

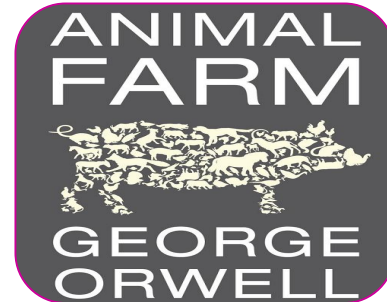


SOCIOLOGY OF GEORGE ORWELL ANIMAL FARM

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ABSTRACT

The main object of George Orwell's novels written during this early phase of his life was to propagate the social problems of the day. He criticized social evils caused by the imperialism and capitalism in these novels. However, his experience in the Spanish Civil War changed his outlook from capitalism to totalitarianism and this world view made him to write the novel with political purpose. Animal Farm is Orwell's most popular and enduring masterpiece in which he tried to fuse the political purpose and artistic purpose into one whole. On a larger scale, the novel is viewed as an allegory for the rise and decline of socialism in the Soviet Union and the emergence of the totalitarian regime of Joseph Stalin. The present research paper is an attempt to interpret of Animal Farm on of the theory of the sociology of literature.



KEYWORDS: Animal Farm , sociology of literature , criticized social evils.

INTRODUCTION:

Eric Arthur Blair, better known by his pen name George Orwell, was born on 25th June 1903, in India, but he was brought up in the socio-cultural environment of England. As a proponent of socialism, he lived as a tramp in London, stayed with the miners, studied the life of poverty and hardship amongst the workers and wrote about them in his works. During the early phase of his life he experienced the varied life of a police officer in Burma, a plongeur in Paris, a down and out among downtrodden in England, a teacher in a school, a storekeeper at Hertfordshire, and a reporter in Wigen Pier and reflected the very experience of these fields in his early novels, reviews, essays and documentaries. His main object of the novels written during this early phase was to propagate the social problems of the day. In these novels Orwell criticized social evils caused by the imperialism and capitalism. However, his experience in the Spanish Civil War changed his outlook from capitalism to totalitarianism and this world view made him to write the novel with political purpose. His close observation in Spanish Civil War and the active participation in the Second World War made him conscious about communism in Russia under the despotic rule of Stalin and the totalitarianism of fascist political leaders in Spain and Germany. In order to make people aware of these threats he wrote *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty Four*. In these two novels orwell exposed the secret realities in politics of the day. The present research paper is an attempt to interpret of *Animal Farm* on the grounds of the theory of the sociology of literature.

The sociology of Literature:

The sociology of literature is a specialized area of study which studies the relationship between literary works and their social context. Being a specialized area of literary study, it focuses its attention upon the relationship between a literary work and the social structure in which it is created, examines literature in

cultural, economic and political context in which it is written or received, and explores the relationship between the artist and society. It also examines the sociology of the writer and analyses the conditions of creation and production of the book and of mass literature.

The sociology of literature believes that a work of literature does not arise automatically. It is shaped by the dominant social, cultural, political and economic values of the day and connected with the literary tradition. The social referents make literary works a social document, so the study of such social referent is regarded as legitimate social evidence. It also serves as an aid in understanding both society and literature. After the close reading of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, it is found that the socio-cultural and political conditions of the day made him to write this novel.

The Sociology of *Animal Farm*

Animal Farm is Orwell's most popular and enduring masterpiece in which he tried to fuse the political purpose and artistic purpose into one whole. On a larger scale, the novel is viewed as an allegory for the rise and decline of socialism in the Soviet Union and the emergence of the totalitarian regime of Joseph Stalin. However, his intention of attacking communism and totalitarianism is not only confined to Stalin but it has the universal appeal. In this regard Robert Lee observes: "Instead of being just an allegory of twentieth century Russian Politics, *Animal Farm* is more meaningfully an anatomy of all political revolutions" (109). Besides a critique of a particular political philosophy and practice i.e. Stalinism, it is in a broader sense a critique of totalitarianism in fascist Germany under Hitler and in Spain under Franco and capitalism in America, England as well as in the Soviet Union. The major issue of the novel is that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Orwell was hostile to Moscow-directed Stalinism, especially after his experience with the Spanish Civil War. He was a witness of the influence of Communist policy such as ceaseless arrests, censored newspapers and prowling hordes of armed police during the Spanish Civil War. Being a democratic socialist, he felt restless to see the shocking effects of totalitarian communism and decided to write about it. While expressing his desire, he writes: "Since the Spanish Civil War, 'I have been convinced that the destruction of the Soviet myth was essential if we wanted a revival of the Socialist movement' (CELJ III 405–6).

Orwell wanted to write against Stalinism in a simple manner that could be easily understood to everyone and appeal to the readers but he did not get the proper form and style for the presentation of his experience nearly for four years. In the mean time he wrote his most important essays, namely, "Inside the Whale"(1940), "Lion and Unicorn"(1941), "Looking Back on the Spanish Civil War"(1943) and "Arthur Koestler", (1944). These essays focus his ideology of democratic socialism. While writing these essays, he was working on *Animal Farm*. Although the novel was written within a short period between November 1943 and February 1944, it was in his mind since his return from the Spain. Before 1939 he was writing a book for a year but after the publication of *Coming Up for Air* we find a gap of four years because his intention was purportedly 'to make a complete break from his former polemical, propagandist way of writing and to concentrate on human relationship'(Lee 105). Secondly, he was thinking of the form to be used to write his novel and one day, coincidentally, his ideas were ignited by a village boy who was driving a huge carthorse along a narrow path, whipping it whenever it tried to turn. It struck him that if only such animals became aware of their strength, man would have no power over them, and that men exploit animals in much the same way as the rich exploit the proletariat. Orwell proceeded to analyze Marx's theory from the animals' point of view and at that moment he got the idea of an animal fable to realize his plan to expose the abuse of the absolute power in the communist Russia under the despotic rule of Stalin. The result of this exposure is *Animal Farm* (Meyer 19).

Orwell selected the beast fable intentionally because it is closer to criticism than to fiction in the full imaginative sense. According to Robert Lee "the essential characteristic of the beast fable is irony: The form that provides for the writer 'the power to keep his reader conscious simultaneously of the human traits satirized and of the animals as animals" (107). In fact, fable is an important form of art to criticize and attack the social evils in an artistic mode, and due to the very choice of beast fable, Orwell's *Animal Farm* could

gain success at a large scale than his previous work. He makes use of animal fable for the novel to get the fusion of his ideology about the politics of communism in Russia and the artistic strength of beast fable. By reducing the vast and complex history of the Russian Revolution to a short work describing talking animals on a single farm, he is able to portray his subject in extremely simple, artistic and symbolic terms, presenting the moral lessons of the story with the utmost clear, objective, and forceful way. Due to this fusion of artistic strength and political purpose, the novel achieved the substantial success all over the world and is translated into many languages. In the words of Robert Lee *Animal Farm* is “Orwell’s finest book” . . . a “little masterpiece” in form and style (Lee 108).

The major success of the novel really lies in the tremendous response of the readers, reviewers and critics. It is true that the social referent or context is the major determining factor of the emergence of the novel; it was the role of gatekeepers which equally played the dominant role in making the novel popular among the readers.

The social referents of both *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty Four* are totalitarianism of Stalin in communist Russia and Hitler’s in Fascist Germany. Orwell had witnessed and observed that the principles of socialism were crushed by Stalin to gain absolute power. Both the novels reflect the social truth that the absolute power corrupts the social values and principles absolutely. The very social truth is at the base of both the novels. The sociology of literature studies such social truth as the social genesis of literature. In both the novels the mental structures are explored and these mental structures are not individual but social phenomena.

In fact, the existence of all the novels of Orwell is determined by the social contexts or referents that he actually witnessed, experienced, thought and felt. *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty Four* are the creations of Orwell’s anti-communist and anti-totalitarian world view developed after his experience of the Spanish Civil War and the Russian Revolution. He has witnessed the influence of Communist policy such as ceaseless arrests, censored newspapers and prowling horde of armed police during the Spanish Civil War. He is convinced that the destruction of the Soviet myth is essential to revive the socialist movement. To write against Stalinism, he intentionally selects a simple form of animal fable to make his ideas intelligible to everyone. He knows that the form is closer to criticism than to fiction, and easily appealing to the readers. His ideology of combining the politics of communism in Russia and the artistic strength of beast fable makes the success of *Animal Farm* possible. The socio-political referent of the novels shows that Orwell is against communism and totalitarianism for the sake of democratic socialism. In these two novels Orwell exposes the secret realities in politics of the way. It is also found that Orwell’s world view of socialism is completely different from the socialism of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. Marx believed that property is the root cause of inequality in the society. So he suggested the abolition of private property for maintaining equality. In *Animal Farm*, he rejects the Marxist ideology and focuses the psychological forces of human nature His world view of socialism is not based on economics but on psychology and ethics. In order to warn people the threats of communism and totalitarianism, he wrote *Animal Farm*.

CONCLUSION

After the discussion of George Orwell’s novels on the realistic and pragmatic grounds of the sociology of literature, the researcher has arrived to the conclusion that the social referent, the world view of Orwell and the ideology of the gatekeepers equally play a dominant role in the emergence and success of Orwell’s novels. Besides these determinants, the different periodicals uplift the novel and praised its quality in the several articles and reviews to cater the taste of his novels among the readers. The publishers like Victor Gollancz, who supported Orwell financially, and Secker and Warburg that dared to publish *Animal Farm* during war time also played an important role in the development and success of Orwell’s career as a novelist. As it has already been discussed one more important factor that determined the fame of Orwell as a novelist is the literary tradition of animal fable and dystopia. The analytical and sociological study of Orwell’s novels makes it clear that, the social referents, the world view of the writer, gatekeepers of

literature and socio-political and academic organizations play equally important role in the creation and success of his novels.

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