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Inherent Evil Nature in Golding's *Lord of the Flies*: A Psychoanalytical Approach

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Abstract

This article analyzes William Golding's novel, *Lord of the Flies* from the psychological perspective to explore the hidden intent of the characters. It is about a small group of children who divide and involve murdering each other from their peaceful beginning. Jack and his tribe of hunters including Roger are inclined to be guided by their unconscious and do many evil activities. The objective of this article is to explore how the characters in the novel are guided by unconscious and become savage. Ralph, Piggy, and Simon are guided by reasoning as they can control their unconscious and are not guided by evil as much as the groups of Jack do. Evil is not confined to any group or person, it is found everywhere within all even in Piggy and Ralph. If it is not controlled by our subconscious, the evil will take disastrous form. It applies a qualitative method of study to explore the unconscious activities of the characters and how they reflect evil activities rather than good activities. Studying the novel from the lens of psychoanalysis, it is found that human nature is inclined to exercise wild and instinctual drives than rational and logical activities.

Keywords : Barbarism, disorder, evil, innate, primitivism, savagery, unconscious,

Introduction

Lord of the Flies revolves around a group of English boys who are evacuated from Britain on a desert island in the Pacific. The children first establish a society and involve in the activities like playing, hunting, and swimming. They develop social order and choose a leader to run their group in a systematic manner. Ralph is chosen the leader following a democratic way but he lacks ability to think clearly at the difficult hour. They all are guided by the will of being rescued from the island for this they have to keep fire burning

all the time. They also need to build shelters for living. The children are divided into three groups for performing different tasks such as keeping fire, building shelters, and hunting wild animals for meat. This way their society functions for a short time. They follow their allotted duties in a team spirit. When they lose their interest and drive them from the controlled world, their society disintegrates. Some boys are inclined to divide them into factions and descend into savagery declaring themselves free from rules and structures and some are guided by rationality to achieve common goal of being rescued. In this regard, Santwana Haldar says, "*Lord of the Flies* may apparently look like an expression of utter frustration and pessimism, because the innocent and good natured boys are killed and the rule of disciplined and good sense is ousted by savagery" (5). The novel focuses on human nature through the activities of small children. The place and the characters depicted in it are microcosm of the world and humankind and it also includes the features of British society which has undergone terror and chaos during the time of the Second World War.

Jack being jealous to Ralph later declares himself the leader being crazy for power. Then aggression and suppression begin and conflict emerges among children. They are divided into two groups one is led by Ralph which believe in rationality and the other led by Jack believe in hunting and become savagery. The catastrophe happens due to the conflict between two groups and Piggy and Simon are killed. Ralph is made alone and becomes outcast. He is hunted by the group of Jack to kill but he escapes. They set fire to force Ralph out of the island and a naval officer sees the smoke and comes to rescue the children and fortunately saves Ralph from the attack of his enemy. With the pathetic image of Ralph, the novel ends happily. The behavior of the children reflects the division of society. As Joanne Cooper and Ken Kempner opine, "The power of *Lord of the Flies* (Golding 1954) is found in Golding's artful telling of the rapid disintegration of the civilization the boys knew and their reversion to barbarism" (419). The defect of the society is best reflected through the defects of human nature. It presents the tension between emotional and rational reactions and immorality and morality. Analyzing the novel from the psychological perspective, Bern Oldsey and Stanley Weintraub state, "Jack appears as the Freudian id personified; Ralph the ego; Piggy the superego, the conscience of the grown-up world" (97). The allegory of the evil is its surface level and the real meaning lies in human psychology.

The novel depicts the downfall of the civilization which faced many wars resulting the loss of many lives. The reason behind such incidents is the inherent human nature in man alone. Jerome Martin argues that the theme of the novel is to reflect the defects of the society by reflecting the defects of human nature which is best studied under a crisis or

a trauma as Ralph undergoes in the novel (408). When people involve in creating brutal behaviour, civilization, democracy, set of rules and order are not followed and havoc is created in the society as Jack and his followers do in the novel. Therefore, this article explores unconscious thoughts and motives of the characters in the novel to show innate evil nature of human beings to fill the gap in the study.

Review of Literature

Multifarious interpretations and views regarding the novel *Lord of the Flies* are found. Some critics regard it as the interpretation of Christian myth and some others find it as the reflection of human foolishness. The theme of the novel is connected with the adaptation of the Christian myth of the Fall of Man by reflecting the desert island. E. C. Bufkin says, "it is not surprising that in *Lord of the Flies* the principal technical device he uses is irony. It, like the myth of fallen man, permeates the novel" (40). The children and the desert island represent the symbols of myth and emphasis is made on ethical nature of human nature to be safe from evil activities. Dark side of human nature is reflected by the evil activities of the children. Bufkin shows that the novel ironically presents the idea of the biblical theme but he misses the issue of human psyche. John F Fitzgerald and John R Kayser report, "*Lord of the Flies* is an allegory on the disintegration of society due to a flaw in human nature: man fails to recognize, and thereby appease, the irrational part of his soul" (78). They focus more on allegorical meaning and failure of human beings to know their responsibility. They emphasize on social problem and overlook the theme of human hidden intent. By exploring the hidden intent of the characters the gap between previous studies and this study can be fulfilled.

Emphasizing on human soul for ultimate truth, Raychel Haugrud Reiff says, "Through *Lord of the Flies*, Golding forces readers to recognize the truth of the human soul so that they can realistically understand themselves, other people and the world" (67). His focus is on the realization of the self but he misses the idea of inherent human evil nature. Harold Bloom says, "Though *Lord of the Flies* is a moral parable in the form of a boys' adventure story, in a deeper sense it is a war story. The book's central emblem is the dead parachutist, mistaken by the boys for the Beast Beelzebub, diabolic *Lord of the Flies*" (1). He shows that the novel is related to morality through the perspective of the children. It is also concerned with conflict and he avoids the concept of hidden intent of human beings. David Daiches writes about the novel, "It is the story, told with meticulous realism and at the same time with a visionary clarity that shows up everything as symbolic, of a group of a group of small children wrecked on a desert island degenerating into a society based on

fear, violence and tyranny” (1175). He emphasizes on the theme of realism and avoids the matter of human psyche. Many critics have raised voices about the novel and none of them have focused their criticism on the issue of human psychology. So this paper has attempted to fulfil the research gap by studying the novel from the perspective of psychoanalysis.

Problem Statement

Golding depicts the dark side of human nature from the perspective of small children in his novel. Jack and his group in the novel involve in degenerating the society full of violence and tyranny. Absence of rationality and morality encourages human beings in creating brutal activities. Thus, this article attempts to answer following research questions: In what ways a person involves in creating havoc and terror in the society? Why are human beings inclined to do brutal activities more than rational ones? How can the innate evil nature and savagery of human being be controlled?

Psychoanalysis as Human Unconscious

Psychoanalysis sees literary text as an expression of the unconscious of the individual character or of the author or of the entire human race. It includes the study of the motives of authors, characters, readers, childhood memories, relationships to people, creative process, and symbols. Human behavior is motivated by impulses that are concerned with unconscious and not immediately connected with conscious mind. In that sense, we have no control over those impulses as they are unconsciously motivated. Most of our activities are motivated by unconsciously which is the reservoir of all kinds of experiences and comes out in our early age. As Lois Tyson writes, “The unconscious comes into being when we are very young through the repression, the expunging from consciousness, of these unhappy psychological events” (15). In this way unconscious is the dynamic entity that includes our deepest level of sense. By defenses we keep all kinds of problems in the unconscious. Also being a therapy, psychoanalysis is used to cure mental disorders in which patients are made to bring the problems into conscious by letting them talk freely. It is mainly based on how mind, instincts, and sexuality function. Focusing its connection with immediate satisfaction or pleasure principle, Gregory Castle opines that, “it seeks the repetition of desires and wishes that could bring harm to the individual, appears to be in the service of the death instinct” (167). All human instincts fall into two classes, life and death instincts. When people are guided by death instinct, they tend to do harm to others being guided by aggression.

Sigmund Freud contributed to put the study of human conscious and the unconscious on a scientific way. He opened up the entire realm of unconscious to systematic study and

psychoanalytic concepts have become parts of our everyday lives. In this regard, M.A.R. Habib writes, "Freud's fundamental contribution was to open up the entire realm of the unconscious to scientific study" (57). He suggested a three-part model of the psyche dividing as the ego, the superego, and the id corresponding to the conscious, the conscience, and the unconscious. Each part of the personality comprises unique features for contribution of human behavior. Unconscious is barbaric and it is concerned with pleasure principle. Related to the study of unconscious, many of Freud's ideas are related to sexuality and infantile sexuality. For this, he refers to the concept of Oedipus complex as the expression of the unconscious in early age of human beings. Freud postulated that we bear a form of otherness within ourselves as much of our thoughts and actions are not freely determined by us but driven by unconscious forces which we can barely fathom. Defense mechanisms repress those unconscious desires and keep us safe from anxieties and guilt. There is always conflict between conscious and unconscious mind and the mature human behavior is the compromise of these two forces. The most important aspect of it is to have kindly engaged in free association. Thus, the theory of psychoanalysis mainly the study of unconscious to explore the novel, *Lord of the Flies* is significant.

Human Savagery in *Lord of the Flies*

Comic sense cannot include everyone although the novel ends happily. The boys are rescued but characters like Piggy and Simon are killed. The tragic end of the two boys darkens the note of happy ending. The problem created in the novel is by Jack. Due to his will to rule creates havoc in the novel and children involve in murdering their friends. He plays the role of a villain. His lust of power causes confrontation in the novel. Thus, throughout the novel anarchy and confusion dominate the world. The main mistake of Ralph is to organize a meeting at twilight regarding the fear of the littluns. From that incident he loses control and never maintains it. He is a dreamer who plans everything but in performance he becomes weak. When children begin to do what they like avoiding their assigned duties, he says, "We decide things. But they don't get done" (68). He continuously urges his friends about the importance of making fire for-- their rescue but the children ignore his advice. His repeated emphasis indicates that the children are out of order as he says, "we can't have proper assemblies if you don't stick to the rules" (78). He seems to be unable to gain power to control animalism and anarchy of Jack. Due to lack of control the evil force begin to work and children become indifferent toward following rules and regulations. When he reminds about the rules Jack retorts as, "Because the rules are the only thing we've got! But Jack was shouting against him" (89). He wants to be guided by

his free will displaying the savagery that is deeply rooted in human heart.

The primitive and barbaric nature of the children is reflected in the novel when they are gripped by the fear of beast. While talking about the beast Ralph and Piggy show rational idea saying that there is no beast but Jack's attitude displays violence. Taking the beast as a source of danger they involve in ritualistic sacrifice. If their fear of beast is clarified, the murder of Simon will not happen. They kill him taking him as a beast. The rumour of the beast creates them in a situation of killing their own member as they take it as a source of terror. The title of the novel concerns with the evil force Beelzebul, a beast in some New Testament texts. As David Spitz writes that the lord of the fly is the personification of the evil, the fly-ridden dung heap which is the part of man (28). It means by rejecting God human beings want to do what they like. The evil force hidden in human consciousness is the beast and by letting it work, people make mistakes or behave like a beast. In the novel Jack and Roger behave more like the beast and promote savage and force. Their activities can be controlled by environment for making them rational and sensitive.

Even in the world of adults we find many events caused by their failure of managing their affairs. Many wars and chaotic situations in this peaceful world are the results of the promotion of evil behaviour. In the novel, the children by promoting evil force converted the peaceful island into hell. The repeated chant of the group, "Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood!"(135-136) reflects evil nature of Jack and Roger as they show excitement. They first beat Simon as beast and he falls over the steep rock to the sand by the water. Then they poured down the rocks over him and kill him. Next his dead body was found in such condition as, "The water rose farther and dressed Simon's coarse hair with brightness. The line of his cheek silvered and the turn of his shoulder became sculptured marble. The strange attendant creatures, with their fiery eyes and trailing vapors, busied themselves round his head" (137). This way, he becomes the victim of the fear of the beast and the evil nature of his friends. He knows reality about the beast that is a dead pilot as he is sensitive to truth and beauty.

The novel was written after World War II and Golding is reflecting the terror of the war which is the reflection of savage human nature. In this regard, Haldar writes, "*Lord of the Flies*, published some fifteen years after the Second World War, is a well thought out comment on man's basic nature as was revealed in the explosion of atom bomb, the viciousness and cruelty of which put a question mark on the future of human civilization"(2). The terror created by Jack and his forces is similar to the holocaust of the atom bomb which Golding has chosen as the setting of the novel. The novel is apocalyptic in the sense of

inherent evil nature of human as reflected in the novel. The death and missing in the novel are not accidental but they are created by the children who turned savage. With pride, cruelty, aggression, and thirst for power, Jack becomes like a devil figure, a typical modern autocrat who persuades all the boys to disobey rules.

Innate Evil Nature in the Novel

The novel portrays the evil practices through the perspectives of children. They are regarded as innocent but in the novel they create havoc in the society and involve in inhuman activities. Being very sensible, Ralph says, "There aren't any grownups. We shall have to look after ourselves" (25). In this sense he is a sensible leader. In absence of proper guidance from adults, the boys ignore their duties and indulge in other activities. They let their unconscious work more than rationality. They are motivated by pleasure principle rather than maintaining law and order. They break the organization they have made in the beginning. They are haunted by the rumour of the monster. Ralph, Simon, and Piggy like to follow the rules but Jack and his followers start behave in a primitive manner by painting faces. Even they leave the job of making fire which is essential for their rescue. If they had continued, they would have been rescued earlier without losing any friend. Their evil nature worked here for avoiding this activity. Overall the activities of the boys go out of order for creating painful situation. The evil nature of Roger is reflected as he behaves with Ralph and Piggy and says, "You could see who I was. The chief said we got to challenge everyone" (142). To hold power, he changes himself as a brute.

Again Roger intentionally rolls down a rock and strikes Piggy and he falls down forty feet landing on the rock of the surface of the sea. Jack and his followers threaten to kill Ralph and he flees for protecting his life. He feels the experience of being nearer to death. Many kinds of terrorist activities of this world are created by lord of the flies i.e, human evil desire. As children in the island, we are living in the dangerous society caused by our own evil nature. As Raychel Haugrud Reiff indicates that the message of the novel is concerned with recognizing the truth of human soul for knowing themselves, others, and the entire world (67). The novel mainly deals with reflecting human instinct which is barbarous by nature. By the activities of the children it is clear that we all reined by evil which is instinct and it can be made rational by practice. The children work through their instinct while creating havoc in the island.

Numerous deadly sins, created by innocent children are found in the island. They involve mainly in destroying what is good either it is material or spiritual letting their unconscious work freely. Shumaila Mazhar, et al. state, "*Lord of the Flies* is a deceptively

simple text that can be read as an indictment of human nature and civilization itself. Golding is not disparaging human instincts, rather he is implicating the human tendency to commit senseless atrocities concealed by the civilized deceptions and inventions of morality, justice, and ideology” (38). By portraying the dominant role of Jack and his followers over Ralph and his supporters, the inborn evil nature is explored in the novel. Regarding the portrayal of evil nature in the novel, Afaf Ahmed Hasan Al-Said writes, “It was the evil seen daily as commonplace and repeated by events it was possible to read in any newspaper which, he asserted, were the matter of *Lord of the Flies*. The war could be regarded as the catalyst which released an already present evil” (129). People possess the evil nature as fundamental and permanent feature. It is generally assumed to be only with adults but the novel reflects that it can emerge at any time and at any condition. It shows the impulse toward civilizations and savagery rages in a person regardless of any age.

Conclusion

Analyzing the world of small children in *Lord of the Flies* from the psychoanalytical perspective, it is found as a microcosm of the world of adults. The creation of lawless and disordered society and the ruin in the novel is similar to the ruin made by matured people being evil. The children reflect their unconscious and involve in activities like disobeying the rules and murdering each other. The primary factor for children’s development is id which is irrational and without any logical sense. It is mainly concerned with pleasure and immediate satisfaction. They are found guided more by pleasure principle rather than by conscience or rationality. Being guided by unconscious the children become selfish and self-centered. The novel presents pessimistic view regarding human fate and nature. The reason behind reflecting evil through children is to show inherent evil in men. It tries to display that human beings are savage by birth as the germs of evil are embedded in them. The growth of evil nature is controlled by civilized practices and the lack of control causes savagery and brutality. In the novel the adult-less world is the main cause for the children to involve in criminal activities. This can also be related with lack of conscious world in the society. Due to lack of control, the deeply inherited savage behavior in human heart causes many devastating effects. As an allegory the novel reflects savagery inherent in human heart from early life and the lack of environmental control causes barren world without any human values and norms. When human beings are guided more by unconscious, there is chance of creating lawless and disordered society.

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