

Animal Imagery in George Orwell's novel "Animal Farm"

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ABSTRACT

The present paper is a literary stylistic study that illustrates in George Orwell's novel *Animal Farm* the imagery, the allegorical meaning, linguistic exploitation or manipulation of words. One of the most traditional features of the *Animal Farm* and an integral part of its imagery is Orwell's sophisticated sensitivity to political abuse of language. Inwardly, this novel is an allegory that relates to power struggle, usurpation, coercion, manipulation, hypocrisy, oppression, political racket and fear of the ruling classes in any shape they may exist (human or animal). It seems to be a simple tale of animals. However, severe the subject is, through his vivid imagery and artful use of literary instruments, Orwell has made it imaginative and humorous. With its clear, deceptively simple, but creatively honed prose style and expressive language, the novel is a source of great aesthetic and intellectual pleasure and political insight.

Keywords: Orwell, imagery as a literary device, allegory, symbol, life-like, violence.

Introduction

Imagery is the use of vivid and descriptive language by the author in a literary text to add meaning to the work (Imagery 2016), the use of figurative language to portray thoughts, acts, events, things, characters in such a way as to appeal to human senses and to deepen the comprehension of the work by the reader. The role of literary imagery, therefore, is to create a visual presentation and enable the reader's imagination to imagine scenes, events, characters mentioned in the written discourse.

Writers use imagery in their work to add meaning to the work to make it more attractive to vibrant for readers. The use of animal imagery in literature is in common among writers from the early days, as can be seen in the writing of the Egyptian Pharaohs, which is considered to be the most ancient literature found today. Writers use the animal and other symbols to present the neutral characteristics of their characters. They symbolically associate certain animalistic personas with the human beings to indicate the real human nature and this also satisfy readers to a great extent. This study analyzes the use of animal imagery in the works of two English authors and two Bengali authors and comes up with a comparative analysis. The authors are Ted Hughes, George Orwell, Sukumar Ray and Jibonando Das. All of them are very prominent and used animal imagery quite successfully.

Introducing The Author And The Story

Orwell (1903-1950) was a British journalist and author who published two of the most popular 20th century books, 'Animal Farm' and 'Nineteen Eighty-Four.' Orwell was born on 25 June 1903 in East India, Eric Arthur Blair, the son of a British colonial civil servant. He was educated in England, and after leaving Eton, he served the Indian Imperial Police in Burma, then the British Colony. In 1927, he resigned and decided to become a writer.

The novel 'Animal Farm' opens with an old pig, named Major, addressing his fellow animals on Manor Farm. Major character Mr Jones, the farmer who owns Manor Farm, because he controls the animals, takes their produce (the hens' eggs, the cows' milk), but gives them little in return. Major tells the other animals that man, who walks on two feet unlike the animals who walk on four, is their enemy. They sing a rousing song in favour of animals, 'Beasts of England'. Old Major dies a few days later, but the other animals have been inspired by his message. (Orwell 52)

In particular, the other animals are roused by two pigs, Snowball and Napoleon, to take action against Mr Jones and capture the farm for themselves. They render seven commandments which all animals must obey: among other things, these commandments prohibit the animal from killing another animal, and they include the mantra

‘four legs good, two legs bad,’ because the animals (who walk on four legs) are their mates, while the two legs of the human overlords are evil.

The animals are leading an uprising against Mr. Jones, whom they are pushing out of the farm. They called the ‘Cow Farm’ Manor Farm, and set out to run things themselves, along the lines set out in their seven commandments, where all animals are equal. But it becomes clear before long that the pigs, particularly Napoleon and Snowball, consider themselves unique as the leaders of the animals, requiring special treatment (76). However, when Mr. Jones and some of the other farmers are undertaking a raid to try to retake the farm, the animals work together to protect the land and to see the men off. A young farmhand is knocked unconscious, and feared dead initially.

Things begin to fall apart: Napoleon’s windmill, which he commanded the animals to create, is vandalized and accuses Snowball of destroying it. Snowball has been exiled from its farm. Many animals are on the verge of hunger during winter. When Mr Whympers, a man from a neighboring farm with whom the pigs have begun to trade (so that the animals can obtain the materials they need to create the windmill), visits the farm, Napoleon constructs it so that he sees or hears the animals giving windmill a positive account of life on Animal Farm.

Without consulting the hens first, Napoleon organises a deal with Mr Whympers which involves giving him many of the hens’ eggs. They rebel against him, but he starves them into submission, although not before nine hens have died. Napoleon then announces that Snowball has been visiting the farm at night and destroying things.(85)

Napoleon also claims that Snowball has been in league with Mr Jones all the time, and that even at the Battle of the Cowshed (as the animals are now referring to the farmers’ unsuccessful raid on the farm) Snowball was trying to sabotage the fight so that Jones won. The animals are sceptical about this, because they all saw Snowball bravely fighting alongside them. Napoleon declares he has discovered ‘secret documents’ which prove Snowball was in league with their enemy.(99)

Life on Animal Farm becomes harder for the animals, and Boxer, while labouring hard to complete the windmill, falls and injures his lung. The pigs arrange for him to be taken away and treated, but when the van arrives and takes him away, they realise too late that the van belongs to a man who slaughters horses, and that Napoleon has arranged for Boxer to be taken away to the knacker’s yard and killed.(101)

Squealer lies to the animals, though, and when he announces Boxer’s death two days later, he pretends that the van had been bought by a veterinary surgeon who hadn’t yet painted over the old sign on the side of the van. The pigs take to wearing green ribbons and order in another crate of whisky for them to drink; they don’t share this with the other animals.

A few years pass, and some of the animals die, Napoleon and Squealer get fatter, and none of the animals is allowed to retire, as previously promised. The farm gets bigger and richer, but the luxuries the animals had been promised never materialized: they are told that the real pleasure is derived from hard work and frugal living. Then, one day, the animals see Squealer up on his hind legs, walking on two legs like a human instead of on four like an animal.

The other pigs follow; and Clover and Benjamin discover that the seven commandments written on the barn wall have been rubbed off, to be replaced by one single commandment: ‘All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.’ The pigs start installing radio and a telephone in the farmhouse, and subscribe to newspapers.

Finally, the pigs invite people to the farm to drink with them and reveal a new relationship between the pigs and humans. Napoleon tells his human guests that the name of the farm is going to revert from Animal Farm to the original name, Manor Farm. The other farm animals, witnessing this through the window, can no longer say who the pigs are and who the men are, because Napoleon and the other pigs are acting like men now.

Methodology

The word image is derived from the Latin word ‘Imitari,’ which is to imitate the English equivalent including imitation or replication of the individual or thing’s image. In dictionaries, the primary definition is the visual representation to an object created by the lens, mirror or other optical device or the image of an object created on a photographic content. (Webster, 1934: 1233). As an impression, a mental image of perceived experience, image is further explained. In literary criticism, the notion of imagery derived from the psychological term image has been used widely. The term originally stood for visual images, but its application changed to language and

literature with the passing of time. In its literal sense, an image is a specific entity defined in the physical world, which, when imitated and repeated or depicted, performs certain functions in a literary text. According to the New International Dictionary of English Language, an image is a mental depiction of something that is not actually present to the senses, a revival or imitation or a sensible perception, along with corresponding emotions, a duplication in memory or an imagination of sensations of sight, touch, listening and hearing etc as visual, tactile, auditory images (Webster, 1934: 1234).

Poets, novelists and dramatists use imagery to make their ideas clear and enjoyable to readers. It is a literary device used with much expertise. Imagery means to use figurative language to represent objects, actions, and ideas in such a way that it appeals to our physical senses. The function of imagery in literature is to generate a vibrant and graphic presentation of a scene that appeals to as many of the reader's senses as possible. It aids the reader's imagination to envision the characters and scenes in the literary piece clearly. Apart from the above-mentioned function, images drawn by using figures of speech like metaphor, simile, personification, and onomatopoeia, serve the function of beautifying a piece of literature. For example, imagery of light and darkness is applied superbly in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

“O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!

It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night

Like a rich jewel in an Ethiope's ear ...” (Act I, Scene V)

Here we see that Romeo praises Juliet by saying that she appears more radiant than the brightly lit torches in the hall. He says that at night her face glows like a bright jewel shining against the dark skin of an African. Through the contrasting images of light and dark, Romeo describes Juliet's beauty.

Symbolic Significance of Animal Farm

Animal Farm is an allegory where animals are symbol. It also serves the purpose of children book. It is full of animal characters with only one human character. “Orwell's vivid imagery is tied to a rather rigidly structured animal allegory that discloses human experience of great historical and political value” (Muradian).

Analysis Of Style And Technique

Various species of animals have been appropriately utilized by poets of different languages and culture and it ranges from Asia to Africa to Latin America. Animal imagery most often used as symbols. Indian literature used animals from religious point of view in some cases. Animals are dear to children, no doubt. So, animal imagery is very widely found in children's classic.

Animal Farm is the master piece of G. Orwell where there is a superb nexus of animal and human. Orwell's “finely honed prose style works to near perfection and is superbly adapted to dealing with central artistic difficulty involved in the Animal Farm project, that of making his characters believable as both animals and humans, or rather as animals with human characteristics” (Molyneux, 1989). Orwell has presented humans and animal alike and considered swinish nature a basis of corruption and root cause of all evil and malpractices. He has made the best use of animal imagery to uphold the themes of power struggle, usurpation, misuse of power and human nature above all. He has utilized animal imagery to criticize socio-political scenario. A list of prominent animal characters used in Animal Farm is given below:

Major, a white pig.

Boxer, cart horse.

Mollie, white mare.

Moses, tame raven

Snowball, young boar.

Nepoleon, Young boar.

The book *Animal Farm* is full of animal imagery where at the beginning readers get the view of animals of Manor Farm overthrowing their human owners. It is an extended allegory where readers get a glimpse of 1917 Russian Bolshevik revolutionaries. Here we meet Old Major, a pig, who symbolizes Marxist and Leninist ideology.

“He was twelve years old and had lately grown rather stout, but he was still a majestic looking pig, with a wise and benevolent appearance in spite of the fact that his tusches had never been cut.” (p. 2)

The readers get some other younger pigs like Napoleon (Stalin), Snowball (Trotsky) and Squealer (mass media). They all are followers of Old Major and they defeat the owner Mr. Jones in a battle and establish their own farm where there will be no human. Dedicated working class people have been depicted by Boxer, another animal of the farm. But Napoleon sells the dedicated hard-working animal in order to buy whisky. Behavior of rulers has been aptly portrayed through vivid animal imagery.

Though all the animals had dreamt for equality in rights, democracy and facilities, and practice of democracy, greed and lust for power prevailed and “All animals are equal and some animals are more equal” emerged as motto. Seven commandments were violated. The seven commandments which they had written on the wall:

Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy.

Whatever goes on four legs, or has wings, is a friend.

No animal shall wear clothes.

No animal shall sleep on a bed.

No animal shall drink alcohol.

No animal shall kill any other animal.

All animals are equal.

In course of time the commandments get a changed version. The animals started behaving like their ex-owner Mr Jones. “Orwell’s imagery is particularly active when he explores the ways in which those in power often use rhetoric and language to twist the truth aiming at gaining political and economic control” (Muradian, 2006).

Animal Farm is a successful work which makes the best use of animal imagery to criticize rulers and political system. This book has a double purpose as it is a good and funny book for children. Usually children like animal stories and Animal Farm has every component for quenching the thirst of a young mind.

Conclusion

Literature is a strong weapon against social injustice and oppression. Some animals rightly have been used by authors to uphold the malpractices of society. Animals can be utilized in literature for children, and for adult readers as well. Animal imagery is used in both Bangla and English literature. Poets and dramatists of Bangla literature have kept animals for children only, there is hardly any underlying meaning. But English authors have used animal imagery which has profound meaning and message. Animal imagery, if used skillfully, can serve for both kids and adults. Today there is mass awareness regarding saving the planet through saving animals and plants. So, literature can be an effective tool to raise awareness among common public. And to achieve this, there is the necessity to develop human-animal nexus both in literature and in real life.

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