

Socialism in George Orwell's Novel *Animal Farm*

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Abstract – It is an established fact that George Orwell's fictional works reveal his strong condemnation and hatred of poverty and oppression. His books present the best sociological reporting. Through his writings, Orwell has tried to bring about a social regeneration. That is why, he is highly esteemed for his ideas on freedom in the society. Although, he strongly advocated socialism, but he opposed vehemently the orthodoxies and bureaucratic socialism of his time. He saw society not from a distance but after becoming a part and parcel of it. After seeing the deplorable plight of the dregs of society, he inculcated a spirit of brotherhood in his life and started believing in freedom, justice, decency, equality and truth.

Key-Words: Equality, Ideology, Democracy, Vision, Freedom, Liberty.

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It goes without saying that socialism is a political ideology which strongly favours wealth equality. It is a fact that most of the resources and other important things is controlled and governed by the government. The individuals, in the society, receive social benefits in return of that. Socialism can be categorized in many different forms keeping in view how the resources and valuable things are governed by any country. For instance, communism is one of the forms of socialism introduced by Karl Marx.

It is an established fact that George Orwell's book *Animal Farm* is imbued with socialism as it vividly and faithfully projects the life of animals living on farm. On the apparent level, the title of the book suggests it as a book about animals, but the in depth and incisive study of this work reflects the human nature and behaviour. The animals appears to be merely puppets to explore how human operate, how propaganda was used by early powerful leaders such as Stalin, and its effect on the behaviour of the people.

Without any shadow of doubts, Orwell strongly believes in socialism, but at the same time, he also asserts the fact that this theory cannot be adopted because of intolerable sins of human nature. In the present book, we can quote the example of Napoleon who appears to be good leader in the beginning, but with the passage of time, turns greedy and power-hungry. That does not mean that the writer is against socialism, but he is against Stalin's interpretation of the socialist ideas..

As Orwell firmly believes in a class-less society, his idea of socialism is clear right from the beginning of

the book in Old Major's speech who encourages all the animals to get rid of their cruel master, Mr. Jones, the owner of Manor farm. He cruelly treats all the animals on the farm. All animals are fed up with a life full of injustice and tyranny. In that situation, the idea of socialism is completely absent from the farm. A society based on equality, liberty and fraternity is a day-dream for the animals. As far as the notion of socialism in George Orwell's novel, *Animal Farm* is concerned; it has been explored by the author through animalism. The ideas propounded by Old Major in the opening chapter of the novel are the part and parcel of Orwell's conception of socialism. In Major's speech, we witness the streaks of Marxian ideology as the idea of equality, liberty and fraternity are inherent in Old Major's speech.

There is no doubt in denying the fact the concept of equality and brotherhood are deep rooted in Orwell's philosophy of socialism. Old Major's speech is an embodiment of constant inspiration and encouragement as animals revolt against their master, Mr. Jones, who is the symbol of tyranny and exploitation. Old Major, in other words, is the true replica of Karl Marx who pleads for equality, common decency and general brotherhood. On the basis of the inspiration drawn from his speech, the animals organize, hold meetings and, ultimately, succeed in driving away Mr. Jones, the human dictator.

After the death of Old Major, when Mr. Jones is driven from the farm, all the animals expect a better life and think that they can live a life of equality and comfort. In the expulsion of Mr. Jones, Orwell

highlights if only animals became aware of their strength, they could overthrow the despotic regime of Mr. Jones who exploited animals in the same way as the rich exploit the proletariat. The same view is the crux of the novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* where the author says if there is any hope, it lies in proles. In the expectations of the animals for a better future, one can witness Orwell's idea of socialism. After that, the pigs take command of the farm, but very soon the idea of socialism is forgotten and perverted as the new rulers fail to keep their words and the animals are unconcerned about the future. Immediately after taking over the charge, Napoleon drives Snoball from the farm with the help of vicious hounds, and the seven commandments based on socialism are eliminated. In this situation, one finds Marxism turning into Stalinism which reminds us of the evolution of 1917 behind which was the noble voice of Karl Marx, degenerated gradually into the authoritarianism of Stalin. Orwell, by implication, wants to convey the idea how every revolution which begins primarily with noble aims results later into tyranny and authoritarianism of one party or one person. Orwell's concern for the poor working classes and his love for an individual's liberty compel him to highlight some basic features of the contemporary society established on democratic socialism.

In *Animal Farm*, Orwell has powerfully explores human beings as capitalists, the pigs as Bolsheviks; the animals are exploited classes; Napoleon is Stalin; the imperious major is Marx-Lenin; Boxer is proletariat and Snoball is Trotsky. Napoleon's expulsion of Snoball from the farm has its parallel in the expulsion of Trotsky by Stalin from Russia.

Admiring Orwell's humanitarianism, critics like Jeffery Meyers rightly remarks that Orwell's moving theme is a fervent plea for human dignity and compassion. In his book, *The Road to Wigan Pier*, Orwell defines brilliantly the meaning of socialism when he says that everyone who knows the meaning of poverty, everyone who has a genuine hatred for tyranny and war, is on the socialist side, potentially...we have got to fight for justice and liberty, and socialism does mean justice and liberty when the nonsense is stripped off it. Critics like Richard Rees says that at his best, Orwell was much more realistic and indeed, a better Marxist than theoretical pundits of socialism and communism.

It is a well-known fact that Orwell finds the biggest reason for the failure of socialist propaganda is that it takes too low a view of human nature of course, this only shows his philistine incapacity to understand the complexities of Marxist thought. Socialism, for Orwell, is a drive towards brotherly love and honourable equality.

George Orwell can be regarded as a man of democratic socialism. His book, *Animal Farm* portrays man as selfish, cruel and greedy who is power-hungry mad after attaining absolute power and becomes a

tyrant. This idea is clearly perceptible through Napoleon who as power turns his head and makes him mad. He does not treat others with justice and sense of decency. The idea of socialism is not humanised in his character which is favoured by the author as his subject of propaganda, his philosophy of life and theory of democratic socialism in *Animal Farm*.

Through Napoleon, the writer seems to illustrate that totalitarianism derived its energy by the exploitation of human beings. This is clearly evident through some animals like Boxer, the noble horse, who is loyal and sincere, but is sold to butchers for not being useful as he is growing old. It reminds us of poor boy David, in *David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens. Like Dickens, Orwell also fights against the evils of exploitation, suppression and tyranny in the society, and both of them think that people of an ideal society should not be cranky, affected and perverted. Through Napoleon in *Animal Farm*, Orwell delineates beautifully how individuals are betrayed on the name of brotherhood. The author strongly believes that positive conception of socialism is possible only when it is based on brotherhood and honest dealing. Like Napoleon, there is a constant betrayal of working class by its leaders. Equality and decency are the key factors for socialism, and future of mankind is bleak if we do not reinstate the belief in human brotherhood. The main hindrance in establishing socialism is that people are indifferent to decency. He strongly opposes the Left-wingers being intellectual and imaginatively self-indulgent, and wanted to remain undisturbed in their habits and attitudes as socialists while keeping their prosperity which was founded on the subjection of millions of poor people as we come across Napoleon who changes the commandment 'all animals are equal' to 'All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.'

The animals in the novel long for order, but are unable to get it. Like Orwell, they find their revolt against society as compulsive which is the miserable and chaotic state of the world that drives them to rebellion. There is a constant threat to their liberty that modern totalitarian systems have rendered. It is clearly evident in the voice of Benjamin who says, "windmill or no windmill, life will go on as it has always gone on-that is badly," and further adds that hunger, hardships and disappointments were the unalterable laws of life. Like Benjamin, many small animals who have certain complaints in their minds are killed mercilessly which highlights complete dictatorship and no animal could raise its head against the rulers. Here, Orwell explores that in the dying sound of Boxer, there is the dying hope of humanity. It is totally against the author's idea of healthy socialism.

It is his rebellion against these evil forces of society which, in the words of Raymond Williams, brought him the name not only of 'democratic socialism' but also of revolutionary and militant socialist. The total

strength of his social vision lies in the fact that he envisages a healthier society based on triple foundations-library, justice and common decency. He believes that socialism—freed from the control of the crackpots and dedicated to the cause of justice, liberty and the plight of the unemployed—can serve a logical solution to the horrors of 'a world in which nobody is free, in which hardly anybody is secure, in which it is almost impossible to be honest and to remain alive'.

There is no doubt in denying the fact that an in depth and incisive study of *Animal Farm* illustrates the falsification of socialism by Russian communism, but at the same time, the west is also guilty of this falsification. It is because the western countries present their society as being one of free initiative for the individual, but they too, have got centralized managerial industrial society of an essentially bureaucratic nature motivated by materialistic approach. Even In some democratic countries, the methods of totalitarianism are used to crush individuals' freedom. Endless investigations, character assassination by legislators and security regulations, deprive an individual of his or her freedom and liberty. Finding himself surrounded by the dictators with their satanic hunger for power, the scientific mode of production which makes man an automation, he gave a 'strangled cry,' and a warning to the people that the spirit of humanism is vanishing. As a matter of fact, Orwell throughout his writings exposes the forces responsible for the destruction of humanism.

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