

## ‘Animal Farm’ : A Fable of Relevance in 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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### Abstract

‘Animal Farm’ is a fable and an allegorical political satire on the Russian Revolution which gives a long lasting lesson not just of history but a clarity on how a revolution starts and where it finally reaches. History repeats itself as the revolutionaries are also human beings who have certain traits by which they are governed irrespective of their caste, creed , culture or ethnicity. The book by George Orwell written in the Nineteenth Century still holds the universal appeal of all times and is relevant to be read and understood by all those who have plenty of questions and queries regarding the start of a new system by razing the old one down.

**KEYWORDS:** Fable, Satire, Russian Revolution, Totalitarianism, Socialism, Proletariats.

‘Animal Farm’ is a fable and a political satire on the Russian Revolution by Eric Arthur Blair , popularly known as George Orwell . The novel was first published in 1945 . The novel came into existence as Orwell being a journalist closely watched the world in action . The series of historical events happening during his time made him realize some thoughts which even today hold themselves to be true. He was a very sensitive , intelligent and an observant individual due to which he could penetrate , feel and think acutely about his surroundings where reportage was in vogue and the age was soaked with the tremors of Spanish Civil War which broke out in Morocco on 17<sup>th</sup> July 1936. Orwell was a journalist who wanted to gather first hand information and relevant material for his newspaper articles. But situation did not allow him to remain away from the scene and he participated in the war which brought him face to face with the real situation and it acted as an eye opener for him in understanding the ongoing war and revolutions. Orwell spent plenty of time with the downtrodden of England and became convinced that the solution to poverty was in socialism- a political and economic philosophy which said that the state should control the production and distribution and all members of the state should share the profits. In the Preface of Ukrainian edition of *Animal Farm*, "I became pro-Socialist more out of disgust with the way the poorer section of the industrial workers were oppressed and neglected than out of any theoretical admiration for a planned society." As he explains in the essay "Why I Write," "Every line of serious work I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, *against* totalitarianism and *for* democratic socialism." He saw totalitarian type of Government as that form of Government in which there is no representation to any political opinion except that of a ruling party with characteristics like, obtaining concrete results quickly by way and violence; abolishing past and creating future by false propaganda, censorship and terrorism; curtailing individual liberties like freedom of thought, speech and press; centralizing economy; power an integral part; and no caring of the previous or present laws.

Seeing this form of government ruling nations like France, Germany and Russia made Orwell think that it was a world-wide phenomena which would wipe out the total existence of man and thus be a great threat to the mankind and literature of the world. His anti-totalitarian feelings were widely conveyed in many of his novels and Journals. 'Animal Farm', a political satire through a fable was such novel based on this very theme of anti-totalitarianism. In 'Animal Farm'(1945), Orwell satirizes the Russian totalitarianism as he viewed. He attempted a deadly attack on Stalin and on his betrayal of Russian Revolution. It was an act of courage and integrity for Orwell that he was writing a novel to degrade the Russian Regime, the one which everyone was glorifying under the impact of false propaganda.

Leon Trotsky opined that goal of socialism in Russia would not be realized without the success of the world revolution. Joseph Stalin later rejected this idea, stating that socialism was possible in one country and cleverly used Lenin's argument in his favour and to defeat his competitors within the party, which said that socialism's success needs the workers of other countries in order to happen.

Orwell crafted his 'Animal Farm' on the historical events of Russian Revolution, what he saw as a prevalent — and false belief that the Russian Revolution of 1917 was a step toward socialism for millions of poor and oppressed Russians. Orwell felt that Stalin's brutal rise to power was a betrayal of socialist principles and were towards totalitarianism: "I was struck by clear signs of its transformation into a hierarchical society, in which the rulers have no more reason to give up their power than any ruling class." Convinced that "a destruction of the Soviet myth was essential if we wanted a revival of the Socialist movement," Orwell began thinking about how he could best communicate his opinions on socialism and Stalin. His thoughts were ignited when he happened to see a village boy whipping a cart-horse. At that moment, Orwell received the inspiration he needed to formulate his ideas into *Animal Farm*: "It struck me that if only such animals became aware of their strength we would have no power over them, and that men exploit animals" as the government in a totalitarian state exploits the common people.

Orwell, writing this fable passed on from human 'prole' characters to animal characters. He found similarities between the two. Proles are as poor, full of strength and stupidity, lacking in brain like the animals. The theme of 'Animal Farm' deals with the rise and fall of a revolution. He very objectively paints the ups and downs and the cause for the rise and fall of a revolution. By this fable he proves that the position of the proletariat can never alter. They will remain the same in the times to come. The only reason is the 'Nature's Law', ie, the 'Survival of the Fittest' that is ingrained in the blood since birth. According to Marx all are equal and everything should be divided equally among them. In 'Animal Farm' 'Some are more equal than others.'

In the novel, a revolution takes place which converts 'Manor Farm' of Mr. Jones to 'Animal Farm' of all animals. Seeds of revolution were sown by Old Major (a boar) who gives the message of liberty, freedom and comradeship leading to riches and happiness by hating mankind- the symbol of a tyrant. Inspired by his speeches they revolt against

Mr. Jones and his men under the leadership of Napoleon and Snowball, the two young Boars. After the success, the fundamental principles are written on the wall of the big Farm, last of which said, "All Animals are Equal." But this slogan could not remain for long as under the guise of doing more mental work for everyone's welfare they grasped the position of a 'privileged class'.

This elite class of boars when found footage in the society by their sly methods, the 'Survival of the Fittest' starts in this class also. In the expected struggle for leadership Napoleon chased Snowball out of the farm. With the opponent being suppressed and expelled, the leader becomes further elite within the elite. Thus, the familiar pattern of oppressor and the oppressed, rich and poor, ruler and the ruled emerges making the circle a complete whole. The revolution ends where it had begun. Life for all the animals (except the pigs) is harsh. Eventually, the pigs begin walking on their hind legs and take on many other qualities of their former human oppressors. The Seven Commandments are reduced to a single law: "All Animals Are Equal / But Some Are More Equal Than Others." The novel ends with Pilkington sharing drinks with the pigs in Jones' house. Napoleon changes the name of the farm back to Manor Farm and quarrels with Pilkington during a card game in which both of them try to play the ace of spades. As other animals watch the scene from outside the window, they cannot tell the pigs from the humans.

The novel though rooted in Russian Revolution reflects the seed of eternity in the present scenario. The book still holds its worth in the changing times and when revisited still holds itself true in the twenty first century. The technical advancements, the awareness and globalization has not been able to leave its impact on the human mind. The novel suggests to its readers to have a peep into the personal and professional motives of their leaders. Their seeming altruist attitude betrays the voter who had sent him or her to rule making bodies on their behalf. The luring by words in a picturesque manner still provides hope to the citizens for a better life, which ultimately never happens. The poor still stay poor and the rich go richer. Leaders do not prove to be what they had promised misleading the public. The novel also presents the subtle ways in which a group of citizens — of a farm or a nation — can be eventually led by the nose into a terrible life ruled by a totalitarian regime. In "Why I Write," Orwell describes *Animal Farm* as "the first book in which I tried, with full consciousness of what I was doing, to fuse political purpose and artistic purpose into one whole." His political purpose — presenting a model of socialism gone wrong — is found in the way that the novel's animals reflect different kinds of humans and their struggles for freedom and power. Orwell felt that a farm where "All Animals Are Equal" would solve many social and economic problems — but he also knew that such a system would be difficult to maintain, since some animals would act on the principle that "Some Are More Equal Than Others." The characters presented in the novel are quite familiar to the people we still see around us. Like; Major is an old boar whose speech about the evils perpetrated by humans rouses the animals into rebelling. His philosophy concerning the tyranny of Man is named Animalism by his followers. He also teaches the song "Beasts of England" to the animals; Snowball- A boar who becomes one of the rebellion's most valuable leaders. After drawing complicated plans for the construction of a windmill, he is chased off of the farm forever by Napoleon's dogs and thereafter used as a scapegoat for the animals' troubles; Napoleon - A boar who, with

Snowball, leads the rebellion against Jones. After the rebellion's success, he systematically begins to control all aspects of the farm until he is an undisputed tyrant; Squealer- A porker pig who becomes Napoleon's mouthpiece. Throughout the novel, he displays his ability to manipulate the animals' thoughts through the use of hollow yet convincing rhetoric; Boxer- A dedicated but dimwitted horse who aids in the building of the windmill but is sold to a glue-boiler after collapsing from exhaustion; Mollie- A vain horse who prefers ribbons and sugar over ideas and rebellion. She is eventually lured off the farm with promises of a comfortable life; Clover - A motherly horse who silently questions some of Napoleon's decisions and tries to help Boxer after his collapse; Benjamin- A cynical, pessimistic donkey who keeps on repeating "Donkeys live a long time."; Moses- A tame raven and sometimes-pet of Jones who tells the animals stories about a paradise called Sugarcandy Mountain; Bluebell, Jessie, and Pincher Three dogs; The nine puppies born between Jessie and Bluebell are taken by Napoleon and raised to be his guard dogs.

Orwell does not only find fault with the leaders but the fault of lies with the common man like Mollie, whose only concerns are materialistic and lack any political sense of what is happening around them. Such people offer no resistance to tyrants like Napoleon. Boxer is like a blindly devoted citizen ("Napoleon is always right") come what may. Although Boxer is a sympathetic character, his ignorance is almost infuriating, and Orwell suggests that this unquestioning ignorance allows rulers like Napoleon to grow stronger. Even Benjamin, the donkey, contributes to Napoleon's rise, because his only stand on what is occurring is a cynical dismissal of the facts, though he is correct in stating that "Life would go on as it had always gone on ..." His only action is to warn Boxer of his impending death, but this is futile as it occurs too late to do Boxer any good.

The characters seems to be just animals with human qualities still found all over the globe. The Farm represented is like any other country irrespective of its caste, creed, colour, culture or geographic location. The novel derives its value of permanence from the personality traits, emotions and method of thinking which are universal in their nature and appeal and are found in all societies. In any given situation the society has such kind of people and reacting in the way shown in the novel.

Apart from the characters depicted, it is the wheel of nature which suggests that "Old order changeth; yielding place to new". The new system germinates, matures up and then withers away leaving the space for another cycle of the same kind stating that history repeats itself. Though, Swift explored themes of political corruption in eighteenth century, Orwell consciously tried his hand in twentieth Century through his political satire 'Animal Farm' which needs to be studied deeply and remembered. The book is since a fable it moralizes with utmost clarity that if we are not aware and conscious of our actions, the class of haves and have-nots, the ruler and the ruled will continue.

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