

George Orwell's Animal Farm : A Critical Interpretation

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Abstract

Rebel is the main theme of Animal Farm. It represents the rebellion of animals on English Farm against the brutal attitude of their human masters. It is a sad story. It is a story of idealism, self-sacrifice and good intentions. But all these things are crushed and betrayed. As we go through the text we come to the conclusion that this is the story of disillusionment. It is a political allegory. Desire for freedom or the overthrow of tyranny may be the cause leading to the violence of revolution. But a new tyranny may quickly take the place of old. It is a clear portrayal of dictatorship in all its shapes and forms. Orwell has taken the theme from his own age may be it was the Stalin's regime in Russia and his activities during Spanish Civil War. In the story, Napoleon, the leader of the Animals finally assumed the role of a tyrannous being and usurped power and privilege.

Keywords: Rebellion, Stalinism and totalitarianism

It is true that George Orwell wrote Animal Farm with a clear political purpose. He was fed up with the working of the Government of Stalin. He could not control his hatred for Communist Party and its propaganda. But Orwell did not like to write a simple political pamphlet. As a political book it would have failed miserably. But Animal Farm became popular all over the world as an interesting novel. The writer got success in his aim because he followed the old pattern of writing an Animal fable. Now he could change the dates and events freely for his purpose. He could fly on the wings of imagination and at the same satirise dictatorship. T.S. Eliot could not approve Animal Farm for publication yet he admired it. He believed that the Plot has been handled skilfully. The novel is interesting from the beginning till the end. The novel conveys political purpose clearly but it impresses everybody with abundance of wit and humour. It affects the reader's feelings and emotions. George Orwell was shocked to see that the British intellectuals admired Russian communism openly. He was convinced that the Stalin Govt. was not democratic. In his opinion the Russian leaders had forgotten the path of democratic socialism. Certain basic rights of the people were neglected and there was no equal distribution of wealth and prosperity in Russia. Hence he exposed this cruel government to warn the people. The policies of Russia, Germany, Italy and Roman Catholic church were terrible at that time. George Orwell didn't want them to become permanent. In 1939 he realised that the people might surrender themselves permanently to such

regimes. In *Animal Farm* he boldly raised the voice of liberty, equality and fraternity. He had reached the conclusion that the promises of revolutions had been falsified by the Russian Govt. George Orwell always kept the Soviet history in his mind while writing *Animal Farm*. He satirised Russian events and dictatorship at the same time. Here he openly said that revolution failed to fulfil the promises of the leaders. They managed the government affairs for their selfish purposes. They abolished the old laws and institutions for the sake of democracy. The result is that leaders manage to get special rights for themselves. They satisfy their lust for power and create class-consciousness again. The pigs are more equal than other animals. They forget the past and give a new interpretation of history. They ignore the seven commandments and remove the hoof and the horn from the flag. Justice and equality are neglected totally on the farm though it is a republic. George Orwell was a literary artist and not a political thinker. His portrayal of animals is accurate and convincing. He had been a farmer at Wallington and hence understood the animals well. This experience helped him to make a lively portrayal of the animals in *Animal Farm*. Every incident is related with the main theme. There is no superfluous animal on the farm. The moral purpose of the artist is clear. His enthusiasm for democratic socialism is admirable. So, there is a grand mixture of political theory and artistic purpose in *Animal Farm*.

In *Animal Farm* George Orwell exposed the Russian Government of Stalin. He was shocked to know the political murders in Russia in 1936-38. Nazi-Soviet treaty was intolerable to him. He was against totalitarianism. It is true that *Animal Farm* is called a charming fairy tale for children. But this book is a grand political satire. He wrote this book when he was completely shocked with Communism. He realised that the Revolution of 1917 failed to give happiness in Russia. Stalin had become a dictator. The animals removed Jones from the farm. The leaders removed the czar from Russia. The same political leaders started enjoying a life of luxury and did not think of the good of community. Similarly pigs took over the farm and became its masters. They enjoyed the milk and apples and regarded themselves superior to others. Now they forgot the slogan-" All animals are Equal." (p.23) They believed, that some animals are more equal than others. Orwell satirised this policy of the pigs. He studied the history of the world from 1917 to 1945 expose the political leaders. The policies of Stalin have been satirised through Napoleon. Stalin expelled Trotsky from Russia in 1929. The contribution of Trotsky to Bolshevik Revolution was reinterpreted by the Soviet politicians and he was condemned. Similarly Napoleon and the pigs started speaking against the schemes of Snowball. Many Russians left the country after 1917 and here Molly left the *Animal Farm*. The faithful Proletariat suffered due to the cruel policies of Stalin. Here Boxer worked hard and even then had a tragic end. The Civil War of Russia has been described here through the Battle of cowshed. The Battle of the Willdwill hints at the German attack upon Russia in 1941. Stalin had

disliked Trotsky's policy of industrialization of Russia. But he adopted the same policy after Trotsky's departure. Similarly Napoleon wanted to build the windmill though he had urinated on this scheme of Snowball. Here George Orwell satirised the hypocrisy of Stalin. Napoleon listened the confessions of the animals and ordered for the killing of faithless pigs, dogs, sheeps, hens etc. Here the writer satirised the Moscow purge Trials Organised by Stalin. Old Major Speaks fluently on the farm. In the beginning of his speech he promises the animals to tell them about his dream. But he failed to reveal the same dream to them till the end. Here Orwell satirised those political leaders who promised a lot in the beginning and did nothing till, the end. We have sympathy with the animals in the beginning of the novel, They revolted against Mr. Jones and got success. Very soon the pigs took all the powers of the Farm in their hands. They became superior to all other animals. They had special rights and benefit. They acted as supervisors and asked other animals to do the total physical work. This attitude of the pigs has been satirised by the writer. Napoleon took the help of his dogs to silence his opponents. He introduced new economic policy for his selfish purpose. He sold timber to Mr. Frederick as Stalin has sold weapons to Hitler. The pigs started enjoying dressing, drinking, smoking, etc., in the fashion of upper classes. When the animals peeped into the Chamber they found no difference between men and the pigs. This false socialism was satirised by the writer. Thus, Orwell satirised the dictatorship of Stalin in Animal Farm. We enjoy every situation of this level.

Napoleon rises to absolute power slowly and slowly. George Orwell describes him as a "large, rather fierce-looking Berkshire boar" (p.15). He does not talk much but wants to get his ideas followed by all. He hates all discussion regarding his plans. He believes in the theory Do or Die, never ask why. He skilfully organises the party machinery and everything is in his grip. Once he becomes the sole leader of the animals, he does not grant his liberty to any animal. Like other pigs, he belongs to the group of mental workers. He believes that milk and apples are meant only for those who do mental work. In the beginning he adjusts with Snowball. He took no part in the fighting against Mr. Jones. But the credit goes to him in the end of the novel. He cannot tolerate any opposition from any corner. All the pigs are loyal to him. He does not like the committee system of Snowball. He wants the protection of Animal Farm at every cost. He believes in introducing reforms through the younger generation. This is the reason he brings up nine puppies and trains them. Napoleon cannot tolerate the popularity of Snowball on the Animal Farm. He does not like the plan of windmill as given by Snowball. He knows that Snowball will get more votes in the election on the Animal Farm. He gives a signal to his nine dogs at the time of election and removes Snowball from there forever. Napoleon stopped Sunday morning meetings on general discussions. He becomes the President of this new republic. Now Squealer will tell his decisions to

the animals. Now he wants to build the windmill. He gave the policy of trade with the human beings. He appointed Whymper to contact with the traders of outside world. All the seven rules of Animal Farm were thrown to the winds by him. Now the pigs lived in the farmhouse and slept in beds. He lived in luxury and did not care for the sufferings of other animals on the farm. Napoleon was cunning and cruel. He blamed Snowball when the windmill fell down due to winds. He sold Boxer to the Butcher and bought whisky with that money. He listened the confessions and ordered for the hanging of all his enemies. Now there was a reign of terror on the farm. The best honour Animal hero, first class was conferred upon him. He lived like a king and did not meet the general animals freely. He established business relations with Mr. Frederick and Mr. Pilkington with little success. He did not feel guilty at heart and conferred on himself the honour 'Order of the Green Banner.' Napoleon started the business of wine on the farm and drank half of a gallon of beer daily. Now he started walking on two legs and used Telephone, Radio etc. Now he lost faith in the word 'Comrade', he removed the hoof and the horn from the flag. Actually now there was no difference between Napoleon and Mr. Pilkington. Napoleon represents the policies of Stalin. Through Napoleon, George Orwell satirised the dictatorship of Stalin. Comrade Boxer said, "comrade Napoleon is always right." (p.50) But the irony is that Napoleon was never right.

Snowball has been rightly described as a better pig than Napoleon. He has been admired very much for his wisdom quickness in speech and foresightedness. He stands for Trotsky. As a matter of fact Trotsky wanted to give a different shape to U.S.S.R. He did not agree with the policies of Stalin. So Stalin expelled him from Russia. Now Trotsky took shelter in different countries. He was finally killed in Mexico by a secret agent of Stalin. Snowball was a pig of great ability. He had the genius to plan the future and work for it. He consulted Napoleon and Squealer for different programmes. He imagined those new plans for Animal Farm which Napoleon could not even understand. Hence he was the rival of Napoleon. Snowball said that all animals would live naked. He prepared the seven commandments with the help of Napoleon. Had Snowball become the only leader he would have followed them definitely? He had democratic feelings in his heart. All the animals accepted the seven commandments as declared by Snowball. Snowball formed many committees for the welfare of animals. He started classes so that the animals might learn reading and writing. He gave another slogan to the animals "Four legs good, two legs bad." (p.31), It was Snowball who defended the Animal farm from the attack of Mr. Jones. He had studied a book of Julius Caesar and had learnt about defence matters. He got success in his defensive operations due to his wonderful knowledge. He got success in driving out Jones from the farm. Now he made a speech before the animals and asked them to be patriots. He asked them to be ready to die for the Animal Farm. The title 'Animal Here, first class' was conferred upon him by the

animals. They all admired him for his bravery. He was never selfish, cruel, or mean. He had no intention to gain personal glory. He disagreed with Napoleon merely because he wanted all round development on the Animal Farm. The disagreements between them proved fatal for Snowball. Had there been a fair election on the farm, Snowball would have become the leader of animals. Napoleon was always jealous of his intelligence. Napoleon knew that Snowball had wonderful knowledge of agricultural operations. Snowball had prepared the plan of windmill for the happiness of the animals. He wanted to produce electricity for the farm so that all might get rest and leisure. He proposed to Napoleon that pigeons should be sent but to other farms for propagating the ideas of Animal Farm. Snowball was in favour of a general rebellion on every farm on the earth. His plan of windmill was perfect from, every point of view. He presented the whole plan with a piece of chalk on the wooden floor of a shed. But Napoleon could not tolerate this noble step of Snowball. He was wise among the foolish supporters of Napoleon. He had to pay a heavy price for his noble scheme of windmill. He was driven out from the farm by the nine dogs of Napoleon. Napoleon made a lot of propaganda against Snowball's policies. He was blamed for the fall of windmill. Squealer told the animals that Snowball had done nothing for the protection of Animal Farm. The title of Snowball was withdrawn. It was rumoured that Snowball had poisoned the food of Napoleon. As matter of fact, Snowball was a lover of all the comrades. He had full faith in the seven commandments of the Animal Farm. He was a supporter of equality, liberty and fraternity. He had democratic feelings in his temperament. He composed the song 'Bests of England' which was later on neglected by Napoleon. Readers admire Snowball for good qualities and condemn Napoleon for wickedness.

So, Animal Farm can be admired for its detachment, economy and tight formal control. Here the writer described his sympathy for the animals. He was afraid of certain political and social influences which threaten the moral values. Animal Farm is really a landmark in prose fiction.

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