

## **William Golding's novel "Lord of the Flies" as a Delineation of the Defects of Human Race**

**Balwant Singh &**

**Altaf Ahmad Ganaie**

School of Studies in Languages

Jiwaji University, Gwalior

### **Abstract:**

Lord of the Flies is a dystopian novel. Instead of man triumphing over nature and creating an ideal society as in traditional island literature, here we have man succumbing to the devil in his own nature and sliding back to savagery. The boys raise not an island Utopia but a primitive atavistic savage community. This paper is a deep inquiry into the essential nature of human society. The heroes of the novel are the proud products of English public schools-decent, disciplined boys who have been trained well in the values of civilized society. In typical British democratic tradition they assemble, elect a leader and make rules for the welfare of all. But very soon democracy fails, civilization fails and soon the boys return to the law of the jungle, where might is right. The conflict between Ralph and Jack is the conflict between two types of rule democracy and dictatorship. This research article is an attempt to trace the defects of the society back to the defects of the human race. We have the history of human society re-enacted backward. Here is society journeying back into primitivism. The moral is that the shape of a society must depend on the ethical nature of the individual and not on any political system. So the main concern of the novel is human nature and not the traditional theme of "castaway literature" with its discovery of the island world and conquest of nature. It deals with the discovery of human nature in an island setting.

### **Key Words:**

Savage community, Civilization, Human race, Society, Savagery, Adventure

**Introduction:**

William Golding's first published novel *Lord of the Flies* (1954) is his best-known work, though some of his later writing has a complexity and resonance deserving greater attention. *Lord of the Flies* became an immediate worldwide success, reflecting post-war disillusionment with human nature; indeed, Golding has explained that the novel originates from his experience of human evil during the atrocities of the Second World War. In 1983 William Golding was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. He is in the great tradition of the storyteller, and is not afraid to point up a moral truth while keeping the reader entertained. Like George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, Golding's *Lord of the Flies* has been described as a dystopia. Instead of showing an optimistic picture of a perfect world, Golding depicts a pessimistic picture of an imperfect world. The novel is also a revision of the desert-island myth originating in *Robinson Crusoe* and continued in *The Coral Island* (1857), a novel for boys written by R.M. Ballantyne. Ballantyne shows individuals who maintain their humanity in uncivilized places because of their innate goodness and virtue. Golding's novel shows the reverse.

*Lord of the Flies* describes how a group of English schoolboys, who are shipwrecked on a desert island, degenerate into savages. With a combination of fantasy and psychological realism, Golding shows how, when the constraints of civilization are removed, the essential nature and original sin of man is revealed. Although based on the dynamics of a group of school boys, the novel confronts profound questions of innocence, evil and the fall of man, casting doubt on the possibility of any lasting social progress.

The slanting sticks of sunlight were lost among the branches. At length he came to a clearing in the forest where rock prevented

vegetation from growing. Now it was a pool of shadows and Ralph nearly flung himself behind a tree when he saw something standing in the centre; but then he saw that the white face was bone and that the pig's skull grinned at him from the top of a stick. He walked slowly into the middle of the clearing and looked steadily at the skull that gleamed as white as ever the conch had done and seemed to jeer at him cynically. An inquisitive ant was busy in one of the eye sockets but otherwise the thing was lifeless. Or was it ?

This novel gives a surer indication of his continuing concern with moral allegory than it does of his subsequent experiments with fictional form. Golding set the novel on a desert island on which a marooned party of boys from an English cathedral choir-school gradually falls away from the genteel civilization that has so far shaped it and regresses into dirt, barbarism, and murder. The island is cut off both from the disciplined harmony of the boys' musical background and from a disharmonious world of grown-ups at war. *Lord of the Flies* is first of all a simple story of romantic adventure. We have the exploits of a group of boys who are stranded on a remote island on the South Pacific. It is the mysterious world of *Robinson Crusoe*. But while *Robinson Crusoe* triumphs over the forces of nature, the boys here yield to them and sink into the depths of savagery. One after the other they forget the values of civilization and begin to live like primitive men. They hunt pigs and soon they start hunting one another. Their adventures in the course of the novel take a violent turn. What begins as a romantic adventure develops into a gruesome tale. The novel is shaped intellectually by an intermixture of the Christian concept of original sin, a post-Darwinist and post-Wellsian pessimism, and a systematic undoing of R.M. Ballantyne's adventure story of plucky and resourceful boys, *The Coral Island* (1857). At the end of the story an officer from the warship that rescues the boys dejectedly remarks, 'I should have thought that a pack of British boys... would

have been able to put up a better show than that'. The sudden shift of viewpoint and the dejection were re-explored, with subtle variations and darker ramifications, in each of Golding's subsequent novels. As the range of his fiction shows, Golding emerged as a major successor to an established line of Modernist mythopoeists. Unlike Yeats, Eliot, Joyce, or Jones, however, he was not content with a reanimation of ancient myth; he was intent on over-turning and superseding a variety of modern rationalist formulations and on replacing them with charged, unorthodox moral shapes. It is not just British Boys who reveal their innate depravity, but the whole human race.

*Lord of the Flies* is probably the most powerful English novel written since the war. It is the story, told with meticulous realism and at the same time with a visionary clarity that shows up everything as symbolic of a group of small children wrecked on a desert island degenerating into a society based on fear, violence and tyranny. Most of Golding's later novels show this same visionary intensity and show him also groping for a form that will contain this kind of tortured moral vision. None of them is wholly satisfactory, but they are all of immense interest and show a remarkable talent. Golding is a man haunted by his own sense of human inadequacy who, disregarding all novelistic traditions available to him, is conducting a bold search for the kind of novel which will contain his own vision of man. Golding is a symbolic novelist, and sometimes has trouble with his symbols. The novelist today, partly as a result of the immense amount of critical work done on the novel, much of it pointing to the symbolic implications of particular aspects of particular works, is more self-conscious about symbols than he has ever been.

*Lord of the Flies*, according to William Golding, is an attempt to trace the defects of the society back to the defects of the human race. The moral is that

the shape of a society must depend on the ethical nature of the individual and not on any political system. So the main concern of the novel is human nature and not the traditional theme of "castaway literature" with its discovery of the island world and conquest of nature. It deals with the discovery of human nature in an island setting. The novel is a deep inquiry into the essential nature of human society. The heroes of this story are the proud products of English public schools—decent, disciplined boys who have been trained well in the values of civilized society. In typical British democratic tradition they assemble, elect a leader and make rules for the welfare of all. But very soon democracy fails, civilization fails and soon the boys return to the law of the jungle, where might is right. The conflict between Ralph and Jack is the conflict between two types of rule—democracy and dictatorship. We have the history of human society re-enacted backward. Here is society journeying back into primitivism.

The novel is also a philosophical study into the nature of man. It shows that civilization is only skin deep. Faced with the hostile forces of nature, the boys lose all the values of civilization. They fall victims to atavistic fears. The "beastie" in the novel is the embodiment of that fear. The beastie that the boys are afraid of is probably their own inner nature. Even Ralph, the best of the boys, cannot cope with that fear. And Jack like a primitive man worships the "Beastie" and gives offerings to it. We find that man can easily become a savage. Savagery is still an essential aspect of human nature. What civilization has done is to control it. Once that control is withdrawn, the angel disappears and the devil takes over. The conflict between Jack and Ralph is in a way the conflict between the angel and the devil in man. It is significant that in the end it is the devil who wins. The "beastie" is, as Simon knows, in the mind of man. The focus of the book is on the beastly side of human nature.

Lord of the Flies is a dystopian novel. Instead of man triumphing over nature and creating an ideal society as in traditional island literature, here we have man succumbing to the devil in his own nature and sliding back to savagery. The boys raise not an island Utopia but a primitive atavistic savage community.

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