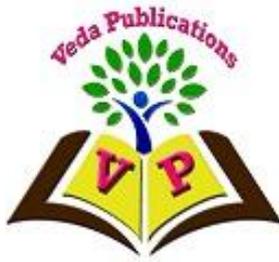


**'LORD OF THE FLIES' AS AN ALLEGORY**

Salini Sathyaseelan

(Research Scholar, Department of English and Comparative Literature, Central University of Kerala, India)**ABSTRACT**

This paper explores the allegorical aspect of Golding's novel '*Lord of the Flies*', achieved in terms of character portrayal, narrative method, events and themes. The novel is a parable of life in the latter half of twentieth century, the nuclear age, when society seems to have reached technological maturity while human morality is still prepubescent. It is a sharp criticism on celebrated enlightenment rationality. Even in the late 21 century the lesson given by Golding is significant. The novel is an allegory, which shows the clash between democratic utopianism versus fascist violence, and in the backdrop of the novel, certain characters immediately recall the scenario of world war II and cold war. The Novel is also an excellent example of religious allegory. Major characters like Jack, Piggy, Simon, and Ralph represent values. Psycho analytic reading of the novel explores the strange double economy of desire and disgust and the desire of transgression.

Keywords: *Allegory, civilization, Fascism, Society, Power.*

Citation:

APA Sathyaseelan, S. (2016) '*lord of the flies*' as an allegory. *Veda's Journal of English Language and Literature-JOELL*, 3(2), 99-103.

MLA Sathyaseelan, Salini "'*lord of the flies*' as an allegory". *Veda's Journal of English Language and Literature-JOELL* 3.2(2016):99-103.

**INTRODUCTION**

Lord of the Flies was originally titled *The Strangeness Within* "and was published 29 years before Golding won Nobel prize for literature. It is a Parody of a famous adventure story of boys in Ballantyne's Coral Island .In Ballantyne's Coral island, three castaway boys cherish their sweet memories about the happy days they had spend on island. But Golding in his novel gives us a very bleak unpleasant picture of life. Golding already points out that his novel is not about adventures or happiness.

He says,

"Ballantyne's island was a nineteenth century island inhabited by English boys; mine was to be a twentieth century island inhabited by English boys"

Lord of the Flies is a perfect example of allegory. Allegorical aspect is achieved in terms of character portrayal, narrative method, events and themes. Golding ridicules the enlightenment and its rationality. Golding was a contemporary of Adorno and Horkheimer for whom the enlightenment rationalism was nothing but a mass deception. 'Reason' is nothing more than a 'construct' set against 'unreason'. He feels that 'civilization' emerged after the enlightenment is nothing more than a mask which covers evil inherent in human nature. Golding challenges the common belief that after the enlightenment savages of middle ages emerged as refined human being who think and act with their reasoning capacity. Golding points out that middle age and age of reason lies within oneself.

Lord of the Flies flashes light on the deeper realities of human mind. He illustrates how humans behave in strange ways while they are in small or large group situations. When people forget about their mortal existence they may wage wars till their death takes them away from this world. War is the destiny of every society which forgets about its existence. The Novel is a parable of life in the latter half of twentieth century, the nuclear age, when society seems to have reached technological maturity while human morality is still prepubescent.

It is said that anti puritan dream is realized in *Lord of the Flies*. When puritans lost their grip on power, people celebrated their freedom. Later on, this unchecked freedom led society into a state of

perversion. This was visible in literature especially literature of restoration period.

DEFINITION OF ALLEGORY

Before analysing the novel as an allegory, let us have a look on definition of allegory. According to M H Abrams

"Allegory is a narrative, whether in prose or verse, in which agents and actions, and sometimes the setting as well, are contrived by the author to make coherent sense on literal or primary level of signification and at the same time to communicate a second, correlated order of signification". (2009, p 15)

There are historical and political allegories in which the character and actions stand for historical personages and events. In the second type of allegories that is 'allegory of ideas', central device is the personification of abstract entities such as virtues, vices, state of mind, modes of life and types of character and places. *Lord of the Flies* is a beautiful fusion of these two types of allegories.

POLITICAL ALLEGORY

According to Diken and Lausten *Lord of the Flies* is an allegory of a bio political or post political society that elevates "security" to the most sacred principle of organization. This is evident from the story line on the backdrop of socio political condition of era in which it was written.

The two 'clans' the boys establish on the island, those led by Ralph and Jack, explicate the two sides of the society .The one led by Ralph stands for institutionalised part of society where people abide by rules and harmony is maintained. The other part shows dark side of the same society in which fantasies of transgression and perversion takes place. We can read the story in the background of rising of fascist powers during the time of World war II and the clash is between democratic utopianism versus fascist violence, society versus mob. Ralph the fair leader appeals to reason and order, while Jack a replica or minimized image of fascist leaders unites boys by creating a monster, a common enemy which exists only in the realm of imagination.

Choir boys symbolizes blind followers.

"Choir stand still wearily obedient the choir huddled into line and stood there swaying in the



sun". This is a small description of choir boys. (Golding, 1954, p 26)

This may explicitly stand for Nazi followers of Hitler. Golding explains how in the crowd, conscious personalities disappear, and members take one and same direction. Individuals will obey the leader and like in a trance he can act in contradiction with his individual character.

The conch is significant in the context. Conch represents law and order as well as freedom of expression. Whoever possesses the conch is the only person admitted to talk at the time. Piggy shouts at older boys ' Let him have the conch '. In order to give younger boys a chance to speak. Piggy embraces ideology of democracy and for him ' unsettlingly ' it matters just as much as the older boys do. Littluns also participate in the election process. When conch is broken into pieces at castle rock, law and order too ends. Disorder consumes the boys after it. Conch represents order authority, dialogue and democracy.

There is also an allegoric relation to the cold war. The beast represents communism. During the cold war, the main fear of people was the spread of communism .Leaders used this fear to rise to power and do what they wanted.

Each and every character in the novel represents something more than his self. They symbolizes certain ideas. One of the reasons for the fame and popularity of this novel is it is not only a political allegory but also an allegory of ideas. Each character stands for historical personages and at the same time they represent a part of human nature. It achieves political, religious and psychological significance at same time and becomes allegory of humanity as a whole. Critic Reily in his essay "Lord of the Flies: Fathers and sons" notes that the book "has been read as a moral fable of personal disintegration, as a social fable of social regression, as a religious fable of the fall of man".(Reilly, 1992)

Ralph the twelve year old intelligent boy takes the responsibility of all and becomes leader.

E M Foster describes Ralph in an introduction to one of the novels edition as "He is sunny, decent sensible and considerate". He is committed to the welfare of his fellow companions. Ralph is the representative of civilized world. He uses reason and intelligence to find out the monster. He organizes everything,

maintains peace and order and ultimately chased by savages. He stands for democratic idea of welfare and humanity. One can join either in Ralph's group or in Jack's .Ralph also stand for a democratic leader who always gives value to others opinion. Ralph represents reasoning capacity and humanity which differentiate man from animal.

Jack the enemy of Ralph carries just opposite character trait of Ralph. Jack is a real savage whose hunger for power makes him blind. When Ralph is elected as leader, fury bubbles in him and he almost becomes a silent simmering volcano .The knife and his hunting excursion recalls the image of stone age man. His painted face not only covers his feelings but also helps to push out even the last drop of humanity in him. Jack metaphorically stands for dark side of all personalities.

Jack is nothing other than a minimized figure of Hitler. He is a usurper and rules like an autocratic chief. Like Ralph his leadership quality does not come from his good superior personality but from his capacity to frighten his followers into implicit obedience. Jack develops his totalitarian state and military regime. He creates a common enemy in order to unite hunters and his politics are aestheticised through putting some painting on face and garlanding. He is a mini Hitler who has declared Jews as the common enemy and united Germany under the banner of fascism. Jack soon follows the method of exterminating his friends and follows a holocaust in which Piggy and Simon are brutally killed. For Jack "Fair is foul and foul is fair".

Piggy's comment on Ralph makes it clear "Which is better – to be a pack of painted indians like you are or to be sensible like Ralph is". (Golding, 1954, p 259)

Piggy stand for intelligence and Ralph knows his value .Piggy believes in an organized society and respect authority. Piggy thinks in a worldly wise scientific manner regarding the rumours of beast. He is aware of the changes in his fellow companions and asks the question..

"What are we? Humans? or animals? or savages? (Golding, 1954, p 129)

Piggy has been ridiculed, hurt and finally killed only because he gave advises to the savages. Great philosophers and those who think 'differently



'from others always face same fate either it is in the form of death or exile. Piggy's spectacles stand for close observation of human mind and its nature. Piggy called a spade a spade and that was his mistake. Piggy is doomed in a society where irrational fears and physical strength are more respected than science, law and dialogue.

RELIGIOUS ALLEGORY

Novel takes the form of Religious allegory especially through the character Simon. None of the characters other than Simon functions solely as a part of allegory. The name of the novel can be traced back to the Jewish hierarchy of demons where Beelzebub is referred to as "Lord of the Flies". He is the chief representative of false Gods. Anderson defines the central theme of Lord of the Flies as a statement of what it is like to experience the fall from innocence into sin and to experience damnation. The island, beautiful and abundant of tasty food recalls the Garden of Eden in which Adam and Eve once lived happily. When Jack the metaphorical serpent tempts other boys showing meat and turns them against Ralph, the heaven turns to a hell. However redeemer comes in the form of Simon. Simon symbolises the faith. He possesses spiritual qualities like kindness, virtue, generosity and ultimately courage to search the truth. He is the spiritual leader and a prophet. When all boys are chilled with the fear of beast, Simon goes off alone into the forest and discovers that so called beast is nothing but a rotten dead body of an airman entangled in his parachute. Simon tries to unveil the secrecy. But in that attempts he is killed by his companions. They mistake him for a beast and kills him in the midst of frantic dance. Christ, the redeemer of mankind too was crucified for preaching the gospel truth. Thus evil walks out with crown by killing reason, intelligence and virtue.

The story is not the tragedy of some boys but tragedy of all humanity, in which grown up ' children ' flies to cut the throat of his fellow companions. Golding ridicules the civilization of which mankind is proud. It is nothing but a superficial outer cover which covers the real nature in the time of crisis and cause real nature of human manifest itself.

The war against evil is not matter of opposing others, but of confronting ourselves, our

own desires. So *Lord of the Flies* talks about evil inherent in us. In the famous preface for "Anti Oedipus" Foucault claimed that "the major enemy, the strategic adversary is fascism And not only historical fascism, the fascism of Hitler and Mussolini... but also the fascism in us that causes us to love power, the desire the very thing that dominates and exploit us" ("Anti Oedipus" 11)

Simon hears this from the Lord of the Flies

"Fancy thinking the beast was something you could hunt and kill You knew, didn't you? I am part of you? close close close! I am the reason why it's no go? Why things are what they are". (Golding, 1954, p 206)

So the boys who escaped from the devilish world now caught on their own. Criticism of the *Lord of the Flies* began with Golding himself. He summarizes the theme as follows

"It is an attempt to trace the defects of the society back to the defects of the human nature. . .The moral is that the shape of a society must depend on the ethical nature of the individual and not on any political system however apparently logical or respectable".(Bhadury, 2013, p 63)

Author makes it clear that civilization should come out from inside, from the depth of the soul, it has nothing to do with sophisticated life style. It is all about one's morality, ethics and values which ultimately lead to a harmonious social life. What Golding insists is not rule of law but one's ability to rule himself.

PSYCHO ANALYTIC READING

A psychoanalytic reading of the text in this context will be more useful. The Story is presented ultimately as the conflict between civilization and barbarism, in depth it is about clash between id(Jack) pleasure principle, which stands against ego (Ralph) reality principle and super ego(Simon) morality principles. Boys are under the influence of two simultaneous emotions, they are both fascinated and terrified by nature outside and inside.

"Taboo and transgression are reflected in these two contradictory urges . . . The taboo would forbid the transgression but the fascination compels it". According to the authors "this strange double economy of



desire and disgust, of object and abject or of transgression and confirmation is the underlying matrix of the novel. Bülent Diken and Carsten Bagge Laustsen (Diken & Lausten, 2006, p 436)

Jack represents the impulsiveness and cruelty, Piggy, intelligence and Simon artistic and religious side. Ralf stands for an overall being. The three ring characters share qualities that connect them. Piggy and Jack has desire to lead but Simon does not have any such desire. Piggy and Simon represent morals, Jack has none. Jack and Simon share the passion. Jack's passion rests in hunting while Simon's rest in nature/life while Piggy is plain.

CONCLUSION

Lord of the Flies thus becomes an excellent example for a political and religious allegory as well as allegory of ideas. James Stern pointed out in 1955 review for the New York Times Book Review that "*Lord of the Flies* is an allegory on human society today; the novel's primary implication being that what we have come to call civilization is at best no more than skin deep"

This novel has been praised on literary grounds much less often than a sociological psychological or religious tract. The bleak picture presented in the novel rises thought provoking questions in readers mind, especially about civilization, enlightenment rationality and the human nature. The Novel was criticized because it is derivative, filled with gimmickry, devoid of characterization and lacking in logic

Golding replies to this criticism by saying that

"I am by nature an optimist; but a defective logic- or a logic which I sometimes hope desperately is defective-makes a pessimist of me." (Golding, *On the Crest of the Wave*)

Woodroffe comments "*Lord of the Flies* is by no means entirely bleak, and encourages us to identify humanity with its humanity and not with its inhumanity".(Murray, 1991, p 791)

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