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Email : Rupen@hiralalpaulcollege.ac.in

Profile Link

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Email : pazhani.swamy@jainuniversity.ac.in

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Email : mihir.shah@swarnim.edu.in

Profile Link : <https://startup.swarnim.edu.in/fteam>



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Email : pssrivastava@iutripura.edu.in

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Dr. G.V.P. Samaranayake

Lecturer

Department of Ayurveda Basic Principles, Faculty of Indigenous Medicine, Gampaha Wickramarachchi University of Indigenous Medicine, Yakkala, Sri Lanka

Email : prabashi@gwu.ac.lk

Profile Link : <https://gwu.ac.lk/index.php/ayurveda-basic-principles>



Dr. Djemli Samir

Lecturer

Department of Biology, Badji Mokhtar Annaba, Algeria

Email : samir.djemli@univ-annaba.dz

Profile Link : <https://perso.univ-annaba.dz/fr/djemli-samir.1000187.html>



Dr. R Sampath Kumar

Associate Professor

Department of Business Management, University College of Commerce & Business Management, Osmania University, Hyderabad, Telangana, India

Email : drsampath@osmania.ac.in

Profile Link : <http://www.ou-mba.ac.in/faculty.html>



Dr. S Raja (Ph.D.)

Assistant Professor

Department of Management Studies, SRM Valliammai Engineering College, Kattankulathur, Tamil Nadu, India

Email : rajas.mba@valliammai.co.in

Profile Link : <https://www.srmvalliammai.ac.in/attachments/mba/profile/9.Dr.S.Raja.pdf>



Dr. Vivekanand Mishra (Ph.D., M.SC.)

Professor

Department of Science, Alliance University, Bangalore, India.

Email : vivekanand.mishra@alliance.edu.in

Profile Link : <https://www.alliance.edu.in/faculties/category/core-faculty>



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Assistant Professor & Head

Department of BCom(eCommerce) & BCom(SF), PSGR Krishnammal College for Women, Peelamedu, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India.

Email : mdeepalakshmi@psgrkcw.ac.in

Profile Link : <https://www.psgrkcw.ac.in/department/b-com-e-commerce-and-b-com-sf/>



Dr. Shivendra Singh (Ph.D.)

Assistant Professor

Department of Applied Chemistry, Amity University Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, India.

Email : ssingh4@gwa.amity.edu

Profile Link : <https://www.amity.edu/faculty-detail.aspx?facultyID=3866>



Dr. K. Ganesh Kumar (Ph.D.)

Associate Professor

Department of Information Technology, Velalar College of Engineering and Technology, Thindal, Erode, Tamil Nadu, India.

Email : kganeshkumar@velalarengg.ac.in

Profile Link : https://www.velalarengg.ac.in/dept_it.php#faculty



Dr. Ashutosh Talwar (MBBS, MS, FAIS, FICS, MAMS & FIMSA)

Assistant Professor

Department of Surgery, Guru Gobind Singh Medical College, (Constituent of Baba Farid University of Health Sciences), Faridkot, Punjab, India.

Email : ashutoshtalwar@ggsmch.org

Profile Link : <http://www.ggsmch.org/Teaching22092020.pdf>



Dr. Sanyogita Shahi

Professor

Department of Chemistry, Kalinga University, Chhattisgarh, India.

Email : sanyogita.shahi@kalingauniversity.ac.in

Profile Link : https://kalingauniversity.ac.in/dr_sanyogita_shahi1.php



Dr. Punam Pandey

Assistant Professor

Department of Basic & Social Sciences, College of Horticulture, Banda University Agriculture and Technology, Banda, Uttar Pradesh, India.

Email : punampandey@buat.edu.in

Profile Link : <https://buat.edu.in/basic-social-sciences/>

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A Critical Overview of Abuse of Power in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*

^{*1}Dr. Hergie Alexis Seguedeme, ²Dr. (MA) Toliton Telesphore DIKPO and ³Dr. Orierien Olivier Abodohou

^{*1, 3}Enseignant-Chercheur à l'Université d'Abomey-Calavi, Bénin.

²Enseignant-Chercheur à l'Ecole Nationale d'Administration de l'université d'Abomey-Calavi, Bénin.

Abstract

This research sets out to examine the issues of abuse of power that the whole world is facing as revealed in George Orwell's *Animal farm*. Everyone today wants to lead or be on the mountain top and will do whatever to achieve that goal. This power may be related to sovereignty or the power to make rules that apply to the population of a particular area. Power is certainly necessary for the development and good behaviour of everyone, but when it is today held by certain predecessors who do not want to leave room for others, there is a succession of coups d'état, megalomania and even the rebellion thus causing loss of human life causing many victims. The present article unveils from a historical satire perspective that such factors as excessive ambition, arbitrary, money, corruption and own interest are the reason why people have abuse of power.

Keywords: Abuse, power, abuse of power, animal, animal farm

Introduction

Today, the question of power is becoming more and more uncertain for our society and our generation because most people want to have power at the same time. Accordingly, that has become a great issue every country in the whole world has been facing. One may notice it through the way our leaders behave during elections by promising big projects they never finish, seeking trust they always betray, promises they never keep, they promise just to access power.

Here are many reasons why people want to be on power. Among them one can mention the fact of having more money, the fact of giving order just to be more respected, fixing their own rules once they get power then to access everything. However, what is strange in that matter and most of people ignore is that, they are no freer of their movements, their families too are no freer to travel as they want from country to country just because of the way the husband is leading or using power.

This research work is organised in four (04) sections. Section one focuses on the methodological aspects of the study and section two explores the aspects of power-abuse in the novel. Section three deals with the analysis of the causes and consequences of abuse of power and finally, section four is dedicated to the approaches, ways and means in order to help and show people in position of power how to be a great democrat and a great leader.

1. Introduction to the Study

1.1 Problem Statement

As the world evolves many things are changing. Obviously, the way leaders are leading today world without any emotion. To give more essence to that word, power in the context of this research work, can be defined as, "the extent to which

persons or groups can limit or regulate the alternative courses of action open to other persons or groups with or without their consent ^[1]." (Lundberg *et al*). Also, German sociologist Max Weber, defines it as:

Many scholars adopt the definition developed by German sociologist Max Weber, who said that *power* is the ability to exercise one's will over others (Weber 1922). Power affects more than personal relationships; it shapes larger dynamics like social groups, professional organizations, and governments. Similarly, a government's power is not necessarily limited to control of its own citizens. A dominant nation, for instance, will often use its clout to influence or support other governments or to seize control of other nation states ^[2].

Lust for *power*, and *power-hungry ambition for power* that can be permanent or temporal depending on the type of power is what one calls megalomania. Its (power) is a process whereby an individual mostly rich leave the vicissitude of his morality to cross borders in search of having more money and dominate people.

It is in that same thought that Robert Greene says: "Your fears are a kind of prison that confines you within a limited range of action. The less you fear, the more power you will have and the more fully you will live ^[3]"

In that story the animals were fed up with their owner, Farmer Jones, so they threw him out. Once they get rid of Tyrant Jones, life on the farm temporarily improves, and hopefully a happier future with less work, better education, and more food. The novel ends with the way the pigs behave and dress, just like the people they were trying to get rid of in the first place. That matter has become ignored nowadays and it is

important to find solutions that will not only be read or heard, but also, be put into practice.

1.2 The Objectives, the Scope and the Hypothesis of the Work

1.2.1 The Objective of the Work

This research work is based on George Orwell's *Animal farm* (1945). Just after the publication of this satirical novel in 1945, many critics were interested in its size and content.

The aim of this essay is to unveil the satire and allegory used by George Orwell's to codify his message on one hand and one the other hand links the said message to nowadays event around us vis-à-vis the abuse of power in the world that politic leaders have to at all costs lead the world with the bad practice by underestimated those who elected them when they were in need. This research paper decrypts what happened in the novel and how the fact of not knowing how to lead or run a group of persons can drag into the insecurity of our community.

1.2.2 The Methodology of the Study/Literary Theory

This study is A Critical Overview of Abuse of Power in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Here, Marxist theory and qualitative methods have been used. The choice of those particular methods and theory are justified by the fact that the novel *Animal Farm* has to do with political issues and class struggles. Qualitative methods help in getting available information in the novel and other documents. The problem this work tackles is the abuse of power.

1.2.3 The Scope of the Work

In order to stick to the issue under scrutiny, this study focuses mostly on the aspects related to the way animal rebel against their human farmer, hoping to create a society where animals can be equal, free, and happy. The main thematic of *Animal Farm* is the ability of ordinary people to continue to believe in a revolution that has been completely betrayed.

1.3 Literature Review

The misuse of power is one of the modern issues that has been existing so far. Since the beginning of the world after God has created Adam and Eve, the notion of power control started. For that reason, it is unfair to talk of the misuse of power without exploring the meaning of the concept in whole.

A lot of humanist researchers like historian Arthur M. Schlesinger jr, activist scholar John Molyneux, and Orwell Scholar, have directed their works about the concept of power which has become a tough question vigorously debated in social theories nowadays.

Animal Farm was released to critical acclaim. Writing for the *New York Times*, historian Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. hailed it as "a simple story perhaps, but a story of deadly simplicity superbly controlled and brilliantly sustained satire." Not everyone agreed with Schlesinger, however. Writer and critic W. J. Turner, for instance, thought the novel was marred by "pessimism" and accused Orwell of being "grossly unfair to Stalin in his account of him as 'Napoleon.'" Still, the fact that the novel has been a staple in classrooms for generations suggests that critics like Turner did not have the last say" [4]. Writing in 1989, activist-scholar John Molyneux (1948) summed up *Animal Farm* as "probably the most popular and influential piece of literary propaganda produced in English, perhaps in any language, this century." Molyneux claimed it was "likely that far more people have learned what they know of the fate of the Russian Revolution from here than from any

other source." In his introduction to a 2003 edition of the novel (with *Nineteen Eighty-Four*), essayist and critic Christopher Hitchens (1949-2011) confirmed *Animal Farm*'s distinction as "the twentieth century's most successful satire." As Hitchens and Molyneux both make clear, although the novel has long appealed to younger readers with scant knowledge of Soviet history, the book's legacy rests on its political force"[5].

1.4 Conceptual Clarification

The term abuse [6] according to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* is "the use of something in a way that is wrong or harmful". In the same source, the term **power** is "the ability to control people or things" [7]. In others words it is the ability to direct, influence, or dominate others. In this case, one talks of "dictatorship".

2. Exploring the aspect of abuse of power in the novel

2.1 Background of the Novel

2.1.1 The Author

George Orwell, pseudonym of Eric Arthur Blair, (born June 25, 1903, Motihari, Bengal, India-died January 21, 1950, London, England), English novelist, essayist, and critic famous for his novels *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-four* (1949), the latter a profound anti-utopian novel that examines the dangers of totalitarian rule. Born Eric Arthur Blair, Orwell never entirely abandoned his original name, but his first book, *Down and Out in Paris and London*, appeared in 1933 as the work of George Orwell (the surname he derived from the beautiful River Orwell in East Anglia). In time his nom de plume became so closely attached to him that few people but relatives knew his real name was Blair. The change in name corresponded to a profound shift in Orwell's lifestyle, in which he changed from a pillar of the British imperial establishment into a literary and political rebel.

2.1.2 Historical Background of the Novel

Russian society at the beginning of the 20th century was bipolar: a tiny minority controlled most of the country's wealth, while the vast majority of the country's inhabitants were poor and oppressed peasants. Communism emerged in Russia when the country's workers and peasants, supported by the intellectual class, rebelled and overwhelmed the wealthy and powerful capitalist and aristocratic classes. They wanted to build a socialist utopia based on the principles of German economic and political philosopher Karl Marx. *Animal Farm* was written by George Orwell and published in 1945. This novel is an allegory-even though it is set on a farm and stars a cast of farm animals, it reflects the events of the Russian revolution of 1917. The animals are all clever representations of Russian politicians, voters and workers. Orwell used the novel to make his opinions on Russian leaders heard.

2.1.3 About the Novel

As an allegorical novel, *Animal Farm* is full of symbolism. Just as the animals represent individuals or groups throughout Russian history, the farms themselves represent Russia, and the surrounding farms represent the European powers that witnessed the Russian Revolution. Orwell's decisions about which objects, events, or concepts to emphasize are not as plot-driven as narrative fiction. Instead, its decisions are carefully calibrated to elicit the reactions that readers expect. When Old Major dies, two young pigs, Snowball and Napoleon, assume command and stage a revolt, driving Mr.

Jones off the farm and renaming the property "Animal Farm". They adopt the Seven Commandments of Animalism, the most important of which is, "All animals are equal". The decree is painted in large letters on one side of the barn. Snowball teaches the animals to read and write, while Napoleon educates young puppies on the principles of Animalism. To commemorate the start of Animal Farm, Snowball raises a green flag with a white hoof and horn. Many of the animals who participated in the rebellion are dead or old. Mr. Jones is also dead, saying he "died in an inebriates' home in another part of the country". The pigs start to resemble humans, as they walk upright, carry whips, drink

alcohol, and wear clothes. The Seven Commandments are abridged to just one phrase: "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others". The maxim "Four legs good, two legs bad" is similarly changed to "Four legs good, two legs better. As the pigs become more human.

2.2 Picturing the abuse of power in the novel through characters

In the novel, the abuse of power is described as a political thirst that has Napoleon to lead the farm. But, due to some limitations of this essay, just some of the characters are taken into account. Among them we have

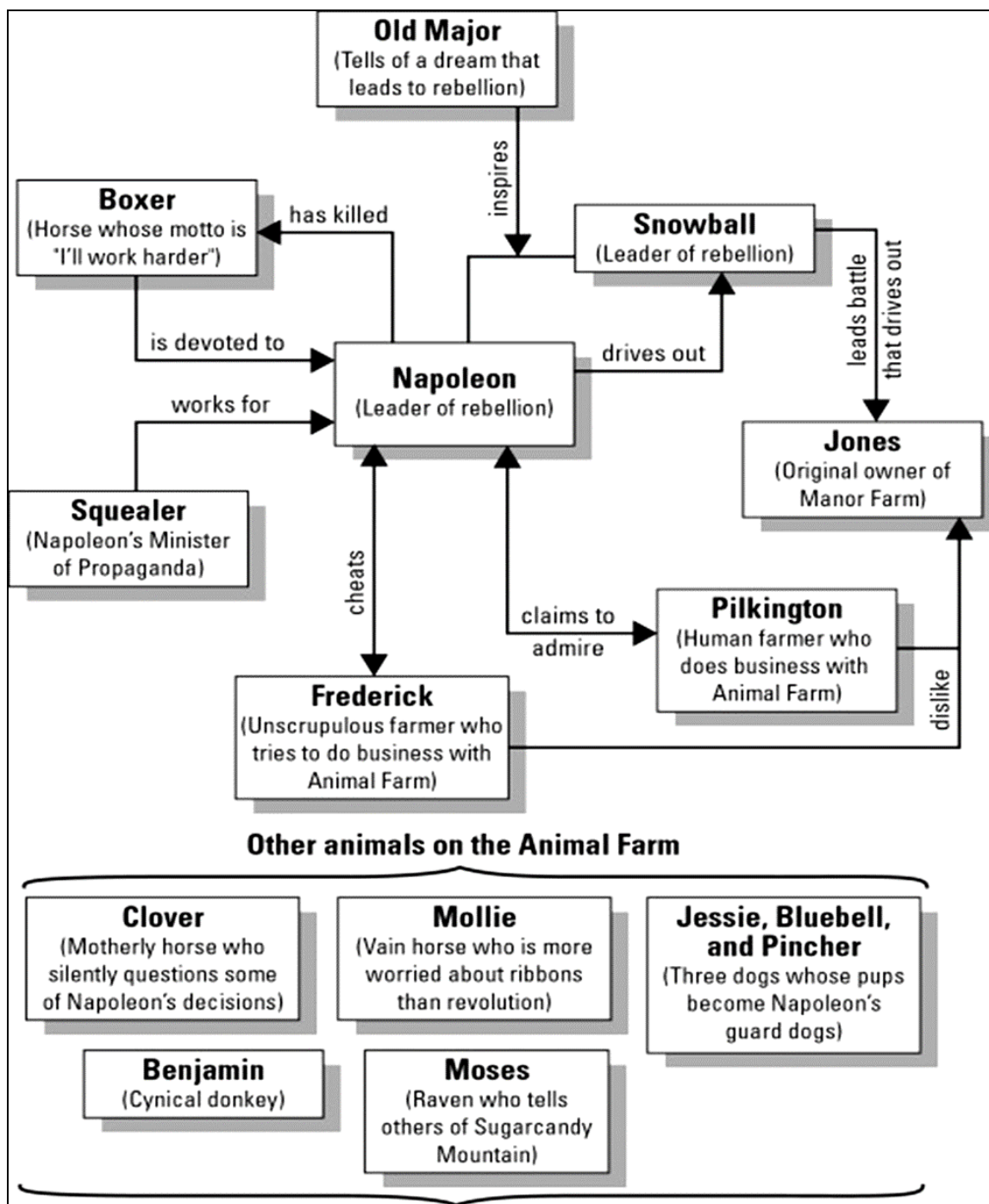


Fig 1: www.citethisforme.com

2.3 The Impacts of Abuse of Power in the Novel: Myth or reality?

Before exploring the impacts of abuse of power in *Animal farm* one can relate the assassination of Thomas Sankara and twelve of his companions by a financed-commando during a

push On October 5, 1987 to a political misusing of power. According to some non-precised source, it is discovered that the one who financed Thomas Sankara's execution was Blaise Compaoré.

Without any further insight to what happens in *Animal farm*, as one can see from the story above about Thomas Sankara, his companion in arm was the one who killed him. Let's now compare it with the abuse of Power in *Animal Farm*, Snowball and Napoleon are pigs that are main characters in *Animal Farm*. In this story, one can see how similar and different they are when one compares and contrasts them. They are similar in species, the purpose, good leaders, outspoken and intelligent. After having chased Mr Jones these was the seven original commandments ^[9]:

1. Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy.
2. Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend.
3. No animal shall wear clothes.
4. No animal shall sleep in a bed.
5. No animal shall drink alcohol.
6. No animal shall kill any other animal.
7. All animals are equal.

These commandments are also distilled into the maxim "Four legs good, two legs bad!" ^[10]

Later, Napoleon and his pigs secretly revise some commandments to clear themselves of accusations of law breaking. The changed commandments are as follows, with the changes bolded

- i) No animal shall sleep in a bed with sheets.
- ii) No animal shall drink alcohol to excess.
- iii) No animal shall kill any other animal without cause.

Eventually, these are replaced with the maxims, "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others", and "Four legs good, two legs better" (80) as the pigs become more human.

When one considers the case of Thomas Sankara to make the difference in the first place it is because they are almost exactly the same stories.

Coming back to this novel, Snowball can be seen as Thomas Sankara, Napoleon as Blaise Compaoré who killed him to access power for 27 years.

3 Causes and Consequences of Abuse of Power

3.1 Analysis of the Causes of Abuse of Power in *Animal Farm*

Coming back now to the real life one can say that the real reason why people want power is because of the nature of their personality. This paper decodes three kinds of people in the world

1. People who want money (businessman) like Pilkington
2. People who want power (leaders) like Snowball and Napoleon
3. Those who want neither (Saints) like Mollie and Boxer

Some of the Reasons People Seek Power Are

- With rights comes great responsibilities. Those who seek power are first and foremost those who have the ability and courage to assume power, be it a country or an organization.
- However, the way in which this power is used determines further progress. Some people want power for the wrong reasons. (The epic example is Hitler) If so, the result would be tyranny.
- There are also those who seek the power to change the face of the world/workplace. Epic examples are Bill Gates, George Washington, Sardar Patel, Vladimir Putin.

With rights comes great responsibilities. However, the way this power is harnessed determines the darkness or light of the future.

3.2 Analysis of the Consequences of Abuse of Power

- From the misusing of power, one can draw some crucial consequences affecting our society and the whole world

3.2.1 Dictatorship or totalitarianism

It is a situation where a single person or political party rules the entire country.

1. Dictators always oppress and suppress people. Or even promote their own favourites and interests. This causes inequality but no one really objects because it would mean putting oneself in danger at the hands of the ruling government.
2. Mass killing. Large number of innocents people are killed. Because the population may get frustrated with the policies of the government and his make the dictator consider the person as enemies of government.
3. The population is never happy with such a government. So, it possible that at some point the masses will protest and agitate against the policies of unity and try to overthrow the government.

Drawing on this way of ruling, readers can easily identify the power abuse of Napoleon when he seizes power after getting rid of Snowball. In the following, one can read:

There was a deadly silence. Amazed, terrified, huddling together, the animals watched the long line of pig's march slowly round the yard. It was as though the world had turned upside-down. Then came a moment when the first shock had worn off and when, in spite of everything-their terror of the dogs, and of the habit, developed through long years, of never complaining, never criticising, no matter what happened-they might have uttered some words of protest. (80)

This totalitarianism style of government can be clearly seen above when the people are unhappy with the way they were ruled, the way the leaders treat them, the way they were ill-treated but never happen to utter a word.

3.2.2 Megalomania

Megalomania is a mundane mental disadvantage, with no self-control roll.

The reasons for one's ambitions, and why one feels they are practical, need to be defined. One may feel chosen by destiny, perhaps as a leader of an unstoppable movement or people, or one may just believe to be a superhuman. One's task must be on a grand scale, and while one can be capable of subtlety, and willing to take time or use indirect means, it is the focus of one's life and all his efforts. This disadvantage mainly appears as an option on templates for people with some power, such as courtiers, noblemen, tribal chiefs and wizards. Disc world treats Megalomania as a pure delusion. In the novel scrutinised, the antagonist Napoleon can be qualified as a megalomaniac.

3.2.3 Excessive Ambition

Excessive ambition is a word denoting strong desire for distinction, preferment, honour, political power, fame, or the object of such desires, or a general motivation, not necessarily tied to any particular goals? Overall, this is a positive quality, especially for people trying to build their own businesses. Obviously, if you're more naturally driven to set goals and accomplish them, you'll be more likely to succeed than

someone who isn't, right? Actually, no; this isn't always the case. In fact, in some cases, extreme ambition may end up doing more harm than good. If you believe you're the type of person who is overwhelmingly ambitious, you'll need to watch out for the following dangerous side effects.

To finish the major effects of abuse of power are anarchy, rebellion, coup, underdevelopment, crises, political turmoil, assassination etc. The abuse of power creates ill feelings among political opponents. This situation brings underdevelopment, exploitation, corruption, indiscipline and all forms of ills in the society^[10].

As the consequences are seen as not only on the individuals but also on the families, countries and nation, there is then a need to find ways to get out of these social issues.

4. Coping with Abuse of Power

After discovering the causes and consequences of abuse of power, this document has suggested some strategies to see to that social challenge.

4.1 Approaches

As I said it at the beginning of this essay, if one chooses to work on such a topic "A Critical Overview of Abuse of Power in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*" is to talk about it so that candidates to power know what happens if they misuse power by playing with it and find solutions which can help reduce these situations have been facing. Then, politicians should know in advance who they are, meaning if they will really be able to lead.

4.2 Strategies

Since solutions cannot only be sufficient in helping people not lose their culture and identity anymore, I strongly put emphasis on the following recommendations:

How can we stop ourselves from abusing power? What insights can we glean from science so that we avoid mistakes of the past and make the most of our power? The ethical principles that follow are some approaches enabling people to pursue this aspiration.

4.2.1 Being Aware of One's Feelings of Power

The feeling of power is like a vital force moving through your body, involving the acute sense of purpose that results when we stir others to effective action. This feeling will guide you to the thrill of making a difference in the world.

4.2.2 Practicing Humility

Power is a gift-the chance to make a difference in the world. People who enact their power with humility enjoy more enduring power. Ironically, the more we approach our power, our capacity to influence others, with humility, the greater our power is

4.2.3 Staying Focused on Others and Giving

The most direct path to enduring power is through generosity. Give resources, money, time, respect, and power to others. In these acts of giving, we empower others in our social networks, enhancing our own ability to make a difference in the world.

4.2.4 Respecting

By directing respect toward others, we dignify them. We elevate their standing. We empower them. That all members of a social collective deserve some basic form of dignity is an ancient basis of equality, and it is expressed in our day-to-day

lives through respect. Practicing respect requires work. There is no reward people value more than being esteemed and respected. Ask questions. Listen with intent. Be curious about others. Acknowledge them. Compliment and praise with gusto. Express gratitude.

4.2.5 Changing the Psychological Context of Powerlessness

We can minimize the tendency of some people to feel below others, so toxic to health and well-being, by practicing the first four principles listed above^[11].

Conclusion

Throughout my essay, I explored and overviewed what happens in *Animal Farm* before being able to suggest some solutions to solve the issue of the thirst of power; for that, I used the qualitative method basing on the collection and the analysis of the available data (mostly internet sources).

As far as the hypotheses are concerned, two are used at the beginning of this work: First, the fact of being too thirsty for power can push the nation into a total fear thus prohibiting them from being free in their expression and actions; second, the misuse of power can lead to war and loss of human life. As a result, by using the methodology of Marxist criticism, both of the hypotheses have been confirmed.

Our Society is a place of competition. Humans use their powers in different contexts and through various modes. The choice is either to fight for power, to be the leader of the community, or to accept power from other sources. Most of the time people fight for power because they don't want to serve under someone else's dictatorship. As Abuse of power grows, people strive to get as many benefits as possible to get to the top. All desire power, and everyone desires a different kind of power. Power makes people feel different because it gives them what they want. Human desires never end, so power can never satisfy all human desires. Both long for the ability to do what they want, and their goals are endless. No matter how hard people try to get power, they never get what they want because they never stop wanting more. The more we empower others, the greater good is increased.

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