

Animal Farm: A Critical Study in the Wake of Indian Politics

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“The promise given was a necessity of the past, the word broken is a necessity of the present.”

Machiavelli

Abstract

The society we live in has roughly two factions in terms of the economic status of the people i.e. Bourgeoisie and Proletariat. One is the dominant class while the other is the labouring class. The former is called the parasitical due to their dependence on the produce made available by the latter, the perennial suffering lot. The lowest economic class feels cheated and thugged only when their leader becomes a dictator and endorses capitalism for achieving his high political end. Lord Acton opines, ‘Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely.’ A totalitarian, Joseph Stalin, who is portrayed in the novel as Napoleon, the pig and becomes the voice of the voiceless animals, emerges as the sole leader of the discontented working class, ultimately extends his supporting hands to capitalists against whom the Russian Revolution broke out in 1917. Thus the Revolution lost its sheen very soon. There is no dearth of Stalinism on this planet in the present socio-political phenomenon. The central idea of the novel rests on its concluding lines ‘The creature outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which.’ The novel is a departure from the maxim ‘all animals are equal’ to the maxim ‘all animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others.’ The paper in question is a sincere attempt to critically analyze the dystopian novel ‘*Animal Farm*’ (1945) by George Orwell, a staunch opponent to pseudo-communalism, in the wake of the existing socio-political scenario of India in particular.

Keywords- Bourgeoisie, Proletariat, Totalitarianism, Dystopia, Stalinism

Animal Farm, an allegorical as well as dystopian sensation by George Orwell, possesses a unique place among the novels written by his contemporaries. It is a novel of its own kind. A fable, the narrative is said to have been written in the backdrop of the Russian (Bolshevik) Revolution of 1917. It reveals the class character of the political stalwarts. The writer of 1984

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which is other dystopian novel, indirectly but successfully focuses on how the leader of the masses turns a dictator, endorsing the capitalistic power and putting their promised welfare into peril. The leader of the suppressed and the exploited uses them as the vote bank. Using the ladder of the movement or the revolution, the concerned leader of any organization or party, after having got success in his motto, does the same as is done by the oppressors and perpetrators. So there is little difference between the ruler and the opposition leader or revolutionary leader. If the former is a declared dictator, then the latter is a would-be dictator or a dictator in guise. In a nutshell, political leaders, barring a select few having broader socio-humanistic vision, are opportunists. They also do the same as is done by the incumbent as and when they come in power. Nicolas Stalin, a bonafide leader of the labouring class, happened to turn a dictator whose insurgence from the womb of the Russian Revolution imposed a threat to communism, the principles propounded by Lenin, a great sociopolitical thinker of his time. Lenin advocates the significance of literature for the sake of the party. He has argued in 1905 that 'Literature must become party literature.... Literature must become part of the organized, methodical, and unified labours of the social-democratic party.'¹Premchand also holds the similar view when he clarifies that literature is a beacon light being carried along ahead of politics. In other words, literature purges politics when the latter gets corrupt.

Orwell's *Animal Farm* modelled on Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* epitomizes the plot of the Russian (or Bolshevik) Revolution of 1917. Thus goes the story of the novel. Old Major, the prize boar, opposes Mr. Jones, a cruel farmer, because of his dominating as well as parasitic attitude. Whatsoever is produced by the animals in the Manor Farm owned is stolen and consumed by the owner. All the animals feel suffocated and enslaved under the custody of the farmer. Old Major organizes the animals, suggests them to learn letters and arithmetic and to stand united. He also commands them as to how to get freedom from their perpetrator. He tells them all about the old liberation song 'Beasts of England' that appears in his last night dream. The song has the enthusiastic appeal on them. He calls them a spade a spade about the man's intention towards them which the even minded animals fail to understand and let him consume their produce.

Man is the only creature that consumes without producing. He does not give milk, he does not lay eggs, he is too weak to pull the plough, he cannot run fast enough to catch rabbits. Yet he is lord of all the animals. He sets them to work, he gives back to them the bare minimum that will prevent them from starving, and the rest he keeps for himself.' (*Animal Farm*, p. 9)

After Major's death, the lead role comes upon the onus of Napoleon the pig, who is considered to be the most deserving to lead all the animals, helping them free from the fetters of slavery and establish their own independent identity. Although Snowball, another pig, seems to be more capable to play the leader of the animals than Napoleon, the former, a better speaker but comparatively a less dominating figure, is forcefully sidelined by the latter

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who possesses more influential and domineering personality. Napoleon, the pig suggests all the animals to stay united and wages a revolt against Mr. Jones to disown him from the Manor Farm where the produces are made available mainly for him. All the animals that include horses, cows, hens, dogs, sheep, goats etc. extend their blind support to their leader. They get a tremendous success in their mission under the able leadership of Napoleon, who formulates as many as seven commandments, the last being 'All animals are equal' (*Animal Farm*, p 23). The animals are too submissive and docile to their leader to understand his cunningness or shrewdness lurking in him so as to disbelieve him. Here the principle of animalism refers to that of communalism. The Rebellion against the man's hegemony brings a grand success but very soon the freedom turns nightmarish with Napoleon's endorsing the man's go of life. Napoleon commands their followers in the changed maxim, 'All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others.' (*Animal Farm*, p 114) Finding a communist leader in guise in the lap of capitalism to satiate his high political end, all the animals come to understand in no time that they all are cheated and be-fooled. 'The creature outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which.' (*Animal Farm*, p 120)

Here Major represents Lenin, a staunch socio-communist and ardent admirer of Karl Marx, the propounder of Marxism, whereas Napoleon and Snowball symbolize Stalin and Trotsky respectively. It is a well-known fact that the Russian Revolution took place against the inhuman and cruel governance steered by the Tsar. To Marx, The state is the handmade of the ruling class. It exercises and preserves the interest of the exploiting class through forces. That is why the use of force for changing the social system of production or change in the old social order, force is inevitable.² The proletariat were the worst sufferers who wanted an immediate end of Tsars' rule in the country. The principles of communism are termed as Animalism in the novel in question. Stalin came forward shrewdly to play a savior and staunch communist. But very soon his real personality got dismantled and his pseudo-communistic ideology appeared before the people just after he was found praising and favoring the capitalists against whom the Revolution broke out. George Orwell avers emphatically, '...one makes a revolution in order to establish a dictatorship.'³

If we look into the Indian socio-political scenario, past and present, we find that the anxiety George Orwell has expressed in his widely read novel '*Animal Farm*'s more relevant even in the context of India, our beloved country. Right from the freedom struggle to the attainment of independence to emergency to the present day politics of India, we find the ideas stuffed in the book are based on such a truth that suits to almost all the pseudo-democratic and pseudo-communistic peoples of the world. The 'negative utopia' anticipated in the book is nothing but a nightmare. Even Premchand, a renowned Hindi novelist, expresses the similar viewpoint in one of his novels entitled 'GABAN', 'A man rejoicing political power deviates from the good, ideal path.'⁴ Lord Acton, a renowned political thinker, has also the similar opinion in this concern. He comments, 'Power corrupts. And absolute

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power corrupts absolutely.’⁵ Freedom does not mean the freedom from slavery and cruel rules of the perpetrators alone. Premchand apprehends that independence is meant for the transfer of power from one to another. It means the ground reality remains unchanged or becomes more grievous. In case of the independence of India, it is an open truth that at the cost of partition that claimed millions of lives India became free—free from the British rule only, not from the internal or domestic dominance or slavery. The already socio-politically exploited have felt no better change in their socioeconomic life. It is because they have got no respite so far even in the post-Independence era. real Aazadi has been confined to the very few including the netas, capitalists, crony capitalists, the crooked, business icons, bureaucrats, corrupts, but not for the people living below the poverty line, the marginalized, the socioeconomically backward classes, the oppressed and moralists who have been paying heavily the cost of their being honest and have no grudge against their perpetrators and exploiters and the people on the upper rung.

It is only due to the power hungry people that the real freedom is a pipe dream and far away from the unfortunate lot. Instead of the English, now the black Englishmen rule the roost in India. JankiBallabhShastri, a celebrated Hindi poet, in one of his poems ‘Meghgeet’ (Ode to Cloud), writes, ‘Uparupar pee jaate hain jo peene waale hain/ Kahte hain aisehee jeete hain jo jeene waale hain’⁶ (They drink unknown, unseen. It goes without saying that they live in the way they like.) The whole poem cited here is an allegory that presents a political satire especially in the context of Indian politics. The cloud has been portrayed as the political personality who is born not to ease the problem but to make the problem knottier and more complicated. This is a fact true to every complicated, politicized circumstance of the world.

Dr Ambedkar was more concerned about the practice of inequality in the sociopolitical precincts. He seems to have apprehended the impending threat to our political democracy that is of little value in absence of socioeconomic democracy. He once said that ‘How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril.’⁷ After the Independence, the Mahatma expressed his earnest desire that the Congress had played its role, it must be dissolved. But it didn’t happen. The chelas of the Mahatma rubbished and dumped the Gandhian thought, distorting and making it unpopular and irrelevant. Gandhiji had firm belief in political spirituality and political morality and principled politics. He garnered his faith in ‘the spirituality of politics and recognized the responsibility of political governance as a moral duty’⁸. During the Emergency that is supposed to be the first freedom struggle in the post-Independence India, and that was a pan-India revolt against the Congress-led central government for its fascistic attitude, anti-democratic role and anti-development policy, even the leaders of the opposition parties along with a good number of supporters and intellectuals were put behind the bars. Journalists were also not spared. Presses were censored. Ordeals of the jail-inmates were hair raising and heart rending. The contradictory

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proposition 'India is Indra, Indrais India'⁹ got a wide popularity in the mid-70's of the last century. The movement against the misrule of the then central power was named the Total Revolution as the dissenters included intellectuals, students, peasants and working class people across the country. The movement was, of course, a grand success because it proved a bane to the incumbent government. The election did not give mandate in favour of the ruling party. Consequently, the new government was formed but very soon it got a setback, its alliance parties left it in lurch, ultimately it received a mid-term fall. It lasted only for 21 months. In 1980 after mid-term election again the congress had a remarkable comeback.

It is said that in politics nothing is fair or foul. But the close observance shows that politics is a game of the overambitious. It is such a game as is more foul than fair. The power hungry people have given it the ugliest look. In the name of elimination of poverty they eliminate the poor. In early 1970's, the Congress, the then ruling party of India, gave a campaign 'Garibi Hatao' to eradicate poverty. Propagating this very campaign too much, the party won the ensuing election but the wiping out of poverty from India remained nothing but a fake political propaganda. The government did not consider it proper to solve such a grave problem. On the contrary, the problem has become more grievous since then. Even no other governments of India paid no heed towards a suitable solution to this burning question that has halted the holistic progress of the country. Munawwar Rana, a famous Urdu poet, expresses in the following lines the bitterest truth of the politician who even at the cost of precious lives of the countrymen,

* *'Bahut See Kursiaan Is Mulk Mein Lashon Pe Rakhi Hai
Ye Wo Sach Hai Jise Jhoothhe Se Jhoothha Bol Sakta Hai'*¹⁰

(Many a political chair is placed over the dead.

It is such a truthful fact that can be endorsed
by the worst liar as well.)

* *'Bahut Mumkin Hai Ki Tum Bhi Aadamkhor Ban Jao
Kahin Sansad Mein Khane Koi Chaawal Daal Jaata Hai'*¹¹

(It is very easy even for you to become a cannibal.

It is because no one goes to parliament for having
rice and pulse.)

In case of Bihar's political drama, after the end of the Congress era in 1990's till now, the non-Congress government ascended the ruling chair with the promise to make the socio-academically and politically backward class feel pride, bringing them to the mainstream but the political promise has not been fulfilled. The political merchants of utopias have been adopting the 'use and throw' policy for their self-centric trivial political interests, befooling the electorate who feel trapped in the horns of dilemma, that is, in the what to do and what not to do condition. In place of democracy and meritocracy, we feel ensnared by the autocracy and oligarchy. The politicians today play flatterers and sycophants before elections and dictators and political goons after elections. In the words of Chanakya, who is also

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popularly known as Kautilya and the father of socioeconomics, 'If the good people distance from politics, the bad ones will shrewdly rule over them'.¹²

Not exaggeration to mention here that politics in the continent of India has long been criminalized and crime has been politicized long back. It is now very difficult to differentiate between the politicians of the criminal background and those of the intellectual background. Which is which is very hard to be found out. One connives with the other to camouflage their real identity. Unprincipled politics is a common phenomenon. Big promises and highly pitched proclamation for bringing the heaven on the earth at the time of elections but with the formation of the government after the poll results, everything politically promised turns airy and hollow.

So for the communist party of India, it has suffered a heavy setback due to its myopic vision. It is now confined to a few principled leaders who are carrying along the bier of the Marxist-Leninist ideology. It never played a lead role for the emancipation of the exploited working class against the exploiting ruling class or the capitalists because majority of the Marxist and Communist Party leaders either have been from the feudal class or have feudalistic attitude. They could never become the savior or messiahs of the peasants or the workers for whose well-being they promised time and again but what the sufferers got is needless to state. In this context, it can be easily understood that what happens to the lamb or the goat if for its supposed wellbeing, the butcher takes the onus on his own shoulders. It is not hidden that even now the Indian peasants are committing suicide and the laboring class feels having been kept away from their basic needs and fundamental rights.

Orwell opines that political chaos is connected with the decay of language. And political chaos results from the unprincipled policy and tortuous attitude of the ruling body. In the *Animal Farm*, Napoleon first tells the animals, his followers and supporters, 'Four legs good, and two legs bad' (*Animal Farm*, p 37) and 'All animals are equal.' (*Animal Farm*, p 14) But later his tone gets changed. A Hindi couplet of an anonymous poet befits here to a great extent. Thus run the lines of the couplet,

'Unche Se Unche Mile, Mile Neech Se Neech/

Paani Se Paani Mile, Mile Keech Se Keech. (The upper class easily mixes up with the same class and water gets mixed with water itself whereas the people of the lower classes feel at home with their likes and mire mingles with mire.)

When Napoleon starts mixing up with the ruling class, he commands his followers in the changed linguistic form. 'Four legs good, and two legs better' (*Animal Farm*, p 114) and 'All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others.' (ibid) The same is applicable to every political phenomenon. Even in the wake of Indian politics, political realism can be felt by the changed linguistic tone of the ruling class. The incumbent government came to power with the campaign 'Aachhe Din Aane Waale Hain' (Goods days are about to come) but now its linguistic tone has gone in the reverse gear when one of the heavy weight political leaders of the ruling party, addressing a gathering in Uttar Pradesh, has

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recently said, ‘Achchhe Din Kabhi Nahin Aate’ (Good days never come). The whole political scenario of the world more or less tells the same tale. Machiavelli rightly remarks, ‘The promise given was a necessity of the past, the word broken is a necessity of the present.’¹³

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