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A Discourse on Civilization and Savagery in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*

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Abstract:

William Golding's debut Novel *Lord of the Flies* 1954 is considered as the remarkable piece of art in the contemporary literature. It deals with the group of English school boys left on Island after their plane is shot down during a war. Away from the civilization, its rules and structures the boys steadily slide down into savagery. With the help of young boys in *Lord of the Flies*, Golding portrays horrors of evil which reside nowhere but inside of human beings. Golding was an eminent author, School teacher and a great philosopher who had deep insight about human nature. He concluded in the *Lord of the Flies* that human beings have a 'darker' side to them. He believes that there is a savage in all of us, and if we are put in the position to survive, we will do anything. His first hand experience as a teacher and naval warfare force in World War II instigated him to turn towards literature. World War II "was to shock him into questioning the horror of war. These experiences inform his writing; he was appalled at what human beings can do to one another, in terms of the wartime atrocities...and in their being innately evil" (Foster, 7). Golding Throughout the novel depicts the existing impulses of the civilization in Ralph and savagery in his archrival Jack. Golding puts Jack as opposite to Ralph in order to divulge the inner darkness of man. Golding treats cruelty; selfishness and longing for powers in the characterization Jack that worsens his nature and provokes 'mankind essential illness' which is a basic concept of Golding's philosophy.

Keywords: savagery, civilization, power, anarchy, darkness and conflict.

Introduction:

William Golding is best known for his Novel *Lord of the Flies*, he won the Nobel Prize and a Booker Prize for his magnificent work of depicting the 'darker' side of human nature. His novels are acclaimed everywhere, even though they illuminate the human condition in the world of today. *Lord of the Flies* represent the conflict mainly between the School boys left stranded on the Coral Island after their plane crashes on Island. Since there

are no grownups they need to take care of themselves. This novel typifies how these school boys try to manage their affairs and established law and order there. But soon all of the innocence is lost and the inner evil or darkness which exists within the boys overpowers them and causes destruction and anarchy. Desire for power leads breach in their harmonious and peaceful nature. From the beginning of the novel we find traces of dark side of human nature: "within the diamond haze of the beach something dark was fumbling along" (15). In the beginning everything seems to be at peace but gradually the 'savagery' arises within the innocent boys and disintegrated them. Ralph is a protagonist symbolizes civilization tries to provide internal balance by adopting symbiosis and assigns importance to his arch rival Jack when he speaks out "the choir belongs to you, of course. They could be the army or hunters, they could be" (20). Ralph is depicted as a rational, works for safety, unity, harmony and brotherhood. He did not want to rule on Island but he manages how to go back in society. Not only has this he taught them, how to accommodate there on the Island. *Lord of the Flies* is a fight between good and evil or civilization and savagery in the main characters Ralph and Jack. Ralph represents order, civilization and law whereas Jack represents savagery and evil although longing for the power. The inherent desire for power to control and rule even those facets which are beyond of our realm create tension. The struggle for power is the basic phenomenon of society of which the school boys come. Power as Foucault has found, is not only a physical force but a pervasive human dynamic which determines our relationship with others. It is the way in which one group dominated over others. This attribute of human can be seen in the Jack the arch rival of Ralph who cannot withstand Ralph as a leader of the group and so they are seen always in conflicts. This trait is similar to Foucault's view that: "The intricately structured 'power relations' in a given culture at a given time demonstrate, how the society controls its members through constructing and defining 'what appears to be universal' " (Murray, 69).

It is being witnessed that *Lord of the Flies* is a fight between Ralph and Jack, even though it is a fight between civilization and savagery or good and evil. Golding through this novel conveys the notion and idea through symbolic characters and events. Golding a philosopher wants to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature. He refers man as morally diseased creature who produces the evil as the bees produce honey. Golding creates the Island as a peaceful place where the boys come from outside accidentally to live there. First they live there peacefully but suddenly the 'darkness' surpasses the vision of civilization. Jack who comes under the onset of evil starts to create fissures and cracks that

disharmonized them from each other on the Island although he is being supported by Roger. Ralph acts as a leader on Island give other boys some commands to work. But he is contrasted by the arch rival Jack who asserts:

“I’m not going to be part of Ralph’s lot_” “I’m going off by myself. He can catch his own pigs. Anyone who wants to hunt when I do can come too.” He blundered out of the triangle towards the drop to the white sand. “Jack!” Jack turned and looked back at Ralph. For a moment he paused and cried out, high-pitched, enraged. “No!” He leapt down from the platform and ran along the beach, paying no heed to the steady fall of his tears; and until he dived into the forest Ralph watched him (158).

Jack declares himself the leader of the new tribe of hunters and organizes a hunt and a violent ritual slaughter of a sow to solemnize the occasion and Ralph watched. The hunters then behead the sow and other boys believe exists in the island and preoccupies them with its presence. It is certain that that the boys were subdued by the hunting, killing and they likely to shed the blood on the peaceful Island. Additionally, *Lord of the Flies* is a struggle between good and evil. It is a fight for power, self discovery, and civilization. On the other side there are Simon, Ralph, Piggy, and Sam fighting with Roger and Jack to retain peace and order perennial. Golding persuades us that the beast is inside of human beings and this ‘mankind’s essential illness’ lastly come into force and dilapidate civilization gradually and this novel is the best symbol. *Lord of the Flies* reaches a certain self-discovery and realised retrospectively, that evil is not outside, but it is rather inside them. The most striking example is Simon who faces such kind of essential illness. Kinked Weeks and Gregor describe the self discovery as “Knowledge of good through evil and evil is thus certainly connected with the knowledge” (116). It is Simon who discovers evil in him and surprised the associates who has following him on The Island. Thus the Simon after realising of the beast expresses an interesting concept:

Maybe, he said hesitantly, ‘maybe there is a beast.’ The assembly cried out savagely and Ralph stood up in amazement. ‘You, Simon? You believe in this?’ ‘I don’t know,’ said Simon. His heartbeats were choking him. ‘But....’ the storm broke. ‘Sit down!’ ‘Shut up!’ ‘Take the conch!’ ‘Sod you!’ ‘Shut up!’ Ralph shouted. ‘Hear him! He’s hot the conch!’ ‘What I mean is....maybe it is only us.’ maybe it is only us” (97).

From this Quote the readers realised the evil is inside of human beings. Most of us become victims of the beast. Golding symbolically depicts the savagery in Simon this is a fine example. However, *Lord of the Flies* is a conflict between evil and good and Golding insinuates that evil becomes supreme over good. This evil is projected on Jack who violates the principles of Island and did not accept any order and rule imposed by Ralph and Piggy. Roger is one of the hunters is a close friend of a Jack. His sadism, brutality and cruelty are even more intense. He leads the murder of piggy. The boys on the Island, thus starts to fight and collide the peace as well as civilization. Golding himself said that the evil arises from man's essential being which is related to the theme of 'darkness of man's heart'. Rather in an argument with the definition of Golding Tiger states: "the innocence of the child is crude fallacy, for homo-sapiens has by nature a terrible potentiality for evil, this potentially cannot be eradicated or controlled by human political system no matter how respectable" (Tiger, 54). This shows that the animal instinct is even stronger than any political system. The initial innocence and the good behaviour of boys changes after the first killing of pig on the Island. It is obvious that the boys in spite of ills present in them still look like for the evil in the outside world.

This paper is an assessment that Lord of the flies is a conflict between good and evil. Golding describes the breakdown of civilization as resulting from nothing more complex than the inherent evil of man. Throughout the novel Golding uses different kinds of characters as symbols to represent the competing conflict between savagery and civilization. Ralph is a symbol of civilization tries to keep the boys follow order and rules of civilization. Ralph with the support of Piggy tries to retain civilization and order perpetually. Piggy is a sensible thus he wants to stop the emerging savagery and evils: what are we? Humans? Or Animals? Or Savages? (99). All of this is code of ethics, goodness and morality. However, the group declines when Jack with his associate Roger arises as opposites of Ralph's tribe create mess on the Island. Jack and Roger are the representatives of beast on the Coral island. Jack fights for power he did not care for the group to rescue and maintain order on Island is completely opposite of Ralph's civilization. Jack loves to hunt and dominance of power over other boys. By the end of the novel he becomes a sole leader who uses power only for his own interests and benefits. Thus, it strikes the conflict between civilization and savagery, and good and evil. This conflict is also seen in the characters such as Piggy, Simon, Sam and Eric these are the representatives of good supports Ralph and follow all commands and principles of Ralph. These characters are opposite of Roger, who is sadistic finds pleasure by inflicting pain on

rivals. He is a wicked person, joins Jack's tribe and manifests evil inside within. He becomes the hang man, killer and dictator though kills Piggy and prepare a stick to put Ralph's head on it as he describes by Jack as carrying "death in his hand" (Kelly, 200).

This is a treatise not only the tragedy of some school boys but the tragedy of all human beings. Golding ridicules the civilization of which a mankind is proud of it are nothing but a superficial covering of real nature of human beings. The war against evil is not matter of opposing others, but confronting ourselves, and our own desires. So *Lord of the Flies* is about the evil inherent in us. It is a fight to surpass the evil exists, as Golding states: "it is an attempt to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature... the moral are the shape of society must depend on the ethical nature of an individual and not on any political system however apparently logical or respectable" (Bradbury, 63). Thus the author makes it clear that civilization should come out from inside, from the depth of the soul. *Lord of the Flies* is about the nature of man, his essential being and the inherent evil in him. As the novel progresses Ralph like Simon comes to understand savagery, barbarianism, and bloodlust exists within boys on the *Coral Island*. The *Island* has now plagued with horrors of evil:

The Island scorched up like dead wood- Simon was dead- and Jack had...the tears began to flow and sobs shook him. The little boys began to shake and sob too. And in the middle of them , with filthy body, matted hair, and unwiped nose, Ralph wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart and the fall through the air of true wise friend called Piggy" (230).

After coming across from the above lines we noticed the savagery nailed on civilization. Golding in this novel exposes the violence, bloodshed, power and evil in human nature. The conflict is a driving and a crucial issue of this treatise. Earlier Ralph is unable to understand the bloodshed, lust and loss of innocence. Jack the opposite character remained violent throughout the novel, his commitment to achieve power and punish the others are perpetual till the subsequent deaths of Simon and Piggy. This novel is fable and allegory of World War II as well as the 'mankind essential illness' thus, the novel ends with morn, bloodshed and conflict on Island.

Conclusion:

Indeed! *Lord of the Flies* is a struggle between two competing impulses that exists within all human. *Lord of the Flies* depicts these two impulses in school boys who have been marooned on the Desert Coral Island. And Golding assumes these two instincts of boys as civilization and savagery that is predominant in boys. As the story proceeds there occurred a conflict all of the characters are fighting to each other for power and dominance and manifests darkness and evil within that would symbolises the universal fight with savagery. Golding was an eminent philosopher, stressed 'mankind's essential illnesses. He focussed that the man produces evil as the bee produces honey. *Lord of the Flies* is an allegorical novel that contains characters and objects that directly represent the novel's themes and ideas. Golding's central point in the novel is that a conflict between the impulse toward civilization and the impulse toward savagery rages within each human individual, regardless a child or an adult. Golding describes the breakdown of civilization as resulting from nothing more complex than the inherent evil of man: "So the boys try to construct a civilization on the island; but it breaks down in blood and terror because the boys are suffering from the terrible disease of being human" (85). On the surface, the novel appears tug of war between Ralph and Jack who stand for two opposite values. Thus, this is not only about the conflict between good and evil, but it is all about the darkness that resides in the boys on the Island and gradually suppressed them and also keeps them away from civilization.

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