

## **Manifestation of Will to Live in William Golding: A Study of Lord of the Flies**

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### **Abstract**

*The present research paper seeks to explore the concept of Manifestation of Will to Live in William Golding's Lord of the Flies (1954) which is supported by the philosophical and psychological thoughts of Arthur Schopenhauer and Sigmund Freud. Will to live is the ultimate reality of life. Search for reality in its various aspects has been an eternal pursuit of mankind. But, it is a quest that has never been satiated; the more one searches, the more one finds that its limits recede. This quest is generally for the ultimate or the absolute meaning. All creatures including human being struggle for this end against anything and anybody to the utmost limits of their powers, and in the last resort all else will be sacrificed to it, including the lives of other people as happened in Lord of the Flies. From this, it is simple to explain that man loves above everything else an existence which is full of want, misery, trouble, pain, anxiety, and then again full of boredom, and which, were it pondered over and considered purely objectively, he would of necessity abhor; and that he fears above everything else the end of this existence, which is nevertheless for him the one and only thing certain.*

**Key-Words:** *Manifestation, Will to Live, Reality, Quest, Asceticism, Primitive,*

William Golding was a novelist, poet, playwright and a Nobel Prize winner for 1983, best known for his first novel *Lord of the Flies*. Golding's scientific background, his encounter with the sea, his warship, the laboratory and the stage make him different from any conventional moralist. Golding seems a solitary figure in the religious convention. He voices in a world which is largely indifferent to God and religion. However, his art takes the shape of an ironic quest for reality and man's moral struggles.

He taught at Bishop Wordsworth's school, Salisbury and came in close contact with the little people later on the experience finds its expression in the novel *Lord of the Flies*. In many of his novels, his reflections on his pupils and his reaction of the war could be traced out. Broadly speaking he explores man's nature and the changing contexts. He emerges as a serious critic of his age whose utopias have often become dystopias. He is also a writer engaged with earlier mythologies, stories and fables, and his novels betray a nightmarish intensity and poetic symbolism that encapsulate past and present.

*Lord of the Flies* has been interpreted in widely varying ways ever since. The novel carries mystical, theurgical religious and mythological elements all put together. The themes are about destruction of civilization, the depravity of man, chaos of existence in a world of darkness in which attempts are made to find a pattern and a synthesis of the age old conflict will to live. Golding perhaps finds the real in man's will-to-live. His very first novel, *Lord of the Flies* (1954), suggests Beelzebub's personification in school children, who are shipwrecked on a desert island. While most readers may find the two groups of children distinct – one good, the other bad but, both personify the will-to-live,

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because both try to survive in their own ways. The conflict in the two groups is, therefore, only superficial, as underneath, there is the same will, manifesting itself in their desire to live.

Ralph and company appear to be a good because they wish to be rescued. While Jack and his associates think of immediate survival. They therefore hunt pig for meat and oppose Ralph and his followers who counsel all children to first try to burn fire so that some sailors may notice the presence of life on the desert island and thus attempt to rescue them.

The *Lord of the Flies* unsettled the society of England in particular and world at large of the latent barbarism in the boys' world for the struggle will to live. The intention of the *Lord of the Flies* was to look at the whole history and functioning of government in an anonymous island. The novel refers to the presence of Beelzebub, denotes the principal of evil personified—the Devil, Satan, Mephistopheles. It is indeed written in the form of the fable with the moral that the will is human reality. But, it is evil, for it has no purpose whatsoever in lives, perpetuating itself.

Golding equates the “Lord of the Flies” with the demonic force latent in man; it is generally kept in check by the rational part of human nature, but in the absence of reason or social pressure, breaks out an act of barbaric bloodletting. This force has been called by various types of names, depending on whether one is a theologian, a poet or a humanist: “original sin”, “Adam's Curse”, “the darkness of man's heart”, “the banality of evil.” To the realist the demonic or merely a corollary of the theorem of existence; as a concomitant of human nature, it cannot be ignored, and only the saint can surmount it by asceticism and through knowledge.

Golding does not immediately symbolize the philosophy of darkness of human heart, but in his visual way allows it to flow from series of events. First, the “littluns” complain of seeing an imaginary beast; the fear has grown out of fitful imaginations, which must attach itself to an object, finds an outlet in the dead paratrooper. After that, the hunters, who revert to the most primitive form of expedition, transfix the head of a slain pig on a pole as a blood offering to the “beast.” Simon comes upon the impaled head, and his confrontation with it is dramatically heralded by the disappearance of the butterflies.

The insect-covered head introduces itself as the “Lord of the Flies”, an expression which, like so much in Golding, is ironically accurate. The “adult cynicism” which it imparts to Simon is significant, for the young seer has directly confronted evil without the assuring barricade of butterflies: “Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill! said the head. For a moment or two the forest and all the other dimly appreciated places echoed with the parody of laughter. You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you? Close, close, close! I'm the reason why it's no go? Why things are what they are?”(Golding 161-62)

Simon has communed with evil concretely embodied in a pig's head buzzing with flies, and the proximity causes him to faint. Although Simon's senses force him to vomit with revulsion, he nevertheless frees it from the wind's indignity. When he returns to his frightened, blood-crazed companions that, in effect, “they have nothing to fear but fear itself” ( Oldsey & Stanley 25), his murder becomes the martyrdom of a saint and prophet, a point in human degeneration next to which the wanton killing of Piggy. **Simon alone understood what evil was, but he could not communicate it.**

Golding's *Lord of the Flies* is neither the biblical Satan who tempts Christ, nor the Miltonic counterpart who speaks in glorious rhetoric. Rather it is a pig head—evil reduced to one of its vilest incarnations. “Golding will have nothing to do with a suave Mephistopheles or a honey-tongued

Lucifer; his Devil is more in keeping with Dorian Gray's decaying portrait because it abandons rhetorical finery for the stark reality of spiritual corruption”(Dick 28). The Lord of the Flies was correct: the beast is in man; and, when it expresses itself, it is in the form of a rotting self-portrait.

In their introduction, Ian Gregar and Mark Kinhead – Weekes of the Faber School edition of the novel say that what Golding has done in *Lord of the Flies* is to create a situation, which will reveal in an extremely direct way, the real human nature, if we consider it apart from the mass of social detail. The novel as we know, was written in reaction against Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* (1858). Throughout the novel, Golding overturns Ballantyne's optimistic portrait, which equates Englishness with good and foreignness with evil, and suggests that “evil is more likely to reside within humanity and that external evil in reality a projection of an inner evil” (McCarron 293). The boys in Golding as against those Ballantyne's are no more decent public school boys. Golding brings his scientific methodology to bear upon discovering the will in school boys, first by isolating them from the adult world which disguises evil and then showing in its most naked form that will shows itself undisguised. If we take Ralph's remarks about “the darkness of human heart” as coming very close to the subject of the book and indeed it is, than all Golding's novels are prefaced by *Lord of the Flies*. Ralph is not only referring to this symbolic darkness of a particular group of boys, adults and other civilized people but he is referring to general human nature, *per se*.

It is not a beast or snake but man's own will to survive that is devilish. The idea of will as reality is present in all culture, both in the East and West. However, it was Schopenhauer who philosophized the view and made it to reflect on the state of man. It is a metaphysical idea that beyond the motives of man, there lies as Golding puts it evil inside the bones. Evil is in the blood that mankind inherits, as Golding's next novel *The Inheritors* (1955) suggests. It is again a small group of Neanderthalers, which is systematically killed by a larger and more powerful group of New Man called *Homo Sapiens*. It is commonly expected of those, who claim to be Home-sapiens to be human, humane. The children in *Lord of the Flies* are saved by the adult world otherwise makes war and though children in *Lord of the Flies* are saved at the end but the adult world is not better off, for it makes most kind of wars.

Golding's experience in World War II had a profound effect on his view of humanity and the evils of which it was capable. World War II completely shattered his Candide-like optimism: “When I was young, before the war, I did have some airy-fairy views about man. . . . But I went through the war and that changed me. The war taught me different and a lot of others like me” (Devis 28).

*Lord of the Flies* is not only an examination of the idiosyncratic nature of the small boys but also of the essential nature of humanity itself, the will-to-live. The island becomes the microcosm of the adult world which is also destroying itself. Ralph, the protagonist who is the embodiment of democracy and goodness tries to live by rules but he himself becomes disillusioned with democratic procedure; he unknowingly gives away Piggy's embarrassing nickname; and much more importantly, he takes part in Simon's murder. **At the very end Ralph experiences a blinding** intuition and weeps uncontrollably “for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and the fall through the air of the true, wise friend called Piggy” (LF 230).

Golding's purpose of showing the will-to-live in its most brutal aspect is that human nature cannot be improved by the best of schooling, religion in its formal sense, by civilization but it can be seen in its real nature, and therefore, it can be thus radically changed by eastern asceticism as in Eliot's last section of the *The Wasteland* (1922) by urging upon man to give, to sympathize and to control, if he wishes his peace of mind, peace which surpassed understanding, says Eliot. The only difference between children and Neanderthaler, on the one hand, and the *Homo Sapiens* of the civilized world on

the other is that the former betray their will-to-live more nakedly than the so-called civilized people. The two World Wars and earlier large scale – colonization is an instance that war makers claimed themselves to be civilized. This is the irony which underlines Golding's fiction.

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