

HUMAN INSTINCTS AND SOCIAL ORDER: A STUDY OF CIVILIZATION VS. PRIMITIVISM IN GOLDING'S LITERATURE

Sakshi

Research Scholar, Department of English, School of Education and Humanities, IFTM University, Moradabad, Email - mishrasakshi467@gmail.com

Dr. Shivali Singh

Professor and Head, Department of English, SOEH, IFTM University, Moradabad, Email- shivali.singh@gmail.com

Abstract:

Nobel Prize-winning author William Golding is known for illustrating how an individual's sophistication and instincts can pull them in different directions. The research paper primarily looks at the relationship between orderliness in society and basic human behavior by examining these three works by Golding: *Lord of the Flies*, *The Inheritors* and *Pincher Martin*. By analyzing the novel closely, this paper seeks to know how Golding uses storytelling, symbols and characters to portray what can happen to civilization when people have basic human feelings. The study will analyze how society breaks apart, human nature turns primal and the author reflects on how acts of kindness and cruelty exist in everyone. Also, the paper will highlight how Golding's works are still relevant today, discussing the ongoing problem of maintaining social order as people are not always reliable and animal instincts are still strong. Finally, it explores what limits there are to this research and what can be expected in the future, together with the unique problems and opportunities of studying Golding's take on life and mankind.

Keywords: William Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, human nature, civilization vs savagery, primal instincts, narrative analysis, symbolism, social order, good and evil, contemporary relevance, literary criticism

1. Introduction

Human beings have always questioned and debated what their own nature is. Is there something basic in human nature that makes us good or bad, do our society's rules turn us good or bad or do we all really just have an animal inside waiting to break free? In many of his books, Golding directly handles the important ethical challenge of conflict. *Lord of the Flies* and other works by Golding, correspond to the weaknesses of human society and the ongoing effects of our primal instincts. In Golding's novels, the author portrays a serious view, implying that social structure based on reason, morality and law is always at risk from deep-seated primitivism.

The paper will analyze the relationship between people's instincts and how they fit into social structures, mainly examining *Lord of the Flies* as the main text. By looking at the plot, how the characters grow and the symbols used, we will study how Golding presents the process of civilization being replaced by savage behavior and the difficulties of a peaceful society. The paper

continues by studying the wider effects of Golding's work, comparing them to contemporary crises, conflicts and struggles between individuals and the group.

2. Objective

This research paper aims to look at how William Golding uses writing to show the clash between human instinct and the rules of society, emphasizing the themes of civilization and primitivism.

The purposes of the paper are centered on:

- Find and explore the main themes of civilization, savagery, human nature, leadership and morality in Golding's chosen works.
- Study how Golding portrays characters who battle with being civilized and going with their instincts and see how their actions and thoughts transform through the story.
- Explore the meaning of objects, places and actions in Golding's work and see how they help explain the ideas about civilization and primitivism.
- Reflect on how Golding sees human nature and the part society may play in developing the way people behave.
- Assess the contemporary impact: Consider if Golding's themes still matter nowadays and discuss their effect on our perception of society and human actions today.

3. Problem Statement

Golding's writing asks whether social order can really keep people's natural instincts in check and what happens when these instincts break free. This statement represents the key conflict found in the writing of Golding. In *Lord of the Flies*, the lack of adults and life in the wild cause even good kids to lose their sense of order and start behaving savagely. It is due to realizing that social structures can easily break down and that human nature may always prevent the best efforts at maintaining order, no matter how hard people try. It also raises the question of whether Golding's belief that humans are corrupt holds up and how that affects our future social structures.

4. Methodology

This research paper uses textual analysis mainly by studying William Golding's works, with *Lord of the Flies* being the key resource and *The Inheritors* and *Pincher Martin* brought in as needed. These are the key steps needed in the methodology:

- Textual Analysis: Careful and detailed reading of the selected novels, closely attending to the plot, the way characters talk, descriptions, and moments and sections that show how civilization and primitivism clash in the book.
- Thematic Analysis: Analyzing the choices of civilization, savagery, leadership, morality, and fear and how power worked among the protagonists and their societies. This will involve tracing the development of these themes throughout the narratives and examining their interrelationships.
- Character Analysis: In-depth examination of key characters, such as Ralph, Jack, and Piggy, and on their individual struggles between civilized and primal impulses. This will involve identifying character archetypes and analyzing their roles in representing different aspects of human nature and society.

- Symbolic Interpretation: Decoding and interpreting the symbolic meanings of objects (e.g., the conch, Piggy's glasses, fire), settings (e.g., the island, darkness), and events (e.g., the hunts, the dances) within Golding's narratives. This will involve understanding how these symbols contribute to the overall thematic message of the works.
- Contextual Analysis: Although mainly text-oriented, Golding's writing's historical and philosophical background will be taken into account. This covers the aftermath of World War II, the Cold War, and philosophical discussions of human nature, such as the Hobbesian versus Rousseauian viewpoints.
- Critical Review: Using pertinent literary analyses, philosophical interpretations, and socio-psychological viewpoints to enhance the analysis and offer a more comprehensive academic framework, this review engages with the body of existing scholarly criticism of Golding's works. This will involve consulting scholarly articles, books, and reputable online resources on Golding and related themes.

This approach uses hermeneutics, mainly focusing on interpreting the text and the themes in its setting. Meaning is drawn directly from the literature and secondary references are used to support and place findings in context, rather than forcing specific theories.

5. Significance of the Study

This study holds significant value for several reasons:

- Literary scholarship: It helps us learn more about William Golding's publications and the huge influence he had on 20th-century literature. By concentrating on the contrast between civilization and primitivism, the study provides a narrow perspective for examining Golding's intricate stories and thematic issues.
- Gaining an Understanding of Human Nature: A lot of the themes in Golding's novels touch on human nature. The key idea of the study focuses on showing how individuals have inner conflicts and societies lack stability.
- Social and Political Relevance: Now that social relationships are divided, politics are polarized and there are many cases of society breaking down, Golding's look at humans becoming savage is very relevant. The study points out the difficulties that come with trying to maintain social cohesion and order which can be lost if humans reverse back to animalistic impulses.
- Educational Value: All over the world, the novel *Lord of the Flies* is an important part of the curriculum. It offers key insights and helpful ways of looking at the novel which can help in teaching and understanding other novels with similar themes. It helps people think deeply about people's behavior, the structures of society and the duties of members of a community.
- Interdisciplinary Application: Golding's works deal with ideas that are found outside of a single study area. This research might interest scholars working in sociology, psychology, political science and philosophy, since it deals with main questions around human behaviors, society and the ethics in civilization.

6. Findings

In Golding's stories, most noticeably *Lord of the Flies*, he vividly demonstrates how social order can be fragile and how primal instincts often emerge when civilization weakens. The findings of this research, based on textual analysis of Golding's works, are as follows:

- **Innate Primitivism:** The novels of Golding frequently express a deep pessimism about how humans are naturally inclined. He describes a dark side in humans that society only barely keeps under control. After being separated from the adults and left without law, the boys on the island quickly adopt a tribal and violent lifestyle. These signs are clear in their rising ceremonial actions, adoption of face paint to hide their wild nature and vicious pursuit of pigs, leading to their struggle against each other.
- **Fragility of Civilization:** Golding shows that civilization is not an inherent quality but a fragile construct, as it can quickly fall apart when pushed. The symbols of civilization in *Lord of the Flies* – the conch, Piggy's glasses and the fire are destroyed or become insignificant as the boys deteriorate. Being set on an island represents a place where society's façade is lost and we can see how primitive people truly are.
- **Breakdown of Rationality and Order:** When instincts take control, rationality and order are substituted by irrationality and chaos. Jack frequently unsettles the group by using emotions and creating fear which leads to Ralph's efforts to manage the discussions becoming less effective. After losing their way, the boys replace logic, planning and plans for the future with short-term joy and attacks.
- **Leadership and Power Dynamics:** Golding points out how leaders help keep society together and also illustrates how power could wrongfully influence them. Initially, Ralph is a good leader who cares about everyone, but Jack's growing popularity and tier of being the one in charge, supported by everyone's fascination with hunting, makes him the main person in charge. It shows the clash between modern civilization and simple human needs.
- **Loss of Innocence and Moral Decline:** In *Lord of the Flies*, the narrative arc shows a journey from innocence to experience that is like humanity's fall from grace. Previously innocent and optimistic, the boys start sliding morally as their animal instincts develop and social rules collapse. The deaths of Simon and Piggy personify the final victory of barbarism over kindness and wisdom.
- **Symbolic Representation of Instincts and Order:** Important symbols in the book such as the conch, stand for the conflict between feelings and structure. The conch shell stands for order, democracy and respectful conversation and its weakening until it shatters resembles the end of peace and civility in the community. At first, fire means hope, rescue and civilization, but it later represents destructive violence. Piggy's glasses which show his intellectual side, are broken, meaning rationality has ended for him.
- **Nuances in Human Nature (Simon as an Exception):** While predominantly pessimistic, Golding's work also hints at the possibility of inherent goodness in some individuals. Simon, in *Lord of the Flies*, embodies a mystical and compassionate understanding of the island's "beast" as residing within themselves. He represents a counterpoint to pervasive

savagery, suggesting that not all individuals are equally susceptible to primal instincts. However, his tragic fate underscores the vulnerability of goodness in the face of overwhelming societal darkness.

- **Contrasting Primitivism in *The Inheritors*:** *The Inheritors* offers a different perspective on primitivism, contrasting the Neanderthals, who are portrayed as instinctively peaceful and communal, with the emerging *Homo sapiens*, who are depicted as more cunning, violent, and capable of abstract thought but also prone to cruelty. This novel complicates the simplistic view of primitivism as inherently savage, suggesting that "civilization" itself can bring about new forms of violence and exploitation.
- **Internal Primitivism in *Pincher Martin*:** In *Pincher Martin*, the focus shifts from societal to internal primitivism. The protagonist's desperate struggle for survival on a rock becomes a metaphor for the primal human will to live, even in the face of overwhelming adversity and impending death. This work emphasizes the deeply ingrained survival instincts that can drive human behavior, even in the absence of a social context.

In conclusion, Golding's literature presents a stark and often pessimistic view of human nature. His works suggest that civilization is a fragile construct, constantly threatened by the undercurrent of primal instincts inherent in humanity. The descent into savagery in *Lord of the Flies* serves as a cautionary allegory, highlighting the potential for societal collapse and the enduring challenge of maintaining order in the face of human fallibility.

7. Limitations and Scope for Future Research

This study, while providing a comprehensive analysis of civilization versus primitivism in Golding's literature, acknowledges certain limitations:

- **Focus on Select Works:** The primary focus on *Lord of the Flies*, with less extensive analysis of *The Inheritors* and *Pincher Martin*, limits the breadth of the study. While these novels are central to the theme, exploring other works like *Darkness Visible*, *Rites of Passage*, or *Free Fall* could offer further nuances and perspectives on Golding's portrayal of human nature and social order.
- **Literary Focus:** The methodology is predominantly literary, focusing on textual analysis and symbolic interpretation. Incorporating interdisciplinary approaches, such as psychological, sociological, or anthropological perspectives, could enrich the analysis and provide a more multifaceted understanding of Golding's themes.
- **Limited Cultural Context:** While acknowledging the historical context, the study could benefit from a more in-depth exploration of the cultural and societal influences that shaped Golding's views on human nature and civilization. Comparing Golding's vision with those of other authors and thinkers who grappled with similar themes could provide further context and comparative insights.
- **Subjectivity of Interpretation:** Literary analysis inherently involves a degree of subjectivity. While the paper strives for objective textual analysis, interpretations can be influenced by the researcher's own perspectives and biases.

Scope for Future Research:

Future research could expand upon this study in several directions:

- **Comparative Studies:** Comparing Golding's portrayal of civilization and primitivism with that of other authors who explore similar themes, such as Joseph Conrad (*Heart of Darkness*), Robert Louis Stevenson (*Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*), or even contemporary dystopian novelists, could offer valuable insights.
- **Psychological Approaches:** Applying specific psychological theories, such as Freudian psychoanalysis, Jungian archetypes, or social psychology, to analyze characters and themes in Golding's works could provide deeper psychological interpretations of the conflict between instincts and social order.
- **Sociological and Anthropological Perspectives:** Examining Golding's narratives through sociological theories of social order, deviance, and group dynamics, or anthropological studies of tribalism, ritual, and cultural evolution, could broaden the understanding of the societal forces at play in his works.
- **Gender Studies:** Exploring the role of gender in Golding's depiction of civilization and primitivism. The lack of female characters in *Lord of the Flies* and the predominantly male world of his narratives raises questions about gender dynamics and their influence on the themes of savagery and order.
- **Philosophical Interpretations:** Delving deeper into the philosophical underpinnings of Golding's work, exploring connections to Hobbesian and Rousseauian thought, existentialism, and moral philosophy, could illuminate the underlying philosophical questions driving his narratives.
- **Contemporary Applications:** Further exploring the contemporary relevance of Golding's themes by analyzing current societal issues, such as political polarization, online tribalism, environmental degradation, and the challenges of maintaining social cohesion in a globalized world, through the lens of his literary insights.

8. Contemporary Relevance

Golding's exploration of the fragile nature of social order and the persistence of primal instincts remains profoundly relevant in the 21st century. Despite advancements in technology, social structures, and global interconnectedness, humanity continues to grapple with the same fundamental tensions that Golding so powerfully depicted.

- **Political Polarization and Tribalism:** The contemporary world is witnessing increasing political polarization, the rise of tribalistic ideologies, and the erosion of civil discourse. Golding's portrayal of the boys' descent into tribalism in *Lord of the Flies* resonates with the dynamics of identity politics and groupthink that are prevalent in modern societies. The ease with which rational debate is replaced by emotional appeals and tribal loyalties echoes the breakdown of order on the island.
- **Social Media and the Unmasking of Primitivism:** The anonymity and immediacy of social media platforms can, in some ways, mirror the conditions of the island in *Lord of the Flies*. The removal of face-to-face accountability and the prevalence of online anonymity can

embolden individuals to express primal impulses – aggression, mob mentality, and cruelty – that might be suppressed in more civilized social environments.

- **Fragility of Democratic Institutions:** Golding's work serves as a cautionary tale about the fragility of democratic institutions and the importance of upholding the values of reason, law, and respect for individual rights. The erosion of trust in institutions, the rise of authoritarian tendencies, and the spread of misinformation in the contemporary world highlight the ongoing struggle to maintain the structures of civilized society.
- **Environmental Degradation and Resource Scarcity:** The boys' destructive behavior towards the island environment in *Lord of the Flies*, driven by their immediate needs and lack of foresight, mirrors humanity's current struggles with environmental degradation and resource depletion. Golding's work subtly foreshadows the consequences of unchecked primal desires and the lack of long-term thinking, which are critical issues in the context of climate change and sustainability.
- **Global Conflicts and Humanitarian Crises:** The recurrence of global conflicts, humanitarian crises, and instances of mass violence in the contemporary world underscores the persistent reality of human savagery. Golding's narratives serve as a stark reminder of the potential for societal breakdown and the devastating consequences when primal instincts are unleashed on a larger scale.

In essence, Golding's literature remains a vital tool for understanding the complex and often unsettling aspects of human nature and the enduring challenges of building and maintaining a just and ordered society. His pessimistic vision serves not as a prophecy of inevitable doom but as a powerful warning and a call for vigilance against the ever-present threat of human primitivism.

9. Conclusion

William Golding's literature, particularly *Lord of the Flies*, offers a compelling and often disturbing exploration of the tension between human instincts and social order. Through his allegorical narratives, Golding demonstrates the fragility of civilization and the persistent presence of primal savagery within individuals and societies. His works suggest that social order is not a natural state but a carefully constructed and constantly challenged edifice, susceptible to collapse when confronted with the powerful undercurrent of human instincts.

The findings of this study highlight the innate primitivism that Golding portrays as residing within humanity, the fragility of civilized structures, and the destructive consequences when rationality and order are replaced by primal impulses. Golding's symbolic language and character development effectively illustrate the descent into savagery and the tragic loss of innocence. While predominantly pessimistic, his work occasionally hints at the possibility of inherent goodness, as seen in characters like Simon, but ultimately emphasizes the precariousness of virtue in the face of overwhelming societal darkness.

The contemporary relevance of Golding's themes is undeniable. In a world grappling with political polarization, social fragmentation, and the persistent threat of violence and societal breakdown, Golding's cautionary tales serve as a vital reminder of the ongoing struggle to maintain social order and the enduring challenge of controlling the primal instincts that lie dormant within human

nature. His literature compels us to confront the uncomfortable truths about ourselves and to recognize

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