



## POWER OVER AUTHORITY: A HUMAN INSTINCT IN *LORD OF THE FLIES*

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**Abstract:** *The authority acts crucial part in social life to keep order. But human instinct of power leans towards disorder by eradicating ethics. The eminent novel Lord of the Flies written by William Golding is a great effort to distinguish man's perception towards Authority and Power at the time of its creation, in response to British middle-class standards and faith in moral codes. It makes realization that how Golding has used satiric tone to attack public principles of the period. It became a significant piece of literature to take a lesson by every nation of the world. In a sense Great Britain was beating the drum as an empire builder and advancing rather nationalistic prejudice that Britons had greater courage, higher moral and loftier goals than lesser mortals. It points that religion disperses the forces of evil in the world. One who is not religious will be evil. Here, Golding differs sharply as his choir boys, with their crosses on their cloaks, become the most bloodthirsty of hunters. Once they remove their cloaks, they also throw away their religion and give no subsequent indication that religion has had any effect at all upon their characters. Golding's work points that religious institutions have failed to eradicate wickedness existed within human as an instinct. It strengthens with apt conditions and supportive power. That can be controlled by the group of people only who believe in authority and not in power. This authority categorizes Ralph & naval officer, savior.*

*Golding designs actual life on the island where the boys land. The boys had worn school uniform when they landed on the island excluding Jack and his group. Jack's nature awfully leans towards revolt. He accepts challenge of hunting as he knows well that he can do it. This confidence enables him to succeed in hunting pig. It associates Jack solely with hunting, even leads him towards process of savagery & uncivilization by power hungry acts.*

*In contrast, Ralph and other boys had worn school uniform which symbolizes willingness to maintain rule and order. Jack challenges Ralph's leadership as he cannot hunt pig. He believes authority should be powerful to feed all to survive, encourages him to demand leadership. Ralph's notion of survival is wider, encompassing sure life and not temporary. The tussle between the two starts with the same issue. Jack's taking all the power in hand and setting fire to the whole island is an example of anarchy and beast in human nature, irrespective of religious background. Both categories are available in society, first represents evil force in Jack while second forms righteousness in Ralph. The first viewpoint carries destruction of humanity itself while later ensures existence of the same and sustained progress. The question remains unanswered, how Jack can be alive by setting fire to the whole island?*

**Key Words :** Authority, instinct, savagery, disorder, beast, humanity.

### Introduction:

William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* first published in 1954, presenting general

psychology of man. He cleared novel's theme as "an attempt to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human

nature." To give more clarity, in the essay *A Moving Target*, 1982 by him "The theme of *Lord of the Flies* is grief, sheer grief, grief, grief," are his own words. At the end of novel Ralph mourns over spot of evil in heart of every individual. The earlier school going boys tried carelessly to dictate others who

D.H. Lawrence once said, "This is the very worst wickedness, that we refuse to acknowledge the passionate evil that is in us. This makes us secret and rotten."

Golding wanted to illustrate in this literary piece the dark side of human nature and make the point that each member of humankind has this dark side. The boys conceptualize the source of all their worst impulses as a beast, some sort of actual animal or possibly supernatural creature inhabiting the island. Yet, all along the boys take on the persona of the beast when they act on their animal impulses. There is no external beast.

In "lord of the flies," flies feast on dead animals. In that the fly who desire to take major part to eat tries to empower upon other flies. It resembles Jack, who tries to become Lord or chief among boys either by keeping them in control or killing them. When Simon asks the assembly "What's the dirtiest thing there is?" he looks for the answer "evil" but also included in that answer is decay and death. Ironically, Jack's answer is partially correct. Jack gives more clear picture of the beast's identity as he asserts that "The beast is a hunter," accidentally implicating himself as hazard, a source of the boys' fears. His desire for power and authority encourages him to obligate and persuade savage acts against his own breed. His forceful action perfectly suits the words, "Power . . . chattered in his ear like an ape." The symbolic devil sits on his shoulder in form of animality, trying to have power over rest of the boys.

#### **Power - A Human instinct:**

Golding depicts everyday life through the island on which the boys land. The boys had worn school uniform when they landed on the island excluding Jack and his group. Jack's nature awfully leans

were not participants of their group. The same obedient and cultured school going boys exposed the urge to impose pain and enjoyed the rush for power. They reject values of the civilization represented by Ralph and select indulgent savagery and animality represented by Jack.

towards revolt. He accepts challenge of hunting as he knows well that he can do it. This confidence enables him to succeed in hunting pig. It associates Jack solely with hunting, and cannot see the necessity of other things that can keep them alive. It leads him towards process of complete savagery, uncivilization and even anarchy by power hungry acts. Golding corresponds this to the vice and malicious people in the world. In contrast, Ralph and other boys had worn school uniform which symbolizes willingness to maintain rule and order. Ralph suggests that they should exercise communication and order which clears his temperament. He and Piggy call meeting in which 'conch' is settled out as authoritative power to speak and rest to follow. Ralph, having conch in hand instructs Jack and his group to kill and bring pig to eat. Ralph represents civilized and democratic people in the world.

Jack Merridew is a representative figure for savagery. He follows emotions of fury and savagery right from the beginning. Initially, he is the chief of his choir group, who become hunters in the development of the story. At the end his savage behavior and capacity to tell people what they want to hear, gives him chance to take charge over Ralph. Then his foremost aim is to hunt and kill to achieve more power. In chapter eight Jack's act of killing a mother pig very cruelly shows recklessness in him. He makes no difference in killing pig and killing boys like him. He takes complete charge at the end because of his persuasive

and controlling conduct. In the development of plot he remains less concerned to any social bonding. In the end he is totally careless for the deaths of Simon and Piggy. His passionate attempt to kill Ralph makes him complete savage to conquer all power. Golding reveals the idea that without the authority and punishment in the society, humans are capable of savage acts.

Savagery is encouraged by chant. Jack and his hunters sang, "Kill the pig! Cut his throat! Bash him in!" suggests its celebration. Another chant, "Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood! Do him in!" not while killing pig but when they are supposedly killing the beast (Simon). The boys delight in killing pigs and supposed beast. This chanting suggests the same enjoyment as in football to enjoy oneself for good happenings. The boys also get caught up in the rush in killing Simon and they did not realize what was exactly going on. The chant changes as boys seem more blood thirsty, the first chant, "kill the pig! Cut his throat! Bash him in!", turns into "Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood! Do him in!" Here, the boys have added "spill his blood!" suggests more lust for blood and ultimate savagery.

There are many more things that drive into savagery. First, crave for power. Jack gets it but craved for more power. To kill pigs needed for food but the way of killing was not only savage act but also source of pleasure for triumph. While killing mother pig it shows how savage they can be. Whereas killing pigs gives power, the power to overrule Ralph's orders. Jack arranges his men to kill Piggy, and was going to kill Ralph to get full power. He performs nothing but savage acts. Secondly, the imagination and knowledge drives into savage acts. In the killing of Simon, the boys feel guilty about their past failures and crimes. Try to lose fear and self-awareness in a ritual act of murder in which Simon becomes a "beast," responsible for the

presence of evil on the island. Previously, the pigs were scapegoats through which the boys sought to lose feelings of guilt and inadequacy in the violent act of murder. But, as often happens in unhealthy societies, the first act only increases the need for purgation, and the killings become progressively more criminal, going from pig to sow and, finally, to a human victim who relieves, momentarily at least, the common guilt. Sir James Frazer, in *The Golden Bough*, includes an entire chapter on scapegoats, describing the scores of ways that primitive tribes ceremonially deposit their guilt on a single object, animal, or person and then proceeds to harm or destroy the guilt-laden creature. Often, the primitive tribe will use sticks to beat the scapegoat, as the boys do.

There is correlation between Jack's failure to kill pig first time and futile attempt to take charge from Ralph. Jack prepares to kill pig but hesitates in the same manner as he tries to take charge from Ralph but he hesitates to take it forcefully. His hesitation on both the parts exhibits that his moral side is still in existence. But finally when Jack takes charge over Ralph, all others left out. Savagery is introduced in form of physical punishment. Jack and Roger took pleasure in torturing Wilfred. Violence was used not only because Wilfred has displeased Jack but because Jack had power to punish individual. Obviously, Jack used his power to his advantage. He also used it to keep all under his control. Piggy was killed by Roger as he was too clever and that's why harmful for salvages. To survive on the island everyone needed to become one of the savages. Civilized or more clever cannot survive on the island. Golding also points that in such condition strong people win over the weak. In the beginning when vote takes place, Piggy tries to be the candidate but is ignored and two strongest are chosen for election, Ralph and Jack.

In initial stages Jack takes Piggy's glasses only to make fun. It is also added by his savagery. He knows it that Piggy's knowledge is main source of Ralph's ideas. He controls Ralph by making Piggy weak and useless without glasses. There are two reasons why Jack acts so, first because there is no form of punishment and second, he is basically immoral. But later on he also realizes that glasses are important means to set fire and would give him more power. While Simon confronts with the staked head that is speaking to him, his awareness of the other boys as the island's true menace is established. It assures that the true evil force is within man and not outside at all. "You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you? Close, close, close! I'm the reason why it's no go? Why things are what they are?", symbolizes evil power within everyone and extreme in Jack.

The sow's head covered with flies symbolizes creatures that lack the capacity to feel compassion or empathy with the dead sow, engaged completely by their want to grab and consume and grow. That compassion makes division between humanity and animality denoting that Jack lacks compassion for the dependant littluns and the weak Piggy. Jack and his hunters lose their compassion as well for rest of the boys just looking for only to hunt meat and strengthen the power by increasing figures of their group or kill those who refute to join.

Fire, an important necessity is carelessly treated and abused by Jack. It shows his lack of foresight. His whole existence and survival depend on fire yet Jack is unable to understand Ralph's anxiety of the fire. He is not much more careful and even concerned to rescue. But at the end, the fire set by Jack to burn Ralph out was meant for evil but ended with a rescue.

#### **Authority - A Human instinct:**

In the beginning of the novel, boys select Ralph as leader because he calls

everyone together and therefore naturally more authoritative figure than Jack. As a result, Jack becomes jealous which is early sign of conflict between Ralph and Jack. The words by Jack, "I ought to be chief." show his inner thoughts of superiority over Ralph and for that reason later on he challenged Ralph. As Jack was a former leader of the choir, Ralph gave him opportunity of leading his group as hunters. He gave Jack this leadership so that he should not rebel against Ralph in demand of more power. Although Ralph arranged it tactfully, Jack was not satisfied. His orders to Sam and Eric that, "the rest are making a line. Come on!" indicates his control over others than just hunter group, to come along while going for hunting. This was the first idea in Jack's mind to take charge from Ralph.

Ralph's idea of setting fire at the top of hill on the island is to rescue all. At the same time Jack is more interested to find means of survival. Ralph gives respect to Jack's idea. But Jack is not respectful towards Ralph's idea and careless about it. He gives more importance to necessity of living. Even he challenges Ralph that he cannot hunt pig and therefore need not to give orders rather should accept Jack's authority. His idea that one who is powerful should be in authority encourages him to demand for authority. Ralph does not accept the notion. The tussle between the two starts with the same issue. But it was Ralph, who was to fight against and challenge Jack's power. Out of this responsibility, Ralph had intense desire to save all from Jack's evil power.

The distribution of boys by Ralph, in three groups and assigning them particular task denotes order. Allowing freedom of expression to everyone though 'conch' indicates democracy. And, setting fire at the top of hill on the island marks rescue from savagery and life in civilization. At another side, desire to enjoy the life by displaying



physical power visualizes disorder. Taking all the power in hand shows permissivity and anarchy. Setting fire to the whole island is an example of beast in human nature which may come out any time. Both categories are available in society, first represents Ralph while second is presented through Jack. The first viewpoint leads humanity towards progress and benefit while later carries destruction of humanity itself. How Jack can be alive by setting fire to the whole island? It is just end of human race.

### **Power Exceeds Authority:**

The authority turns out from conch to the dead pig's head on stick. The power represented by 'sow's head' and 'conch' are different. By different ways the novel "*Lord of the Flies*" is novel of power. Jack is very excited to form rules for their new society when first time arrives on the island but changes his views on rules towards the end of the story. He transition from choirboy to the power hungry character lacking rules. Jack's mask of wearing painted face symbolizes a coat hiding anything. It also frees him to do anything without care.

In second chapter Jack's utterance, "we're not savages. We're English . . . So we've got to do the right things" turns ironically contrast in his actions. He is totally ignorant about forthcoming truth. After learning of the two deaths, the naval officer comments, "I should have thought that a pack of British boys . . . would have . . . put up a better show than that." But he is unaware about the exact seriousness of the matter. Both Jack and the officer are equally ignorant of the truth like all of humanity. The fact is that the boys act on impulses of human instinct that representing rest of the world. Although, Golding uses events more associated with the British the theme is universal. Even if one limits the interpretation of the novel to British imperialism, to do so would be to deny the larger truth: That all people in all societies

possess the same impulses with varying degrees.

The significance of the vanishing of the parachute and corps into the sea at the moment of Simon's death is that now the beast on top of the mountain is no longer necessary. His place is to be supplied by human beasts. It is ironic that Simon, who hoped to dispel the beast by enlightening the boys, instead replaces the beast as the imagined source of evil. After Simon, the savage society will turn its violence against Piggy and then Ralph. Thirdly, without authority savagery is free to continue as there is no punishment for savage acts of torturing and killings others. It demonstrates that man without authority easily turns into savage primitivism, even a beast. Moral and civil knowledge quickly turns into havoc.

It must be perceived that the boys live on the island correspond to a universal society. Golding motives for choosing the island as setting might be best to have the characters secluded, where the law and order of any governmental authority cannot work. Why Golding selected children rather than adolescents or adults? Probably children have not so far completely trained by society to understand right or wrong. In this unawareness, they are guided by their instinct. In the opening of the story Jack, habituated by the prior society he had been a part of; could not dare to kill a pig that was trapped in the encounter. In the development of the plot he becomes fewer or less emotionally involved to any communal norms. Once after killing a pig he becomes confident and more accustomed to it. He shows joy and proud in killing. Towards the end, he realizes no shame for the deaths of Simon and Piggy. His attempt to kill Ralph demonstrates utmost savagery within him. *Lord of the Flies* deals mainly with the most prominent theme that the moral sincerity of every individual within the society closely relates and conditions life within the same. It points towards man as a vicious creature

whose evil sides are brought out when isolated from society. The theme traces the defects of society back to the defects of basic human nature.

The novel suggests one significant aspect of civilized society that outlet is to be provided for the savagery that exists within every individual. The desire of savagery within Jack emerges through killing pigs. In the beginning Jack is normal boy of civilized society and not a hazard to other boys. But, his success in killing pig encourages the evil within him. Now, with changed nature Jack does not follow rules and orders. He rejects as well as challenges Ralph's authority and forcefully demands charge.

The foremost meaning of *Lord of the Flies* is contained in the progression of authoritative charge. It forms in Ralph's mind by using 'conch' to set order. The fear in the mind of Ralph was that without any controlling power there will be absolute anarchy among the boys. This fear makes him to take charge of all boys. If Ralph had accepted challenge of killing pig, Jack could not have accused Ralph as cowardice and weak. It caused Jack to reject his leadership. Ralph failed to understand Jack fully; otherwise he could have used the same Jack for his purpose. Jack could have accepted Ralph's well mannered, well planned, rational and orderly leadership.

**Conclusion:**

In *Lord of the Flies* Golding demonstrates that ethical nature is not inherent in man. In fact, there is a definite ability for evil that exists in man. Jack

represents evidently the same. However, it is the moral uprightness that must overcome in order to be civilized and ethical for maintaining order in society. This is the prominent idea of the story, others exist underneath it. The novel denotes the most prominent idea that normally people look down upon another person or group in order to feel secure. Jack proves that without any rules of society disorder and savagery can come out. One can only repress inner savagery before it breaks out. The arrangement of life within society relates to the moral integrity of its individuals.

It attempts to trace defects of society back to the defects of human nature. The shape of society depends on the ethical nature of individual. Ralph and the naval officer both represent ethical individuals of the society. Therefore both have idea to rescue humanity from power hungry individuals. Jack represents this evil force of power greedy individuals. The idea in the novel runs opposite to the belief that naturally good man is helpless victim of social forces over which he has no control. Ralph, a naturally good boy stands against evil forces even after the circumstances go beyond control. The naval officer even having in the business of killing he is neat and orderly, dignified and civilized. Therefore, both Ralph and the naval officer becomes representative of modern, civilized man not just in the world of fiction but real world. The human instinct of authority within them acts as savior of humanity. It has to be strengthened to defy 'evil force.'

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