

A STUDY OF GEORGE ORWELL'S *ANIMAL FARM* WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF NORTHROP FRYE'S THEORY OF MODES

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George Orwell was a skilled writer who was blessed with a vision to see the complexity of things. His parents named him Eric Arthur Blair. He had taken the last name Orwell from a minor stream in England called 'A River Orwell' and first name George was popular in those days. But he never adopted this name legally and thus he is popular as Eric Arthur Blair in his family and friends.

Born in India in the colonial province of Bengal, Orwell spent most of his days in England with his mother and sisters. From the childhood itself he was a retrospective, imaginative and creative person who liked to read and write. At the age of eleven his poem was published in the local newspaper. In the year 1921, he joined Indian Imperial Police. But soon he realized that it was his biggest mistake to join this service. He has revealed his experience of Indian Imperial force through his work *Shooting an Elephant* (1936). Ida, Orwell's mother was well aware of his son's temperament and encouraged him to become a writer but his father Richard was disappointed by his decision of leaving the police force because he had given his thirty five years to it. Orwell wanted to make his carrier in the field of creative writing and although he struggled hard to become a writer. In order to get inspiration he went to London and Paris where he was robbed and just for one time meal he worked in a filthy restaurant due to which he suffered from pneumonia and was very near to death.

George Orwell remained a Victorian throughout due to his simple life style. A person of thin mustache and simple outfit he wrote two bestselling novels namely *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty Four*. They were translated into sixty languages and about thirty million copies have been sold out. Unlike other modern scholars Orwell liked to discuss the complex matter of politics by doing simple things like rolling his cigar, planting bushes etc. He was popular not because of his critical understanding and other mystic powers but because of his broad and deep perspective of looking at things. His way of presenting things, ideas, and concepts before readers is timeless which can be easily depicted through his novel *Animal Farm* in which he has compared Soviet Commissioners to the greedy pigs and attempted to unveil them. *Animal Farm* is actually a dystopian novella which basically uses terror, threat and repressive bureaucracy to dominate individual. It is actually an attempt to inoculate young generation against the horrors of communism. One of the most famous characteristics of Orwell's non-fiction works like autobiography, social and political works is the experimentation with the literary techniques through which he conveyed his ideas forcefully among his audience.

Orwell in the preface to *Animal Farm* says, "If liberty means anything at all it means the right to tell people what they do not want to bear." (2010: 7). Although his life was very short as he died at the age of forty six but through his great works like *Nineteen Eighty Four*, *Animal*

Farm, Homage to Catalonia etc he always seems to inspire the world by exposing constant tyranny and threats in the political world. For the very first time he used his pseudo name in his novel called *Down and Out in Paris* in London (1933).

Animal Farm : A Thought Provoking Satire on Communism

Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four* and *Animal Farm* project on the terror, threat and repression of totalitarian society. Orwell's *Animal Farm* is a wonderful attempt to satirize communism. Through animals the focus is on the class difference prevailing in the society. "The familiar tone of the story and its careful attention to detail allowed the unpopular theme to be pleasantly convincing, and the Soviet myth was exposed in a subtle fashion that could still be readily understood." (1975: 130) It is actually a way to reveal history of Soviet Russia from 1917 to the Teheran conference. Old major was the Old Boar of the Manor Farm. Snowball and Napoleon were his major allies. One day he called a meeting of animals in which he declared human beings as dictators and driven Mr. Jones out of the farm. After the death of Old Boar, Snowball became the leader. Under his leadership revolutionary changes like the song called the Beast of England, the seven commandments which are relevant for every animal to follow etc were taken place.

The farm under the leadership of Snowball was running smoothly. The twist has come when Snowball reveals his idea for the invention of windmill for the betterment of animals. Napoleon perhaps became jealous with Snowball's leadership over the farm and his idea for the invention of the windmill. With the help of his dogs, whom he nurtured secretly, abducted Snowball out of the farm. Napoleon although after Snowball's death did not dropped the idea of the windmill but things have changed under his leadership. He became biased among pigs and other animals in relation to food stuff like apple and milk. Gradually, he adopted all the traits of human beings like sleeping on the bed, walking upright on the two legs, carrying whips, wearing clothes etc. he seemed to have changed the meanings of all the seven commandments given by Snowball.

The original commandments were:

- Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy.
- Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend.
- No animal shall wear clothes.
- No animal shall sleep in a bed.
- No animal shall drink alcohol.
- No animal shall kill any other animal.
- All animals are equal. (2012: 29).

But later, Napoleon abridged these commandments and the changes were being bolded. The changed commandments are:-

- No animal shall sleep in a bed with sheets. (2012: 65)
- No animal shall drink alcohol to excess. (2012: 99)
- No animal shall kill any other animal without cause. (2012: 84)

They are further changed as: - "all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others,"(2012: 119) and "four legs good, two legs better."(2012: 118)

Animals revealed by Orwell in the novella are quite symbolic. In the Preface of the *Animal Farm*, Orwell says, "although various episodes are taken from the actual history of the

Russian revolution, they are dealt with schematically and their chronological order is changed.” (1975:135). In order to comprehend their symbolic approach, it is relevant to overview the history of the Spanish Revolution. In 1917, the monarch of Russia Tsar Nicholas II was abducted and Alexander Kerensky took his place but after some months Kerensky was being suspended from his post and Vladimir Lenin became the chief commission of Russia. Lenin’s chief men were Joseph Stalin, Leon Trotsky, Gregory Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev. Out of four Trotsky and Stalin were popular and chief leaders. After Lenin’s death Stalin along with Gregory and Lev abducted Trotsky and became successful in becoming the dictator of the Soviet Union. Similarly in the novel also, the names and the characters are allegorical in nature. Tsar Nicholas II stands for Mr. Jones who was driven out of the farm by the animals. Vladimir Lenin is compared to Mr. Old boar after whose death two of his major allies Trotsky and Stalin took hold of the position in the same way after Old Boar’s death Snowball and Napoleon hold their control over the farm who are always antithetical to each other. Mr. Fredrick is actually an allegory of Adolf Hitler. Boxer who is self-sacrificing stands for Proletariat and contrasted to the shrewd and clever Benjamin. Through the revelation of the history of the Russian Revolution, Orwell projected on the system of the government, politicians, and diplomatic people who in order to gain power and position oppressed the lower and the middle class.

Earlier Russian society was divided into two classes. A group of people who were wealthy while the group which holds major population consists of workers, peasant’s etc. Communism took its power when the country’s oppressed class of workers and peasants opposed the upper class, which includes aristocrats and capitalists. They actually wanted to have a utopian society which is based on the ideas and principles of Karl Marx. Karl Marx in his economic and philosophic manuscripts of 1844 says, “the worker in his human functions no longer feels himself to be anything but animal. What is animal becomes human and what is human becomes animal.” (1975: 130)

Therefore, the novel satirizes the politicians who are hungry for powers. Napoleon is actually presented as an epitome of all the power hungry people who always manipulate others in order to take their advantage. Napoleon several actions like stealing of milk and apples by giving foolish excuses that they contains nutrients relevant for the pigs only, abducting snowball from the farm by the lie that he was a traitor and works for Mr. Jones, every time he break off one commandment and whenever farm suffers loss he blames Snowball. Thus, the main ideas of the novel are to project on those power hunger people who always claims for the betterment of the people but did nothing except fake promises. Along with this he also tried to project on those people also who have no existence of their own and walk on the footprints of others like Mollie who has no sense of justice and equality and also does not bear any courage to attack or react against Napoleon. Mollie actually represents the White Russians and a paradigm of luxury and folly in the entire revolution. And according to Orwell these are such person who reinforces the plan and strategies of politicians like Napoleon.

An Overview of Northrop Frye’s “Theory of Modes”

Northrop Frye, the renowned critic of twentieth century can be called an innovator of the terms, as he has used his own terminology in his works mainly in *Anatomy of Criticism*. The literal motive of the first essay *Historical Criticism: Theory of Modes* is to change the age old conception of people on Historical Criticism and also to reveal universal modes on which the literature of the world depends.

In the beginning of “Theory of Modes” Frye has given the reference of Aristotle’s *Poetics* in which he reveals the elevation in the status of characters in fictional works. Frye’s systematic arrangement of modes is based on Aristotle’s three aspects of poetry *mythos* (plot), *ethos* (characterization) and *dianoia* (theme). It, therefore, becomes his inspiration of writing his *theory of modes*. The various modes discussed by Frye in his theory of modes are (i) mythic (ii) romantic (iii) high mimetic (iv) low mimetic (v) ironic.

Frye has divided literature into fictional and thematic modes and then project the above revealed five modes in the light of fictional and thematic literature. Frye’s “Theory of Modes” can be called as a staircase. In this staircase the mythic mode holds the first position where the heroes are Gods; then comes the romantic mode where the hero is an extraordinary person and he is above both the ordinary persons and the nature. The next is the high mimetic mode where the hero is the leader but bound by the natural and social laws; in the low mimetic mode the hero is like a normal and ordinary human being, and at last comes the ironic mode where the hero in some way or the other inferior to the other human beings.

George Orwell’s Animal Farm. Within Frye’s Theory of Modes”

I situate the novella in the category of Frye’s thematic ironic mode. The thematic literature displays the communication of the writer either with himself or with the audience.

The hero of the thematic ironic mode is inferior from the ordinary human being. Because of his foolishness and helplessness the hero of this mode becomes a *Pharmakos*. Frye has made connection to this mode to the literal phase of symbolism. The literature of last hundred years dominates the ironic mode. Before going further it is relevant to comprehend the meaning of irony. The variation between what is written and what is meant is called irony. “In the concept of irony (1841) Kierkegaard elaborated the idea that irony is a mode of seeing things, a way viewing existence.” (1977: 429) Irony basically projects on the perspective which includes discrepancy between the words and the meanings, “or between actions and their results, or between appearance and reality.” (1977: 430) It should not be confused with sarcasm which basically meant to insult someone in a sharp, bitter and caustic manner.

The basic types of irony are Situational, Verbal, Dramatic, Cosmic and Romantic. Verbal irony refers to the discrepancy between the expressed and the underlying meaning of the word. Situational irony reveals the sharp difference between the expected and the actual result in a certain situation. In the Dramatic irony the actors attempt to reveal their ignorance towards a certain situation with which the audience is unaware of. Writers of Greek tragedy make use of this type of Irony. Cosmic irony includes the role of a deity or a fate that “is represented as though deliberately manipulating events so as to lead the protagonist to false hopes, only to frustrate and mock them. Thomas hardy makes excess use of this device.” (2011:148) Romantic irony was introduced by Friedrich Schlegel and other German writers of eighteenth and early nineteenth century to project on the mode of writing or narrative in which the illusion of presenting reality by the author is being build up, just to break the illusion by presenting that the author is the creator of the characters and their actions. For instance ‘Don Juan’ written by Byron makes excessive use of this device to show ironic and cosmic effect. “Irony has many functions. It is often the witting and unwitting instrument of truth. It chides, purifies, refines, deflates, scorns and sends up.” (1977: 430) Irony actually plays a vital role in literature as it makes a work of art intriguing and speculative and compels the audience to widen their horizon and tried to

bring forth the hidden and underlying meaning of the text. Therefore, it will not be any harm if we say that irony is one of the most powerful of the satirist.

The poet hero of thematic ironic mode never mentions about the moral values and other idols of the society in his works and projects on the philosophy of existentialism. Also the poet hero of this mode never lets his negative feelings to dominate and hampers in the progression of his work. While writing a work of art he usually wears a face to produce an impartial work of art. Therefore, in the literature of the ironic mode, the centripetal gaze is on “the theme of pure but transient vision, the aesthetic or timeless moment.” (1957: 61) The poet of this mode reveals an impersonal view of art which is sacred, pure and aesthetic.

Frye, therefore, thinks in much similar ways of Aristotle and Eliot and extends his inquiries in such a way that a coherent pattern of literature emerges. It allows us to adopt an objective view of literature and reveals the fact about literature as an organic whole in its historical context. If Aristotle is seen as the father of the scientific Western, Frye is can be considered a schematizer of thought. Through his doctrines of Anatomy, Symbols, Archetypes, Modes and various other practical usages of his theories, it can be said that Frye’s system does not end with literature but on the other hand, it extends to other disciplines of knowledge as well.

Geoffrey H. Hartman considers Northrop Frye as a new Aristotle while Sheldon Norman Grebstein praises Frye for his catholicity that influenced him in becoming the most renowned mythopoeic- critic of the twentieth century. Different from other critics Frye’s was interested in all genres of literature, therefore, through his theories he broke down the differences that comes out in poetry, drama or fiction and evolves categories which can be applied in all forms of literature.

The features of thematic ironic mode revealed by Frye can be traced in Orwell’s *Animal Farm*. Mr. Jones was being abducted from the farm by the animals in order to gain supremacy over the farm. For the same reason Snowball became the *pharmakos* by Napoleon. The concept of scapegoat is beautifully explained by Orwell through animals like Snowball, Boxer etc. If anything wrong has happened in the farm the blame was being put on Snowball. For instance when the windmill was collapsed, Napoleon and Squealer convinced the animals that Snowball is responsible as he does not want their project to get completed. “Napoleon never presents any of his own plans and always criticizes Snowball’s, though he eventually adopts these plans and even claims he invented them.” (1975: 136) The limit of cruelty and diplomacy was broken when Boxer collapsed while working in the windmill and Napoleon sends a van to take Boxer to the veterinary surgeon but Benjamin the cynical donkey soon noticed that the van belonged to a knacker. He read: “Alfred Simmonds, Horse Slaughterer and Glue Boiler, Willingdon. Dealer in Hides and Bone- Meal.” (2012: 109) He attempted to rescue him but all his attempt was in vain. Late on when they went to Napoleon with the suspicion they had, Squealer became successful in convincing the animals that the hospital has purchased the van from a knacker. But the hidden truth was that Napoleon had sold out his most hardworking and loyal animal to a knacker just to purchase whisky for himself.

As mentioned in one of the features of thematic ironic mode Orwell in his novella did not reveal the morality and idols of the society. He on the contrary revealed the darker side of it where the lust is for money and power. Also in his revelation of dystopian society he remained objective and produce an impersonal work of art which is pure and sacred. The novella comes under the category of verbal irony and in fact brings the contemporary society into limelight. It is an irony and satire on the society which is revealed through animals.

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