



Conflict between Individual Vs Society: a Critical Study of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four* and *Animal FARM*

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ABSTRACT

George Orwell presents the struggle of the individuals in a hostile world and they never emerge as winner. He presents a kind of society where there is no equality no brotherhood, no decency etc. In such a society, the individuals are crushed by the weight of different political and religious ideologies, but they are never triumphant. His heroes from Flory to Winston Smith fight against the hostile forces of the society in the form of totalitarianism and authoritarianism are always a threat for the individuals of the society which hampers their personality growth.

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George Orwell's novels are an extended metaphor of the humanitarian perspective. He saw his age suffering from bewilderment, anxiety and anguish in the thirties when the Second World-War was menacing the existence of man. His novels present a cross-section of the chaotic, muddled and sick world of the pre and post-Second World-War. He shows a mystical insight into the cross currents of the contemporary life. As such, his political and human consciousness gave him a much wider perspective he liberated himself from the shackles of ideologies. Hence, Orwell is neither a leftish nor a rightish, nor even a middle of the path man. He firmly believes in the human values as the supreme guiding force. Orwell desires to expose the dehumanizing and self-debasing lust for power represented by the state. This brought about a direct confrontation with the totalitarian powers. He could see the danger due to loss of freedom in a communist society as well as in any other state under the dictatorship of capitalist masters. Nazism and Fascism are only cloaks to hide the degenerating craving for power which is used to make the individuals of the society faceless and slaves.

Orwell's novels show that an individual cannot know the absolute. The individuals are at the centre of the society and are therefore, the measure of all things. In his world, individual's dignity and viability is not worthy. But, at the same time he, like Huxley, believes that dehumanization of individuals is one of the consequences of advancement of science and technology.

George Orwell's novel, *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, and *A Clergyman's Daughter* expose the poverty-stricken life of the individuals who are deprived of bare necessities of life that makes them dehumanized in a different way. Orwell writes emphatically that endless slums make negative effect upon the standards of living of the individuals. Both these novels are an authentic and powerful study where he sympathetically probes into the abysmal pits of poverty and its annihilating effects upon the individuals who try hard to cope with the ruthless force of poverty in the society surrounding them. An individual can keep the dignity in his life when he is not living in wants and under constant threat of starvation and death. The individuals are aware of the fact that the their survive in the society is not an easy affair, and they have to wage a war against the hard realities of the society.



Orwell's novel, *Coming Up For Air*, is an exploration of an individual's endless search for his identity in a society in which the dehumanizing of commercialism and nightmare threaten the individuals and the individual's integrity.

In such a difficult socio-political scenario, Orwell's only hope lies in 'common decency' and 'democratic socialism'. What Orwell is basically concerned is to have 'a hearing and to bring individuals back to decent, fully humane life.' Orwell's artistic and fictional efforts seem to ameliorate individuals suffering at large and their struggle with the society which is bent upon dehumanizing them. But, he never seems to lose faith in the basic goodness of individual's nature. He cherishes the idea of 'common decency' and 'democratic socialism', and tries to restore the 'religious attitude'. He treats life as 'final'. This humanistic idea enables Orwell to struggle and to face the problems of the society with a note of optimism. Many critics have charged him of pessimism. But any analysis of his writings, both fictional and non-fictional, shows his concern for the welfare and happiness of common individual. *The Road to Wigan Pier*, and *Homage to Catalonia* are the politics of poverty.

Every individual in Orwell's fiction has to fight a continuous bitter struggle against the society and its dehumanized forces. As a result of that, every individual in Orwell's novels, endeavour to come out of the abysmal state of disintegration. They are lonely and fragmented in the alien world. They fail to identify themselves with the society surrounding them. They try to escape from the inhuman world to live according to the demands of human wisdom which seems to them the only viable means of survival. Orwell's individuals face the adversities political, social, economic and even spiritual boldly. They do not break because their faith in the essential goodness of man is firm. They learn to rehabilitate themselves in the war-torn society finding a meaning in an otherwise meaningless world. Life, according to Orwell after all, is worth living.

Orwell, knew very well that an individual is more valuable than the crowd. And no good of the masses is feasible without placing the individual in the correct perspective at the centre of the society. His individuals like Winston Smith, Gordon Comstock, George Bowling do not identify themselves with the swift 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. In this way, his novels might be read and appreciated from existential point of view. His individuals are a misfit in the modern society for they are unable to cope with the utopian society which is based upon cruelty, in justice and inhumanity Orwell feels apprehensive that in the name of salvation of the poor and the exploited individuals, 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 shattered his hopes for a better future for individuals. Orwell loves individual liberty and when this is threatened, a system which ends on individual's liberty, is no doubt an oppressive one. This fills Orwell with gloom and pessimism. To overthrow the new type of oppressive system, he feels, is very difficult. His individuals try their best to overthrow this kind of oppressive system which is totally against an individual's liberty and equality.

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Winston Smith is an individual who has developed bitter hatred against totalitarian forces in the society. He shows his rebellious nature against the unfavourable circumstances which curb an individual's liberty as well as the growth of his personality. He feels that his individual's voice has been crushed by the society and he has no freedom to speak truth as he feels himself totally in chains. These chains are the chains of the totalitarian and authoritarian type of political systems in the society that keep hindering their personality growth. Like Gordon Comstock, Smith rebels against the totalitarian powers. He is no longer ready to sell his conscience and morality in an inhuman world which haunts with nightmarish experiences. T.V. Screens, Microphones and spying helicopters, are the cruel means which are enough to expose the individuals who act



and even think against the totalitarian power-Big Brother. Winston no longer identifies himself with the existing callousness of the society. An individual's thoughts, memories and the past are controlled by the theory of 'Oligarchial Collectivism'. Winston, while working in his office, feels the wiping out of the past, the past he reflected had not merely been altered, it had been actually destroyed.

To Big Brother, it is an individual's consciousness which can break the party into pieces. Like other individuals, Winston also feels his individual voice stifled by cruel and inhuman means. There is a perception that one of the aims of totalitarianism is not merely to make sure that individuals will think the right thoughts but actually to make them less conscious. Orwell argues for the restoration of individual integrity which is wiped out in any kind of totalitarianism. Since, Orwell is a humanitarian writer, he does not tolerate to see the debasing and dehumanizing forces which delink an individual from the past. The society surrounding them provides cheap entertainment and pseudo-propaganda in order to make them unable to think and to make them politically paralysed.

The escape of Winston and Julia from such a society, based on totalitarian rules, symbolizes their desire for personal freedom, domesticity and instinct life which are an integral part of an individual's life, and which they are deprived from. But, when both are caught red handed, the Inner Party symbolized by O'Brien, is bent upon punishing them through severe means. It shows that not only in case of Winston and Julia, but all the individuals in the society are tortured by Inner party through severe punishment.

After Winston is caught, he is kept in the Room No. 101, where Winston is tortured mercilessly and kept oblivious of the normal course of the life. O'Brien tortures Winston to nth degree and Winston, after betraying Julia, surrenders himself to the power of O'Brien and Big Brother. He does not surrender easily, but is forced to surrender by means of the devices which torture him mercilessly. Like Winston, many other individuals of the society are also vaporized by the totalitarian forces and thus, are deprived of personality growth. Winston's confession before the Party's rules, neither solve any problems nor it reconciles him to the totalitarian world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. It does not bring any solution in the lives of the individuals who, like Winston, are kept deprived of the individual liberty and equality. Individual like Winston, are made outside history. O'Brien tells the helpless victim, Winston Smith, how the individuals who dare to raise their head against the Party Codes, are forced to love Big Brother. O'Brien, later on, unfolds the mystery of party's immortality. He tells Winston that what is the meaning of an individual's death how revolt against them.

The individuals in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* long for happiness and freedom, but it is a day-dreaming for them. Even in personal lives, the individuals feel a check at each and every step. The society is no longer in favour of sex in an individual's life. Sex is allowed only to beget children and not for the sake of enjoyment. Even individuals like Julia, the member of Junior Anti-sex league, are interested in sex just for the sake of pleasure. She also wants to break the shackles of totalitarian forces, and that is why, Julia escapes with Winston in search of sexual gratification. After meeting Winston, Julia takes each and every duty assigned to her by the party casually and, thus, like other individuals she also shows some streaks of rebellion in her mind.

Like *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Orwell's novel *Animal Farm*, is also an electrifying example to show how the individuals of the society lose their identity when they are crushed by the totalitarian forces. *Animal Farm*, in fact, is a powerful satire against Machiavellian craving for power. He thinks that politics and revolution bring chaos and annihilate individuality of the individuals; revolution is not an answer because it thwarts man's aspirations and hope for liberty. Orwell argues eloquently that the revolution brought in the name of social welfare is merely a cloak to grab unbridled power. It is a presentation to exploit the individuals in every possible way. The individuals after the socialistic revolution find that the degree of exploitation and suffering are increased in their lives. The Socialistic revolution was brought in the name of human welfare, but after the



attainment of power the things turned upside down, and the individual are exploited in more ruthless manner than they had been earlier. This unveils the process of dehumanization. Power is corrupt in itself. It is a kind of religion where good and evil do not hold any significance.

Animal Farm seems to be an objective condemnation of Fascism, Communism and other, in a human orthodoxies which is also reflected in Orwell's essay "Why I Write". The animals of the *Animal Farm* are in the beginning tortured mercilessly by the owner of the farm, Mr. Jones. But the old major's dream is the force behind the movement which is a source of inspiration for all. Old Major is conscious of the fact that the individuals on the farm are deprived of human freedom human dignity and the equality by the owner, Mr. Jones. They work hard in the fields but are not given sufficient food to eat in return. As a result of that, they think of a adopting a rebellious attitude to make the owner run a way from the farm. The animals are the owner of the farm now. But after the revolution, their dream of getting equality and freedom is further broken by the pigs that attain dictatorship on the farm. They think that they are more intelligent than other animals and they will maintain equality on the form in the future course of time. All the animals will be guided by seven commandments of the farm.

But as the pigs attain dictatorship, all the seven commandments are altered, and diluted by the pigs in orders to feed their mach Machiavellian and materialistic appetite, Finally, there remains a single commandment, "All animal are equal but some animals are more equal than others"¹. After the failure of revolution, the degree of suffering and pathos is enhanced. It also enhances Orwell's condemnation of powers which exploit the individuals for the sake of power. The novelist's anxiety is caused by the loss of individuality. He is afraid that the autonomous individual is ceasing to exist. He expresses a deep sense of anger and disgust against the intellectuals who seek to escape.

In this way, Orwell's numerous individuals seem to admire domesticity and where there is come naturalness and human values. He finds that lives of individuals completely degenerated and life less. Orwell's many individuals escape to the World solitude which symbolizes their inclination towards human life. His dynamics of humanism extends a profound and live effect for the suffering individuals who fight endlessly against the society. He wants to develops a sense of conscience and morality in order to prevent the individuals from being further deprived of justice, equality and decency in the society in which they exist. He was craving certain positive values for the survival of individuals in the society. He is, without any shadow of doubt, the conscience of our generation.

Orwell's novels seriously and emphatically expose the pathetic condition of the down-trodden and the poor who saw a wretched life in endless slums. On the other hand Orwell finds them an embodiment of human values, conscience, generosity and uprightness. He goes on to hope on them.

An embittered indignation against the evils of commercialism, capitalism and pseudo-advertisement, find expression in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*. The individuals, Gordon Comstock who man, refuses to worship the money God is embittered and chooses the live in a slum for he finds a shelter in it a way from the menace of dehumanizing believes that culture and civilization attain total harmony if balance between body and spirit, flesh and soul is achieved which forms the humanitarian infrastructure of the whole society.

Orwell is a thinker who constantly continued to defend the rights of the proletariat, the suffering and exploited individuals. It seems a distinguished argument in the age of orthodoxies, organizations and regimentation. Nineteen Eighty-Four is a political novel as Jeffery Meyers rightly puts it as "Nineteen Eighty-Four portrays the very real though unfamiliar political terrorism of Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia transposed in to the landscape of London in 1941-44"². There is no doubt in denying the fact that Nineteen Eighty-Four is a novel full of pessimism as Issac Deutscher rightly concludes: "Nineteen Eighty-Four is a document of dark and



disillusioned not only with Stalinism but with every form and shade of socialism. It is a cry from the abyss of despair”3.

Orwell, like Shelley, was a rebel. The cruelties and inadequacies of the individuals fighting for liberty troubled him. He, too, quivered like the poet with the frenzied desire to bring fire to mankind and no sacrifice was great in this promethean task. Orwell, being a product of the post industrial era is fully aware of the lurking dangers and antagonism to this task of commitment to bring solution to the ailing individuals in the society. His humanistic approach to life with all its problems is a brave endeavour on the part of the writer. His aim is to present the individuals in their proper perspective. Only a humanistic approach to life and its solution can provide dignity to the individuals in the society.

REFERENCES

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- [2] Jeffery Meyers, *The Genesis of 1984, A Reader's Guide to George Orwell*(London: Thames And Hudson Ltd, 1975)p. 145
- [3] Issac Deutscher, 1984, *The Mysteries of Cruelity, George Orwell 20th Century View* ed by Raymond Williamm(New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc. Englewood, 1974)p.127