

Class, Identity and Social Criticism in George Orwell's Select Works

Dr. Divyasree C

PhD in English

Kanchi Mamunivar Government Institute for Postgraduate Studies and Research
Affiliated to Pondicherry University
Puducherry- 605 008.

Abstract:

George Orwell was a British novelist, essayist and journalist. His works are characterized by social criticism. Social criticism is a type of academic criticism that deals on social issues and the related injustices. Orwell's works have a common theme of opposition to all kinds of totalitarianism. This paper studies his critically acclaimed works.

Key Words: George Orwell, Animal Farm, Nineteen Eighty-Four.

I. Introduction

George Orwell was a British novelist, essayist and journalist. His works are characterized by social criticism. Social criticism is a type of academic criticism that deals on social issues and the related injustices. Orwell's works have a common theme of opposition to all kinds of totalitarianism. Totalitarianism is a type of government where there is absolute control over its citizens by the government, and freedom of speech and expression are restricted severely. There is rampant disregard for opposition to the state, and opposition political parties are prohibited. Totalitarianism is a kind of authoritarianism. It controls its inhabitants and almost all aspects of their lives, even in terms of education arts, and the sciences. Famous novels of Orwell's are Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty-Four.

II. Animal Farm

Animal Farm was written by George Orwell, and published in 1945. Animal Farm is a satirical and allegorical novella. The goal of satire is to expose the flaws of either an individual or society by pointing out their shortcomings using wit and ridicule. Animal Farm is a story about a group of anthropomorphic farm animals. Anthropomorphism refers to the attributing of human emotions and traits to non-humans. In the novel, these farm animals decide to rebel against the farmer. The animals' desire is to create a world where the animals can be happy, free and be equals. However, the rebellion fails and the animals end up under the dictatorship of Napoleon, the pig. This novel is a political satire, and reflects the events that lead up to the Russian Revolution, which occurred in 1917.

During this time in the Soviet Union, the people lived under Joseph Stalin's communist ideology. George Orwell was a critic of Stalin and Stalinism. Stalinism refers to the Marxist/Leninist policies of Joseph Stalin. During this time, Stalin established a totalitarian state, a police state, collectivisation of agriculture and rapid industrialisation. Class conflicts were high during this time. Issues related to class and identity, along with social criticism can be studied in his works.

III. Nineteen Eighty-Four

Nineteen Eighty-Four is a novel by George Orwell, which characterizes a dystopian society. A dystopian society has elements of oppression, mistrust poverty and a police state. A police state describes a government that places extreme restriction on civil liberties. The police play an extreme role in the governance of a police state. Opposition parties are severely weakened or prohibited. The book possesses the theme of mass surveillance. Mass surveillance refers to complex surveillance of a group of people in order to monitor their activities. George Orwell was a believer of democratic socialism.

The novel also comes under the genre of social science fiction. Social science fiction comes under the genre of science fiction. It concerns itself with society and human behaviour. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is set in London, Oceania and Airstrip One. Two important concepts in the novel are important and often quoted. They are "Big Brother" and the "Thought Police." Big Brother is used as a character and a symbol in the novel. In the novel, Big Brother wields total power over the country and its people. The Thought Police are the secret police in Oceania. They monitor the inhabitants of Oceania and arrest those committing thoughtcrime. Class, issues related to identity, and social criticism abound.

REFERENCES:

1. Orwell, George. *1984: Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Lulu Press, 2023.
2. *Animal Farm*. Martin Secker & Warburg, 1995.