

***Individual versus Society: A Study of George Orwell's
Animal Farm***

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George Orwell is one of the Chief exponents of socialistic philosophy. His socialism is based on equality, brotherhood, human freedom and common decency. Earlier on, he had insisted that it was necessary for socialism to separate itself from utopian idealism, arguing that although socialism was the only hope of the world, it could not claim to make society perfect. He had also directed much criticism at the socialist British Labour Party, claiming that it preached not genuine socialism, which should be concerned with the welfare of all people but only the advancement of members of British labour unions. In addition, he advocated that setting up of a united states of Europe which he said by including about half the skilled workers of the then industrialized world under a socialist government, would spread socialist policies throughout the rest of the world by example.

After experimenting with different types of systems like authoritarianism, totalitarianism, capitalism, imperialism etc. George Orwell found that socialism based on the triple foundations of equality justice and common decency is the best remedy for the welfare of the society. But the irony of the situation lies in the fact that the individuals of the society are no longer given equality and justice, rather they are deprived of these elements which are essential for the personality growth of the individuals in the society. As a result of that the individuals have to wage a continuous war against those systems of the society due to which the whole society appears to be a virtual hell for them.

Almost all the novels of George Orwell in general have been built upon this very basic idea. As a novelist, Orwell, in his novels, is generally occupied with the contemporary political and social problems of his time. So, there is no doubt is denying the fact whether it *Burmese Days*, *The Road to Wigan Pier*, *Animal Farm*, or *Nineteen Eighty -Four*, Orwell's works are a clear exposition of the evils of exploitation, authoritarianism and totalitarianism etc. rampant in the society. That is why, in his novels, there is a continuous fight against oppression, tyranny in justice and in equality. His individuals like. Flory in *Burmese Days*, Gordon Comstock in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*; George Bowling in *Coming Up for Air*;

Dorothy Hare in *A Clergyman's Daughter* etc. are pitted against the callous and inhuman society due to which these individuals attempt to overthrow the society along with its foundation. They try hard to overthrow it, but are not triumphant. Orwell's sympathy lies with the down-trodden and oppressed half of humanity. His individuals belong to such classes which are looked upon down by the society, a society organized to destroy its citizens in a ruthless manner.

Animal Farm is Orwell's most successful attempt to unify his political thought and artistic purpose. Through the use of the beast fable, he has gone beyond a condemnation of Russian Communism and its subsequent growth and decay to describe individual's psychology and revolutionary psychology.

The animals' society in this book disintegrates because it lacks an established political tradition (and not because it springs from resolution) when moral duration falls to come from the people, authority becomes absolute power which has a corrupting effect on the individuals. This situation on the farm allows snowball and Napoleon to change the commandments and regulations when it suits them. The animal does not have a racial memory, or an idea of justice and equality to fall back on. Consequently, this is the single commandment which is noticed: "All

animal are equal but some animals are more equal than others." At this only Benjamin, the donkey appears unsettled because it is he alone who remembers what conditions were like before and after and at the beginning of the revolution.

Orwell is a great champion of the underdogs. His purpose in his novels always remains to associate himself with the oppressed half of humanity. His task has been to plead for the amelioration of the poor working class. In his novels, a bitter and continuous struggle can be witnessed between the individuals and the society surrounding them. But he is hard headed enough not to be taken in by any utopias. Realizing the power of the common individuals, he says in *Nineteen Eighty- Four* "If there is any hope it lies in the proles"¹ As an agent of British imperialism, Orwell had experienced, for some years, the tyranny and cruelty of an oppressive system in Burma the reaction of which is plainly to be seen in his book. *The road to Wigan Pier:* " I felt that I had got to escape not merely from imperialism but from every form of man's domination over man. I wanted to submerge myself, to get right down among the oppressed, to be one of them and on their side against their tyrants."²

The lines quoted above clearly show that how much Orwell is against the oppressive system. Orwell's social criticism can best be understood if we keep in mind this deep sense of guilt that worked in him and that he wanted to root out from himself. The job of a police-officer in Burma had left indelible impact on his mind; and he wanted to belong to some other society where he could feel assured there is justice and where he could find fulfillment.

Orwell's *Animal Farm*, like many other works, is a powerful attempt on the part of Orwell to belong, psychologically, with these individuals who wage an eternal discourse with the society around them. And it is the up to a great extent that his humble characters like Boxer, Clover, and sheep deserve more sympathy from the readers as they are those individuals who try hard to get rid of the corrupt system, than Napoleon, Snowball and Squealers do.

George Orwell's *Animal Farm* shows all forms of evil, dehumanization, and totalitarianism. In *Animal Farm*, Orwell argues emphatically that power brings corruption and moral depravity in human nature. Like the worship of "money-god", it is also a religion which betrays individuals' aspirations. Since, Orwell was a socialist; he

perceives socialism from socialist point of view. *Animal Farm* is a powerful exposition of the malignancy and materialism of the pseudo-socialism which exploited the individuals in name of state-control and central economy. The socialistic revolution brought in the name of human welfare and emancipation from exploitation and slavery; proved to be more betrayal, pretence and false hood.

In the present novel, Orwell presents a classless society. Mr. Jones is the owner of the *Animal Farm* called Manor farm, but the animals are fed up and even feel suffocation because they think that their lot is no longer good at that farm. They think that they work hard day and night do harvesting and produced grain in plenty. But their production is taken away by man who whom they consider their bitter enemy. Old major, the middle-aged Boar, represents those individuals who fight for justice and equality in the society. He makes all the animals aware of the grim reality which is responsible for their miserable and pathetic condition. Major's ideas are based on Marxian analysis and assumptions. The animals work with devotion for the realization of their dreams. Orwell has presented human traits in these animals in order to personify them.

Orwell thinks that the real strengths lie in these Paroles. Common people are in great number and their main function lies in the fact that they keep the spirit of freedom alive. Orwell is of the view that if they gather their strength and apply their efforts whole heartedly, then there is no doubt in denying the fact that they can overthrow such despotic power system easily.

Old Major's vision has such a lasting effect that finally the animals will act against their own welfare. They will realize only too late that they have been duped, as of course they had always been in a sense by human beings. A spark of rebellion stirs with the preaching of Old Major who is the perfect representative of an individual's struggle against the evil forces of the society.

Orwell has indicated the dilemma of the poor individuals in the voice of Benjamin who says: "windmill, or no windmill, life of the individuals will go on as it has always gone on-that is badly. Here lies the real theme of *Animal Farm*.

The story of the novel, *Animal Farm* is not only the story of a particular power structure coming into prominence but a story of prolonged agonies of the individuals who are always pitted against the

tyranny and exploitation of the higher authorities and whose state of depression has become symbolic for all ages. Such individuals are not the victims of fate and chance like Thomas Hardy's characters, but they are the victims of the person of their own caste, race and generation. They have devils and demons in their own class who torture and crush them when they attain power.

After the death of Old Major, the animals (individuals) at the farm rebel and with the help of pigs, Snowball and Napoleon, they elaborate Major's ideas into system where there is equality and decency. Mr. Jones is the perfect representative of those cruel forces which deprive individuals of liberty is the society. The animals change the name of Manor farm to *Animal Farm*. 'All Animals are equal' is the slogan of the animals which they swear to keep in future. In this way, the revolt of the individuals brings fruit and all of them dream of a happy and bright future based on equality.

The pigs are chosen leader unanimously by the animals but the new leader, Snowball and Napoleon, fail to keep their words and everyone at farm is unconcerned about the future.

Orwell's disbelief in life after death does not lead him to an approval of a narrow self-centered concentration on the present as Jasbir Jain says : "Time even in its temporal content has some meaning. Life continues for humanity through it comes to an end for particular individuals."³

Since, Orwell has developed a deep sympathy for the weaker sections of society; he felt an innermost psychological compulsion to choose themes of humanitarian character that would provide him an opportunity to plead for the neglected sections of society.

Orwell wants to highlight the fact that there cannot be any reconciliation between the exploiter and the exploited individuals, the proletariat and the capitalist. Even in the Preface to the Ukrainian Edition, Orwell himself admits that it would be wrong to think that any revolution ends on a note of reconciliation between the exploiter and the exploited, He never tries to find out a solution that would involve a compromise between the two classes because this would amount to the betray of the exploited classes. But the main problem for a writer, whose sympathy for the poor is rooted in a sense a guilt, is that it does not generate sufficient confidence is easily shaken and they fall into pessimism. Another difficulty with Orwell is his incorrigible individualism on account of

which he sees a grave threat to an individual's liberty in any organized struggle. It is his compound sympathy for the exploited individuals and a sense of organization that determines the theme of the novel, *Animal Farm*.

George Orwell clearly states that he has included the details of Soviet Revolution in his book only to give symmetry to his fable. In this sense, he suggests, the human beings are capitalists; the pigs are the Bolsheviks; the animals are the exploited class; Napoleon is Stalin; the imperious Major is Marx-Lenin; Boxer is proletariat, and Snowball is Trotsky

In *Animal Farm*, Orwell exposes the sick world of power-worship, and adoration of evil. One of the reasons of power worship, Orwell finds is due to the abnormal rise of nationalism. In his Essay, "Notes on Nationalism", he writes : The abiding purpose of every nationalism is to secure more power and more prestige not for himself but for the nation or other unit in which he has chosen to sink his own individuality."⁴ This unflinching desire for power doesn't mean power for an individual rather he allies himself with group or groups of power such materialistic alliance kills one's sense of justice and morality. One of the factors of political dehumanization is excessive and aggressive national pride that

gives rise to Fascism and totalitarian powers Julian Huxley in *Man In Modern World* rejects the philosophy of exercise national pride and super-race as he writes:

Today all the protagonists have a philosophy of the war they are waging we in saying that we fight for freedom the German in saying that they fight for the triumph of the highest race; the Russian in saying that they fight for their fatherland and to rid of the world of the evil thing they call Hitlerism. Such philosophers are all incomplete, some of them like the Germans's claim to be super race, and are demonstrably erroneous.⁵

Orwell had considerable difficulty in getting a publisher for *Animal Farm*. His persistence in finding a publisher had a political motive, just as the reluctance of publishers was political in origin. This book is a bitter attack on the Soviet system of government and publishers were unveiling to have anything to do with an attack on a country which was at that time, Britain's ally. This is the first book by Orwell where he has tried with full consciousness to fuse the political purpose and artistic purpose into one whole.

In political terms, the book goes for beyond its, immediate purpose of satirizing the Russian Revolution and its consequences and of exposing the Soviet myth. The assumptions of this book are no more favorable to the political system of western democracy than they are to soviet tyranny or to Nazism. This book is really an attack on politics as such: it shows political activity of any kind and is pursuit of any ostensible aim as ridiculous, base in motive and disastrous.

Orwell seems to suggest that the life of the animals (individuals) is full of struggles and hardships like the life of the poor workers in the world and their fate is always to experience betrayal. This kind of social vision is not that of a genuine Marxist but of a radical liberal who cannot most become utopian socialist.

Orwell seems to suggest that human nature is basically greedy, selfish and vicious. He finds that there is always a new tyrant waiting to take over from the old-generally not quite so bad but still tyrant. He thinks that either of the two positions are tenable-the moralistic and the revolutionary. The revolutionary supposes that you can improve human nature by changing the system, while Dickens the moralist, believes that the world will change only when an individual have a change of heart.

The revolution was spearheaded successfully by the pigs, but after the success of the revolution the Seven Commandments were altered and diluted by the pigs in order to feed their Machiavellian and materialistic appetite. Finally, there remains a single commandment, “All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others”. After the failure of the revolution, the degree of suffering of the individuals enhanced. While stirring the rebellion, the Old Major spoke before the miserable animals “Man is the only real enemy we have. Remove man from the scene and the root cause of hunger and overwork is abolished forever.”(AF-12) This was the dream of emancipation of “unchain the downtrodden from tyranny, “overwork” and exploitation of the” individuals that caused the socialistic revolution.

Orwell seems to suggest that there is a limit of enduring anything, and if that limit is over, the individuals bent upon the revolution for their betterment. Same is the case with the animals who are gradually suppressed by Mr. Jones and one day they are no longer bearable that in inhuman treatment which they suffer from.

But the irony of the situation lies in the betrayal and failure of revolution. Ipso, Facto, the treachery, falsehood and the real face of the socialistic revolution came to be exposed when, the harbingers of the

revolution, themselves began to exploit man. The slogan, “All Animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others, “shows the tramp, exploitation and infliction imposed by the pioneers of the pseudo-socialism. It shows discrimination among the animals themselves. The working class of the proletarians suffered much at the hands of the others who try their best to suppress these individuals and, as a result of that, a sense of despair and disappointment is felt by the individuals who are betrayed.

After the death of Old Major, when Napoleon takes over the charge of *Animal Farm*, the ideas of socialisms are gradually forgotten or perverted. Napoleon drives Snowball from the *Animal Farm*, and after his expulsion from the *Animal Farm*, the animals were shaken and miserable. It intensifies the sense of betrayal and apathy towards the revolution. The pigs because of the debasing and Machiavellian nature go on exploiting the animals pretending that: “We pigs are brain-workers”, says squealer. “The whole management and organization of this farm depends on us. It is for your sake that we drink that milk and eat those apples.”(AF-71)

Revolution is not an end in itself. It only leads to a possibility of a society where the individuals are given equality and where there will be social justice and freedom from exploitation by vested interest. But

human beings as they are have proneness for degeneration. Just a turn of the screw and human beings turn yahoos, a successful socialist state degenerates, into worst dictatorship or anarchy. The pigs being clever and strong group subvert the revolution in which human masters are replaced by animal masters, and others continue serving the rulers. This shows Orwell's disillusionment as well as disgust who thinks that the exploitation of individuals is very bad as it hinders the growth of their personality development.

Under the process of this ascendancy of the animals in man, Orwell has beautifully presented a spectacle of Marxism turning into Stalinism. This is the basic insight Orwell wants to offer. He exposes beautifully the terrors of a totalitarian state controlled by a ruthless band of schemers who first exploit the sentiments of the common individuals to capture power and then subject them to even a greater disposition than they had been used to earlier. There is a complete realization of Lord Acton's thesis "power tends to corrupt, absolute power corrupts absolutely."

Commenting on the humanizing nature of the pigs, Laurence Brander writes correctly "the animal characters fit cunningly to their common counterparts. There is mocking similarity between what the pigs say and what politicians say in order to explore common individuals."

And there is such stupidity and perfidiousness in the all humanness do; as if judged by decent animal's standards, we are very poor creatures indeed.”⁶

The expulsion of snowball from *Animal Farm* has a very special significance. He is charged by Napoleon and his supporters of demolishing the Windmill. This concealing and distorting of facts which gets further focused in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Since, the work of Winston Smith, the protagonist, is to change, eliminate, adjust and to Vaporize' the facts. *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, therefore, get linked to each other. The work of Winston is to change the past as if it had never happened. One of the carthorses, Boxer who utilized his maximum labour in making the revolution successful as well as installing the Windmill, grows old. Hence he is of no use for the pigs therefore, Boxer is sent to the butchers. This brings the correct motif of grabbing unbridled power.

According to some critics like Mathew Hoggart, who in his essay, “From *Animal Farm* to *Nineteen Eighty-four*” says that the novel “also belongs to genre of allegory, since it has a point to point correspondence with the events of Russian history from 1917 to 1943: The war of intervention, The New Economic Plan, the First Five Year plan, the

expulsion of Trotsky and the seizing of powers by Stalin the Hitler - Stalin the pact and invasion by Germany are all closely figured.”

Usually the animals in his book long for order and quite in the society but them always meet with adverse circumstances and face them helplessly. The individuals are not secure which the individuals are not able to get that order which they desire for. There is a complete cut-off from the community of their fellow men. Like Orwell, the author himself, they always seem to say that their revolt against society is compulsive, and that it is the miserable and chaotic state of the world that drives them to rebellion. But they also simultaneously feel apprehensive of losing their individual liberty in any mass action. Apart from an awareness of the terrifying persistence of the animal in man despite all revolutions, the other basic idea that Orwell wants to convey in *Animal Farm* is the threat to individual liberty that modern totalitarian forces have rendered:

There is no doubt in denying the fact that Orwell has a strong hatred for imperialism, totalitarianism, authoritarianism and Fascism. And it is his rebellion against these evils forces of society that he has been called as one of the greatest social reformers like Charles Dickens. He wants to envisage a healthy society based on triple foundations of liberty, justice and common decency. He believes that society should be

free from the evils which cause a warning to the individual personality. He is totally dedicated to the cause of justice, liberty and plight of individuals who struggle hard against the horrors of the society. He serves a logical solution to the horrors of a world where nobody is free, in which the individuals are not secure, in which the individuals are almost incapable of being honest and to remain alive.

Admiring Orwell's humanitarianism, Jeffery Meyers rightly says: Orwell is a humanist to the core whose moving theme is a fervent plea for human dignity and compassion".⁸ In his novels, Orwell shows a his deep hatred against the oppressive forces and defining brilliantly the meaning of socialism, he writes, "Every individuals, who knows the meaning of poverty, everyone who has a genuine hatred for tyranny and war is on the socialist side potentially. We have got to fight for justice and liberty and socialism do mean justice and liberty when the nonsense is stripped off it".⁹

In *Animal Farm*, the pigs after breaking the seven commandments of Animalism become depraved. They walk on their hind gags like men, the sheep bleat if "Four legs good, two left better". (AF-91) It shows the collapse of the beliefs the pigs have already become dehumanized. They have brought wireless set the subscribe to John Bull, Tit Bits and the

Daily Mirror. Napoleon and his supporters have meetings with Mr. Pilkington. Napoleon, in the end, changes the name of ‘*Animal Farm*’ and again restore it to ‘Manor Farm’. The miserable animals peep through the hole of Napoleon’s room and find Napoleon and Mr. Pilkington, and other animals, walking and acting like men. They became bewildered for they were unable to discriminate between the former agents of exploitation, Mr. Pilkington and his friends from the pigs “The creature outside looked from pig to man, and man to pig, and from pig to man again but already it was possible to say which was which (AF-107).

The essential message of the book embodies the fact that all human revolutions achieve the basic framework but with the passage of time the ruling power becomes festered and malignant. It ensnares the common man into its network. Stephen Jay Greenbelt convincingly exposes the materialistic appetite of all who bring revolution in the name of individual’s emancipation, “There have been are and always will be pigs in every society’, Orwell says “they will always grab power” (AF-121). In *A George Orwell Companion*. J.R. Hammond writes correctly. “The essential thesis of this book then is that all human revolution fails to achieve the lofty expectations of their originators.”¹⁰ Like Orwell’s *Animal Farm* Arthur Koestler’s *Darkness at Noon*, exposes the failure of

the socialistic revolution which conspire treacherously to grab unfettered pomp and power. In chapter seven, the animal suffers from a deep sense of revolution when Napoleon kicks Snowball out. They show a sense of helplessness and pathos at their own wretched state of affairs : J.R. Hammond writes: “that the ruling elite becomes or corrupted by the growth of its own power until at least it is responsible to itself and ruthlessly destroys any opposition. Tyranny is, by definition, evil, regardless of its political complexion.”¹¹ This enhances Orwell’s condemnation of powers which exploit the individuals for the sake of power. William Steinhoff also identifies correctly the Soviet Revolution, with the politics of betrayal played by the depraved intellectuals. He writes:

‘Orwell has seized the spirit of the age and his own vision of the situation of the world and man was almost the culminating point of the committed writer and his world. He had written against to totalitarianism and assault against the liberty of the individuals. *Animal Farm* deals with the oppressor or an oppressed; exploiter and the exploited. Then it powerfully strikes at the betrayal of revolution. He goes on to argue that power always makes individuals debased and corrupt. Orwell

asks emphatically, is this fate of every revolution brought is the name of human welfare and socialism. The pathos of animals lies in the fact that after the failure of revolution they suffer from sense of injured merit. This turns the table upside down for the common individuals who think that there will be amelioration of their suffering after the revolution. But it never happens.

Orwell described *Animal Farm* as a fairy story. In fact, it is an animal fable which presents two morals, one universal, the other topical. It exposes the corruptibility of man, showing how the reformers abuse power when he seizes it from the tyrant and how in a revolutionary situation the most ruthless man will outset his colleagues as rivals and exploit the worker by cruelty and lies.

Through the animals, the writer presents various kinds of societal types-pigs for exploiters, horses for laborers, dogs for polices, help for blind followers etc. Orwell wants to convey the powerful idea that they always grasp power there have been and always will be pigs in every society, and they will always power everyone in the society, directly or indirectly, contributes to the pig's tyranny.

George Orwell's *Animal Farm* shows all the art forms of evil, dehumanization and totalitarianism. In *Animal Farm*, Orwell argues emphatically that power brings corruption and moral depravity in human nature. Like the worship of "Money-God", it is also a religion which betrays individuals' aspirations. Since, Orwell was a socialist; he perceives socialism from a socialistic point of view. *Animal Farm* is a powerful exposition of the malignancy and materialism of the pseudo-socialism which exploited the individuals in the name of state control and central economy. The socialistic revolution, brought in the name of human welfare and emancipation from exploitation and slavery, proved to be more betrayal, pretence and falsehood.

Orwell should singly be regarded a man of democratic socialism. He is a militant socialist and not a mere propagandist. His *Animal Farm* suggests that man is selfish, greedy and cruel by nature. He is power-hungry and after attaining absolute power he becomes a tyrant. In *Animal Farm* power turns Napoleon's head and makes him mad. Orwell's thesis remains that in every society the individuals should be treated with justice and a sense of decency as well as common brotherhood should mark their relations with each other. He strongly feels that imperialism and

authoritarianism should not be allowed to again ground which sap individual's freedom and equality in the society.

Though he chose socialist system as an alternative he found the universally acclaimed and accepted Soviet Socialist model unpalatable. He himself failed to devise some variant of democratic socialism because whenever he tried he found himself in the every mire of contradiction between collectivization, industrialization and centralized control in the one hand and democracy and individual liberty on the other. May be it is this ideological confusion that does not let him offer a solution to the problems posed in *Animal Farm*.

In this way, in Orwell's Novels, we come across a bitter and hard struggle of the individuals with the society surrounding them in order to achieve their deserved position. But the individuals due to the lack of concentrated effort fail to achieve their aims. They never apply their efforts whole-heartedly rather half-heartedly, and that is why, their revolt does not bring any fruitful and meaningful changes in their lives. They continue to fight an eternal war against reality around them. That is why; they are oppressed and crushed by the cruel forces of authoritarianism and totalitarianism in the society. The individuals in Orwell's works are not fully conscious of the store of energy within them, but if they gather

their courage fully they can turn the table. Orwell wants such individuals to use their potential and energy fully so as to bring desired changes in the society.

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