CHAPTER II
BATTLING THE BEAST WITHIN

The moral values that a person is brought up with as well as his ethical grounding enable him to be a good human being. In addition, as an individual whose actions are codified in a society, the necessity to conform to the norms and mores of the society keeps him within the confines of reason. Nevertheless man’s propensity for evil is so innate that it can induce him to act in a way that may result in disrupting the moral fabric of life and cause the disintegration of the human entity. The failure to understand the evil that co-exists within his self is the reason for his irrational behavior. Only if man is conscious of this truth will he be able to tame the beast within him. It is this confrontation with the evil that Golding examines in *Lord of the Flies* through the imaginary beast.

*Lord of the Flies* draws its source from *The Coral Island* (1957) by R.M. Ballantyne where three boys, Ralph, Jack and Peterkin find themselves the sole survivors of a shipwreck on a coral reef of a large but uninhabited Polynesian island. The tale which has all the marks of an adventure thriller with food aplenty quickly turns awry with the arrival of two canoes engaged in a battle, landing on the island. The intervention by the boys earns the gratitude of the chief Tarao. Following this, Ralph is taken captive by some pirates who land on the island and is taken away in their schooner. On board he befriends one of the pirates, ‘Bloody Bill’ and when they land on another island, he meets Tarao again. Ralph is aghast at the practice of infanticide and cannibalism on the island. In an encounter between the inhabitants of the island and the pirates, Bill is mortally wounded and Ralph finds himself the only survivor. How Bill dies repenting for his evil life, and Ralph manages to sail back to the Coral Island makes up the rest of the story.
Likewise, in *Lord of the Flies*, a bunch of British schoolboys are delighted at their newfound freedom when they find themselves shot out onto an idyllic island when their plane crashes. Ralph, a fair haired boy calls to order an assembly with a conch found by Piggy, a fat boy prone to bouts of asthma. What begins as an exciting adventure with all the promises of a Utopian fantasy quickly turns into a violent and brutal nightmare. As the story unravels alternating between law and order represented by Piggy, democracy represented by Ralph and dictatorship represented by Jack, the island quickly turns into anarchy as the evil instinct in the boys surfaces. Juxtaposed between civilization and savagery, the voice of law and order expressed by Piggy or Simon’s saintly voice of reason, goes unheeded.

Voted chief, Ralph quickly assumes charge, instructing the survivors to work towards two goals, to have fun and to keep a fire going to draw attention. Jack Merridew, choir head, is entrusted with headship of the choir-turned hunters, besides responsibility for the fire. The semblance of order quickly gives way to chaos as the hunters go after a pig, in the process neglecting the fire and losing their chances of rescue by a passing ship. Meanwhile the “littluns” on seeing a dead parachutist in the dark, believe that the island is inhabited by a monster despite Simon’s pleas that the monster is not outside but within them. Triumphant over the killing of the pig whose head is stuck on the pole, hereafter referred to as “lord of the flies”, the hunting game becomes more animalistic with Simon and Piggy falling prey to Jack’s fury. Ralph is then hunted down by the savages with ominous glee round the island. As the terror stricken Ralph collapses at the feet of a naval officer who appears on the island on seeing the smoke signal, he cannot help breaking down and crying inconsolably.
Is evil innate within the human spirit, or is it an influence from an external source? What role do societal rules and institutions play in controlling or suppressing evil? Does the capacity for evil vary from person to person, or does it depend on the circumstances each individual faces? Golding in *Lord of the Flies* attempts to answer these questions through the responses of the school boys -Ralph, Piggy, Jack and Simon, to the situation they find themselves in. Caught in the grip of fear psychosis, the schoolboys lose control of their impulses and their sense of reasoning and turn savages as the divide between the rational and the irrational collapses.

2.1 THEMES

The conflict between savagehuman impulses and rules, order and a structured system of a civilized society is one of the central ideas in *Lord of the Flies*. This conflict between civilization and savagery is depicted throughout the novel by the fair haired Ralph and the violent Jack. While Ralph resorts to authority to lay the rules for the good of the boys in keeping with the moral and ethical code he has been brought up in, Jack seeks gratification of his primitive impulses through raw power. As soon as he assumes leadership of his tribe, he not only demands total surrender from the group but expects to be idolized, clearly indicating his insatiable thirst for power. Ralph on the other hand, knows the importance of the smoke on the mountain, “We’ve got to make smoke up there—or die” (87). Through Ralph, the need for order and rules for the stability of a community is strongly expressed. Where does the civilizational impulse that seems to seize the boys on the island come from? How do human beings behave when there is no one to monitor this impulse? How these and other related ideas and concepts play out and
how different people react to these issues and take decisions, form a major subtext of *Lord of the Flies*. Other concerns include the tension between the group and the individual, between rational and emotional reactions, and between morality and immorality.

The novel also treats the theme of “the end of innocence” (225) bemoaned by none other than Ralph at the end of the novel. The same boys who exhibit childlike behavior alternating between fun, enjoyment, homesickness and fear at the beginning of the novel, reflect the warlike behavior of adults, ready to attack, torture and kill at the least provocation. The island that is referred to as a paradise with its idyllic scenery, fruits and sunny weather is transformed into hell much like the Biblical Garden of Eden from which were banished Adam and Eve when they fell from grace. The snake is replaced by the “snake-thing” initially and later by the “beast” which leads to the final tragedy. Nature too seems to partake of this drama in the form of the impenetrable wall that the ocean tide resembles and the storm that comes in the wake of Piggy’s crashing into the waves. In Chapter Three, Simon finds the forest glade he retreats to, peaceful and beautiful but when he goes back, he is terrified to find the pig’s head stuck on a stick and swarming with flies, another symbolic reference to the loss of innocence. This is further reiterated by Ralph’s initial belief in the early part of the novel, that they will be rescued by his father, a naval officer. The belief soon turns into the hope of being rescued by a passing ship that might spot their signal fire, to losing hope completely, tracing the journey from idealism to pessimistic realism.

Golding depicts the boys’ fall from grace as they end up unable to distinguish between themselves and the pigs they are hunting for food and sport. In Chapter Four
where the hunting scene is re-enacted with Maurice as the game, the savage glee shown by the boys as they circle around the victim is unmistakable. The sadism gets more intense in Chapter seven when the ritual is repeated with Robert as the victim. As the frenzy is worked up to a feverish pitch, they come close to killing him. Their constant reference to pigs and boys in their ritualistic games reflects on their dehumanized behavior. The more they resort to this brutal activity, the more it becomes a part of them to the extent of not being able to distinguish between man and beast, not surprisingly leading to the brutal murders of Simon and Piggy as well as the attempt to kill Ralph. Simon, the “saint” who seeks refuge in nature and who believes that the beast is not outside but within them, is mistaken for “the beast”, a mythical creature which serves as an outlet to the boys’ fear. Poor Piggy whose name itself is symbolically linked to the wild pigs on the island serves as the target of Jack’s violent impulses. Golding through the repulsive behavior of Jack and his gang shows that the loss of innocence can lead to unruly passion which defeats all sense of reason.

There is also a sense of forced exile from the beginning. The first sign of the feeling is expressed by Ralph who believes that his father, who is “a commander in the Navy”, will rescue them and Piggy responds anxiously “When’ll your dad rescue us? (8)… Nobody don’t know we’re here… we may stay here till we die” (9). Although they are thrilled that “here at last was the imagined but never fully realized place leaping into real life” (10) and decide to have fun “until the grown-ups come to fetch us” (33), deep down, they are aware that “the plane was shot down in flames. Nobody knows where we are. We may be here a long time” (32). Despite rubbingish the idea of the existence of a “beastie or snake-thing” on the island, they “want to be rescued” (36). When on the
orders of Ralph, the boys light up a fire as a smoke signal, Piggy is not too pleased and feels that the shelters should have been built first, “How can you expect to be rescued if you don’t put first things first and act proper?”(45) When Jack expresses his wish to catch a pig first before being rescued, Ralph’s reaction is one of indignation “Don’t you want to be rescued? All you can talk about is pig, pig, pig!”(55)

Fear of the unknown is another powerful theme treated in Lord of the Flies. While the day passes off clamoring after berries and wild fruits, “when the sun sank, darkness dropped on the island like an extinguisher and soon the shelters were full of restlessness” (61), making the littluns suffer untold terrors in the dark and huddle together for comfort. Despite the reassurances from the older boys that there are neither beasts nor ghosts, there are murmurs of something moving in the dark outside their shelters. When Percival, one of the boys is asked about it, he breaks down and the littluns too join in, “reminded of their personal sorrows; and perhaps felt themselves to share in a sorrow that was universal”(93). The initial euphoria of the absence of adults and the excitement of having the island to themselves quickly turns sours with things going wrong and Jack parting ways with Ralph and Piggy to command his own hunting group. The worsening situation is expressed through Piggy, “I wish my auntie was here…Grown-ups know things …They ain’t afraid of the dark…They’d meet and have tea and discuss. Then things ‘ud be all right”(101) and Ralph joins him crying desperately, “if only they could get a message to us… if only they could send us something grown-up… a sign or something” (102). Even as the boys patch up and go hunting together, “the brute obtuseness of the ocean, the miles of division” (121) gave one the feeling of being clamped down, helpless, condemned. Ralph’s thoughts take him back to the coziness of home and his parents.
Tired of the never ending wait, Piggy says, “I got a pain in my head. I wish the air was cooler. I wish the rain would come. I wish we could go home”(163). Though outwardly they try and put up a bold front, deep down the boys are fearful of imaginary monsters, the dark unknown which descends at night assuming a monstrous identity. There is a constant feeling that something is behind them all the time. Their fear turns into an expression of collective wrath with one of their own falling victim to it. The constant fear of being annihilated and the need to safeguard himself dominates the human consciousness. Man feels secure only by mercilessly getting rid of all opposition to his authority, whether real or imagined. It is this same frustration of wanting to conquer the unknown that makes the hunting party under Jack resort to killing.

Another important theme that Golding has explored in *Lord of the Flies* is man’s relationship with nature. As sole survivors of the plane crash, the boys have their first contact with the natural world. In the absence of any adult survivor, the youngsters are left to fend for themselves. How the different boys connect with their completely new environment mirrors their personalities as well as their ideological leanings. Their relationship with nature can be grouped under three categories – subjugation of nature, harmony with nature and subservience to nature. Jack’s impulse to rule over the natural world is expressed though his desire to track, hunt and kill pigs. What initially appears to be a flight of fancy takes a dramatic turn as the novel progresses, resulting in total contempt for nature as Jack resorts to setting on fire the virgin forest. Simon, on the other hand is the epitome of love and peace. Quite at home with nature, Simon often retreats into the cool shade of the forest glade. While Jack is painted as a savage with a bloodthirsty desire to conquer the island, and Simon is in union with nature as part of the
human experience, Ralph differs from the two. He is shown to prefer the openness and warmth of the beach to the wilderness of the forest, showing perhaps his affinity towards a civilized world. Golding through the depiction of the characters of Ralph and Simon drives home the point that despite the savage instinct, there exists in human beings some goodness.

While acknowledging that there lies in human beings a savage instinct, Golding feels that it is necessary for society to provide an outlet which is demonstrated through Jack’s desire to hunt. So long as this savage impulse can be channelized for a productive cause, it can be fruitful but when it crosses the rules of civilization, it spells danger. As long as Jack confines to the rules of the game, everything is fine but the moment he chooses to defy Ralph, the negative traits of his character emerge.

Civilization represented by Ralph and the primitive impulse represented by Jack keep clashing and taking different turns. The opposing ideologies are evident in the two boys’ attitude towards authority. While the former tries to establish authority by enforcing the moral and ethical conduct of the English society the boys were accustomed to, Jack overrides him, seized by his primordial impulses and when he does assume leadership by force over his ‘tribe’, demands total subservience from them. Jack is triumphant as the dominance of ‘the lord of the flies’ marks absolute savagery. Ralph’s destruction of the lord of the flies to use the stick as a spear marks the ruin of civilization. The conch, associated with Ralph, is a sign of an attempt to establish order on the island and the pig’s head with flies buzzing around it, with Jack as a mark of apparent evil. The explosion of the conch signifies the end of civilization on the island.
Though Golding is not totally against savagery in human beings within the rules of civilization which can actually bechannelized for the good, as in the tracking of the pig for food, his allegiance is certainly with civilization. Although he is aware that savagery is an inherent part of human existence, he feels it should be kept under check or else it will lead to chaos, disorder and moral degradation. So long as the boys conformed to the rules of the game, everything goes well but the minute they break the rules, disaster strikes.

*Lord of the Flies* also offers a study of conflicting interests – the individual versus the community. The problems that surface on the island – the putting out of the fire signal, the unwillingness to build the shelters, the desertion of Ralph’s camp and the brutal force in the murder of Piggy - clearly point to the interest of the individual over the community. Individualism is symbolized by Jack who wants to have fun on the island, giving vent to lusty pleasures. Ralph who desires a secured life for the boys through a concerted group effort represents the community. The boys, lured by the unbridled freedom and pleasures promised by Jack, follow him, shirking their duties of building shelters and watching over the signal fire. The boys’ decision to join Jack’s tribe arises from a promise of absolute freedom. The reality that this freedom is illusory as Jack tends to resort to more irrational rules and punitive measures than Ralph, to enforce authority, comes as a rude shock. That group dynamics can work only at the sacrificial altar of individual interests is the message that Golding seeks to convey. In fact the very strength of a society is based on the need for collective consciousness, the absence of which can only spell disaster, chaos and confusion.
Lamenting over man’s fall from grace, Golding blames the human tragedy on man’s selfish nature, his prejudices, ego, intolerance and lust for power, which blind him from seeing the evil within him and the good in others. Tracing the defects of society back to the defects of the individual, Golding believes that man can attain salvation only if he is able to recognize the delusion of the mighty image that he has created of himself and destroy it. Fear, alienation and exile are the outcomes of the conflict between savage human impulses and order in a civilized society. Since submission to the savage impulses results in death, destruction and a collapse of the social order, man should be cautious about the pitfalls.

2.2 CHARACTERIZATION

True to the trappings of a fable that will appeal to children, Golding has chosen to narrate the adventure tale through children. All the characters in Lord of the Flies are in between childhood and teenage. The choice of this “in betweenness” suggests that Golding had a specific purpose. Since rebellion is associated with teenage, and responsibility with young adulthood; children who are free of worries and cares, not having to assume responsibilities, seem the best choice to depict the debauchery they can land themselves in. Children are also symbols of the “undeveloped self” or the child in the “id” state which can be easily led astray, besides being representative of man’s underdeveloped state.

The use of an exclusive male cast could also be a deliberate choice as horror tales with all its violence are more associated with boys. Another possibility for the choice could be the representation of the adult world of war and bloodshed where only men were
involved. Of the boys who are from a school in Great Britain, some of them are ordinary students while others like the choir boys have been under an established leader. The novel recounts how the boys, who find themselves in a paradisiacal island far from civilization, regress into a primitive state. Emerging as one of the protagonists is Piggy who represents law and order. Described as “an outsider, not only by accent but by fat and ass-mar, and specs and a certain disinclination for manual labour” (68), it is Piggy who sights the conch in the tidal pool and on its retrieval tells Ralph that they can call for a meeting with the help of the conch. With an instinct for organization, Piggy cannot accept the unabashed freedom of the boys that leads to chaos and disorder. Agreeing to build a fire as a smoke signal, the boys rush towards the mountain and in the melee that ensues, one of the younger boys goes missing. Added to this is the fire getting out of control which makes Piggy furious enough to admonish them for behaving “like a pack of kids” and ask, “How can you expect to be rescued if you don’t put first things first and proper?” (45) Even when deserted by almost all the boys, Piggy’s faith in the conch is unflinching as he shouts out to Jack’s tribe, “Which is better - to have rules and agree, or to hunt and kill?” (200) Ironically in an atmosphere of savagery and bloodshed, the sane voice of Piggy sounds feeble and as fragile as the conch to which he holds dearly, paying for it with his life as “the rock struck Piggy a glancing blow from chin to knee and the conch exploded into a thousand white fragments” (201).

Despite his fat and childish self, Piggy seems sharp. On surviving the crash with Ralph, it is Piggy’s idea to call for a meeting to see if there are other survivors. When talking about being rescued and Piggy wants to know how Ralph’s father would know that they were there, Ralph says that he would be told at the airport to which Piggy
replies, “Not them. Didn’t you hear what the pilot said? About the atom bomb? They’re all dead” (9). It is only Piggy who is conscious of the grave situation they are in, “Nobody knows where we are. Perhaps they knew where we was going to; and perhaps not. But they don’t know where we are b’cos we never got there” (32). Seeing the boys run behind Jack the minute Ralph makes known their status on the island, Piggy comments scornfully, “like kids! Acting like a crowd of kids!” (37) To the level headed Piggy, given the reality of being stuck on an island for God knows how long, building shelters should have been their priority, “The first thing we ought to have made was shelters down there by the beach.’ (45)…Then when you get here you build a bonfire that isn’t no use. Now you been and set the whole island on fire. Won’t we look funny if the whole island burns up?” (46) The reference to shelters assume significance as they represent not only homes but social institutions and establishments to which one needs to conform if order has to be maintained. Piggy’s concern for his fellow beings is evident as he is the first one to realize that one of the boys is missing, consumed perhaps by the fire, “that little’un, him with the mark on his face,…Where is he now?”(46)

When the second meeting is called by Ralph to set a few things in order and to allay the littluns’ fear of a beast, Piggy seems the most knowledgeable, “You have doctors for everything, even the inside of your mind…Life is scientific…In a year or two when the war’s over, they’ll be travelling to Mars and back. I know there isn’t no beast – not with claws and all that…but I know there isn’t no fear, either” (90). Piggy rubbishes the existence of a beast, sure that everything can be explained and relating fear to nothing more than the fear of other people. This theory though is not accepted by the littluns whose experience is otherwise and who believe that the beast comes from the water.
Troubled as he is by his asthma, Piggy is equally terrified of Jack which he expresses, “youkid yourself he’s alright really, an’ then when you see him again; it’s like asthma an’ you can’t breathe” (101). On mistaking the dead form of the parachutist on the mountain top to be the beast, the boys are terrified of going back to keep the fire going on the mountain. Even then, it is Piggy who suggests, “we got no fire on the mountain. But what’s wrong with a fire down here? A fire could be built on them rocks” (142). When Jack and his hunters come and snatch Piggy’s spectacles to make a fire, Piggy is indignant and is prepared to go and demand it back from Jack, “I don’t ask you to be a sport, I’ll say, not because you’re strong, but because what’s right’s right. Give me my glasses…you got to!” (190) When Ralph and Piggy accost Jack and his party to demand the specs, Piggy makes an attempt once again to have some sense of order, “Which is better – to be a pack of painted niggers like you are, or to be sensible like Ralph is?” (200) The true friend that Piggy turns out to be, it is not for nothing that at the end, when they are rescued, Ralph “wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of man’s heart and the fall through the air of the true, wise friend called Piggy” (225).

Ralph, the first of the survivors plays a significant role in *Lord of the Flies*. Elected chief because of his size, appearance and most importantly because of the conch with him, Ralph quickly dons the role assigned to him. Quick to grasp the situation, Ralph lets Jack decide what he wants to be, seeing the mortification on his face on not being voted chief. The first order that he gives after exploring the island is to make a fire to serve as a smoke signal and to build shelters as homes. Despite the group agreeing to the simple rules that he lays down, he soon realizes that rules mean little when they cannot be enforced. He vents his fury on Jack and his choir boys for not tending to the
fire, losing in the process the first chance of being rescued, “there was a ship. Out there. You said you’d keep the fire going and you let it out!” (74) Furious at the lack of responsibility from Jack’s party, he calls for an assembly, “not for fun…But to put things straight” (84). Telling them once again about the importance of the smoke signal on the mountain, the need for the shelters and to defecate only in the chosen location near the rocks, he asserts his authority, “You voted me for chief. Now you do what I say” (87). When a later assembly ends in chaos with an outburst from Jack showing total disregard for rules, and Piggy tells him, “You got to be tough now. Make ‘em do what you want” (99), he responds with reason, “If I blow the conch and they don’t come back; then we’ve had it. We shan’t keep the fire going. We’ll be like animals. We’ll never be rescued” (99). When Jack breaks away, Ralph and Piggy are “eager to take a place in this demented but partly secure society” (167), and partake of the hunting game where Roger acts the pig and in the melee that follows, Simon who comes crawling out from the bushes is mistaken for the beast and killed. Ralph values Piggy’s words and stands up for him when Jack belittles him. When Piggy’s spectacles are taken forcibly by Jack, Ralph goes fearlessly to his camp to retrieve it but fails and in the ensuing confrontation, Piggy is struck down with a rock and meets his watery grave down on the rocks. In the end, with everyone deserting him, Ralph is left alone to fend for himself. Hunted and hounded by Jack through a burning forest, Ralph flees for his life, only to be rescued by a naval officer from a cruiser.

Simon presented as the ‘saint’ or ‘Christ-figure’ is the peace-maker between Jack and Piggy. As he walks “through the acres of fruit trees where flower and fruit grew together on the same tree”, Simon is the one who finds for the “littluns” “fruit they could
not reach, pulled off the choicest from up in the foliage” (57). Simon is the only one who seeks a close communion with nature under “the creepers and the bushes” and is absorbed in “the sounds of the bright fantastic birds, the bee-sounds, even the crying of the gulls that were returning to their roosts” (58) and watches in wonder as “the candle-buds opened their wide white flowers glimmering under the light that pricked down from the first stars”, spilling out their scent “into the air” (59). More than the saintly qualities that Simon may be intended to possess is that he is the only one who seems to be one with the heat and the cool, the dampness and decay of the forest glade and the beauty and fragrance of starlight and night flower, unlike the day dreaming Ralph and the beastly Jack. The most sensible of the lot, it is he who recognizes that the beast is within them. Simon cannot think of “a beast with claws that scratched, that sat on a mountain-top that left no tracks”. What comes to his mind when he thinks of the beast is “the picture of a human at once heroic and sick” (112). While to Ralph and Piggy, what is wrong on the island is Jack, and to Jack, a beast to be propitiated, that man is inherently evil and that there is something of it in all of them including himself is known only to Simon. Simon represents the noble values that human beings require to maintain sanity in a world infringed by insanity.

According to Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor, while Ralph desires more than just to build shelters, “to domesticate, to ward off terror by social community, to civilize, to provide against the littluns’ nightmares the security of ‘home’”, Jack “rediscover[s] in himself the instincts and compulsions of the hunter that lie buried in every man” (29). As he moves forward with his head raised and breathing with flared nostrils to assess the air, “the compulsion to track down and kill” (51) seems to be eating him. In this forest which
offers itself not only to hunt but also be hunted, Jack descends quickly into savagery with the evil instinct of every human being surfacing and from then on, hunting the pigs become an obsession as is expressed by “the opaque, mad look” (54) in his eyes.

When the conch is blown in the beginning to call an assembly of the survivors, Jack’s dramatic entry with his marching choir and his treatment of the boys, smacks of authority and arrogance. Unlike the others, he insists on being addressed by his surname Merridew. His dislike of Piggy is evident when he says, “you’re talking too much, shut up, Fatty” (17). When the question of a chief is sounded, Jack feels he ought to be the chief “because I’m chapter chorister and head boy” (19). Reconciling to the fact that Ralph is the obvious choice, he assumes the role of head hunter willingly and plays the role to the hilt. As the three, Ralph, Jack and Simon go exploring the island, Jack’s habit of driving his sheath-knife into a tree-trunk hint at a lurking bestiality waiting to surface.

Realizing that they would be stranded on the island for quite some time, Jack is more excited because, “there’s pigs, there’s food; and bathing-water in the stream…-and everything” (33). His passion to hunt is supreme. He dismisses the fear of the “snake-thing” expressed by the little boy with the mulberry coloured birthmark saying, “There isn’t a snake-thing. But if there was a snake we’d hunt it and kill it” (35). His imperialistic attitude is perceived when he agrees with Ralph that they need to have rules, “After all, we’re not savages. We’re English; and the English are best at everything” (42). While Ralph pulls Jack up for letting the fire die, losing thereby a chance of being rescued, Jack is more excited about the pig they have killed and how he “cut the pig’s throat” (73). When Piggy admonishes him for the same reason, Jack, perhaps unable to accept the loss of morality in his lusty thirst for blood, vents out his frustration and anger
on poor Piggy by smashing a lens of his spectacles. To Jack whose experience as a hunter reassures him that there is no strange animal on the island, fear is something that is a part of man especially if he finds himself alone in the dark and it is something that can be lived with, just like hunting and killing. The beast in Jack keeps emerging to challenge authority and to reassure him, “Bollocks to the rules! We’re strong- we hunt! If there’s a beast we’ll hunt it down. We’ll close in and beat and beat and beat” (99).

After a successful hunt, the boys relive the hunting experience by re-enacting it with Maurice as the pig and almost kill Robert in a similar scene later. As they gratify their base desires, the line of difference between boys and pigs quickly disappears, making it easier to harm and kill when they actually kill Simon screaming, “Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood!” (168). Lost in this madness, little do they realize that ‘the beast’ is nothing but a mythical inhuman creature that serves to justify the children’s fear.

With the triumphant hunt of the sow and reveling in the feast that followed, showing utter contempt for the conch, Jack establishes his leadership as “power lay in the brown swell of his forearms; authority sat on his shoulder and chattered in his ear like an ape” (165). Jack is the unfazed dictator who will stop at nothing to have his pound of flesh. History has been and continues to be witness to many Jacks who have been ruthless in their conquests.

The “littluns” in whom can also be seen traces of the destructive element are given equal focus as the “biguns” to show perhaps that despite being little boys, their masculinity is as strong and their urge for evil, as deadly. There’s Roger and Maurice who romp through the castles, destroying everything that Henry, Johnny and Percival had
built on the shore; Maurice who throws sand into Percival’s eye and hurries away, remembering with unease the chastisement he had received for “filling a younger eye with sand” (63) in his other life, a reminder of the moral aspects that he has been brought up with. The glee of the little hunters as they celebrate a kill is also unmistakable.

Of the two smallest boys on the island, Johnny, the one to appear first to the sound of the conch, is described as “a natural belligerence”, while Percival is “mouse coloured and had not been very attractive even to his mother” (62). Henry, the biggest of the three, is fascinated by “the tiny transparencies” brought in by the great Pacific tide which “like a myriad of tiny teeth in a saw came scavenging over the beach” (63) for bird droppings and insects and Henry “absorbed beyond mere happiness, found himself exercising control over living things” (64). Johnny’s “natural belligerence” and Henry’s “exercising control” show the basic elements of human nature. The urge to bully and control is evident even among these kids proving that the human instinct for evil is something innate. Roger’s sadism is a little restrained. He throws stones at Henry and yet he does not dare throw to harm, as “round the squatting child was the protection of parents and school and policemen and the law and Roger’s arm was conditioned by a civilization that knew nothing of him and was in ruins” (65). What Golding perhaps wants to imply here is that morality is the result of social conditioning and not something inborn. The donning of face paint by the young hunters is a disguise to get away from the fragile world of morality that reminds them of civilization and the necessity to conform to rules. The breakaway from civilization comes when Jack who had let a piglet go in the beginning, now manages to spear through it and revels in the knowledge “that they had outwitted a living thing, imposed their will on it, taken away its life like a long satisfying
drink” (74). In a world that seeks gratification through violence and bloodshed, all norms of culture, decency and decorum are thrown to the winds. Nothing is allowed to come in the way of their ultimate pleasures. In fact the unrest and lack of tolerance all over the world could be attributed to this selfish need.

In this exciting tale that turns into a bloody nightmare, women are completely absent. There are brief references to an aunt who apparently brought up Piggy, “I used to live with my auntie. She kept a sweet-shop. I used to get ever so many sweets” (8) and Ralph’s fond memory of the time before he was sent away to school, when “mummy had still been with them and daddy had come home every day” (122). The absence of women seems a conscious decision as the novel is based on war which in essence is predominantly the result of male power struggle. It could also be that Golding like many others did not want to associate women, considered the fairer sex, with such violence and bloodshed.

An analysis of the social strata in the novel reveals that Golding could be painting a society which believes that a woman’s role is in the confines of home, providing succour and comfort. In fact the references by Piggy and Ralph to the mother figures as well as the smaller boys, who cried for their mothers, seem illustrative of the second reason. It could also be that the author is ambiguous about the correlation between women, evil and violence while being more certain about this in men. Another possibility could be that it is unimaginable that women would resort to such brutality, or that girls or women are too dumb witted to be part of such high drama. The depiction of the characters of Simon, Roger and Piggy could also be a pointer to the absence of women as all the three characters are allegorical representatives of certain historical figures. From a
psychoanalytical point of view, the absence of women actually provides the boys an ideal situation to get away from the clutches of cultural constraints and be in the natural behavior. Despite the unbridled freedom displayed by the boys, the constant reference to women or mother figures is suggestive of women’s role in providing emotional strength.

Children being the best symbols of the ‘undeveloped self’ where the tendency for the natural urge for primitive impulse is most natural, Golding has made use of them in his narrative. Ralph, Piggy, Jack, Simon and Roger are allegorical characters of historical figures who have played important roles in charting the course of history. Ralph is depicted as the victim of the evil forces he helps create; Piggy, as the sane voice of reason; Jack as the cruel and savage dictator; Simon as the Christ figure who is martyred and Roger as the sadist. Through a binary portrayal of his characters, Golding shows that order or disorder is the result of the moral impulses of individuals in the society.

2.3 POINT OF VIEW

Written during the first years of the Cold War, which began with the civil war in China and ended in the Korean War, the events arise in the midst of World War II. Golding’s personal involvement as Officer in the Royal Navy in the sinking of the Bismarck, one of the strongest German ships, gives authenticity to the narrative. As the action takes place during an atomic warfare, the underlying message about the dangers of ideological warfare seem evident.

The power of a good narrative is in its telling and Lord of the Flies with its racy narration and lucidity of style fits into that category, meeting Conrad’s prescription: “by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel… before all, to make
you see” (Weekes & Gregor 15) The novel, written mostly in the indirect narrative style often resorts to the direct narrative which adds realism to the narration. Through the depiction of the war, Golding seeks to convey that the world is not the reasonable place we believe it to be, that power corrupts and that one has to live with “the darkness of man’s heart” (225). The boys, in the absence of adults form their own government, gods, totems and taboos. Their behavior is interpreted from three angles – as a parable of man stripped of sanctions, customs and civilization; as democracy versus anarchy; and the story of the Fall of Man in the Garden of Eden. Having had firsthand experience of the war, Golding had been witness to the brutalities that went with it. At the same time that all is not lost and that good and bad can exist side by side is shown by the behavior of the boys on the island. Through the novel, Golding’s philosophy is revealed, that “salvation and sanity seem to lie in the complete and honest understanding of the evil that resides in us” (Hodson 18).

*Lord of the Flies* manages to create and retain the suspense till the end through a total fusion of form and meaning. Through the organic development of a thematic structure, Golding has succeeded in giving life to an experience. Commenting on Golding’s style, Frank Kermode says “Golding’s novels are simple in so far as they deal in the primordial patterns of human experience and in so far as they have skeletons of parable. On these simple bones the flesh of narrative can take extremely complex forms.” Through a reconstruction of Ballantyne’s *Coral Island*, Golding leads the boys on a blazing trail of adventure and finally links it to Ballantyne’s happy ending albeit ironically, because unlike the happy ending of *Coral Island*, the naval officer who
appears to rescue the boys is representative of the same atomic world that they had been shot out from and to which sadly, they had to return.

Beginning with the spotting of the conch by Piggy, assuming of leadership by Ralph, the forming of the two groups which later divide, the fear of the beast, the killing of Simon and Piggy, the chase of Ralph through a blazing forest by Jack and the final rescue by the naval officer – Golding has managed to build the readers’ interest till the climax. The fabulist that he is, Golding has through the lavish use of ideas, images and symbols given a picturesque rendering to his novel. The shell, the unliving thing, is given a new social purpose as the sound of the shell is used to summon the boys together. Ralph’s association with the shell makes him be accepted as leader and being the symbol of assembly, the conch becomes the symbol of democracy and the right to free speech. Every time a boy cries out that he has got the conch, the idea of law and order is instilled. The strength it carries cannot be more poignant than in the scene where Piggy confronts Jack and his tribe and shouts, “which is better, law and rescue, or to hunt and kill?”(200). Unfortunately the response that comes at that stage is unmistakable. The shell whose sound spelt a coming together of the society ends in a murderous explosion on the rocks signaling the end of peace.

In Golding’s narrative, the play of the physical senses takes precedence over the social purpose it is meant for, as is shown in the trouble undertaken to disentangle the shell from the green weeds, the description of the brilliant fish and the design on the cream and pink shell. Initially looked upon as a plaything whose farting noises delight them, the use of the conch as a tool for calling an assembly comes when “clouds of birds rose from the tree-tops, and something squealed and ran in the undergrowth”(12).
Presented in allegorical form, *Lord of the Flies* has managed to capture in essence the negative impact of war not only on individuals and their social relationships but on the social order as well. While Ralph is the embodiment of democracy, the flaming red haired Jack represents the military dictator. The appearance of the naval officer at the end of the narrative reiterates two facts, opposing but true – that he too is a representative of militaristic warfare and yet someone who seeks an end to it. In Golding’s view, any war, even if waged in the name of civilization can cause humanity to behave barbarously, and the boys, immature as they may be, represent the impulses that prevailed during the period.

The fragility of civilization expressed through the failure of culture when confronted with a crisis, is shown through the group of British school boys who end up almost exterminating each other when their efforts to establish order in the island fail. Golding’s bitter experience in the war makes him bemoan this tragedy of human existence where evil is the inherent nature of man. The title is said to be a reference to the Hebrew name of Beelzebub, “god of the fly”, “host of the fly”, or literally “Lord of Flies”, a name sometimes used as a synonym for Satan. The title of the book, in turn, has itself become a metaphor for a power struggle in a chaotic situation.

Throughout the novel, the conflict is dramatized by the clash between Ralph and Jack, who respectively represent civilization and savagery. The differing ideologies are expressed by each boy’s distinct attitudes towards authority. In Golding’s view one of the important functions of a civilized society is to provide an outlet for the savage impulses that resides inside each individual and that while savagery is an inescapable fact of human existence, civilization can mitigate its full expression. Kinkead-Weekes & Gregor
believe that “for Golding, the Evil Tree grows in the human brain, in human consciousness, and emblematic and conceptual reductions are dangerous manifestations of the Fall” (21). The reference to the Evil Tree could possibly be drawn from William Blake’s poem, *A Poison Tree* appearing in *Songs of Experience* (1794), dealing with anger, revenge and death where the poet while exploring his darker side extends the exploration to the darker side of the human condition.

In *Lord of the Flies* the children look for an external manifestation of evil in the pig’s head, refusing to accept Simon’s admission that evil is within them. The conch has an ambiguous meaning, changing to suit the mindset of the boys. The very conch, the sound of which stood for order and democracy is spurned when power goes to Jack’s head and is reduced to nothing in the last scene where Piggy’s holding out the conch as a magic talisman ironically ends out to be his death knell. In contrast to *The Coral Island* where the three British school boys, Jack, Ralph and Peterkin are idealized in their tropical paradise, Golding in his adventure tale, shows the true nature of the boys who after all are human beings and are likely to possess the same traits as adults. Behind the idyllic lush green surroundings which evokes a paradise, lurks an unmistakable and sinister deceptiveness which reveals itself in patches, for instance, “the marching choir and the way Jack treats it, recalls an army world of authority, arrogance and callousness, rather than the holy singing their uniform suggests” (Kinkead-Weekes 24). Also as a harbinger of violence is the description of Jack’s angry blue eyes and the manner in which he drives his sheath-knife into the tree-trunk, the camaraderie between Jack and Ralph as when they find themselves alone on a branch and the seemingly innocent hunting and chasing games the boys play which later turn into bloody realities. The initial
excitement at the sound of the s hell to call to order an assembly according to the rules of the game gives way to the desire to inflict punishment, not surprisingly, as it is also part of the games boys play. Though presented under cover of children’s adventure games, the allegorical reference to real war games that adults indulge in, is obvious. The description of the boys as well as their actions bears resemblance to personalities who have determined the course of history in real life, like Hitler and Stalin.

While at the first assembly, the thrill of being on an island of plenty without adult supervision was evident, the fear psychosis brought about by the unknown, is palpable in the second assembly through the report of a ‘littlun’ about a ‘snake-thing’ or ‘beastie’, and which quickly spreads to the others. The sense of irresponsibility due to sheer negligence reaches its height when the fire that is lit threatens to consume the island.

“Small flames stirred at the bole of a tree and crawled away through leaves and brushwood… One patch touched a tree trunk and scrambled up like a bright squirrel… The bright squirrel leapt on the wings of the wind and clung to another standing tree eating downwards. Beneath the dark canopy of leaves and smoke the fire laid hold on the forest and began to gnaw… The flames…crept as a jaguar creeps on its belly…They flapped at the first of the trees, and the branches grew a brief foliage of fire….and then went swinging and flaring along the whole row of them …The separate noises of the fire merged into a drum-roll that seemed to shake the mountain” (44).

The power leashed out by the fire not only turns “the squirrel” into a “jaguar” but evokes “the savage” in the boys who stand in “awe at the power set free below them” and watch as “a tree exploded in the fire like a bomb…tall swathes of creepers rose for a
moment into view, agonized” (44-7) The “drum-roll” announces not only of the savagery that is to follow but the ceremony of execution as well and with it the shattering of peace in the Garden of Eden. The novel’s major symbols are the conch, representing order and calm, associated with Ralph, and the lord of the flies, representing disorder and anarchy, associated with Jack. The conch, the sound of which brought the boys running to assemble loses its significance in the course of the conflict between Ralph and Jack, marking also the decline of civilization. With Jack also reiterating that the conch is meaningless as a symbol of command and order, and not surprisingly with it, the decline of its symbolic significance, the focus shifts to the lord of the flies, an offering to the mythical beast. The beast assumes significance as a symbol of the emerging power of savagery and with it Jack’s rule, not only to keep out the “outsiders” but also to instill a sense of fear in the others who might challenge his authority.

Belonging to a generation that had its upbringing during the war, a period of disillusionment and disenchantment, what appalled the young Golding was that the brutalities were not committed by some primitive tribe in the Amazon but “coldly by educated men…men with a tradition of civilization behind them, to beings of their own kind.” Golding fears that the inability of man to understand and control his impulsive nature might eventually lead to the disintegration of human entity and disruption of the moral fabric of life. Through an examination of the predicament of modern man which recalls the fall from grace of the first man, Golding not only envisions the pre-historical past but the present and the future as well. The fall, as Golding suggests “is not the result of sudden rebellious act, but the inevitable concomitant of the ability to progress from
acceptance to mastery, from unreflective natural calamity to intelligent self-conscious control.” (Iyer, Preface).

While Ralph and Jack dismiss the fear, Piggy or the voice of Golding adopts a scientific approach, “Life is scientific, that’s what it is. In a year or two when the war’s over they’ll be travelling to Mars and back. I know there isn’t no beast – but I know there isn’t no fear, either…Unless we get frightened of people.” (90) and Simon too adds, “Maybe there is a beast…What I mean is… maybe it’s only us.” (95). Both Piggy and Simon try to bring out the brutal fact that the beast lurks within the self, implying that to awaken it or not rests with the self. The ‘littluns’ though refuse to accept this bitter truth and prefer to externalize the beast, in air or in water. In the idyllic surroundings that they find themselves, nature in all its generosity has a lot to offer but just as adults would behave, the boys are subject to jealousy, hatred, selfishness and greed, proving that their world is but a microcosm of the adult world. The children engage in the war games that adults indulge in, abusing science and technology. Realization dawns only at the end of the narrative when on seeing the island “scorched and up like dead wood” and Simon dead, “Ralph wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of man’s heart, and the fall through the air of the true, wise friend called Piggy.” (225) The reference is to Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899) which is a thematic exploration of the relationship between savagery and civilization, and of the colonialism and the racism which is part of imperialism.

According to Leighton Hodson, Golding in *Lord of the Flies* shows how evil is dormant in human nature and how the world may appear a sunny place when in fact the corruption of darkness can arise from man himself and cast shadows over it” (22).
Explaining how the boys in *Lord of the Flies* differ from the ones in R.M. Ballantyne’s *Coral Island*, Hodson says it’s because people “would not behave like that if they were God – fearing English gentlemen and they went to an island like that. Their savagery would not be found in natives on an island. (23)

The evil that Golding dwells upon in *Lord of the Flies* is not something that can be dismissed as farfetched or something that only adventure tales are made up of. While acknowledging that science and technology have progressed to an unimaginable extent having a positive bearing on the lives of human beings, Golding bemoans the fact that the same science and technology have impacted human values to the extent of bringing the downfall of the humankind. The crises that plague human beings leading to an erosion of values and shattering the social order, are self created. Convinced that humanity is suffering from a disease, Golding attempts to make people examine the disease by alluding to the disastrous events of war, the disintegration of human entity and the disruption of the moral fabric of life. By this he hopes to awaken the consciousness of the people to the paradise that they have lost and perhaps reform themselves before it is too late.

Talking to Jack I Biles (1963) about *Lord of the Flies*, Golding said “*Lord of the Flies* was simply what it seemed sensible for me to write after the war, when everybody was thanking God they weren’t Nazis. And I’d seen enough and thought enough to realize that every single one of us could be Nazis… what it comes to is this: that Nazi Germany was a particular kind of boil which burst in 1939 or 1940 or whenever it was. That was only the same kind of inflamed spot we all of us suffer from, and so I took English boys and said, “Look. This could be you”” (3-4). Despite the picture of hell let
loose, Golding believes that all is not lost. Lying dormant in every human being is the evil beast waiting to be awakened and the ability to tame it or not, rests with the individual. While Jack and Roger fail to control it, Ralph and Simon struggle to contain it by appealing to the ethical and social codes of conduct which should govern human society. These social norms that bind human beings with its moral codes have to be internalized in order for good to prevail.

Sadly the ironic turn that *Lord of the Flies* assumes shows a failure on the part of society to curb evil since the naval officer who appears out of the blue to rescue the boys himself is engaged in the bloody war that shot down the aircraft which crashed on the island. So the blood thirsty coup that threatens to consume the island seems to be rather an extension or internalization of the same norms and ideals that govern the adult society which justifies war. Whether the violent behavior of the boys is a natural outburst arising from an inherent evil instinct or the result of experiences of the war torn circumstances they were raised in, *Lord of the Flies* offers an interesting introspection into complex relations in society, morality and human nature, social order and their role in controlling our base impulses. Golding, by emphasizing on the negative impact of savagery clearly indicates that he is on the side of civilization. What Golding chooses to convey seems to be that despite evil being part of our existence, it can be controlled and it is the responsibility of human beings to stay away from evil by learning from past mistakes.

Disturbed by the inability of man to understand and control his evil nature which ultimately destroys him, Golding makes an appeal to the saner side of the human consciousness to recognize this evil. Examining the disease mankind is suffering from, Golding tries to rouse the consciousness of human beings in regaining the paradise that
they have lost. Conflicting interests and the pursuit of power lead to tensions which result in social disorder. Since an individual is shaped by society which is in turn shaped by him, it is man’s responsibility to be aware and keep a check on his savage impulses in order that social order be maintained. Though man’s rise to consciousness is responsible for his progress, Golding attributes his fall from grace to the same consciousness.