

The Relevance of "Animal Farm" to the Present Day Politics

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Abstract:

Politics has existed since the day mankind came into being. The present-day politics can be called a series of selfish motives and interests that are disguised and presented as a procession of principles and promises to exploit the weak and the vulnerable. Animal Farm (Orwell, Animal Farm, 1945) is a political satire authored by George Orwell that reveals the harsh realities of the political nature of the world and has been relevant since the time it was published. This literary masterpiece holds a lot of meaning when comprehended, keeping in mind the present-day political situations and trends. The novel is an allegorical commentary on human behaviour and their response to power and greed. Politics is often called 'dirty' for the attributes of greed and power it resonates. Animal Farm is one of the most significant socio-political novels of all time. Since the 76 years of its publication, the world still is Orwell's Animal Farm. The current state is Jones' Manor Farm, the pigs are the manipulative leaders, and the public is the rest of the farm animals. From the failure of socialism to moving towards authoritarianism, the tale correctly mirrors the present society. The methodology of research used in this paper is descriptive and analytical doctrinal research. The present paper seeks to analyse the portrayal of politics, traits of the characters, and the concepts/ themes observed in the novel, draw parallels, and find relevance in contemporary times.

WORDS SPEAK

Keywords: Politics, Contemporary world, Relevance, Totalitarianism, Power, and Greed

Introduction:

About the Author: Eric Arthur Blair, who went by the pen name George Orwell, was an English author and journalist who wrote essays, articles, and novels. He was a social critic, and that was evident in his work. He was a vehement supporter of democratic socialism and strongly opposed totalitarianism and dictatorship. Born in 1903 in a small Indian village, Orwell gave the Indian Civil Services examination instead of going to the University and became a policeman in 1921, in Burma (present-day Myanmar). He fought in the Spanish Civil War in 1936-37 and was severely wounded from a gunshot in his throat. The novelist was also a member of the POUM. He worked for the BBC in the early 1940s and became the editor of the Tribune, a (left-wing) magazine. Orwell wrote a number of novellas and non-fiction books, his most famous works include *Animal Farm*, 1984 (Orwell, 1984, 1949), and *Burmese Days* (Orwell, *Burmese Days*, 1934). His books often revolved around his political views and expressed distaste for totalitarianism, the dystopian world, and his belief that power corrupts. His writing style was described as direct, witty, accessible, and concise. His fictional work often reflected the harsh realities of the role of power and propaganda in society. The term 'Orwellian' is now used to define all tyrannical and manipulative social circumstances. George Orwell passed away on January 21, 1950, due to Tuberculosis.

About the novel: "Animal Farm" is a mid-nineteenth-century political satire that is inspired by actual events that took place during the Russian Revolution of 1917. The novella has a metaphorical approach in highlighting the authoritarian ways of the politicians and the state. The main characters in the story are farm animals that are personified to throw light on how power corrupts even those who claim to be idealistic and have everyone's best interests at heart. The animals are clever depictions of the Russian statesmen, working-class, and society. Napoleon, the pig, is the protagonist as well as the antagonist in the story. Snowball and Napoleon exploit the other farm animals by introducing fear as an instrument of control. All the tactics and techniques used have a considerable resemblance to the present-day politics. Incitement, fear-mongering, banishment, manipulation, etcetera are a few tricks used by Napoleon to get other farm animals on his side.

The main themes of the story are class division and stratification, equality and inequality, concepts of power, control, corruption, greed, propaganda and manipulation, exploitation of the weaker section by the dominant, the need for human rights, the ill-effects of totalitarianism, corruption of ideals, revolution, and the socialist era of Soviet Union.

Review of Literature:

Various novels have been reviewed by the researcher during the course of research for this paper that revolves around similar concepts like those of in "Animal Farm" by George Orwell.

Books like "The Great Gatsby" (Fitzgerald, 1925), "1984" (Orwell, 1949), "Fahrenheit 451" (Bradbury, 1953), "Lord of the Flies" (Golding, 1954), "War and Peace" (Tolstoy, 1678), "The White Man's Burden" (Kipling, 1899) and "The Brave New World" (Huxley, 1932) are a few literary works that the researcher reviewed and found relevant to the theme of the paper. All these novels share one common theme, that is, the dystopian state of the society. All these themes are observed in "Animal Farm" and are relevant in present-day politics and society.

In "The Great Gatsby" (Fitzgerald, 1925), it is revealed that the greed, money, and power bring with it corrupts everything. Also, the discriminatory nature of the society is brought to light. Jay Gatsby had achieved everything in terms of wealth and status but was still considered an outsider because he was not born with blue blood.

With totalitarianism as its central theme, "1984" (Orwell, 1949) explores how the ones in power are encroaching on the personal liberties of individuals in the name of governance.

One of the main themes of "Fahrenheit 451" (Bradbury, 1953) is the oppression of society by the power of censorship of media. It is revealed how easily a society can be manipulated if there is an absence of a free press.

"Lord of the Flies" (Golding, 1954) explores the dangers posed by mob mentality and the struggles of building a civilization due to the human savagery and hunger.

Leo Tolstoy, through his book, "War and Peace" (Tolstoy, 1678), provides an insight into the dimensions of war and peace in a State and the limits of leadership.

In the poem "The White Man's Burden" (Kipling, 1899), Rudyard Kipling brings out the inequality in the society by justifying racism.

The author of the novel "Brave New World" (Huxley, 1932) tries to establish how the State control is making the society an unhappy place and values like freedom and happiness of an individual are being controlled by an institution.

Analysis:

"All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others." (Orwell, Animal Farm, 1945)

Seventy-six years have passed since this line was first published, but it holds relevance as if it was just penned down yesterday. The line has a lot of meaning to it if interpreted, keeping in mind the present-day politics and the society. Democracy is the most widespread form of governance in the world today. It promises equality and dignity to all. However, those in power are always more equal when compared to those who aren't, especially the weaker sections of the society.

Napoleon and Snowball had promised egalitarian governance on the farm. They had written a code that read all animals are equal. Still, as the pigs became powerful, they became hungry and corrupt. They changed the code to "some animals are more equal than others" when questioned to suit their convenience and to still adhere to the code. This is what happens in present-day politics. When asked to fulfill those promises, the leader makes promises to come to power and then twists his words. These leaders change laws and rules to fill their own pockets, and when questioned, they show how they are doing everything according to the laws they altered.

The pigs started the rebellion with the principles of socialism as well as democracy. But as they gained power, their focus shifted from the rebellion against humans to a new rebellion among themselves for power and control and moved toward totalitarianism and dictatorship.

The satire used by Orwell in his story can be read and interpreted following contemporary politics to make perfect sense of his words. Although he wrote the novella keeping in mind the communist era of Joseph Stalin in Russia and the brutal effects it had, the words still hold meaning. The Russian Revolution and the rebellion by the farm animals can be compared to the various movements that the youth are actively participating in. Marches for the Black Lives Matter movement and protests against the CAA Bill can be called dissent movements against the government in power.

Even though we live in a 'democratic' state, it hardly feels like it. Democracy and dictatorship seem to be synonymous to the contemporary leaders. With rights like liberty and freedom granted just on paper, the book is a dig at the restrictions that the government imposes in order to 'maintain security and order in the society.' We live in our own Animal Farm, where the democratic dictators exploit our aspirations and desires to gain power and satiate their hunger by using tools like fear,

propaganda, and greed. These leaders keep feeding of the public solely because there is no one to hold them accountable similar to how there was no one to stop Napoleon.

The present-day Indian politics is very similar to the Animal Farm after Snowball was sent to exile. There is no strong opposition; the mainstream media does not dare to say anything against the ruling government, and the ruling party enjoys unparalleled support from the public who either aren't aware of the wrongdoings of the leaders or choose to support them despite the knowledge.

The characters in the book can be assigned to the power regimes of the contemporary world. 'Napoleon' is the leader who is full of lies and feeds on power. 'Squealer' is the leader's mouthpiece, also known as the media and press. 'Snowball' can be compared to the charismatic and gifted orator who can attract masses or the opposition leader that holds no power (after the exile). 'Benjamin' represents the sensible, hardworking, and educated section of the society which is aware of the government's wrongdoings but chooses to remain silent. Mollie, the pony, represents all those bureaucrats and sycophants who favour and work for these leaders to fuel their own agendas. The rest of the farm animals are the masses who don't know anything but chant whatever the leader asks them to ("four legs good, two legs bad") without using their rationale or questioning anything.

The book also explores the human tendencies using anthropomorphism. The author very intelligently explains how humans can change their behaviour and ideology when they face difficult choices. Napoleon was not corrupt and greedy at the beginning of the Revolution. He truly believed in the cause and wanted the rebellion to succeed, but as time passed, he got drunk on power, his good intentions turned tyrannical, and he forgot the true purpose of the rebellion and instead focused on his own personal gains and agendas. He was influential, but by the end of the story, he became manipulative.

Conclusion:

The novella was written by George Orwell still holds a lot of relevance in present-day politics and society. It is an accurate narration of the dystopian world we live in today. The characters in the book are not just anthropomorphized but also personified versions of emotions like greed, materialism, manipulation, hunger for power, duplicity, etc. The novel precisely points out how rules are conveniently changed by the aristocracy with little to no consideration for the bourgeoisie and proletariat to fulfil their own agendas; how equality and dignity are promised to all initially but is actually available to a select few; and how a good orator and charismatic leader can coax the masses

to support him and never doubt his intentions. The book can be used to make the 'blind' masses understand how they're being hoodwinked, stripped off of opportunities, and used as propaganda tools by their own beloved leaders. The story also depicts that a rebellion and revolution can quickly die when not fuelled correctly and positively, and all the hard work that was put in to bring about a change in the system would get lost.

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