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READING ANIMAL FARM AS AN ALLEGORY

Deepali Kadam Subhashrao

T. Y. B. A.

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ABSTRACT

The satire in *Animal Farm* takes the character and quality of a fable or an allegory. An allegory is a narrative in which the agents and action, and sometimes the setting as well, are contrived not only to make sense in themselves, but also to signify a second, correlated order a persons, things, concepts, or events. In *Animal Farm* the surface animal story casts a satiric light on our twentieth century socio-political world.

KEY WORDS: *Animal Farm* , character and quality , socio-political world.



1. INTRODUCTION

In *Animal Farm* Orwell did something towards restoring the allegory to its rightful place in literature. Many events in the story are allusions to the recent history of Russia. These parallels should not be carried too far, but some of the more obvious ones should at least be noted.

The major events and characters in this book have a broad similarity with the events and personages of the Russian history from 1913 to 1943. The war of intervention, the New Economic plan the First Five-year plan, the expulsion of Trotsky and the seizing of supreme political power by Stalin, the Great purge Trials the Hitler Stalin pact and invasion of Germany are full and clearly reflected. Again, while Old Major represents Karl Marx, Snowball and Napoleon represent Trotsky and Stalin respectively. (Sant Singh Bal feels that Lenin is left out deliberately because he is not relevant in the context of the recession of the Russian Revolution.) To quote Jeffrey Meyers: "The name Snowball recalls Trosky's white hair and beard, and the fact that he melted before Stalin's opposition." Squealer is Napoleon's apologist, or public Relations Officer and editor of "Pravda". The three dogs stand for the O.G.P.U. or the Cheka under Djerdjinsky and Yagoda, and the two cart-horses, Boxer and Clover, are loyal proletariat. Benjamin, the donkey, is a cinic who is found in all times and in all societies. For him, there is hardly any difference between the pre-revolution days and the post-revolution golden age. He believes that life has always been hard. He is sceptical of all promises of improvement. Moses, the raven, as his name suggests, symbolizes religion. He claims to know the existence of a mysterious country called "sugarcandy Mountain" to which all animals go after death. Moses stand in contrast to Squealer, and specializes in the Kingdom of Heaven. His references to the "Sugarcandy Mountain" where "it was Sunday seven days a week, clover was in season all the ear round, and lump sugar and linseed oil grew on the hedges," remind us of he tempting pictures of heaven painted by men of religion in order to divert the attention of the working classes from their exploited plight, and thus make them accept their earthly existence as a kind of preparation for tasting the eternal joys of heaven. Thus, although the jobs of Squealer and Moses are quite different, the final effect of

the two coalesces, for if one asks the animals to work hard on earth, the other assures them that their labours will be rewarded in heaven. Moses is also the secret service agent of Mr. Jones. Furthermore, the quarrel between Napoleon and Snowball over the issue of windmill represents the rift between Stalin and Trotsky. (Stalin's programme of rapid industrialization and collectivization was taken from the "platform" of the Trotsky opposition, but only after the suppression of the opposition at the end of the twenties. The authors of the programme were Trotsky, Zinoviev and Prebrazhensky.)

The two human farms, Pinchfield and Foxwood, in the neighbourhood of the Animal Farm, symbolize the two groups of non-communist powers-the forces of Capitalism and Fascism. Pilkington is Churchill-England, while Fredrick represents Hitler-Germany. The agreement between Fredrick and Napoleon symbolizes the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939. "Then came the eye-opener of the Hitler-Stalin pact. Suddenly the scum of the earth and the blood-stained butcher of the workers (for so they had described one another) were marching arm in arm, their friendship 'cemented in blood', as Stalin cheerily expressed it." The basis of this fact was implicit in the betrayals and reversals that had characterized the work in of the two regimes throughout the thirties.

In the light of the authenticity of Orwell's allegory, we cannot accept Kingsley Martin's view that Orwell's novel "is historically false and neglectful of the complex truth about Russia." Orwell has demonstrated that after the proletarian revolution succeeds, one privileged minority is replaced by another. In what way do the masses benefit? He denounces the Communist regime under Stalin as a total tyranny inspired and justified by a philosophy.

In Russia, before the Revolution of 1917, there was undoubtedly a good deal of genuine mass discontent against the regime of the emperor-Czar Nicholas- both in the towns and countryside, and the spontaneous overthrow and expulsion of Jones is akin to the uprising by the Bolsheviks. Previously, the philosophy of the Revolution had been worked out and spread by Karl Marx (d.1883), whose Communist Manifesto is represented in the story by the "seven commandments," and by Marx's disciple, Lenin (d 1924), who became the first president of the new regime in Russia. Old Major (whose appearance is confined to the opening chapter) represents a fusion of Marx and Lenin; he propounds the ideals of Animalism and after his death his skull is exhumed for public honour just as the embalmed body of Lenin was put on display in Moscow.

The rest of the world was concerned lest the communist upheavals should spread beyond Russia's borders, and both the U.S.A. and Britain sent troops to assist in the overthrow of Lenin's party, but by 1921 this "Counter revolution" had failed completely, and soon the Western Powers had recognised the new regime and started to establish diplomatic relations with it. These trends find their parallel in the story with the reverse of Jones aided by his neighbours; their rout in the Battle of the Cowshed, and the giving up of the presence that Animal Farm (Soviet Union) was still called the Manor Farm (Tsarist Russia).

Once the threat of counter-revolution had been stalled, the communist leaders were confronted with economic chaos; the countryside was in ruins from the civil war and foreign invasion; urban industry was a much lower level than it had been before the Revolution, and malnutrition and starvation were widespread. But there was much enthusiasm for the new order. "Every one worked according to his capacity" and between 1921 and his death in 1924 Lenin managed to restore some semblance of prosperity-and this period of consolidation has its parallel in the events described in Chapter-3 of Animal Farm.

Lenin's death was followed by a bitter struggle for power between Stalin (Napoleon) and Trotsky (Snowball) leading to Trotsky's expulsion from the Soviet Union which roughly coincided with the inauguration of the first Five Year plan (1928) in which capital producing industries (steel mills, electric generating plants, and so on) were to receive preference over the production of common goods. In Animal Farm this is alluded to in the decision to build the windmill.

The first Five Year Plan was accompanied by a good deal of hardship and rationing, and many of the well-off farmers (known as the Kulaks) refused to cooperate and some went so far as to slaughter their draft animals. In the story, this is alluded to in the "egg-rebellion" of the hens, and Stalin's ruthless suppression of the Kulaks also finds its parallel in Napoleon's actions.

Meanwhile, by the thirties, the Communists in Russia had found that their country could not be made wholly self-sufficient and so they started entering into trade relations with rest of Europe and even with the

United States (as Napoleon did with the farm neighbours), while the superior party officials, now entrenched in power by the secret police, began to enjoy privileges and material comforts denied to the ordinary Russian workers (in the same way as the pigs-supported by the dogs- moved into the farmhouse, started sleeping on bed and drinking whisky).

Although Stalin made a non-aggression pact with Hitler's Germany, the Nazis suddenly invaded Russia in 1941 and destroyed much of what had been built up before they were driven back. In the same way, although Napoleon started to trade with Fredrick, the latter attacked Animal Farm and blew up the Windmill before being forced to retreat.

At first, too, the Soviet Union did not recognise any religion and persecuted adherents of the established orthodox Church. But by 1944 Stalin was writing conciliatory letters to the Pope and was allowing the orthodox Church in Russia to conduct services so as not to alienate the support of those older folk still religious in sentiment. Moses, the tame raven, stands for the Russian Church, once a pillar of the Terrorist regime. When the pigs have consolidated their own position as rulers over the Farm, Moses is allowed to return and with his tales of Sugar-Candy Mountain brings some solace to the oppressed animals.

The final scene of Napoleon entertaining his neighbours in the farm-house possibly suggests the various meetings between Stalin, Churchill and other war-time leaders held on Russian soil during World War II at more or less the same time as Orwell was writing Animal Farm.

Other textual parallels will readily come to mind from a close reading of the book. The full extent of Stalin's abuse of power only became public knowledge in Russia after the dictator's death in 1953, and was not very widely known even outside Russia before that date, so that in writing of Napoleon's excesses, Orwell was focusing attention on an aspect of totalitarian oppression which was inadequately understood.

It was certainly not Orwell's intention to imply that just as it would be foolish for animals to rebel against control, so also it is impossible for opposed masses to rebel against a tyrannical ruling class. But the author's didactic purpose loses some of its force because the reader cannot accept quite seriously (as one can accept, say, the big men and the little men in Gulliver's Travels) the idea of the rebellious animals. They are obviously, like many animals in fables, men in disguise, but the illusion is spoilt when real men, and not only animals appear in the fable.

In other words, Animal Farm does not quite hold together as an allegory, and the reader has constantly to be thinking of the story's meaning in contemporary terms to avoid the inconsistencies of the story itself.

Nevertheless, Animal Farm has enjoyed enormous popularity since after its publication, and is already accepted the world over, minus the Communist countries, as a children's story in its own right.

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