

**PROPHETIC VISION:**  
**WILLIAM GOLDING'S PROPHETIC VISION IN LORD OF**  
**THE FLIES AND THE INHERITORS**

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Golding in his novels is obsessed with the Christian idea of original sin. Yet, he has firm faith in man's mental power. Like a true prophet he believes that a true man indulges in evil no doubt, and gets attracted quite easily towards vice and negative value of life, nevertheless he repents and rises like a beautiful lotus out of the stagnant, dirty and puerile water of decadence and spiritual sterility.

The self recognition comes after self - examination and deep thinking. But when the man realizes his folly, then that heralds a new phase of life for him. His outlook changes and he sheds the grab of selfishness and looks at the entire humanity as a harmonious whole. This is the state of superior consciousness, which Golding as prophet advocates, in his system of progressive conscience. Then only Armageddon can begin leading to the golden age of eternal happiness.

Golding's novels, undoubtedly, reveal a pattern of progression march towards a stage of universal peace and brotherhood. The common hero of all the novels, 'Man' is placed in different situations in the great drama of life and through his encounters the novelist shows how the protagonist learns by mistake to lead a better life. Then a stage is reached when a spirit of universal benevolence overpower him. Under this positive influence, 'Man' undergoes such a transmutation that he sheds all evil and reaches a high level of cosmic awareness, which provides him with eternal peace, joy and tranquility.

In *Lord of the Flies*, the title is derived from Jewish faith in which demons are believed to have a specific hierarchy. The highest order is attributed to Beelzebub who is also known as the Lord of the flies. Beelzebub is the chief representative of the false Gods. Though the novel is

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named after the supreme ' Devil', yet this evil power is not the protagonist of the novel. Golding does not evil in this novel but shows that man can over come evil by a conscious mental effort, as he is the supreme creation of God.

The whole novel and more specifically the end have a deep significance. The boys who had a nightmarish experience at the island are rescued towards the end. Jack and his savages discover the hiding place of Ralph. They try to crush him to death by sliding rocks and doodlers and when this fails then they try to smoke him out. Ironically, the island bursts into flames which attract a passing British cutter and suddenly while, expecting to be killed any moment, Ralph found:

A naval officer stood on the sand, looking down at Ralph in wary astonishment. On the beach behind him was the cutter, her bows hauled up and held by two ratings. In the stern - sheets another rating held a sub - machine gun. <sup>1</sup>

The boys are rescued and the arrival of the naval officer for Ralph symbolizes reinstitution of order. The end shows the lamentation of the novelist on the degeneration of the values and presents his adverse comment on the rising decadence and spiritual sterility not only in England or in Europe but in the entire world, so to say. In this sense, Ralph's outburst in the end takes up allegorical significance because he wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of the man's heart <sup>2</sup>. The novel conveys a serious message hidden behind the superficial boyish adventure.

The story shows a negative and reverse evolution of man. The boys had reached that island fresh from an ordered and civilized society but gradually they revert back to barbarism, savagery and primitive ways of life. They fall victims to the primary passion like anger, pride, fear, jealousy and revenge. How easy it is for a civilized man to descend to the lowest level of inhumanity is amply shown through Jack Merridew who had earlier resented, killing and loathed "the enormity" of the knife descending and cutting into living flesh; because of the "und/bearable blood", but later he advocates hunting and relished murdering his fellow beings as well as seeking to appease 'the Beast' by offering it the head of the killed sow. There have been different interpretations about the boy's behavior in the island. It has been visualized as a parable of the man who suddenly finds himself free from the shackles of the customs and civilization and then he begins to worship the *Lord of the Flies*. Some critics have analyzed the novel as a tract of

democracy and anarchy. References and allusions have been made to the garden of Eden and the fall of the man after his first 'disobedience'.

Keeping in mind Golding's evolution as a novelist, it is evident that the novel falls in the pattern of Golding's idea of progressive conscience. The adventures and the actions of the boys on the island make us realize that good and evil co-exist in the mind of man. Not only this, but there is also a constant struggle between good and evil. However in the cosmology of Golding evil is ultimately overcome and good prevails. After a long struggle full of suffering and hopelessness, cosmic harmony is restored. Man's sense of superior consciousness prevents his final fall. Thus the novelist advocates the idea of mental mutation. The end of the novel, *Lord of the Flies* proves Golding's firm faith that man should restore principles in an unprincipled world' and also restore belief in the ultimate goodness of all things in a world of disbelievers.

Golding has devoted a fully essay entitled "Fable" to explain his motive behind the *Lord of the Flies*:

I may have lived for many years with small boys, and understand and know them with an awful precision. I decided to take the literary convention of the boys on an island, only to make them real boys instead of paper cutouts with no life in them; and try to show how the shape of the society they evolved would be conditioned by their diseased, their fallen nature... so the boys try to construct the civilization on the island; but it breaks down in blood and terror because the boys are suffering from the terrible disease of being human.<sup>3</sup>

The above comment do not clarify Golding's actual stand. These lines tell us the reality of decadence and dominance of evil in man. Golding does not deny the existing spiritual sterility, but like a true prophet accept the existence of negative values. However like a prophet he also envisions a happy future, but though there may be martyrs, messiahs and other saviors, the key to real salvation lies in man's mind. Therefore, the novelist speaks of a highly mutated state of man in future when he will shun the evil and consciously work for the betterment of the society. He does not believe in the falsified idea of spiritual man. Human being has to fall in temptation they must pass through purgatorial fire, but ultimately they will learn the lessons of universal brotherhood and work for the welfare of the mankind.

*Lord of the Flies* lays the firm foundation for the novelist's, prophetic vision to be developed further in the later novels. The novelist himself realized the problems arising due to

various interpretations given by the readers and critics and he was conscious that the novel was mostly being understood as a study of the predominance of the evil in man's mind. His philosophy of progressive conscience the idea of mental mutation and the possibilities of goodness overcoming the evil, ultimately leading to orderly cosmos were some important features which were more or less ignored or perhaps, misunderstood by the critics so he wrote:

For reason it is not necessary to specify, I included a Christ figure in my fable. This is the little boy Simon, solitary, stammering, a lover of mankind, a visionary, who reaches commonsense attitudes not by reason but by intuition. He is really turning a part of the jungle into a church, not a physical one, but a spiritual one. <sup>4</sup>

Golding is not completely misunderstood, there are critics who have correctly interpreted the novelist's attitude to man, society and the idea of the evil. To quote one such opinion:

What has happened has proved conclusively that there is evil in all human beings, even in those who try to be rational and civilized. But this does not amount to any proof that the illness is of essence of man. May it not be an accident; as one might argue medical illness is produced by special circumstances? <sup>5</sup>

This is fact, is the essence of Golding's prophetic vision. Man is tempted by circumstances and falls a prey to the ever-ready tentacles of the evil. Golding has firm belief that the *Lord of the Flies* or Satan or Beelzebub or the forces of the Evil, whatever name may be given to it, stalks the world. It is man's bounden duty to be conscious of the existence of such potent adversary, and then only he can control his mind to overcome the evil and then create the base for impending millennium.

Like *Lord of the Flies*, the title of *the Inheritors* is also ironical. Man's ancestors, the Homisapiens inherited the earth no doubt, but it is accompanied by the loss of innocence and rise of cruel selfishness. Though the novelist does not offer any sort of definite conclusion it is evident from the noel that the 'inheritance' is a 'Fall'; a degeneration and is not any sort of progression or evolution.

Golding describes that the primitive man lived in complete harmony with God and nature. They migrate to safer places during rain and winter and on their return to the summer abode find that though there is a 'small' of something amiss in the air, yet the surroundings are happily

welcoming them. Their consciousness is not yet fully developed to understand evil. On the earth is their mother goddess providing those food-leaves, roots bulbs etc. Their shelter is the cave of ice-women. Nature, is thus an essential partaker in their lives-happiness, sorrows, dangers, deaths and in difficulties, for example, sun is used as a medium to express pain and pleasure both.

Golding, through his novels, establishes the thesis that through evolution and mental mutation man has grown rationally but he has lost his inner freedom and has forgotten his sense of universal brotherhood. Two world wars are living examples of this modern, catastrophe. Golding also shows that man's mind is very strong and he can consciously create cosmic harmony, when there will be mutual goodwill and communal understanding throughout the world.

On a rise near the island, there is a dead tree looking down clearly upon the abode of the New Man. When Lok and Fa observe the strangers from this hidden place, they feel "indefinable attraction of the new people". <sup>6</sup>(p. 135) Thus the dead tree symbolically becomes the 'tree of knowledge', which exposes the last, but the Neanderthals to the strange world of good and the evil of the new man.

Golding's novels deal with the recurrent theme about the presence of the good and evil both simultaneously. As the civilization grows and man's mind becomes mature he develops a greater tendency to get trapped into the pitfall of egocentrism, vanity and self-centrality. In this state he begins to ignore the forces of goodness. Now, Golding's attitude is not condemnatory. He shows that man ignores good forces because the existing pattern of evil in the world fans up his pride and satisfies his inflated ego.

Thus the cosmos face the danger of being reverted back into chaos. Golding believes that the man's mind is a strong citadel capable of rising out of any mire. By developing a sense of cosmic consciousness, man can still save himself and humanity. It means that in Golding's cosmology, evil is a temporary phase. Man's sense of superior consciousness will not betray him and sooner or later, the victory will be that of 'Ralph' and not that of 'Jack'.

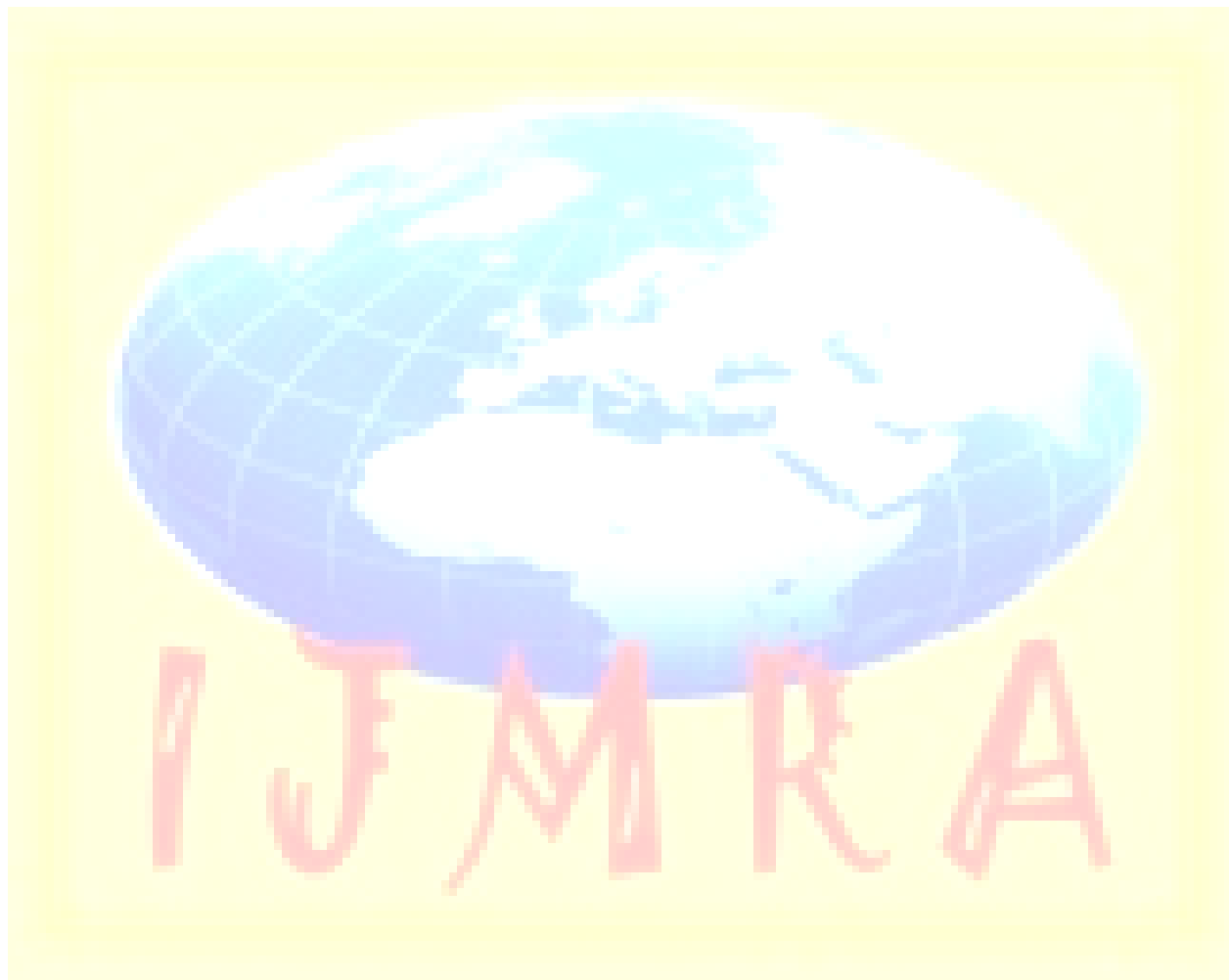
In the Biblical history, the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge brought sin into the world, but it also provided the man with the ideas of the good and evil. Golding stipulates that it is a conscious choice on the part of the human protagonist to select one and to reject the other. Though the forces of the evil appear to be stronger and control the situation in the beginning, the novelist has firm faith in the ultimate victory of human goodness. This is the real pattern in The

Inheritors where a primitive fact has been used symbolically by the novelist to give expression to his concept progressive conscience.

Pincher Martin deals with a protagonist who has led a selfish life. His vanity prevents him from getting guided by goodness, but after death his subconscious mind takes him to a purgatorial journey backwards in which he reviews his past and repents. Martin, as evolved in the novel forgets about the existence of God in his short lived moments of envying life by hook or by crook but eventually, he realizes that all human beings are mere puppets in the hands of the Divine. Again, all such 'pinchers' must feel defeated sooner or later because in Golding's design good has to survive and evil must be destroyed.

As a conventional Christian, Golding believes that man is born out of sin. This idea of original sin is the fore most preoccupation of Golding as a novelist. However Golding has his own secular concept of progressive conscience according to which, just being born out of sin does not necessarily makes a person 'a perpetual sinner'. Evil and good, sin and virtue both exist side by side in human beings. Golding has firm faith in the strong 'will' of man and his pragmatic thinking visualizes the ultimate victory of good.

Pincher is a further deterioration of human consciousness. The protagonist considers his will and ego to be perfect and without any error, and instead of adjusting to the external environment and established societal code of conduct, he attempts to his fashion and life and existence to his egocentric and foolishly vein nature. Eventually he encounters the divine intervention and realizes during that infinitesimally short moment of death that cosmic harmony cannot be destroyed by human will and eccentrics. As man evolved, God blessed him with great rationality, better intellect and growing intelligence. But these must be used for the creative purposes. Golding, thus, subscribes to the view that now there is a process of mental mutation- However, as the mind grows, man should learn to behave and act properly. The novelist has firm faith that by this conscious process of mental elevation future will tend to be better and a golden age, "the New Jerusalem" shall be ultimately attained. This is what can be termed as Golding's prophetic vision. Golding believed that man's mind, through graphic experiences of rise and fall, eventually reaches that state of superior consciousness when self is dissolved and world is viewed with the feeling of oneness.



REFERENCE

1. William Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1971), p-246.
2. Ibid, p-284.
3. William Golding, *The Hot Gates*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1965), pp. 88-89.
4. Ibid, pp. 97-99.
5. Mark Kinkead - Weekes and Ian Gregor, *William Golding: A Critical Study*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1967), p-55.
6. *The Inheritors*, p-135.

