

## SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE MANUFACTURING OF TRUTH: READING THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD ORDER THROUGH GEORGE ORWELL'S ANIMAL FARM

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### **Abstract**

*The contemporary world order is increasingly shaped by digital communication technologies, particularly social media, which play a decisive role in the circulation, mediation and construction of truth. Rather than functioning as neutral platforms for information exchange, social media curate reality through selective visibility, repetition and emotional appeal. This paper examines the manufacturing of truth in the digital age by drawing sustained parallels with George Orwell's Animal Farm. Though historically situated as a political allegory, Orwell's novella offers a powerful framework for understanding how truth is manipulated to sustain hegemonic power. Using a qualitative, text-centred and theoretical approach, the study closely analyses key moments in Animal Farm alongside concepts drawn from post-truth discourse, hegemony, and political ethics. The argument is further strengthened by incorporating perspectives from Indian thinkers such as Mahatma Gandhi, B. R. Ambedkar, Ram Manohar Lohia and Ashis Nandy. The paper contends that the strategies of propaganda, historical revisionism, emotional manipulation, and manufactured consent depicted in Orwell's text closely resemble the functioning of social media in the contemporary world order. It concludes that Animal Farm remains an enduring literary lens for interrogating digital power, truth production, and ethical responsibility in the present age.*

**Keywords:** *social media, truth, propaganda, contemporary world order, Animal Farm, ideology, power*

## Introduction

The question of truth has acquired renewed urgency in the contemporary world order, particularly with the proliferation of digital communication technologies. Social media platforms have become dominant spaces where information is produced, circulated and legitimised. While these platforms claim to democratise access to information, they simultaneously enable the selective amplification of narratives that align with political, economic and ideological power. In such contexts, truth is increasingly shaped by circulation, visibility and emotional resonance rather than empirical verification.

Literature has long functioned as a critical medium through which the operations of power and ideology are exposed. George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, though written in response to the Russian Revolution and Stalinist totalitarianism, transcends its immediate historical context. The novella offers a sustained examination of how language, memory, and truth are manipulated to normalise inequality and suppress dissent. Orwell's insistence that "all animals are equal" gradually degenerates into hierarchical dominance, revealing the fragility of revolutionary ideals when truth becomes subordinate to power (Orwell 7).

This paper reads *Animal Farm* alongside the functioning of social media in the contemporary world order to examine how truth is manufactured rather than discovered. By situating Orwell's insights within post-truth theory and reinforcing them through Indian political thought, the study aims to provide an ethically grounded literary analysis relevant to present-day digital culture.

## Truth, Power and the Digital Public Sphere

In the digital age, truth is increasingly mediated by algorithms that prioritise engagement, popularity, and affect. Social media platforms do not merely host content; they curate reality by determining what is visible, repeated, or

marginalised. As a result, truth becomes less a matter of correspondence with reality and more a function of narrative dominance.

Lee McIntyre defines post-truth as a condition in which “objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief” (5). This condition does not imply the disappearance of facts but their strategic displacement. Truth becomes pliable, reinterpreted to suit ideological agendas.

Orwell anticipates this condition in *Animal Farm*, where the pigs do not abolish truth but continuously revise it. After the Battle of the Cowshed, Snowball is initially celebrated as a hero; however, once he is expelled, the same event is retrospectively re-narrated as an act of betrayal (Orwell 61–62). The facts remain unchanged, but interpretation is restructured to consolidate Napoleon’s authority. This mirrors how social media narratives are retrospectively reframed to support dominant political positions.

### **Propaganda, Fear and Linguistic Control**

Language functions as the primary instrument of power in *Animal Farm*. Squealer’s rhetorical strategies demonstrate how propaganda operates through persuasion rather than force. When the pigs appropriate the milk and apples, Squealer frames this act of inequality as a scientific necessity, claiming that pigs require special nourishment for the collective good (Orwell 36).

The argument is reinforced through fear: “Surely, comrades, you do not want Jones back?”

This moment exemplifies what Jacques Ellul identifies as emotional propaganda, where fear replaces rational deliberation (62). Similarly, social media often amplifies narratives of threat and urgency, discouraging critical reflection and encouraging passive acceptance.

Another significant instance of linguistic manipulation occurs when Napoleon abolishes the Sunday Meetings, citing efficiency and security (Orwell 44). Debate is replaced by decrees, and dissent is delegitimised. In digital spaces, a comparable silencing occurs when dissenting voices are algorithmically buried or labelled disruptive.



A further instance of linguistic manipulation in *Animal Farm* occurs in the pigs' appropriation of literacy itself. While the pigs teach themselves to read and write, the other animals remain largely illiterate, with most unable to memorise even the basic principles of Animalism (Orwell 18–19). This imbalance enables the pigs to monopolise interpretation and authority. When discrepancies arise between lived reality and written law, the pigs rely on the animals' inability to read critically to assert control over meaning. In contemporary digital culture, a similar imbalance exists between those who control digital narratives and those who merely consume them. The authority to define truth thus rests not with factual accuracy but with interpretative dominance.

### **Slogans, Repetition and Ideological Simplification**

The sheep's chant: "Four legs good, two legs bad" - functions as ideological noise that disrupts critical thought (Orwell 52). Whenever complex issues arise, the chant is deployed to suppress discussion. This strategy reduces political discourse to binary oppositions, erasing nuance.

Ram Manohar Lohia's critique of mass politics underscores the dangers of linguistic simplification. Lohia argues that slogans, while mobilising, often eliminate critical engagement. In contemporary social media, hashtags and viral slogans function similarly, transforming complex socio-political realities into consumable affirmations.

Orwell reinforces this critique when the chant is later modified to "Four legs good, two legs better," normalising contradiction through repetition (Orwell 111). The animals accept this reversal without protest, illustrating how repeated exposure erodes critical resistance. This parallels how contradictory narratives coexist on social media without accountability.

### **Memory, Revisionism and Historical Amnesia**

Control over memory is central to the consolidation of power in *Animal Farm*. The gradual alteration of the Seven Commandments exemplifies historical revisionism. When the animals notice changes, they are persuaded that their memories are faulty (Orwell 79). The truth is not erased but overwritten.

Hannah Arendt warns that persistent attacks on factual truth result in a society incapable of distinguishing truth from falsehood (257). Orwell dramatizes this condition when the commandments are reduced to a single paradox: “All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others” (Orwell 112).

This phenomenon mirrors digital amnesia in social media environments, where timelines prioritise immediacy over continuity. Contradictions disappear beneath new content, weakening accountability and enabling power to persist unchallenged.

### **Hegemony and Manufactured Consent**

Antonio Gramsci’s concept of hegemony provides a critical framework for understanding the animals’ compliance. Gramsci argues that domination is sustained through the internalisation of ruling ideologies as common sense rather than through coercion alone (12).

In *Animal Farm*, the animals accept harsher working conditions because they are repeatedly told that life is better than it was under Jones (Orwell 89). Boxer’s maxim, “Napoleon is always right,” exemplifies internalised hegemony (Orwell 56). His uncritical loyalty mirrors how digital audiences often internalise dominant narratives through repeated exposure.

The fate of Boxer further exemplifies how truth is manipulated to sustain hegemonic power. When Boxer is taken away in a van marked for slaughter, the animals momentarily recognise the betrayal, reading the words on its side (Orwell 95). However, Squealer swiftly intervenes, explaining that the van once belonged to a knacker but is now used by a veterinary surgeon, persuading the animals that Boxer is being treated (Orwell 96). Despite the clarity of visual evidence, the animals accept the revised narrative. This episode demonstrates how authoritative explanation can override direct perception, a phenomenon increasingly evident in the digital age, where official narratives and viral explanations often displace observable reality.

## Indian Thinkers and Ethical Dimensions of Truth

Indian political thought foregrounds the ethical implications of truth manipulation. Mahatma Gandhi's concept of *Satya* views truth as inseparable from moral responsibility. From a Gandhian perspective, the pigs' manipulation of truth constitutes moral violence. The public confessions and executions demonstrate how fear replaces ethical accountability (Orwell 84).

B. R. Ambedkar's emphasis on education and critical consciousness further illuminates the animals' vulnerability. The animals' inability to read enables the pigs to monopolise knowledge, paralleling the digital divide that allows misinformation to flourish in contemporary society.

Ashis Nandy's analysis of political psychology explains how fear and cruelty become normalised. Napoleon's use of dogs as instruments of terror reflects how symbolic violence sustains authoritarian control (Orwell 54).

## Discussion

The sustained textual parallels between *Animal Farm* and contemporary social media reveal that truth in both contexts is shaped by power rather than ethics. Orwell demonstrates that domination is most effective when it appears rational, necessary, and benevolent. Social media, despite its democratic promise, often reproduces similar structures through algorithmic repetition and emotional appeal.

## Conclusion

This paper has examined the manufacturing of truth in the contemporary world order through a close reading of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. The analysis demonstrates that Orwell's depiction of propaganda, memory manipulation, and manufactured consent closely resembles the functioning of social media today. By integrating Indian political thought, the study highlights the ethical consequences of truth divorced from justice.

*Animal Farm* remains a powerful literary lens for interrogating digital power. In an age where truth is increasingly mediated by technology, Orwell's warning against ethical erosion remains urgent and relevant.

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