



## Vision of Society in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Animal Farm*

Dinesh Kumar

Asstt. Prof. of English

Dyal Singh College, Karnal

[dineshkarnal1@gmail.com](mailto:dineshkarnal1@gmail.com)

### Abstract

It is an established fact that George Orwell is one of the renowned figures among the British novelists. He has presented a vision of society of society that is based on equality and freedom. His protagonists search for their identity in the society in which the forces of totalitarianism exists in their horrible form. His heroes from Flory to Winston Smith can be found struggling against the horrible situation that surrounds them.

### Paper

George Orwell, as compared with his contemporary writers, is original to the point of being remarkably different. As an assertive writer, George Orwell shows no blind adherence to any political camp and documents very vividly the crude realities of social and political field in his age. The textual analysis of Orwell's two major novels, undertaken in the preceding chapters shows his social vision and his major concerns, as a twentieth-century novelist. His books demonstrate the impact of

politics on artistic imagination. He shows how politics, its effect and its study, can enrich the sensibility of a writer.

In his works, Orwell tries to develop a comprehensive and suitable theory of moulding the society on the main foundations of human brotherhood. As a pamphleteer and journalist also, Orwell's 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 and 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 misery.

He feels apprehensive that in the name of salvation of the poor and the exploited, 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 mankind. Orwell loves individual liberty and when this is threatened, a system which ends economic exploitation appears to be as oppressive as the one based on economic exploitation. This fill Orwell with gloom and pessimism. The overthrow of the new type of oppressive system, he feels, is very difficult. It was possible only if the 'Proles' of the working-classes come into action through greater social consciousness. This idea of greater social consciousness is the central emphasis in Orwell's socialistic philosophy.

According to him, three foundations of socialism are liberty, equality and justice. The virtues of socialism, according to him, are to be measured in terms of decency, common-sense and common brotherhood. Orwell's main task in his books 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 vision of society Orwell projects in his works is something in common with that which has inspired the great humanitarian novelists of the nineteenth century. He is very close to Dickens in his vision of a humane social order and, like Dickens, pleads strongly for the amelioration of the oppressed half of humanity. A similar

outlook is expressed by the American novelist, John Steinbeck in his book, *The Grapes of Wrath*. There are streaks of Marxism in Orwell's humanitarian outlook, and some critics go to the extent of saying that Orwell is even a better Marxist than the theoretical pundits of socialism. This, of course, is not borne out by a close study of the novels through which his vision of society is projected.

It must be clear that Orwell is not merely a utopian philosopher. His vision of society rests on a realistic understanding of the activities of his time. He satirises imperialism, totalitarianism, and dictatorship in a forceful manner, assaid by Dianna Trilling : we are being warned against the extremes to which the contemporary totalitarian spirit can carry us, not only so that will be warned against Russia but also so that we will understand the ultimate dangers involved wherever power moves under the guise of order and rationality.”<sup>1</sup> He is always clear about the gospel he want to preach. His major themes have always been human dignity and compassion. And that is the reason why his works particularly *The Road to Wigan Pier*, *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.

Orwell's last novels, *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* reveal a successful fusion of the political insight into the fictional form, and also the mould of his own experiences. Orwell's prime concern in these works is the struggle against fascism, imperialism and inequality. Socialism is of secondary concern to him.

His novel *Animal Farm* is a utopian fantasy portraying the development of a state proclaimed as an ideal one but becoming despotic and Oligarchial as says Orwell himself in one of his collected essays: History contains of a series of swindles, in which the masses are first lured into revolt by the promise of Utopia, and then when they have done their job, enslaved over again by new masters."<sup>2</sup> The seven commandments written on the wall of the farm just after the revolution provide a fair idea of the past life promised by leaders. It presents the spectacle of Marxism turning to Stalinism. It depicts how the poor workers suffer economic exploitation in the modern times. Though pessimistically, Orwell succeeds in characterising the evil impulses of human beings by presenting them as animals in the story.

There are obviously hints in the book that all revolutions

including the one which begins primarily with noble aims, are bound to turn, sooner or later, into a corrupt monopoly of power by one group or one person. And the result will be as declared by Benjamin in the story that 'life will go on as it has always gone on that is badly'. The poor workers will gain nothing out of revolution except the tyranny of horror of essential human conditions. This has been remarkably exhibited in *Animal Farm*.

Both *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* deal with the same theme, although their treatment is different. Orwell's observation of and participation in the Spanish Civil war and Second World War, made him aware of some realities which heightened his political consciousness as is manifest in *Animal Farm*. His indignation against communism went to the making of this story of humanized beasts. It was the first book in which Orwell tried, with full consciousness of what he was doing, to fuse political purpose and artistic purpose into one whole.

In his broad approach to his themes, Orwell takes the lowest possible view of politicians in both the books – *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. He sees politicians not as ordinary men caught up in big events and forced into evil moulds, but as depraved men, who have been drawn to politics

in the first place by the corrupting search for power. Orwell's heart is with the political idealists, but his head gives its verdict the other way. In *Animal Farm*, the rise of pigs as rulers is presented as inevitable, which has a pervasive irony. The pigs at once come into power and persuade other animals through a characteristic inter-play of idealism and fear. But when the machinery of 'authoritarianism' system passes in their hands, fear replaces idealism fully. B.T. Oxley does not consider this novel to be an allegory as he says: It is not an allegory in which everything has a stand for something else"<sup>3</sup>

But, it cannot be denied that Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is, in some ways, a more powerful outcry of humanity 'from the abyss of despair' than one projects through the animal fable in *Animal Farm*. It demonstrates Orwell's loss of faith in the redemption of humanity. In this book any hope of revolution by the 'Proles' is denied, whereas in *Animal Farm* the farm animals have not been able to overthrow the human dictator, Mr. Jones

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 nature of hope

from life, honesty, sex and humanity is first demonstrated and then systematically overthrown by Nineteen Eighty-four the Party in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Though *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, is ironical in almost all aspects, the irony is fittingly translated at one point into the pattern of Winston Smith's relationship with O'Brien. From the earlier pages of the novel, Winston has been aware of an affinity between himself and O'Brien. This relationship between Winston and O'Brien is the apotheosis of the novel's despair. In the light of this, all the incidental ironies take on a new edge.

Irony, being a powerful weapon of a satirist, has been fully exploited by Orwell in both the novels. In *Animal Farm*, animals raise voice against their human master, Jones, and turn him out for his vices, which ironically they themselves pick up after becoming the masters. The irony becomes even more pervasive when the new rulers (pigs) change the commandments according to their convenience, 'All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others'.

The three slogans of the Inner Party in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, can be recounted here. And these slogans are highly ironical:

**WAR IS PEACE**  
**FREEDOM IS SLAVERY**



## IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, wars have become a means to control the people. It is fought not to win or overthrow the enemy, but to meet their higher political ends. The four Ministries have deceptive names. Ironically, the Ministry of Truth, is meant to falsify the facts, the Ministry of Peace is meant to keep the wars going, the Ministry of Love, carries out hate sessions and most ironically, the Ministry of Plenty, works to ration the products.

Every hero of Orwell from Flory of *Burmese Days* to Winston Smith of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, finds himself alone in a non-human world. So every hero seems to be trapped, whether it be the trap of imperialism in his *Burmese Days* or finally the political trap in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Flory and Winston Smith both feel lonely at heart. They strive for human contact, have love-affairs which are dissatisfactory and their quest for satisfaction meets a wretched end. They yield their individual learning and become a part of the system they live in. Their revolt is muffled and weak because they do it half heartedly.

Orwell's use of imagery and symbols is always relevant and illustrative. There is a complete disintegration of Winston's personality which is symbolic of a threat to

individual liberty. On the other hand, in *Animal Farm* there is no such horrible disintegration of individual's personality. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is symbolic of Winston's shattered hopes and also his life. Julia's casting-off her clothes in Winston's dream is symbolic of getting rid of the totalitarian fetters. In *Animal Farm*, Orwell's tendency of exploiting animal imagery leads him to create a world populated by 'human animals' and 'animal humans'. The rat imagery appears in all his novels in one form or another. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, rats are made to invade the secret room of Winston and Julia. In *Animal Farm*, there is also a reference to rats; they also join the meeting. Orwell's images go beyond the surface meaning and bring out significant sense in his books.

The vision of a society depicted in both these novels – *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is extremely disturbing because of the two-fold horrors. Not only the external freedom is infringed, but also the spirit of human beings is stifled. They have lost their purity of conscience, and have become robots just to obey, not to question. The dictators in both the novels (Pigs and Big Brother) keep their subjects in utter poverty and deprivation to have a strict control over them.

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Orwell shows a remarkable

depth and complexity of the horror of essential human condition, which is dealt with at a comparatively superficial level in *Animal Farm*. That is why, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has greater appeal. We are impressed by its vehemence with which the modern power structure has been satirized. It is certainly a more impressive book than *Animal Farm*.

Language has been one of the major concerns of Orwell in his novels. Language in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, is the most significant device for bringing out the horrors of a rootless, totalitarian wasteland. The words like 'Thought Control', 'Double Think', and 'Thinkpol', have a ring of something terrible.

From *Burmese Days* to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Orwell develops an intensity in his social vision. His reputation as a political novelist chiefly rests on his three novels – *Burmese Days*, *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. If *Burmese Days* is a well regarded novel, *Animal Farm* is a classic of its own kind, and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a fine work of fiction as well as a significant political satire.

Both the passionate desire for justice and bitter pessimism are aptly combined in Orwell's works. That is why he is recognized as a major satirist. Though Orwell rejects idealism in society, it degenerates into bitter hostility

to all moral efforts. He envisages a society that will, after some time, sink into a place where rage, love, hope shame all are dead. Orwell is concerned to show revolutionary ideals of justice, equality and fraternity facing ironic reversals in *Animal Farm*. The insights which *Animal Farm* offers are later spelt out in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The basic political reality is a struggle for power and the basic reality of power is the ambition and self-aggrandisement of the few at the expense of the many.

Orwell, after experimenting with all kinds of social and political systems, comes to realize that none of them is relevant and successful. But even then, he keeps on trying new systems, till the end. He wishes to evolve a socially relevant vision, something that he failed to accomplish. The analysis of both the novels discussed in preceding chapters helps us in appreciating him well. These books demonstrate the impact of politics on artistic imagination. George Orwell has made an important place for himself among the political novelists of a century in which the political novel is a significant force.

## REFERENCES

1. Dianna Trilling, Nation, *George Orwell: The Critical*



---

*Heritage*, ed. By Jeffery Meyers( London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1975) p. 261

2. George Orwell, *Collected Essays* ( London: Secker and Warburg, 1961) p. 388

3. B.T. Oxley, *George Orwell: Literature and Perspective*( London: Evan Brothers, 1967)p. 81