

42. Truthiness, Ideology and Consensus reality in George Orwell' Animal Farm: A Post-truth discourse

Mridul C. Mrinal, Jithin Kumar P

Assistant Professor, PG Department of English, MES Keveeyam College, Valanchery, Malappuram District, Kerala, Contact: mridul4rocksteim@gmail.com

Jithin Kumar P.

Assistant Professor, PG Department of English, MES Keveeyam College, Valanchery, Malappuram District, Kerala, Contact: jithinp33@gmail.com

Post Truth is a philosophical and political concept for “*the disappearance of shared objective standards for the truth*” and the circuitous slippage between facts or alternative facts, knowledge, opinion, belief and truth. In 2016, the oxford Dictionaries selected “Post-Truth” as the “word of the year” and defined it as a “term relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion”. The term was first used in the contemporary context by Serbian American playwright Steve Tesich. In his 1992 article “*A Government of Lies*”. Tesich criticized the American public for submissively accepting the lies of Bush administration. The term resurfaced in 2004, in the title of a book by Ralph Keyes, ‘*The Post-Truth Era*’.

George Orwell's *Animal Farm* doesn't confine to the genre of dystopian novel. It expands to the vast area of political satire. Political satire has its history in the middle ages, when monarchs ruled the lands. The political systems has witnessed as gradual change in Europe after the First World War. The rise of the nation states like Germany and Italy under Otto Van Bismarck and Garibaldi had given rise to nationalistic movements. The historical materialism by Karl Marx describes the six stages of human history, which include, Primitive communism, Slavery, Serfdom, Capitalism, Socialism and Communism. Serfdom or Feudalism was common in the medieval era. Common people were forced to work under aristocrats. Dukes, Barons and Lords ruled as subordinate administrative system under a monarch. Most of the Europe was under the control of such oligarchical regimes. The demand for more democracy in administration was first observed in the peasant revolts of Britain in 1300s. Maritime trades paved the way to imperialism and colonialism. The discovery of the Americas and the European migration had paved the way to the establishment of the United State of America, which is the oldest republic in the world with a government, which was often quoted as for the people, by the people and of the people. It was the first ever-recorded democratic form of government since the Athenian democracy. The declaration of the United States as an independent country on July 04, 1776 was such an event that had a long impact upon the political landscape of Europe. The French revolution was observed as a by-product of the American revolution. The decaying monarchy and social system had been overthrown by the ideas of equality, liberty and fraternity. Several monarchs were deposed and replaced with a comparatively democratic form of governments after the First World War. The emergence of the Soviet Russia brought a new course in the world political arena. The socialist state was governed under the Marxian principles where, the headship of the party organization reigned over the country. The system wasn't democratic. Decolonisation was commenced soon after Second World War, when the old world powers such as Britain, France and Belgium were collapsed. The United States and Soviet Union emerged as the two powerful states, creating a bipolar world followed by the cold war. The Carnation revolution overthrown the Salazar regime in Portugal while general Franko ruled Spain until his death, whereupon the monarchy was restored. The cold war decided the fate of many regimes. Deposition, overthrowing, civil war etc. was observed as a result of the power struggle. The Korean War and Vietnam war are the best examples of the Cold war era power crisis and political unrest. Cuban missile

crisis, deposition of regimes in Central American countries are followed events where the power balance oscillated between The US and Soviet Union.

Animal Farm is a story told through animals living in a barn. The animals were treated in a rough manner, which leads to a widespread rebellion in the farm. In this rebellion, the animals overthrow their human masters. They decide to setup a society where all animals would be equal, free and happy. The pigs were the most educated among the animals. They forms a legal code that everyone in the farm must follow. The most intelligent among the pigs were Napoleon and Snowball. Napoleon was forceful to others, but speaks less while Snowball was lively. Later another pig took the role of leading the propaganda for Napoleon. By betraying the rebellion, the pigs became the most powerful and corrupt. They changed the existing legal codes according to their own interest under the dictatorship of Napoleon. The age-old Goebbelsian concept; If you repeat a lie often enough, it becomes accepted as truth has been used in the farm to establish a constructed reality.

Among the many ways, Napoleon used to maintain the legitimacy of his regime, including the repeated amendments to the seven commandments and their new interpretations. The pigs whose ancestors had established these laws for the animal farm, deliberately violated and gradually ignored them while keeping other animals in the dark. Eventually, the seven commandments were once and for all replaced by a single commandment, all animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others are.

The changes that happened in the seven commandments were ridiculous. The seven commandments of Animalism were painted by Snowball with almost no mistakes. The beginning of a long-term process deception can be seen when the issue of milking the cows pop-up. When the other animals asks, how the pigs are going to manage this? And nobody knows, ‘what is going to happen to all that milk?’(Orwell 18).

As the time went on, the pigs moved to the farmhouse and reside there. Clover, a female cart-horse seeks help from Muriel, a white goat to read the fourth commandment. It was painted as; “No animal shall sleep in a bed” (Orwell 23) where she realized that someone have made some changes in it; “No animal shall sleep in a bed with sheets” (Orwell 60). And Squealer convince them by saying; “the pigs are the brain of the farm” (Orwell 59). One of the amendments on the wall was, ‘Four legs good, two legs bad’ (p 31), even though Napoleon stood on two legs when he delivered orders to Whymper, one of the human from neighbourhood. The animals have mis-remembered yet another commandment. “No animal shall drink alcohol to excess” (Orwell 93). Muriel realized this fact when Napoleon orders a field to be sown with barley, which is a basic ingredient of beer and whiskey.

In the beginning, Snowball worked with Napoleon. Snowball encourages the animals to read and write. He was intelligent, imaginative but he fails to suspect Napoleon’s plan to take control of the farm. All those lies were constructed on behalf of Snowball; Napoleon used him as a scapegoat. The destruction of Windmill, stealing of corn, breaking of eggs, and even the trampling of seed-beds, whenever anything went wrong it usually attribute to Snowball. Squealer even made them believe that Snowball sell himself to Frederick of Pitchfield farm. However, Boxer came up with some doubts regarding the mysterious activities attributed to Snowball. When Squealer says that Snowball was not fighting during the Battle of Cowshed but trying to defeat his own people, Boxer couldn’t apprehend it as truth. He says; “Snowball fought bravely at the battle of cowshed. I saw him myself. Did we not give him ‘Animal hero, First class’, immediately afterwards?” (Orwell 70) And then Squealer made it clear by announcing about the secret documents about it. They were creating the history according to their own interest. Squealer’s role was to support and lead the propaganda for Napoleon.

Animal farm is such a novella, which satirically depicts the emergence of a regime out of absurdity. The elements of truth is a factor in determining the course of the novella. Presenting Animals as characters, the idea lurking behind the characters are evident. It is mostly identifiable with the communist and socialist dictatorships emerged during the cold war. Geographical boundary has little to do with this. In Asia, countries such as Cambodia, Laos, South Yemen, Afghanistan, The Koreas, China; Vietnam etc. were already under the rule of socialist regimes. In American continent, there weren't any exceptions, especially when it comes to Cuba and other numerous regimes came to power in Meso America.

Ideology plays an important role in the emergence a regime. In *Animal Farm*, it is the speech of the Old Major, which became the core tenet of the regime's ideology. The Icons of the ideology can be witnessed when the animal paraded saluting the Old Major's skull on the flag post. Several symbols serves as the representation of the ideology. The song *Beasts of England* was the proclamation of animal fraternity and liberty. This had been sung during every heroic act and during conflicts such as the battle of the cow shed. The Green flag hoisted upon represents the domination of animals over the farm. Similarly, the change in the name when it was changed from Manor's farm to Animal farm name is also a symbol of ideology. The ideology is the driving force behind animal farm.

The emergence of truth is controversial. The seven commandments, which serves as the code of conduct for the farm, was declared as the truth by consensus between the animals. In the later development, it is witnessed that the entire commandments were amended with constructing a false notion and it directly led to the opposite of what the commandments stood for. Here, the emergence of a privileged section is observed along with the truth by consensus. Pigs have established themselves as the ruling power over the Animal farm. The internal feud between Napoleon and Snow white saw the exiling of Snow white using an aiding mechanism of dogs. After Napoleon assumed the ruling title, the truth on consensus is repealed and amended without any consensus. Here neither consensus nor reconciliation had been occurred. It was rather the selfish decision by the Pigs. The ideology and truth became reconciled when squealer intercedes. He propagates the good virtue of Napoleon in order to establish him as the central figure. The elements of hesitations are countered with fear of the return of Mr. Johnes. Napoleon's propaganda had repealed the 'truth by consensus' in reality but never changed its nature, as it remained a truth with the consensus of almost all animals.

The propaganda by Napoleon is a fine example of truthiness in the novella. Each and every claim is engineered with brilliance that the quality was doubtless. The past events are over shaded by the constructed reality and the powerful element of truthiness. Squealer is serving as the instrument for the propagations. He explains constructed realities as the history. The Idea of the windfarm which was put forward by Snow ball, which was hijacked as the actual idea of Napoleon. The truthiness is accompanied by the confirmation of the seven commandments. Commandments are in fact amended from time to time in favour of the pigs. Animals in the farm are convinced with the truthiness of the constructed reality where they reached a consensus reality. They reconciled and agreed upon the version of truth which to be considered as a truth. The truthiness is established by considering various factors such as idea of the windfarm, conspiracy by snowball and other events that are gradually became the violation of the commandments. The animals are convinced to belief the constructed reality. "Napoleon was always right", "I will work hard" (Orwell 55) were the two slogans repeatedly used by Boxer. The blind faith on authority sometimes takes us to deep slavery and ignorance about the world. When Napoleon seize power, he announced that 'there will be no Sunday meetings'. Therefore, till then the animals can only assemble to 'receive their orders'. He made it impossible for them to assemble and make further discussions. Napoleon even reminds the other animals the importance of being loyal to him at Boxer's funeral; "Napoleon ended his speech with a reminder of Boxer's two favourite maxims, 'I will work harder' and 'comrade Napoleon is always right'(Orwell 84)

The novella follows a gradual course in terms of ideology, truthiness and reality on consensus. The course of time becomes an important factor in determining the truthiness of the event as the animals did not actually remember any of the event right from the revolution and the battle of cowshed to till the last. Benjamin and Clover are the only animals who recalled everything held in the past. The chain has been reversed as the seven commandments itself had amended and the truthiness was proven as a quality tool for the employment of the agenda. As a conclusion, truth itself is a debatable topic, which is to be determined through a consensus. Truth being distorted for the sake of propaganda can be seen in this work. Slowly turning the attention of the masses from one to another worked out. Those who questioned the propaganda have either killed or expelled from the farm. This is the way political authorities move forward. Manipulation of facts, lying and ungrounded accusations is the means adopted by the political leaders and authorities. All the other animals in the farm accepted the pigs as more intelligent ones. That was the blind spot where the pigs decide to manipulate the situation.

Citations

1. Orwell, George.(2001).*Animal Farm*.Penguin Books
2. Wikipedia Contributors (2021, July 29).Post Truth. *In Wikipedia.The Free Encyclopedia* . Retrieved on 9:19, July 29, 2021. From <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post-truth>
3. Wikipedia Contributors (2021, August 8). Truthiness. *In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopdia*. Retrieved on 10:15. August 8,2021.From <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truthiness>
4. Wikipedia Contributors (2021, August 15). Truth by consensus.*In Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved on 04:35, August 15,2021.From https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truth_by_consensus