



Totalitarian Eyes: A Study Of Privacy Invasion In 'Nineteen Eighty-Four' By George Orwell

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Abstract: George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a well-renowned novel which is set in a dystopian future where the world is divided into three superstates: Oceania, Eurasia and Eastasia. This research paper explores *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a chilling critique of totalitarianism and systematic erosion of individual privacy and freedom. Focusing mainly on the life of Winston Smith, the protagonist, the paper reflects on how Orwell's warning resonate in today's surveillance - driven world, emphasizing the novel's ongoing relevance.

Index Terms - Dystopia, Privacy, Winston Smith, Surveillance

The Right to Privacy is a fundamental human right that protects an individual's personal life, information and freedom from unnecessary governmental intrusion. This act is protected primarily under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. Enshrined in it ensures certain safeguards against arbitrary deprivation of life and liberty. Article 21 also protects the personal liberty of the individuals. In India, the Right to Privacy is protected by various laws including the Constitution, the Information Technology Act, and the Indian Penal Code among others.

Eric Arthur Blair (1903-1950), under pseudonym name of George Orwell was one of the world's most influential allegory writer besides a journalist, essayist, poet and a critic. His famous visionary works include *Animal Farm*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, *Homage to Catalonia*, *Down and Out in Paris and London* etc. Harold Bloom has praised Orwell about 'his clarity- his ability to write moral journalism without moralizing.' Anthony Burgess believes that , 'Orwell's vision of the future is a boot stamping on a human face forever. But what redeems it is his passion for truth.'

Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a dystopian novel published in the year 1949 as a warning against totalitarianism. The novel explores the dangers of a government that seeks total control over every aspect of life. Orwell himself doubt that this kind of society will ever arrive 'but I believe that something resembling it could arrive.'

In the beginning of the novel, on a bitter April day in London, Winston Smith arrives at his apartment and thinks of writing down a diary which is a punishable offence as everyone is under surveillance the whole day as Winston says, "It was even conceivable that they watched everybody all the time. But at any rate they could plug in your wire whenever they wanted to. You had to live - did live, from habit that became instinct - in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard and, except in darkness, every movement scrutinised."(*Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 5) These lines vividly shows how privacy has been erased. People must

behave as if they're always being watched - even their facial expressions or a sigh could be a crime. There are posters of Big Brother all around the city underscored by the words 'BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU.'

The governmental measures like Newspeak, Doublethink, Thoughtcrime and Thought Police, Two Minutes Hate, Historical Revisionism, Vaporization, Junior Spies, Telescreens and constant surveillance etc. are some of the measures integrated to form a complete system of control, designed to eliminate freedom, truth, individuality and re-shape human thought.

Later in the novel, abolition of privacy continues to dominate, even more intensely. As Winston and his lover Julia begin their forbidden relationship, their increasing desire for privacy become central- and its impossibility in the totalitarian world of Oceania becomes more clear. "There were no telescreens, ofcourse, but there was always the danger of concealed microphones by which your voice might be picked up and recognised; besides, it was not easy to make a journey by yourself without attracting attention." (*Nineteen EightyFour*,123) Even in the countryside where Winston and Julia first make love, privacy is an illusion. Though the place seems quite safe but still both are under constant fear as Party's surveillance can still reach them. Even nature itself is not safe from intrusion.

For instance, "The room was a world, a pocket of the past where extinct animals could walk." (*Nineteen Eighty-Four*,157) Winston and Julia reside in a rented room belonging to Mr. Charrington. They both create a world of their own in the rented room with the view of open sky. Both of them come to the room to make love and find a escape from the Party policies for sometimes. It gives them a sense of freedom and a way return to normal human life. But this was too a trap- the room is bugged and Mr. Charrington himself is the member of the Thought Police. The Party has infiltrated even this private space and this shows that nature is not safe - it is watched.

Towards the end of the work, both Winston and Julia are under the imprisonment of Mr. O'Brien. It is depicted most starkly in the scenes of Winston's imprisonment, physical and mental torture in the cell and vicious interrogation in the Ministry of Love. As Mr. O'Brien said, "We control matter because we control mind. Reality is inside the skull. You will learn by degrees, Winston. There is nothing that we could not do. Invisibility, levitation - anything...You must get rid of those nineteen-century ideas about the laws of Nature. We make the laws of Nature." (*Nineteen Eighty-Four*,277) This shows how individual's personal life is completely colonized by the Party. Even Winston's personal identity and past memories are not his own - the Party redefines the laws of nature and memory, making privacy of thought and past non-existent. Every aspect of one's being is under surveillance.

The very last sentence of the novel, "He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother."(*Nineteen Eighty-Four*,311) It's a terrifying depiction of brainwashing, where the victim loses the ability to even recognize their own oppression. Winston who from the beginning has carried blind hatred for the supreme leader, ended loving him. The Party, at last, has succeeded in conquering Winston's mind and the idea of freedom has been completely destroyed. It signifies the complete annihilation of his former self and his complete submission to Party's will.

CONCLUSION

George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* works under a government controlled by a figure known as 'Big Brother'. The Party consists of three slogans: 'WAR IS PEACE' 'FREEDOM IS SLAVERY' 'IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH'. Orwell presents the novel as a cautionary tale, highlighting the dangers of totalitarianism and the importance of preserving individual freedom and truth in the face of oppressive regimes. As Harold Bloom said, 'Orwell's novel portrays a society in which the last refuge of privacy - the human mind - is systematically invaded and reshaped by political will.' Orwell has correctly shown the abolition of privacy in his work. Even in the modern world, it is not explicitly shown but the spread of misinformation, the rise of echo chambers on social media and misuse of new technological innovations has almost controlled the life of human beings in a certain way. Therefore, the novel delivers a powerful message about the need of resisting oppression and importance of vigilance in protecting personal autonomy and the integrity of truth.

CITATIONS

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