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## THE ART OF HUMAN SURVIVAL THROUGH FALLEN NATURE OF MAN AS PORTRAYED BY WILLIAM GOLDING IN *LORD OF THE FLIES*

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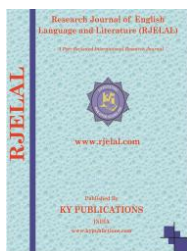
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### ABSTRACT

William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* reveals the mistakes that the grown-ups in the world. War has taught the children how to turn out to be savages when they are left alone. Discipline comes only when a child is brought under a perfect system. When the system is lost chaos and terror returns. The innate nature of a man is Evil. This paper stresses that the boys suffer from evil instinctual forces of the unconscious. The death of piggy is the death of humanity. The children forget peace and harmony and a clash between the rational and irrational society is well analysed.

Key Words: War, Evil, savage, rational

Our greatest evil flows from ourselves

- Jean-Jacques Rousseau

One of the most acclaimed original contemporary British writers of fiction- Sir. William Gerard Golding right from his masterpiece *Lord of the Flies* through his characters experiences an apocalyptic vision which is essentially necessary to reveal that sufferings are experienced due to the blunders committed and the inability of the modern man to understand and control the complexity of his nature, which ultimately disrupts the moral fabric of life. His contribution to literature acclaims him a significant position to the twentieth century novelists and Oldsey and Weintraub in *The Art of William Golding* comments that "Each of Golding's novels is a remarkable imaginative feat, fertile in invention, powerful in drama, suggestive in its richness of literary and mythic overtones" (3). He is a fabulist and a moralist trying to explore the problems of evil in man. His attempt as a fabulist is to inculcate a moral

thought and produce a setting that would embellish the characterization and develop the focal point of the moral lesson.

He concentrates on the duality or paradoxes in human life. The duality in Golding's works establishes "a structural principle that becomes Golding's hallmark: a polarity expressed in terms of moral tensions" (Dick 21). The polarity is the clash between flesh and spirit, rationality or irrationality and warfare and welfare. The goodness in man's deeds brings happiness. Evil in man makes him secretive and rotten and brings a disastrous end to the people around him. Golding strongly believes that evil is a dominant phenomenon in human nature and has crystallized with such conviction in his novels in displaying pain, sufferings and unethical conditions of life that probe a threat to mankind. Hence he brings war, deceit, murder, lust, and other amoral actions of man that attributes evil deeds is an innate propensity of a human being. He believes that man is

selfish, self-determined and egocentric and that he is morally responsible for his evil desires. Man take up his responsibility if a change in behaviour happens and when he is compelled to see himself. Golding through his settings in the novel concentrates on revealing the dark natures in his characters. The darkness in man's heart makes man to turn himself away from the moral world and heads towards sin, guilt, hate and violence. Golding clearly emphasizes the contemporary evils that keep challenging the soul of man. Golding in his *Hot Gates* puts in the moral dilemma's of man in a clear cut manner " that man's capacity for greed, his innate cruelty and selfishness was being hidden behind a kind of pair of political pants" (Lord of the Flies will be quoted as LOF 87) . This dilemma is caused by man's inability to see the world with a system of values and Golding makes it very clear in an interview with Baker and remarks that man is "like a creature in space, tumbling, eternally tumbling, and no up no down ... in the scientific sense" (133). His novels insist on the "the fallen nature of man, and that what stands between him and happiness comes from inside him." (ibid 90) Golding has made an attempt to draw the attention of mankind by communicating his idea on the darkness and fallen nature of man that pose a threat to existence.

*Lord of the Flies* speaks about a group of boys who land accidentally on an uninhabited island where they are in a situation to create a new world of their own choice without the interference of adult human force. Eventually they fail to establish a new order of society because the innate natural impulses of human nature which they inherit from the human race substantially overrule them. The story culminates to disorder and confusion, devastation and ultimately the boys are brought back to "civilization" by force. Golding attempts to point out that the defects of the society are only the historical blunders created by man in the past and it thoroughly relies only on the ethical nature of the human race. Man's primitive savage instinct from the primitive forebears remains strong and unchanged even when civilization casts a sense of reformation on each person in a long outrun. John S. Whitley finds man in *Lord of the Flies* as essentially a fallen creature. He points out: "Reacting against the Romantic notion

that man is basically noble if freed from the fetter of society, Golding insists that evil is inherent in man; a terrifying force which he must recognize and control" (7). Golding is greatly influenced by the great Greek masters Euripides, Sophocles and Herodotus, where he has learnt to visualize a balance between desire and fate, illusion and reality. Having gathered experiences as a navy officer and a school teacher, Golding depicts the intricate human psychology and lack of human relationship in an age where men actually have little to live for. The so called "civilized" people reveal their selfishness, greed and cruelty and make the innocent and gentle characters – the victim of the debased society.

Civilization does not give refinement and peace or shape the society but in turn it has shaken the world with utter savagery in the form of wars. Pralhad A. Kulkarni In *William Golding: A Critical Study* comments on the evil in Golding's boys "... Golding's boys seem to possess evil inherently. They present the original sin. In fact, with Golding's boys, civilization seems to be back sliding into savagery" (26). The boys in the *Lord of the Flies* are taken back to the world where there are no laws, God and rules. This makes them to return to an amorality of childhood where they lose their innocence and become real savages. In *The Lord of the Flies* Golding has made " an attempt to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature" ( Epstein 189).

The boys not older than twelve want to set an authoritarian regime of their own: "We're on an uninhabited island with no people on it. . . . There aren't any grown-ups. We shall have to look after ourselves (LOF 35)" but they experience disintegration. The society comes into being when Ralph finds the conch and establishes rules "I'll give the conch to the next person to speak. He can hold it while he's speaking. And he won't be interrupted." (LOF 48). They call for a general assembly and they follow a simple parliamentary procedure

"Let's have a vote"

"Yes"

"Vote for chief!"

"Let's vote ..." (LOF 20)

The boys elect Ralph not on the basis of any reason but on the possession of the conch. Being the oldest boy on the island a gradual struggle prevails between Ralph and Jack after the "toy voting". Ralph is a superior leader by the possession of the conch and is accepted by all except by Jack. He later designates himself as 'hunters' and takes the responsibility of lighting the signal fire to facilitate rescue. The beacon fire symbolizes civilization and it becomes the only hope for rescue and creates awe among the littluns. The reversal of leadership and the destruction of the conch cause a state of reversion from civilization to savagery when "the fire was dead" (98) and cause the first death on the island. The reversal of anarchy is obvious when Jack gives no importance for the conch: "Conch Conch" shouted Jack, "we don't need the conch any more. We know who ought to say things. What good did Simon do speaking, or Bill, or Walter? It's time some people knew they've got to keep quiet and leave deciding things to the rest of us" ( LOF 121 ). Golding has portrayed Ralph as a father-like person having concern for the social and ethical issues of the people in the island by providing them with shelter and fire. Jack's material greed and hankering for power is revealed when he causes destruction and murder. He is interested in hunting and merrymaking and keeps away from the order created by Ralph to satisfy his sensuous pleasure. Jack becomes an externalization of the evil instinctual forces of the unconscious.

A gradual struggle prevails between them in organizing the principles of the society. Breaking law is a serious offence to Golding. He highlights that the boys are disciplined when they are kept under force at school but once left free on the uninhabited island their brutality is visualized. Jack attains the chieftainship by his ideals through temptation and fear. The children's instinct for survival monotonously drives them to search for food and arrange shelters but they get drifted to do what they enjoy. Later cruelty is also seen among the other boys when Roger and Maurice shatter the castle of the "littluns" and also a littlun throws sand on his playmate and enjoys the sound of his "crying". Jack's fascination and dark pleasure for killing a pig is seen when he manages to kill a pig that has been trapped but yet manages to escape, he turns white on his

failure in killing the pig. The reason for his failure is his hesitation on seeing the unbearable blood when he descends the knife into the living flesh but later he masters the art of brutal killing:

Jack was on the top of the sow, stabbing downward with his knife. Roger found a lodgement for his point and began to push till he was leaning with his whole weight. The spear moved forward inch by inch and the terrified squealing became a high-pitched scream. Then Jack found the throat and the hot blood spouted over the hands. The sow collapsed under them and they were heavy and fulfilled upon them (LOF 45 ).

The savage quality in Jack and his crew members abandon the chance to be rescued when the hunters fail to keep up the signal fire and when they break Piggy's glasses, the only hope for lighting fire ends. When Jack and his crew is rebuked by Ralph for their irresponsibility, things start to change rapidly. Ralph and Jack start to look at each other differently. Their emotions are baffled and they clash repeatedly. Jack's love for power and his hatred towards Ralph get to an extreme when he throws a spear at him. Jack is not basically very bad; he is man of anger, violence and action and wants to be a leader. To Golding War has taught him not only violence but also the nature of man. The general nature of humanity is showing love and care but men of this age turn out to be more foolish in raping our planet with the hazardous atomic weapon. The children have learnt to use weapons, paint their faces, and create fort as they have witnessed in the World War II.

Learning from the grown-ups from the other world, the boys are prone to sensuous joys of life and lack rational thinking. Virginia Tiger clearly states Golding's view on the boys "the innocence of the child is a crude fallacy, for homo sapiens has by nature a terrible potentiality for evil. This potentiality cannot be eradicated or controlled by a human political system no matter how respectable" (54). Fear, the sign from the adult world gets cultivated in the minds of the littluns when they talk about the beast and they become crazy and irrational and

hence the first murder is caused by fear. Ralph and Piggy are left alone when the boys desert them to participate in the fun and feasting. The first assembly meeting that translates to a ritual dance to celebrate the hunting and sacrificing of the pig turns out to be a savageous ceremony, eventually murdering Simon when he is mistaken for a beast. When the boys talk about the beast and when they do the expedition to find the beast, it is Simon who finds that the beast is merely an illusion. He resists temptation and remains unaffected unlike others. Evil does not affect him and Golding portrays him as possessing God-like qualities where he is visualized as Christ figure As Jesus was met by the Satan, Simon is also threatened by the lord of the flies .Temptation fails to allure them and hence Christ and Simon are murdered by the evil forces. The boys are gripped by the beast within and it transforms them into hideous murderers, killers S.J. Boyd observes the death of Simon as: "A re-enacting the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, Simon's life and death are an imitation of Christ" (17). *Lord of the Flies* allegorically refers to Beelzebub which presents the struggle between good and evil. Simon not being afraid of the beast, goes near to examine it. He interprets the world through logic and reality. Simon is not a prey to illusion and this is witnessed when Jack, Ralph and Roger are astonished to see the pilot with the parachute on the mountain top with the flies around his head and he has been mistaken for a beast. Baker in *William Golding: A Critical Study* leaves a remark that the beast is then identified with man but yet it is to be explored the worst in man.( 13) .Initially when the boys discuss the beast, it is Simon who tells that there may be beast but "it's only us" (108).When he successfully faces evil and easily faces dark , he proves to others that there is no beast and they have nothing to fear but only themselves. Bufkin remarks that the beast is manmade and it emerges from man's superstition beliefs and ignorance (55). Arnold Johnston declares that "The Beast is an externalization of the inner darkness in the children's nature" (10).Simon is very rational and he speaks as an efficient responsible person, defending Piggy when he is accused of not doing any physical labour in arranging the pile of woods. Simon clearly proves that Piggy's specs have been the major contribution in lighting the fire. Simon's blend of spirituality and

rationality proves his innate goodness. In Golding's view point Simon "... acts as peacemaker between Jack and Piggy" (Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor 29). Ralph's fear for the unknown and his lack of spirituality are the causes for his fall. The raid for Piggy's glasses again proves that the beast resides in the hearts of the boys. Ralph goes to the fort to get back Piggy's glasses where Jack's terrific autocracy causes Piggy's murder. He could not tolerate himself being called as a 'thief' and hurls the spear at Ralph with full attention. When Ralph is chased all the boys are literally conscious that they are devoting themselves to murder and human sacrifice.

Ralph's rational society is disintegrated when he has a clash with Jack's society. Ralph has 'no devil like qualities, because he is very optimistic that his father would come to the island for their rescue. He ignores Piggy's statement "How does your father know we are here?"(LOF 12) Ralph's simple faith and his child like qualities make him weep at the end for the loss of innocence when an army officer comes for rescue. Ralph's weakness is his fluctuating between good and evil. It is obvious when he reveals Piggy's nickname and later when he is humiliated he is caught between the two courses of insult and apology. Ralph's common sense in lighting fire for signaling the cruiser ship and building shelters is a contrast to Jack's obsession for hunting. Ralph's inability to control his emotions gradually matures when he witnesses the death of Simon and learns how to accept responsibility and to expiate for the sin that Golding hints as a remedy for keeping the rational society alive and intact. Ralph's rational society is totally affected and he becomes a pathetic figure when his heroic glamour disappears when he forgets "his wounds, his hunger and thirst and became fear on flying feet" (LOF 56) to save his life. The shelters built are set on fire and this brings in the cruiser ship and Ralph is saved but he cries for the loss of innocence and the darkness of man's heart (LOF 72). Ralph weeps not only for his life but he also weeps symbolically for humanity. C.B. Cox has pointed out: "... Ralph weeps for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart and the death of his true, wise friend Piggy, he weeps for all the human race" (117) .The island set up on fire indicates that the boys' glamour towards the island is lost and

what is happening in the adult world is done to island where they are. The Edenic garden has been turned into a hell. It is Jack who advocates civilized rules "After all, we're not savages. We're English; and the English are best at everything. So we've got to do the right things" (LOF 47). He is the one to be against the civilian restraints and turns to be a savage.

World War II has caused a greater impact on the human emotions and hence human feelings and civilization are exposed to the threat of extinction. The island in all Golding's novels helps them have a self-revelation, which brings out the true nature of man. The boys get to live a life that man had been living since ages exploiting all resources without having intention to think about future. The boys like to get involved in a world of destruction. The group led by Ralph and group led by Jack are rendered as a parody of the society of adults who engage in destroying the other group.

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