



Assertion and Ideology in the Novels of George Orwell

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George Orwell dislikes the power which made them oppressors, and because the Burmese were the underdogs, he had to criticize the English. This was his reaction to the end of his life: whether the oppressed were Indians, the unemployed, a political minority in Spain or in Russia, he always stood up for the weaker side. As a self-described democratic socialist, Orwell believed in active government, yet his alertness to the excesses of official power informed *Animal Farm* and *1984*, his two masterpieces about totalitarianism.

KEYWORDS: --Oppressor, Democratic socialist, Totalitarianism, SPIRITUAL DISQUIETUDE

INTRODUCTION

Eric Arthur Blair who wrote his books under the pen name of George Orwell was born on 25th June, 1903 in Motihari, Bengal, in India. "George Orwell, the great essayist, novelist and journalist, was the penname of Eric Arthur Blair. He was born in Bengal, India, in 1903. His boyhood was spent in the pre-war period of England. It was a period of some progress but the First World War destroyed all this. This period was full of Great Peace based on the liberal capitalistic society.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND SPIRITUAL DISQUIETUDE

George Orwell has many of the traits of the best English pamphleteer, courage an individual vehement opinion, an instinct for stirring up trouble, the arts of appealing to that imaginary creature the sensible man and of combining original observations with sweeping generalization of seeing enemies everywhere and despising all of them. The economic and social conditions of the age of Orwell left their influence on Orwell and moulded his world-view. The socio-economic questions of the day on which Orwell brooded deeply, had a bearing on cultural values. The trustworthiness of Orwell's literary work was that he managed to translate his variegated experience into the ever-widening channels of his thought and action. His experience of abysmal poverty in Paris and London, of totalitarianism in Spain, of imperialism in Burma gave him sufficient food for thought- to ponder over the great socio-economic problems of the age. The authoritarian system at cross gates made him aware of one ugly social reality, that of class distinctions. Orwell was very near the truth when he spoke of the indivisible relationship between the English educational system and the English class-consciousness. He evolved his views on social injustice and exploitation. There are two classes- the middle class and working class. He creates a kind of space between man and men. The middle class because of his economic well being and because of his social prestige exploitation. Poor and down trodden society known as working class in the terminology of Orwell. With the term exploitation is utilized for the working class. It is meant for physical, economic and humanly exploitation. Orwell was particularly severe with the middle-class for their apathy towards the working class. Instead of expressing any leaning towards the middle-class child. Orwell shows the hardworking with some kind of exploitation in the novel *Animal Farm* through the animals in an unique manner- "Throughout the year the animals worked even harder than they had worked in the previous year. To rebuild the windmill, with walls twice as thick as before, and to finish it by the appointed date, together with the regular work of the farm, was a tremendous labour. There were times when it seemed to the animals that they worked longer hours and fed no better than they had done in Jones's day. On Sunday mornings Squealer, holding down a long strip of paper with his trotter, would read out to them lists of figures proving that the production of every class of foodstuff had increased by two hundred per cent, three hundred per cent, or five hundred per cent, as the case might be. The animals saw no reason to disbelieve him, especially as they could no longer remember very clearly what conditions had been like before the Rebellion. All the same, there were days when they felt that they would sooner have had less figures and more food."1 Orwell taught that the working class stood for violence, stupidity and coarseness. It is worthwhile to shift the focus to the social and economical background of the age of Orwell and to see to what extent it shaped his socio-economic criticism. A novelist of ideas cannot escape the social and economical influences of his age and Orwell is no exception. A socio-economic satirist can only delve deep into the layers of the society and make satirical thrusts against the social discrepancies or social anomalies. The aim of a socialist is not merely to point at any kind of social weakness like hypocrisy, double-dealing but also to attack and comment on them. A satirist enlightens his readers. The attitude of a satirist is largely determined by the various forces of the society to which he is subjected. Orwell's experience as a dishwasher in the cheap hotels of Paris, his walking experiences in London and his stern realization of poverty and unemployment in the economic depression of the thirties were perceptible factors in projecting Orwell's dilemma before his age. Orwell's characters are the true spokesmen of his social, cultural, economical and spiritual. Their love for the society and human being, their interest in songs and dances, their delight, labour and interest in trade and their devotion and pleasure in spiritual activities all these make them essentially refined and virgins. Distrusting the industrial and commercial civilization of rubber, glass and steel, Orwell's

characters seek refuge either in the organic community of the past societies or idyllic surrounding. It is by these elusions that Orwell's characters show their love of common pleasures and retain the common decency of human beings. Orwell's concern with the cultural retrogression of the society is reflected not only in his novels but also in his autobiographical essays such as *How the Poor Die*, *Such, Such Were the Joys*, *Shooting an Elephant* and the like. Even his autobiographical documentaries *The Road to Wigan Pier*, *Down and Out in Paris and London* and *Homage to Catalonia* are memorable for the writer's interest in cultural and spiritual theme. Here, Orwell declines the cultural view and prepares himself to shoot an elephant- "Early one morning the sub-inspector at a police station the other end of the town rang up on the phone and said that an elephant was ravaging the bazaar. Would I please come and do something about it. I did not know what I could do, but I wanted to see what was happening and I got on to a pony and started out, I took my rifle, an old winchester and much too small to kill an elephant, but I thought the noise might be useful in terrorism. Various Burmans stopped me on the way and told me about the elephant's doings." (On *Shooting an Elephant*, 1936) By temperament Orwell was a socialist and a rebel, having his sympathies for the oppressed in the world. In spite of being a part of the Empire he retained his essential sympathy for the weak and oppressed. Orwell left his country when anti-colonial forces were getting stronger. He spend five years to experience the impact of oppressive despotic regime and this influenced his response to the Western Civilization. He witnessed the struggle between the oppressors and the oppressed. So he wrote about this struggle and when he returned to England he faced the problem arising due to the World War that is the problem of unemployment. He wanted to end capitalist dictatorship. Because this dictatorship degraded human life. Orwell was a part of English Socialism. In the term English Socialism, Orwell stated that "the war and the revolution are inseparable...the fact that we are at war has turned Socialism from a textbook word into a realizable policy." Orwell's message is that a society which has leaders with absolute power is ultimately doomed to failure due to the inevitability of leaders manipulating power for their own personal benefit. The philosophy of 'Animalism' in *Animal Farm* quite clearly is designed to represent Marxist-Communism. In *Animal Farm* the theory of 'Animalism' is drawn up into seven commandments exclusively by Snowball and Napoleon as described in chapter first. Orwell here ironically compares two ways of the world- the way of the animal world and the way of the human world. Four legs creature are coming together for friendship and they have been prohibited for any kind of alcoholic use or any sort of exploitation to one another. It indirectly indicates that the creature of two legs (human being) are in the habit of doing the things which have been prohibited to animals for using them in their personal relationship. Animalism quickly becomes a means of breeding such a great fear of man into the animals so that they would become even more determined to work hard. Old Major represents a mixture of Marx and Lenin. He proclaims the Marxist Doctrine of Revolutionary Socialism and provides the basic beliefs which later become the seven commandments. He is presented as a kind and wise leader who has a social state of the highest perfection- "All the habits of Man are evil. And, above all, no animal must ever tyrannise over his own kind. Weak or strong, clever or simple, we are all brothers. No animal must ever kill any other animal. All animals are equal." Orwell also points out at some drawbacks of Old Major's Marxist teachings in a cunning way. The imagination that all animals are comrades is undermined straight away by the fact that the dogs and cats openly show hostility to the rats- "Major raised his trotter for silence. Comrades, he said, here is a point that must be settled. The wild creatures, such as rats and rabbits are they our friends or our enemies? Let us put it to the vote. I propose this question to the meeting: Are rats comrades?" The chapter is concerned with two aspects- first; the social and second the economic issues. According to Marxian thinking, it is the monetary factor that describes the social relevance to a writer. In economic disparities the society as such will not be in the position to progress continuously. Society is the name of different type of peoples with different religion, with different languages and with different motives of life. These anthropological and cultural issues related to the growth of man create the sense of society as a whole. Economic factors contribute to a maximum extent for the happiness of man. Therefore, the chapter once again links the third aspect spiritual with negative sensibility disquietude. Psychologically social harmony with economic objective creates the sense of spiritual quietude. The chapter will be denoted to analyze the misbalance motives of society and culture on the one hand and the economic disparities on the other. These are the factors which create the mental unrest, which results in into spiritual disquietude. In the novel *A Clergyman's Daughter*, which is written by George Orwell in 1935, its main figure Dorothy Hare, the only and weak-willed daughter of a widowed Anglican curate, finds the strength for endurance after a contact with the working class. In the novel Orwell puts Dorothy's appearance in such way- "It was just half past five, and coldish for an August morning. Dorothy (her name was Dorothy Hare, and she was the only child of the Reverend Charles Hare, Rector of St Athelstan's Knype Hill, suffolk) put on her aged flannelette dressing-gown and felt her way downstairs." 5 Dorothy's father is a rector of Knype Hill, which is known as a small town of East Anglia. She lives like an automaton. She is thrown into the under-world of London among migrant workers. She furnishes herself with a cope and also learns that how to stay alive. The only fact is that she does not believe in anything. With the passing of time when she regains her memory, she realizes that she cannot go back to her father because of a scandal about her and an older man, Mr. Warburton. In the final issue she is liberated from a police court by a rich uncle and sent for education in a private school. After some time of schooling, when she knows the truth about this type of lower-middle class school, she returns to her father- "Outside, in the swimming hear, she mounted her bicycle and began to ride swiftly homewards. The sun burned in her face but the air now seemed sweet and fresh. She was happy, happy! She was always extravagantly happy when her morning's 'visiting' was over; and, curiously enough, she was not aware of the reason for this." But Dorothy cannot forget her past, so she feels absolute emptiness in her life- "It was noticeable that her stories were not only dirty and libelous, but that they had nearly always some monstrous tinge of perversion about them. Compared with the ordinary scandalmongers of a country town, she was as Freud to Boccaccio." But she has discovered in herself the ability to live without meaning, to survive despite inhuman conditions. Soon she resumes her responsibilities as *A Clergyman's Daughter*. And in end of the novel all problems of her life vanishes from her mind- "The problem of faith and no faith had vanished utterly from her mind. It was beginning to get dark, but, too busy to stop and light the lamp, she worked on, pasting strip after strip of paper into place, with absorbed, with pious concentration, in the penetrating smell of the glue-pot." 8 . In this novel we see that Dorothy try to achieve her lost dignity and in view of circumstances, she does not get despair. She and Flory (in *Burmese Days*) are of the solid middle class, in which Dorothy shows her bold nature and she tries to decline every possibility of defeat. Dorothy is conveyance into the dirty world of the tramp by an unexplained loss of memory. Later, she is escaped from poverty and despair first by her cousin and then by Warburton. Orwell shows his social disquietude towards Dorothy's unpleasant life. She is looking so nervous and disappointed think in herself a blameless. In state of her loneliness and isolation she gazed upon the streets- "She was looking out upon a street- a shabby, lively street of small shops and narrow-faced houses, with streams of men, trams and cars passing in either direction. But as yet it could not properly be said that she was looking. For the things she

saw were not apprehended as men, trams and cars, nor as anything in particular; they were not even apprehended as things moving; not even as things. She merely saw, as an animal sees, without speculation and almost without consciousness.”⁹ Dorothy is economically obliged to work extremely hard. Her low income, in all cases, prohibits her escape and function to perpetuate her dependent state. She compels to do a hateful job because she wants money – “There was an unspeakably hateful job in front of her- a demand for money. At the very best of times getting money out of her father was next door to impossible, and it was obvious that this morning he was going to be even more ‘difficult’ than usual. ‘Difficult’ was another of her euphemisms.” Orwell draws a picture of systematic forces. Her hardworking in hop fields, in this case Orwell criticizes the way in which wages are systematically lowered as the season progressed and why the wages are so low to begin with. He describes Dorothy’s life as a manual laborer.

Conclusion

Orwell was a fine, journalist who became famous for the plain style of writing evident in his essays; his successful attempt to make political writing an art; his famous satires on totalitarianism; his search for objectivity and honesty in journalism depicted most graphically in *Homage to Catalonia* (1938). Many of Orwell’s experiences are captured in his books and essays. Orwell described himself as lower-upper middle class, failing to realize that there are only two classes: the capitalist class 97 which possesses but does not produce and the working class which produces but does not possess. Orwells’ writings always carry a stamp of his personality. It always peeps through the lines and he appears a man of very sweet and charming personality.

REFERENCES

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