also as cognitive processes that bridge the gap between concrete entities and abstract concepts (8; 7; 6, 79). Moreover, metaphor is deeply entrenched in culture, shaping individual and collective identities, and contributing to cultural understanding (11, 60; 9, 27; 10, 87).

Animals, being an integral part of our environment, naturally serve as a rich source domain and vehicle for conceptualizing and expressing metaphors related to human behavior. These metaphors permeate various forms of discourse, from ancient myths and folklore to contemporary literature and everyday language. Proverbs, in particular, offer a condensed yet profound expression of these metaphors, encapsulating cultural wisdom and insights into human nature. Through the analysis of proverbs, we can uncover the underlying cultural values and beliefs encoded within these animal metaphors, providing a deeper understanding of the human experience across different societies and historical periods.

### The Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Conceptual metaphors are cognitive constructs that structure our understanding of abstract concepts by mapping them onto more concrete domains. They involve the transfer of knowledge and understanding from one domain, called the source domain, to another, known as the target domain. Characteristics of conceptual metaphors include their pervasive nature across languages and cultures, as well as their ability to shape thought patterns and cognitive processes. They facilitate reasoning, decision-making, and problem-solving by enabling individuals to conceptualize and interpret complex ideas in terms of simpler, more concrete experiences.

In the context of language, conceptual metaphors provide a framework for comprehending and expressing complex ideas in terms of more familiar or tangible experiences. As per Lakoff and Johnson (8), a metaphor signifies the comprehension of one concept in terms of another, involving grasping one conceptual domain through the framework of another. The crux of metaphor lies in understanding and experiencing one type of entity in terms of another. Conceptual metaphors encompass a

source domain, representing a more tangible or physical concept, and a target domain, representing a more abstract concept. The Great Chain metaphor system delineates how objects or entities in the world are metaphorically conceptualized, offering insight into the metaphorical conceptualization of “things” found in language as nouns.

Within this metaphorical system, the Basic Great Chain metaphor maps the relationship of human beings to “lower” forms of existence, positioning humans at the highest level, followed by animals and inanimate objects (4). Consequently, humans are perceived as animals and objects, epitomized by the metaphorical notion that “people are animals.” This hierarchical chain delineates typical attributes and behaviors associated with each category. Since the seminal work “Metaphors We Live By” by Lakoff and Johnson (8), cognitive linguistics has gained prominence, considering a speaker's linguistic knowledge as an integral component of cognition.

In this paradigm, metaphor is not solely a literary device but also a conventional cognitive tool inherent in everyday communication. The perspective on metaphor has evolved to acknowledge its pervasive presence in thought and communication, challenging traditional views of metaphor as merely rhetorical or ornamental. Even ostensibly “dead” metaphors, which have become customary and automatic through continuous usage, remain active in thought and continue to shape our understanding of the world.

Animal metaphors have garnered significant attention among scholars in the realm of cognitive semantics, often analyzed within the framework of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) introduced by Lakoff and Johnson (8). This theory delineates the mapping of two domains termed as source and target domain, extensively utilized in scrutinizing metaphorical expressions across various concepts, including emotions (5), virtues like perseverance (14, 33), and inflation (15, 57). These investigations delve into the conceptualization of such concepts within identified metaphorical expressions.

In the context of proverbs, conceptual metaphors are employed to convey cultural perceptions of human behavior, identity, and social dynamics with animal imagery. Animal metaphors serve as symbolic representations of human qualities, behaviors, and characteristics, allowing for the expression of complex ideas and cultural values in a succinct and memorable manner. By examining the conceptual use of animal metaphors in representing humans in proverbs, we can gain insights into the underlying cognitive frameworks and cultural associations that shape these linguistic expressions.

### **People are Animals**

Animals have served as powerful symbols in proverbs across cultures, each imbued with its own unique meanings and associations. In many societies, animals are seen as embodiments of certain qualities, virtues, or vices, and their inclusion in proverbs allows for the conveyance of complex ideas and moral lessons through simple and relatable imagery. For example, the lion is often regarded as a symbol of strength and

courage, while the fox is associated with cunning and slyness. These symbolic associations vary across cultures, influenced by factors such as geography, mythology, and religious beliefs.

Proverbs frequently employ animals to convey a wide range of traits and characteristics, serving as metaphors for human behavior and societal dynamics. For instance, the industriousness of ants may be used to emphasize the value of hard work and diligence, as seen in the proverb “*Like ants, like diligence.*” Similarly, the loyalty of dogs may be invoked to underscore the importance of loyalty and fidelity in relationships, as in the saying:

### **A faithful dog is better than a friend is**

The cultural significance of certain animals and their associations with specific qualities often reflects the values and beliefs of a society. For example, in Chinese culture, the dragon symbolizes power, strength, and good fortune (4), while in Hindu mythology, the elephant is revered as a symbol of wisdom, stability, and prosperity. Similarly, the owl is often associated with wisdom and knowledge in Western cultures (15, 62), while the snake may symbolize deceit and danger. Understanding these cultural significances is essential for interpreting the deeper meanings behind animal symbolism in proverbs and appreciating the rich diversity of cultural expression.

Using animal metaphors in English proverbs contributes to the representation of humans by providing vivid and evocative imagery that encapsulates complex aspects of human behavior and character. These metaphors serve as cultural shorthand, conveying societal norms, values, and attitudes towards certain traits or behaviors. For example, the prevalence of animal metaphors depicting cunningness, stubbornness, pride, quietness, or freedom in English proverbs reflects cultural perceptions and judgments of these qualities (2, 161–165):

1. *Sly as a fox.* This metaphor invokes connotations of intelligence, cunning, and adaptability, suggesting that the individual is adept at navigating complex situations and achieving their goals through strategic means.

2. *Stubborn as a mule.* This metaphor describes someone as obstinate, unyielding, and resistant to change, likening their behavior to the well-known stubbornness of mules.

3. *Proud as a peacock.* This metaphor characterizes someone as excessively proud, vain, or boastful, invoking the image of a peacock displaying its vibrant plumage to attract attention.

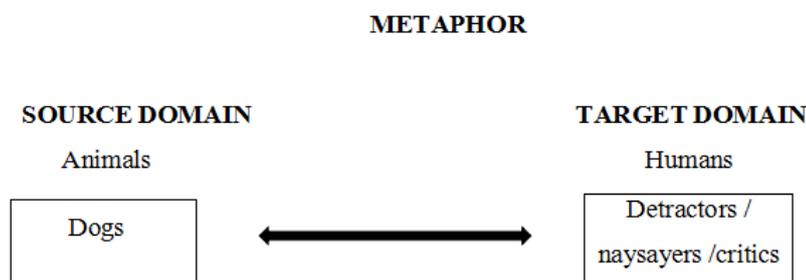
4. *Quiet as a mouse.* This metaphor depicts someone as timid, shy, or reticent, evoking the image of a mouse moving stealthily and silently to avoid detection.

5. *Free as a bird.* This metaphor symbolizes someone as liberated, independent, and carefree, drawing on the freedom and mobility associated with birds in flight.

### Analysis of Animal Metaphors in English and Uzbek Proverbs

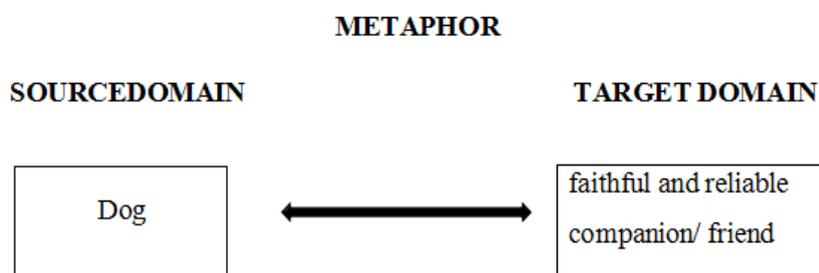
Müller (13) suggests that linguistic, historical, and cultural factors influence the perception of animal metaphors, shaping their symbolic meaning and social connotations. Proverbs featuring animal imagery often convey universal themes and human experiences that transcend linguistic and cultural boundaries. In both English and Uzbek proverbs, animals serve as powerful symbolic representations of human qualities, behaviors, and characteristics.

1. a. It hurar, karvon o‘tar. (Uzbek)
- b. Dogs bark, but the caravan goes on. (English)



The proverb encapsulates a profound insight into human resilience and determination in the face of criticism or opposition. At its core, the metaphorical imagery of “dogs” represents *detractors* or *naysayers*, individuals who may criticize or oppose a particular course of action, idea, or endeavor. Dogs are known for their tendency to bark loudly, often as a means of alerting or expressing displeasure. In this context, the act of barking symbolizes the noise and criticism generated by people who oppose or question progress. Conversely, the “caravan” symbolizes forward movement, progress, or the continuation of a journey despite obstacles or distractions. Caravans are typically associated with long journeys or expeditions, where travelers persevere despite challenges encountered along the way. Therefore, the proverb suggests that while criticism or opposition may arise (“dogs bark”), it does not hinder or deter progress (“the caravan goes on”). It underscores the importance of perseverance, resilience, and steadfastness in pursuing one's goals or objectives despite encountering obstacles or facing criticism from others. In the above proverb, the dog is mentioned in a negative sense, as a critic, condemning people, and in the following English proverb, it comes in a positive sense.

2. If you want a friend, get a dog. (English)

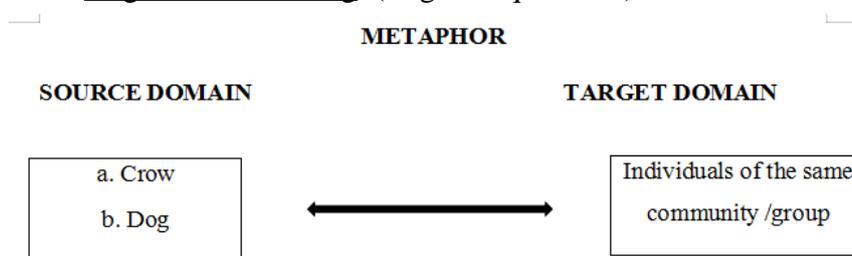


The proverb suggests that a dog can serve as a substitute for a human friend or companion. It implies that the qualities exhibited by dogs, such as loyalty, trustworthiness, and unconditional love, are desirable traits in a friend. In this context, the dog symbolizes the ideal qualities of friendship. Dogs are often associated with unwavering loyalty, devotion, and affection towards their owners (11, 79). Therefore, the proverb implies that if one seeks the loyalty and companionship found in a true friend, one should “get a dog.” The proverb may also serve as a critique of human relationships, suggesting that the loyalty and reliability of a dog surpass the complexities and potential disappointments of human friendships. It implies that human relationships may be fraught with complexities and uncertainties, whereas a dog's loyalty is more straightforward and dependable.

**3. a. Qarg'a qarg'ani ko'zini cho'qimaydi. (Uzbek)**

A crow does not eat another crow's eye. (The translation of English version)

**b. Dog does not eat dog. (English equivalent)**



These two proverbs share a similar underlying meaning, emphasizing a sense of unity or solidarity within a group. The Uzbek version of the proverb employs the word “qarg'a,” which translates to “crow” in English. Crows are often associated with intelligence, resourcefulness, and communal behavior in many cultures. In this context, the choice of the crow as the source domain suggests that the proverb draws on the perceived characteristics of crows to convey its message. Crows are known for their social nature and their tendency to form close-knit communities. By using the image of a crow in the proverb, it implies that members of a community should emulate the cooperative and supportive behavior observed in these birds. Just as crows do not harm each other, individuals within a community should uphold similar principles of cooperation and non-interference in each other's affairs.

Similarly, the English version of the proverb employs the word “dog,” which carries its own cultural connotations. Dogs are often viewed as loyal and protective animals, symbolizing qualities like fidelity and friendship. The use of the dog in the proverb reinforces the idea of loyalty and mutual trust within a group, emphasizing the importance of standing by one another and not engaging in actions that would betray the trust or unity of the community.

It can be understood that in Uzbek culture, the crow symbolizes cooperative and supportive behavior, likely due to its social nature and communal tendencies observed in the animal. On the other hand, in English culture, the dog serves as the symbol for such behavior, reflecting

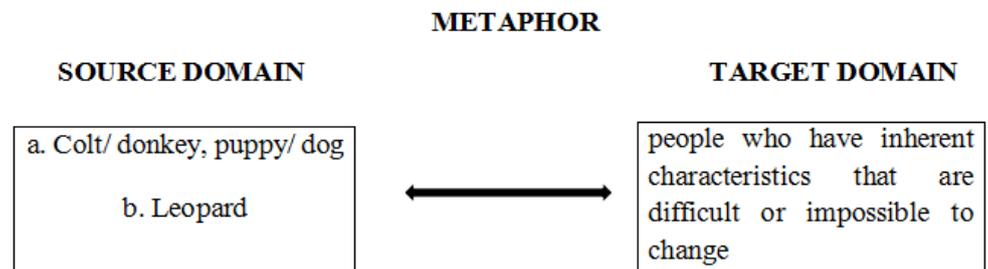
its reputation for loyalty, companionship, and protective instincts (11, 81). These cultural associations with specific animals shape the choice of metaphorical imagery in proverbs and other forms of expression. By using animals like crows or dogs as symbols, these proverbs tap into culturally shared understandings of their traits and behaviors, making the message more relatable and impactful to the audience.

**4. a. Ho'tik birla kuchukni qancha qilma tarbiya**

It bo'lur, eshak bo'lur aslo bo'lmas odamiy. (Uzbek)

No matter how much you train a puppy and a colt, it will become a dog, it will become a donkey, and it will never become a human. (Translation)

**b. The leopard does not change his spots. (English)**

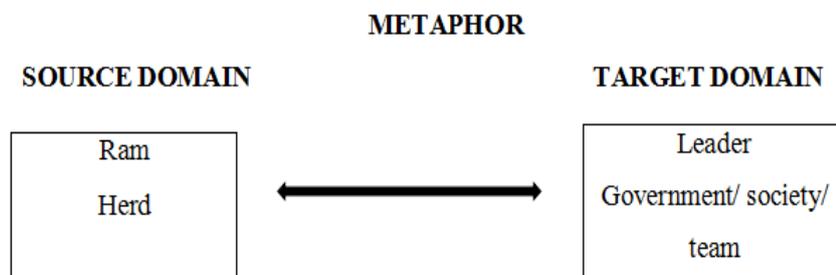


Both proverbs suggest that certain traits or characteristics are inherent and unlikely to change over time. They imply acceptance of the situation as it is, rather than attempting to change something that is fundamental.

However, they differ in their specificity and focus. The first proverb refers specifically to the inability of training to change the nature of a puppy or a colt into that of a human. In contrast, the second proverb focuses on the unchanging nature of a leopard's spots, symbolizing an individual's inability to change their innate traits or behaviors. Furthermore, while the first proverb may be more applicable to situations involving education or upbringing, the second proverb is often used to describe people who consistently exhibit certain behaviors over time, regardless of external influences.

**5. a. Podani qo'chqor yetaklar (Uzbek)**

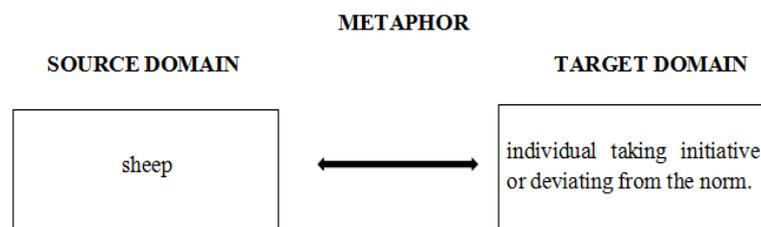
The ram leads the herd (Translation)



This proverb suggests a hierarchical structure within a group, with the ram symbolizing leadership and authority. The image of the ram leading the herd evokes notions of guidance, direction, and dominance. It

implies that the actions and decisions of the leader have a significant impact on the rest of the group, as they follow the lead of the ram. In a broader sense, the proverb reflects the concept of leadership and the role of influential individuals in guiding the collective behavior of a group or community. It underscores the importance of strong leadership and the potential consequences of the leader's actions on the rest of the group.

b. If one sheep leaps over the dyke, all the rest will follow  
(English)



This proverb illustrates the concept of herd mentality or conformity within a group. It suggests that if one member of a group takes a certain action or adopts a particular behavior, others are likely to follow suit. In the context of the proverb, the image of a sheep leaping over a dyke symbolizes an individual taking initiative or deviating from the norm. However, the emphasis is on the collective nature of sheep behavior, implying that once one sheep takes the lead, the others will inevitably follow, regardless of the potential risks or consequences. This proverb reflects human behavior as well, highlighting the tendency for individuals to conform to group norms or follow the actions of their peers, even if it may not be in their best interest. It underscores the powerful influence of social dynamics and the herd instinct in shaping human behavior and decision-making processes.

Both proverbs address the dynamics of group behavior and the influence of one individual on the collective. However, there are differences in emphasis and perspective between the two sayings. “If one sheep leap over the dyke, all the rest will follow” focuses more on the collective behavior of the group, suggesting that individuals tend to follow the lead of others without question. On the other hand, “The ram leads the herd” specifically highlights the leadership role of the ram, portraying it as a natural and expected aspect of group dynamics.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the examination of animal metaphors in English and Uzbek proverbs unveils a profound insight into the shared human experience across diverse cultures. While each culture may have its unique set of proverbs and symbolic associations with animals, there are striking similarities in the underlying themes and messages conveyed through these metaphors.

Animal metaphors serve as powerful tools for expressing complex ideas, emotions, and societal values in a succinct and relatable manner. Whether it's depicting human behavior, relationships, or societal dynamics,

these metaphors offer a universal language that transcends linguistic and cultural boundaries. Through the use of metaphorical imagery, proverbs provide valuable insights into the collective wisdom and cultural heritage of a society, offering timeless lessons and moral guidance for navigating life's challenges. Furthermore, the analysis of animal metaphors in proverbs highlights the interconnectedness of language, culture, and cognition. Metaphors are not merely linguistic devices but reflections of cognitive processes and cultural norms ingrained in society. By studying these metaphors, we gain a deeper understanding of how language shapes thought, perception, and social interactions, shedding light on the complex interplay between language and culture. Overall, animal metaphors in proverbs serve as windows into the human psyche, revealing universal truths about human nature while celebrating the diversity of cultural expression. As we continue to explore the rich tapestry of linguistic and cultural diversity, may we appreciate the enduring significance of animal metaphors in capturing the essence of the human experience and fostering cross-cultural understanding and appreciation.

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