



Lord of the Flies a Religious Fable

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Date of Submission: 01-09-2022

Date of Acceptance: 13-09-2022

Abstract:

Lord of the flies written by William Golding in 1954 was a second world war fiction. The small boys ranged between 6 and 12 years were marooned on the deserted coral island. Golding tried to explore and extract religious implications in the otherwise novel of apocalyptic wilderness. The author tried to prove the fact that just as darkness and light lie in juxtaposition. Evil and good are juxtaposed in man. When there are no barriers of civilization the beast lurking behind the mask of civilization raises its head. Human mind is governed by ID, ego and super ego. The suitable circumstances wise moving far away from the shackles of civilization propitiate the dominance of ID over ego making man an utter beast. With the self-effort and perseverance one can acquire the rational thinking and behaviour. Through seclusion and meditation one can kindle the light of spirituality within oneself.

Keywords:

Religious fable, Pantheism, Allegory, Human beast, Evil inherent in man, Irony.

I. Introduction:

Religion is a systematic way of life followed by our ancestors with adherence to certain principles, customs, traditions etc. It illuminates one's character by extracting spiritual energies from within the soul of the human beings. Religion provides the human beings a discriminating capacity between virtue and vice. A religious living up holds righteous living and unblemished character. It dispels the confusion from the minds of human beings of the modern world. It also paves way for moral wellbeing of the individual by promoting self confidence, internal repose in critical situations by instigating virtuous behavior of the individual with virtues such as fortitude, forethought, endurance, intellectuality, compassion, universal integration, self integrity etc., as well. Religion is based on systematized rituals performed by different communities. It is based on belief in sacred symbols

and texts. Every religion forbids sinful acts and enhances morality of the individual by providing choice between hell and heaven. It rests on one ideology and belief in super natural powers. Every religion differs in mode of worship. The religious fables try to impart moral principles to the readers in the form of a story; they strengthen the character and provoke self analysis by entertaining people often through satire. They contain symbolism, irony philosophy etc. The fabulists employ allegory which tells moral that lies explicit behind the actual story and lyricism, hallucinations also. Lord of the flies written by William Golding portrays the precarious situation of school going boys who are brought to the island on account of the plane crash in Second World War. He tries to prove that evil is inherent in man; it is brought forth when situation arises.

Golding has woven the novel with texture of intricate symbolism and tries to reveal the complex truths in a simple way by transforming every object, character and action into symbolical form.

Setting

The Island is a utopia in the early part of the lord of the flies with abundant delicious fruit, enveloped in greenery and also with a comforting river. It is filled with bushes, canopies providing seclusion and scope for nurturing spiritual thoughts. Golding reverses the situation by transforming the utopia into anti utopia by bringing forth the evil instincts of the boys and depicts the inclination of war among the human beings in the absence of spirituality. The mountains present in the island are the symbols of human aspiration to achieve heights of spirituality.

Symbolism

The conch in the novel symbolizes discipline, authority, order and democracy. It can also be taken as an emblem of peace as its colour is creamy white. The signal fire is used by Golding



both as a constructive and destructive fire. It is considered a symbol of hope, rescue and spiritual progress in the beginning of the novel. Gradual transformation of it into hellfire reflects the ultimate devastation taken place in the world. The trees in the island are symbols of the mysteries of the island so as the ghost and the Lord of the Flies, which are the external manifestations of the inherent evil in the boys. The hallucination of Simon about head of the pig parleying with him is another testimony for this novel being called a religious fable as it reminds Aesop fable 'you are a silly little boy'said the lord of the flies 'just an ignorant silly little boy' Simon moved his swollen tongue but said nothing.Occasional trial made by Ralph to throw back the hair that falls on his eyes symbolizes the occasional blinding of reason by emotion. Symbolical implication of intermingling of hope and despair can be given to the occasional glimmerings in darkness to testify the fact that Lord of the flies is a religious fable. The head of the pig impaled to the stick reminds head of Goliath who is murdered by David in Bible.

Characters

Golding deftly creates the characters so that each and every effort and thought of them is laid before the reader for close analysis. Simon with his preference for seclusion and his intuitive thoughts emphasize the presence of inner glory of spiritual light which has to be extracted with the help of introspection and meditation. He is an embodiment of super ego, truth and Messiah in bible. He is also capable of seeing good in bad, beauty in ugliness like Jesus. And also capable of encountering truth with bravery. While Jesus spends his last night on Mount Olivet, Simon spends his last night on a mountain on the island. Simon's death resembles the death of Jesus Christ. The former sacrificed his life for the boys the latter sacrificed his life for Israelites thus, through Simon Golding tries to foster the quality of sacrifice for the sake of truth in reader fore going the self interest. Ralph the protagonist of the novel tries to keep the disordered life on the island in order, but the evil instincts of the human nature does not allow him to do so. Ironically, he himself is thrown though unwillingly in to a chaos created by the other boys. As the novel progresses, he is given to despair and he finally gets perplexed about his abilities to lead the group. There is a conflict of being and becoming in him. His soul becomes the battle ground with war between vice and virtue. He is torn in a conflict between the evil in him and the civilization he aspires to imbibe. He is a representative of the humanity who is dogged by

the conflicts and perplexities of the mysterious world. His internal struggle reminds the struggle faced by Samuel Becket against his temptations of worldly authority against spiritual authority.

Golding creates Ralph as an embodiment of ego and repentance. In the novel Piggy represents the presence of thoughtful and committed people in the universe who explore the cause behind the inherent evil in human heart and its effects on the others. Golding through Piggy's character emphasizes the value of commitment towards one's own responsibility. He stresses the importance of analytical thought that is to be cultivated by the human beings in the present-day world. Thus, Piggy is the personification of intellectuality and endurance. He serves as an emblem of assurance provided by intellectuality in critical situations and as a personification of Apollo the Greek god of reason. Jack the other important character of the novel is the testimony for negative emotions of jealousy, hatred, craving for power etc. Jack and his followers represent id and dictatorial attitude of present-day world in the novel. They are also regarded as personifications of division a Greek god of emotion. Through Piggy, Jack and his followers Golding portrays the conflict between reason vs emotion on the island. He advocates the triumph of reason over emotion can be achieved with the guidance of spiritual energy within one self. All the little boys in the novel are the embodiments of innocent bliss which Golding glorifies in contrast to the evil thoughts in other boys, thereby asserting the importance of innocence. They also impart supernatural qualities to ordinary objects on the island with their meaningless fears making the novel a religious fable. Thus, Golding personifies the qualities and intentionally magnifies each and every character in the novel to show the evil effects of negative emotions. The tribal dance performed by the mob of hunters reminds the reader the rituals of primitive religions. Ralph, Piggy, and the little boys try to preserve their character by paying reverence to external nature safe guarding the laws of nature as far as possible. The mob of hunters indulges in demonic worship disrupting the harmony, ecological balance on the island. The varied modes of worship followed by the boys make Lord of the Flies a religious fable. Through this novel Golding tries to portray the quality of skepticism that rules the mind of modern man owing to the lack of security.



Employment of Irony

The whole novel is woven by Golding as web of ironies. There is situational irony in gradual transformation of paradise like island in to inferno by the boys, Verbal irony when Jack who asserts the presence of rules on island himself disobeys by choosing the job of hunting.

"We've got to have rules and obey them. After all, we're not savages. We're English, and the English are best at everything." Chapter 2. There is cosmic irony when Simon who approaches mob of hunters to reveal the presence of evil in man gets murdered accidentally by the inherent beastly boys. Circumstantial irony, when Ralph who is elected as leader by the boys to safeguard security and protection on the island, himself becomes insecure by the end of the novel. All these ironies remind the irony of human life that is the conflict between human expectations and will of God which makes the novel a religious fable. "The main function of a fable is to impart morals to the reader by using any ideologies either in scriptures or in theories formulated by naturalists".

Tenets of Pantheism

Lord of the Flies dwells on tenets of pantheism. The author identifies human soul with cosmic soul this can be put forth as an argument to prove the point that this novel is a religious fable.

Duality in Human beings and Nature

In his novel Golding analyzes the hidden evil instincts of the boys in the lap of nature exposing duality of human personality by surfacing the jackal and hides of human nature and tries to impart the quality of self discipline in the reader by warding off the threat caused to human virtues by the inherent evil. He makes an assertion that man is an inalienable part of the nature, destruction of nature results in self destruction. In fact, it appears that Golding tries to assert the omnipresence of duality of good and bad in nature also by juxtaposing light and darkness, good and evil, threat and security, life and death on the island aligning the polarity in external nature to the polarity in human nature.

Pantheism as Universal religion

The conventional dogmas of the man-made religion are ignored by the author. The boys are made a community irrespective of their caste, creed, customs, traditions etc asserting the fact that island is the microcosm of macrocosmic turbulent outside world. This identification made by Golding makes Lord of the Flies as religious fable, as nature and

humanity are made religions to be followed by the future citizens, the representatives of man kind. Golding perceives hidden and profound similarities in outwardly dissimilar human beings. As quoted by dalai lama, this is my simple religion. There is no need for temples; no need for complicated philosophy. Our own brain, our own heart is our temple the philosophy kindness and emphasized the quality of kindness by magnifying the cruelty in boys.

Jack can be identified with perverted humanity of whole world. Ralph and other boys can be identified with the humanity that succumbs to evil by the inescapable influence of the corrupt world by this he achieves universal integration of people. Religious Fables try to make the reader a perfect human being in society by imparting principles of civil conduct also, Close analysis of the novel makes it clear that apart from inherent evil, lack of organization among the boys, lack of knowledge about the order of priorities are responsible for the chaos on the island. The foremost thing that is to be done on the island is the involvement of every boy in collective action of building signal fire on the island in order to be rescued, instead of electing the leader and conducting the meetings. This kind of insight dawns up on the reader on completion of reading of the novel but the imitation of the power corrupt, out side evil world by the boys is used by Golding to depict the extent of estrangement of man from nature. He also depicts how fast the humanity is slipping away from the hands of nature. He advocates integrity as a principle to be followed by humanity to lead a secure life in this modern turbulent world. He also advocates the importance of self introspection as a tool to achieve integrity.

Golding tries to extract inner spiritual glow that lay hidden under the bottom of the heart of humanity influenced by complexities and perplexities of modern world by placing the boys in the unusual circumstances. The mysterious situation created by Golding makes Lord of flies a religious fable by proving the truth that the life is an unsolved riddle. Though the boys are transported to the adult world by the end of the novel, a question crops up in every reader's mind that whether the boys are really transported to secure world proving the fact that perfection in the world is ambiguous. The assertion of endurance fortitude tolerance, fore thought is made in the novel to lead a protected life in the present days' world of disintegration by the author.

Golding's emphasis is on glorifying the human values rather than upholding angelic virtues. So, he makes ordinary school going young boys



instead of angles as characters which makes the reader to think the story as so simple in theme, devoid of any moral implication and music of thought. But the occasional employment of hallucinations allegorical descriptions lyrical passages makes the novel a religious fable.

"The candle-buds opened their wide white flowers . . . Their scent spilled out into the air and took possession of the island." Chapter 3

:8:

"Then, amid the roar of bees in the afternoon sunlight, Simon found for the fruit they could not reach . . . passed them back down to the endless, outstretched hands." Chapter 3

Analogy between the Lord of Flies and Paradise Lost

The analogy between Paradise Lost and Lord of the flies can be drawn to prove the novel as a religious fable. The title of the novel reminds the reader Beelzebub the lieutenant of Satan in paradise lost. While there is a revolt of Satan against God in the epic; there is a conflict between good and bad in Lord of the Flies. Ralph can be considered as modern Adam with his conflicting soul. Jack can be considered as modern Satan with his destructive soul. All the boys in the novel represent innocence of Eve in the Paradise Lost. Piggy represents Gabriel of the epic with his attempt to curb the temptations of the boys to commit evil. Pigs on island represent the fruit of forbidden tree in the epic. The setting itself represents Eden Garden in the beginning of the novel as well as inferno at the end of the novel. Rabort and Maurice who guard castle rock, remind the sin and death who guard the gates of hell in paradise lost.

The primitive dances organized by the mob of hunters remind the reader of the novel the primitive rites performed by future generations of humanity at the end of Paradise Lost. The castle rock reminds the pandemonium of paradise lost. The figurative descriptions used by the author while narrating the descent of dead parachutist on the island prove the novel as religious fable as the parachutist serves as the harbinger of anarchy on to the island just as the Satan disguised as minion angel in paradise lost. (There was a speck above the island, a figure dropping swiftly beneath a parachute, a figure that hung with dangling limbs. The changing winds of various altitudes took the figure where they would. Then, three miles up, the wind steadied and bore it in a descending curve round the sky and swept it in a great slant across the reef and the lagoon towards the mountain. The figure fell and crumpled among the blue flowers of

the mountain side, but now there was a gentle breeze at this height too and the parachute flopped and banged and pulled. So, the figure, with feet that dragged behind it, slid up the mountain. Yard by yard, puff by puff, the breeze hauled the figure through the blue flowers, over the boulders and red stones till it lay huddled among the shattered rocks of the mountain top.) chapter-6 Lord of the Flies

The offerings of pigs' head by the mob of boys remind the reader about the sacrifice made by the prospective humanity by the end of Paradise Lost. At times the religious fables enlighten the reader philosophically also by reminding philosophy of life. Through this novel Golding reminds the philosophical dictum that the change is the part of life as well as of nature just as the light changes into darkness, spring changes into autumn in nature; life is the medley of happy and sad moments fables assert the belief in fate.

"Human beings are like wanton flies in the hands of mischievous boys to God" the quotation given Thomas Hardy becomes true in Lord of the Flies on the careful observation of play of fate on the boys in the form of plane crash making the novel a religious fable.

II. CONCLUSION

On the whole Golding makes Lord of the Flies a religious fable by making humanity as a universal religion advocating amalgamation of humanity with the nature to achieve spiritual development in human world integration of humanity irrespective of superficial dissimilarities to mitigate the destruction of universe.

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