



George Orwell as a Committed Writer

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Abstract

It is an established fact that George Orwell was a humanist to the core who wrote for the amelioration of poor working classes suffering from inequality and oppression at the hands of despotic and cruel regime. Orwell was able to write about the problems of working class people because he himself faced poverty and oppression which he described in a convincing manner in his fictional and non-fictional works. George Orwell always pleads for the oppressed half of humanity and also speaks for the betterment of those people. Orwell's humanism is based on democratic ideals of equality, brotherhood and decency which he considers to be the bedrock of his concept of humanism.

Key-words: Oppression, Humanity, Equality, Brotherhood, Sympathy, Democracy

Paper

There is no doubt in denying the fact that George Orwell occupies a prominent and towering place among the twentieth century writers. After going through the fictional works of George Orwell, we can safely and rightly conclude the fact that he emerges as humanist and a committed write in the tradition of Mulk Raj Anand and others. Like



Mulk Raj Anand and other humanitarian writers, in Orwell's humanitarian perspectives, one can witness sympathy, compassion and deep rooted generosity for the oppressed classes. George Orwell's humanitarian perspective is also constructed on the bedrock of universal brotherhood and restoration of fundamental democratic values like equality, liberty and decency. It was because Orwell himself was a victim of hostile forces in the society like poverty, human suffering, exploitation and man's dehumanization. In his fictional works, we come across of his humanistic philosophy, and his philosophy itself provides the format of Orwellian concept of humanism.

There are various critics like Carter who analyses Orwell's novels in terms of conflict between the self and the outside world. In George Orwell's novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the same critic finds a repetition of Kafka's novel, *The Trial*, for Winston Smith only discovers evil rather than good which is nothing but an absurdist idea. Further, we find Winston Smith refers to the totalitarian system and the double-think device of Ingsoc depend upon Sartre's view of existentialism as the novelist also puts it as :“it is a simple fact about human beings that they are able to hold two contradictory beliefs at one and the same time, or to believe and not to believe the same thing at the same time.”

In Orwell's fictional world, we witness a warm glow of the humanitarian perspective as Hammond also points out: “He (Orwell) demonstrates the intellectual weakness of the moralistic position as exemplified by Dickens whilst at the same time acknowledging his profound admiration for the warm humanitarian vision.”

George Orwell is well known for his staunch humanism and his commitment for reflecting the problems of poor masses. His humanism and commitment make him a



novelist with a mission and purpose, his mission being to write for the betterment of oppressed humanity. He considers that a truly humanistic art is commensurate with the needs of our times. His humanism results from his consciousness of an urgent need to help to raise the suppressed members of society. He is a crusader in the cause of humanity. He writes for refining and ennobling him for stirring up the dormant stores of tenderness in him for his fellow human beings. It is precisely for this reason that Orwell is no spinner of fairy tales for mere amusement. On the contrary, he has always written to emphasize the essential dignity of man despite his weaknesses and to engender compassion in the hearts of men for the oppressed and the downtrodden.

As an assertive writer, George Orwell shows no blind adherence to any political camp. His works demonstrate the impact of politics on artistic imagination. He shows how politics, its effect and its study can enrich the sensibility of a writer. His novels *Animal Farm*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, *Burmese Days*, and *A Clergyman's Daughter* seem to focus on the treatment of human values. His life and writings are dedicated to the values of democracy, freedom, equality and liberal humanism. His concept of an ideal society rests on the basic tenets of humanity. These are easily understandable by those who have been bred in the best traditions of the nineteenth century liberalism. In fact, Orwell depicts the society in all its sociological hues. He is of the view that humanity can be retrieved only if the society is based on the tenets of socialism. He gives us a faithful representation of almost all the social aspects prevailing during his time such as Capitalism, Colonialism and Socialism, the chief political ideologies taking over the world. In his works, he tries to develop a comprehensive and suitable theory of moulding the society on the main



foundations of brotherhood, decency and human freedom. As a journalist also, his effort has always been to bring about a general social awakening among the people. He always shows a deep involvement in the problems of the poorer sections of society. He wants to oppose the system which keeps them under oppression. But, despite his passionate concern for the poor people, he could not convince himself that any proper method could be devised to end their miseries. He feels apprehensive that only totalitarian structures emerge in modern times to replace the hated capitalist system. Though he tries to indict the oppressive system in his books, his experience of the Russian Revolution shatters his hopes for a better future for mankind in which there is humanity and individual liberty. He loves individual liberty and when it is threatened, he fills with gloom and pessimism. He feels that the overthrow of the new type of oppressive system is very difficult. In such a society, there will be no justice, equality and human freedom. One should be conscious that there is danger to one's freedom and this consciousness is the central part of Orwell's socialistic philosophy. According to him, three foundations of socialism are liberty, equality and justice along with human freedom. The virtues of socialism, according to him, are to be measured in terms of decency, common sense and human freedom. His main task in his works remains to propagate a vision of society which is based on the type of socialism mentioned above. He repeatedly expresses his bitter hatred against those forces which threaten these values. The humanity and human freedom presented in his works are something in common with that which has inspired the great humanitarian novelists of the nineteenth century. It must be clear that he is not merely a utopian philosopher, rather his vision of human freedom rests on a realistic understanding of the activities of his time. He satirises imperialism, totalitarianism and dictatorship in



a forceful manner, as we have seen from the study of *Animal Farm*, and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. He is always clear about the gospel he wants to preach. His major themes have always been human freedom, human dignity and compassion. That is why, his works particularly *Animal Farm*, and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* acquire a universal appeal. These works will keep him alive so long as the basic tenets of humanism are valued in the world. These novels reveal a successful fusion of the political insight into fictional form. Orwell's prime concern in these works is the struggle against Fascism, imperialism, inequality, lack of humanity and human freedom.

Both the novels, *Animal Farm*, and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* deal with the same theme, although their treatment is different. In both these novels, human freedom and humanity have been threatened by the socio-political conditions of the times. In *Animal Farm*, the common masses are first promised to live a life where human freedom will be a priority. But after the revolution, the humanity itself is betrayed. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, we come across how inhumanity leads to the degeneration of one's personality in the character of Winston Smith. It also shows how one's personality growth is hindered due to the lack of human freedom in one's life. The main theme of the novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, is similar to Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. It is about the obliteration of humanity by the powerful state, by reducing consciousness and diminishing identities. The vision of humanity and human freedom depicted in both these novels- *Animal Farm*, and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is extremely disturbing because of the two fold horror. Not only the external freedom is infringed, but also the spirit of human beings is stifled.



Orwell is a great champion of the underdogs. The cruelties and inequalities of life troubled him. His purpose in his novels always remains to associate himself with the oppressed half of humanity. Being a humanist, he has developed a deep sympathy for the weaker sections of society. He feels an innermost psychological compulsion to choose themes of humanitarian character that would provide him an opportunity to plead for the amelioration of the neglected sections of society. His humanistic approach with all its problems is a brave endeavour on the part of a writer.

Without any shadow of doubt, George Orwell's protagonists return to the society resolving an authentic failure with a positive sense of compromise. He faces the world with a renewed sense of courage, faith, honesty and common decency. George Orwell's sense of despair against the dehumanized world was projected from the individual to the social plane. He considers individual more valuable to the crowd. He is an advocate of the fact that no good of masses is feasible without placing the individual in the correct perspective at the centre of the world. His characters like Winston Smith, Gordon Comstock, George Bowling do not identify themselves with the shift of social, moral, political and economic values. In such a hostile world, they seek to achieve authenticity, fight against the adversities of life honestly in order to retain their integrity and dignity and want to make their life worth living.

Like P.B. Shelley, George Orwell was also revolutionary in his outlook disturbed by the cruelties and inadequacies of life. Since Orwell was a product of post-industrialist era and that is why, he was fully aware of the lurking dangers and antagonism to this work of commitment to bring succor to the ailing mankind. His humanistic approach and commitment to social problems of life, seem to a brave endeavour on the part of



the writer. He thinks that only a humanistic approach to life and the problems associated with it can provide dignity to individuals in the society.

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