



Mythological Microcosmic Universe and Foucauldian Power Dynamics in William Golding's Lord of the Flies

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Abstract

Though the concept has been taken from R.M. Ballantyne's one of the first works of juvenile fiction, the story is distinguishable and identical to mythological origin of human beings in the world. With the gradual marching of the action in the novel, it unfolds by degrees the genesis, emergence, judgement and capitulation to the omnipotent God. The belief of genesis is identical to the aeroplane crash, emergence of human beings becomes similar with the survivors who come across each other due to the crash on or near an isolated island in a remote region of the Pacific Ocean. Before genesis or creation, according to mythology, there must be a destruction or chaos and this becomes identical to the aeroplane crash. Further, finding a conch, which implies system and governance, can be linked up with the origination of governed society which was prevailing from the primitive age during the epoch of primitive aboriginal beings. Finally, the appearance of naval officer, whose party has landed to investigate the fire, is synonymous, to some extent, to the capitulation and surrender to God to be guided. His appearance is also identical to "Deus ex machina", a device which was prevalent around since the time of Greek theatre. From another perspective the naval officer presents foucauldian disciplinary power which does not rely solely on force, instead it controls the subjects through hierarchical surveillance, normalising judgement and examination.

Keywords: Mythology, foucauldian disciplinary power, microcosmic world, diabolus ex machina, dues ex machine

Frank Kermode says that Golding's novels are simple in the sense that they deal with the primordial nature of human experience. His portrayal of Ralph, Piggy, Simon only shows sanity while almost the rest of the boys led by Jack are perverse. Jack is unsatisfied only in hunting pigs and in Golding's words Jack's nature of hunting pigs turns him and his team-mates into savager and ferocious being. This savage nature of Jack is easily comprehensible as we look into the history of our previous generation. People kill each other in order to quench their thirst for blood. Few moments ago they were not enemy but with the marching of the time enmity, savagery grasped the whole situation probably only to recreate a new one at the end. In the *Old Testament* book of *Genesis* Noah's ark which is the ship in the genesis flood narrative through which God saves Noah, his family and examples of all world's animals from destruction which had taken shape in the form of a global flood. Here also, at the fag-end of the novel destruction devours almost the forest in the form of fire only to create or change the situation like that of Genesis. Not only in Genesis but also in *Mahabharata* Lord Krishna says to Shakuni, one of the antagonists in the Hindu epic *Mahabharata*, that one day all of us have to die no matter how much pious we are or how much sinner we are. With the marching of the time all of us have to surrender to time and time will cause a destruction devouring all of us.

Lord Krishna exemplified that when in a pot some corns are kept, the man who is the owner of pot shakes the pot so that more corns can be kept and every corn takes their position inside of that pot. Piety, virtue keep some humans in corn-form in below category so that they are devoured by time later and sin keeps some humans in corn-form in comparatively upper category than virtuous people so that the sinner can be devoured by the omnipotent time earlier. Krishna says that the omnipotent time here shakes the pot and all of us would be categorized in the pot regarding our own nature of virtue and vice. But at the end, all of us would be devoured by the omnipotent time. Therefore, it can be concluded that destruction is required in order to save and create a new ambience.

In the novel, it is the smoke, emitted from the fire, which intrigued the naval officer to investigate the cause and consequences of it. The naval officer says “We saw your smoke. What have you been doing? Having a war or something? After the appearance of naval officer the situation changed. Similarly, after a disastrous effect done by the fire the naval officer emerged, being intrigued, to save the endangered. It is also said in mythology that the omnipotent God will come for our succour and salvation. In addition to this, the story of Noah’s Ark appears in the book of Genesis, the Old Testament of the Bible also known as the Hebrew scriptures. Though it is unknown who is the author of this book, the Christians believe that the Bible is the inerrant work of God. The book delineates that God summoned a great rain to flood the earth. Noah and his family members were virtuous people on the earth and so God instructed Noah to build an ark so that he, his family and animals can be safe. During Noah’s time people of the earth were corrupt and filled with violence. Noah was blameless and recognizing this God shared his intention with Noah to flood and destroy the earth. Along with it God advised Noah to protect his family and animals to repopulate the earth after the destruction i.e., the global flood. In the present novel by Golding, the island later becomes filled with perverseness, violence, savagery and to end this or for its culmination a destruction is required. This destruction takes shape in the form of fire at the fag-end of the novel. Though the fire here does not destroy the corrupt people but it plays the essential role by intriguing the naval officer who comes to save their lives. In the following there are certain examples from *Srimad Bhagavad Gita*.

Yasmat ksharam atito ham aksharad api chottamah
ato smi loke vede cha prathitah purushottamah,

(Literal translation of *Srimad Bhagavad-Gita*, Chapter 15, verse 18, *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* by Swami Ramsukhdas, Gita Prakashan, 1998, page 719)

Srimad Bhagavad Gita also presents a similar and almost identical view of the world by saying that all worldly things are perishable. *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* also represents that the embodied souls in this material world are only God’s eternal fragmental parts and they are in combat with six senses including intuition or mind. Thus, life becomes meaningless making people alienated and isolated in this world and dividing the unity among mankind.

Mayadhyakshena prakritih suyate sa-characharamhetunanena kaunteya jagad viparivartate,

(Literal translation of *Srimad Bhagavad-Gita*, Chapter 9, Verse 10, *Srimad Bhagavad-Gita* by Swami Ramsukhdas, Gita Prakashan, 1998, pages 457)

In this verse, the Gita reveals that this energy brings all animate and inanimate forms into being in accordance with the nature of God. Therefore, the material world undergoes the changes of genesis or creation, fostering or nurturing and destruction in order to maintain the cycle. It has been stated that though the Supreme God aloof from all the activities of the material world, he operates as the supreme omnipotent director. All the living entities born under the supervision of God take different shapes according to their past deed. Therefore the God is not directly attached rather he glances over material nature and it becomes activated.

Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* represents the Victorian optimism in the civilised values of English schoolboy society. In his novel the boys are shipwrecked also but they utilise their proficiency to correspond the values of society in which once they were. They work in a progressive way maintaining the structure and having prudence they build shelters, boat and they are in search of a healthy ambience. But here in Golding's novel the boys led by Jack operates in a destructive way succumbing to perverseness. In order to quench their thirst they kill one by one animals which culminates in killing Simon and Piggy. At last, they also chased Ralph but couldn't kill him. They couldn't kill Ralph because of the appearance of naval officer before them. In a sense the naval officer works as Foucauldian disciplinary power which does not solely rely on force, instead, it controls the subjects through hierarchical surveillance, normalising judgement and examination. Hierarchical surveillance means that the power is exerted over the subject as they feel that they are being watched. Eventually the subject begins to act as if they are continually being watched. Here also the ferocious boys, led by Jack who tried to kill Ralph, operate in a natural way seeing the naval officer who has just come to investigate the causes of smoke in the forest. Therefore Foucauldian disciplinary power is exerted over the boys led by Jack. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* was the inspiration for Golding's *Lord of the Flies* and it inverted the morality of *The Coral Island*. In Ballantyne's story the shipwrecked boys encounter evil but in *Lord of the Flies* the evil nature is almost within the boys. In spite of their evil temperament, they behave properly in front of the naval officer. Foucault says that the disciplinary power controls the subjects through various mechanisms like hierarchical surveillance, normalising judgement and examination. Due to hierarchical surveillance the boys maintain a proper decorum among themselves in front of the naval officer as they think they are continually being watched. Again, normalising judgement are used to categorise individuals who don't adhere to the norm as abnormal or deviant. In connection with the ambience that is prevailing in school it can be comprehended. In school, the students respond to the ringing of bells which is used to give the students warning or indication regarding a certain norm or routine. Again, in the classroom putting up hands in order to ask questions etc. Examination involves inspecting and classifying an individual using these mechanisms. These components make up disciplinary power. Because of this disciplinary power they behave in a proper way renouncing and abandoning their evil nature. Here Golding's use of *The Coral Island* is unambiguous because there are references several times. At the beginning of the novel the boys say we can lead our lives in a jolly way until any senior comes to rescue us and also at the fag-end of it the naval officer says, "Jolly good show. Like the Coral Island". Whatever this may be, after a violent activity for blood-thirst they operate sanely.

Along with it the 'deus ex machina' which is a device that was used in Greek theatre and drama has been used here through the character of the naval officer. His appearance can be linked up with the god from the machine. The goal of this is to bring about resolution.

Diabolous ex Machina, which is the evil counterpart of Deus ex Machina, has been implied in the present novel. To delineate Diabolous ex Machina, we may say that the introduction of an unexpected new event, character or ability or anything that has been designed to ensure that things suddenly get much worse. In the course of the action we may perceive that the events that happened because of the perverseness done by Jack clearly upholds the Diabolous ex Machina. This gets culminated in the killing of Simon and Piggy.

Conclusion: From the above discussion, we may conclude that as there are references, regarding the formation of our world that there must be a chaotic ambience or destruction before genesis, in the present novel the same idea has been implied. Secondly, the conch which implies order, system and governance can be linked up with the origination of governed society which was prevailing from the primitive age during the epoch of primitive aboriginal. Not only in Genesis but also in *Mahabharata* Lord Krishna says to Shakuni, one of the antagonists in the Hindu epic *Mahabharata*, that one day all of us have to die no matter how much pious we are or how much sinner we are. With the marching of the time all of us have to surrender to time and time will cause a destruction devouring all of us.

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References

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