



# ‘An exploration of Pride and Nationalism in George Orwell’s ‘The Sporting Spirit’

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- **Abstract:**

In the essay ‘Sporting Spirit’ George Orwell has demonstrated anti-sport perspectives. He has written this essay after witnessing the football match between England and Soviet Union. He suggests that sport is an unfailing cause of ill will. It creates bitter relations between two nations. He argues that sports played at the international level should promote goodwill or friendliness between nations. But in reality it creates animosities, hatred, jealousy, boastfulness and ill-will. Therefore he does not favour any competitive sport played at any level. He ironically shares the bad feelings between the teams played at international level.

The main objective of this research paper is to investigate the significant attributes such as pride and nationalism in George Orwell’s ‘The Sporting Spirit’. Here the research wishes to highlight the situation that the sporting spirit in any game is war minus the shooting. He relates sporting spirit to pride and nationalism. The paper also delineates the reality that sports played at international level can only be a mimic warfare. In this regard, he reveals the current status of sports in current scenario. The researcher highlights the several causes for the rise of the modern cult of sport and focuses on the fact that serious sport has nothing to do with fair play.

- **Keywords:**

Anti-sport views, goodwill, animosity, passion, jealousy, pride, nationalism, mimic warfare

- **About the Author:**

George Orwell is the pseudonym of Eric Arthur Blair. (1903-1950). This British author was born in Bengal. In the year 1922, he joined the duty of Indian Imperial Police and witnessed the British imperialism. ‘Down and Out in Paris and London’ (1932) was his first book under the pen name of George Orwell. ‘Burmese Days’ (1934) was his first fictional work. Then he wrote the high-flying works such as ‘A Clergyman’s Daughter’ and ‘The Road to Wigan Pier’. Later, he joined the duty of Home Guard during the Second World War and worked for BBC to compose and socialize wartime misinformation. He anticipated and allegorized these occurrences in his most

popular novels like *'Animal Farm'* and *'Nineteen Eighty Four'*. The central ideas of George Orwell's work are: the philosophy and perils behind dictatorship, exploitation, misinformation, individualism, self-determination and control. His writing is concise, direct and journalistic. He never uses insinuations, descriptions and imageries in his writing. He describes surroundings and characters very effectively.

## • Introduction:

The present paper focuses on the pride and nationalism in George Orwell's *'The Sporting Spirit'*. Let us try to understand these two key terms in detail.

### Pride:

*'Pride is the consciousness of satisfaction that you have when you or general public who are close to you do something exceptional.'*

The word *'pride'* is derived from the French word *'prud'* which means *'brave'*. It is the sagacity of having estimation of oneself. It essentially manifests self-centeredness. It is a multifaceted derivative sentiment that develops logic of self. As per Merriam Webster, pride can be defined as,

*'.....a reasonable self esteem or self-assurance and contentment in oneself.'*

Oxford defines pride as,

*'.....The quality of having high judgments of oneself.'*

Pride is the source of all malevolence. It is viewed as a virtue as well as vice. It is virtue in the form of righteous pleasure, magnitude of spirit etc. It would be a vice as a self-importance, disrespect, self-idolatry etc. Richard Taylor comments about pride,

*'.....the justified love of one's own excellence.'*

## • Nationalism:

*'Nationalism is the desire of a group of people who share the same race, culture, language, etc. to form an independent country.'*

It is an idea that holds that nation should be harmonious with the state. It also endorses the wellbeing of a particular nation. Its aim is to achieve and continue the nation's self governance. It holds that each nation should oversee itself and should be liberated from external obstructions. Nation is an accepted and ultimate foundation for a overview and it is the authentic basis of opinionated authority. It constructs and preserves nationalized distinctiveness, harmony, autonomy and integrity. The prominent features of nationalism are ethnicity, civilization, geographic locality, verbal communication, political affairs etc. It seeks to safeguard and promote a nation's customary traditions. It is used to validate ethnic, cultural and spiritual separations and demoralize human rights and autonomous customs.

## Objective of the Paper:

The objectives of the paper are as follows.

1. To explore the concepts such as pride and nationalism in George Orwell's *'The Sporting Spirit'*.
2. To correlate sporting spirit to nationalism.
3. To delineate the realities of sports played at international level
4. To juxtapose the causes for the rise of the modern cult of sport

## • Materials and Research Methodology:

The data and information presented in this study were analyzed, scrutinized and verified on the basis of theoretical and psychological aspects. The method employed for this study is practical oriented and based on practical considerations.

## • Literature Review:

1. Dr. M. Kasirajan Assistant Professor Dept. of English, P. Manimaran, Research Scholar, Bharathiar University Coimbatore, *'Sports as a Bifurcating Aspect of Two Nations: A General View on George Orwell's The Sporting Spirit'* Language in India, Vol-19, Issue-6, June 2019

In this article, the researchers have attempted to write about the actual status of sports in detail and how it bifurcates two nations. Degradation of human community is reflected in modern and post modern era through sports. The games played between two countries create bitterness, produces friction and disintegrates the nationalism.

2. Beck. Peter. *'War Minus the Shooting'*, George Orwell on International Sport and the Olympics  
George Orwell has depicted about the reality of international sports. His article 'The Sporting Sport' is published I December 1945 in Tribune. He represents his hostile attitude towards the Stalinist totalitarian regime in the Soviet Union. He envisages that sport is the significant tool of nationalism by citing the Dynamo Moscow Football Team's visit in 1945.

The researcher has delineated his research perspectives and offered a new dimension to the earlier topics by citing the critical and eye opening issues such as utility of sports, its current status, political predilections and vicious passions of players, local sport and international sport, pride, passion, greed, rivalry and nationalism among the teams, the true nature of sporting spirit and modern cult of sports through the research paper entitled as *'An exploration of Pride and Nationalism in George Orwell's 'The Sporting Spirit'*

## • Implication of Sport:

Sports are very indispensable for every human being. It keeps them vigorous and offers corporeal as well as cerebral growth and strength. It also keeps our all organs attentive and our hearts become stronger by recurrently playing some kind of sports. It develops the persona of people. in addition, it amplifies the blood stream in the

whole body. It increases self-reliance and diminishes stress. By playing outdoor games, the imperviousness of the body augments. Thus sports are played for robustness, infatuation and accomplishment.

### • **Political Partiality and Ferocious Infatuations:**

In the opening scene of the essay, George Orwell opines the standpoints of many philosophers about the arrival of Dynamo Football Team,

*'Sport is an unfailing cause of ill will.'*<sup>1</sup> (TSS : Page 4)

Here the writer reveals political preferences and brutal obsessions that football evokes. At the Arsenal match, the writer is enlightened about the match that a British and a Russian player struggled against each other; they gave heavy blows to one another and the whole multitude jeered the adjudicators. Russian Newspaper 'News Chronicle' point out that Arsenal was not an all England team. Thus the consequence of the Dynamo's tour fashioned unmarked hostility on both sides.

Someone also reported to the author about Glasgow match was complimentary for all from the beginning. Then there was a gigantic disagreement about the composition of the Arsenal team,

*'Was it in reality an all England team, as argued by the Russians, or merely a league team, as asserted by the British and did the Dynamos conclude their tour unexpectedly in order to keep away from playing an all England team?'*<sup>2</sup> (TSS : Page 4)

This hullabaloo sustained to reverberation for the years in the addendum of history books.

George Orwell feels astounded by hearing the certainty from people that,

*'Sport generates benevolence between the nations and that if only the ordinary peoples of the humanity could congregate one another at football or cricket, they would have no proclivity to assemble on the battleground.'*<sup>3</sup> (TSS : Page 4)

Here the writer cites an example of 1936 Olympic Games,

*'International sport competitions lead to carouse of abhorrence, one could construe it from wide-ranging ideologies.'*<sup>4</sup> (TSS : Page 4)

### • **Current Status of Local and International Sports:**

George Orwell reflects his observations about present sports system. He asserts,

*'Nearly all the sports practiced nowadays are competitive. The players play to win and the game has little meaning unless they do their utmost to win.'*<sup>5</sup> (TSS: Page 4)

He also comments that these players do not have any feeling of local patriotism. In fact, they should play for the fun and exercise. When they win the match, nation feel proud about their victory. They appreciate them for their extraordinary work. They consider this win as a festival and celebrate as a grand success. On the contrary, the question of prestige arises if they lose the match. They feel disgraced, irritated and behave like a destroyer. Their savage combative instincts get awakened.

Further Orwell divulges the current status of matches played at international level,

*'At the international level, sport is outspokenly like a impersonate conflict but the noteworthy thing is not the conduct of the players but the approaches of the viewers and behind the audience, of the nations who labor themselves into vehemence over these ridiculous competitions.'*<sup>6</sup>. (TSS: Page 5)

The writer presents the circumstances of numerous sports such as cricket, football, boxing etc. *Cricket*, the game of vacation, demands the elegance rather than potency. It can cause much ill motivation. The readers can observe the disagreement over body line bowling and over the forceful strategies of the Australian team that visited England in 1921. *Football* is the game in which the players get injured. Every nation has its individual technique of play which seems inequitable to foreign persons. There is a most horrible condition in case of a *boxing*. In this cosmos, we can envisage the most atrocious landscape and it is about the struggle between white and coloured boxers before an assorted audience. It is the sardonic truth that boxing spectators are constantly repulsive and the behaviour of army women does not permit them to attend its contests. Here he shares his experience as an official of Home Guard,

*'Two or three years ago, Home Guards and customary multitudes were holding a boxing competition. I was positioned on protector at the entrance of the hall, with orders to keep the women out.'*<sup>7</sup> (TSS: Page 5)

- **Co-relation between Games Playing and Nationalism:**

George Orwell speaks about the association of games playing and chauvinism. He asserts that the fascination with sport is appalling. The undomesticated excitements are stimulated in young countries where games playing and patriotism are both current enlargements. In Burma and India, the police fortification is prearranged for football matches. The police are allotted to keep the crowd from invading the field. He further offers an example of Burma,

*'In Burma, I have observed the followers of one side smash through the police and immobilize the goalkeeper of the opposite side at a decisive moment.'*<sup>8</sup> (TSS: Page 5)

Orwell shares his experience of Spain where he had witnessed a football match played fifteen years ago in Spain. There was an irrepressible insurgence during the match. Thus the sensation of enmity created in the players of both team. When such hostility creates, the impression of fair playing of game according to the rules evaporates. People assembled over there craving to envisage perceiving one side on top and the other side mortified. In such scenario, people do not memorize that conquest gained through unethical way or through the interference of the multitude is worthless. Even when the spectators don't interfere physically they weep to manipulate the game by cheering their own side and throwing opposing players with mocking and verbal abuse.

- **Orwell's Notion of 'The Sporting Spirit':**

The writer highlights the actuality that solemn sport has nothing to do with a fair play. It is bound up with detestation, covetousness, arrogance, ignorance of all rules and aggressive enjoyment in witnessing violent behavior. In reality, it is combat minus the shooting. He looks at the numerous discernment and approaches of smugness, enthusiasm, resentment, xenophobia and revulsion. To prove the fact, he shares some of the examples of the sporting spirit. For instance, showing reverence for two nations by participating in national anthem, shake hands with the other team before and after the game, applaud and carry the team mates by saying 'good shot; or 'good try', not to disparage the team mates, treating other team with high opinion, stay away from banter or harassment other team, accepting calls and not to dispute with the officials etc.

Further he adds that sportsmanship is the precise strength in which a game is played. In fact, it is the procedure of accepting ones accomplishment with unassuming nature. It helps to deal with disappointments that come in our path and to make demanding labors to accomplish achievement in supplementary endeavor. It also aims to enhance the way to focus and endeavor to be successful in the next game. A perfect sportsman, according to Orwell, plays a game for the pleasure and satisfaction. He is neither winded by a triumph nor disheartened by a defeat. He remains ever the unchanged both in misfortunes and affluences. It exemplifies the individual potency, understanding, endeavor and optimistic realization. The strength of sport is the merriment of the human spirit, body and intelligence. It is reflected in our ethics such as moral principles, fair play, truthfulness, physical condition, luminosity in performance, temperament building, team work, commitment, dedication and admiration for rules and laws and for other team mates.

- **Modern Cult of Sport:**

George Orwell comments that instead of talking senselessly about the hygienic, vigorous enmity of the football field and the great part played by the Olympic Games in bringing the nations together. It is more constructive to make inquiries how and why this contemporary cult of sport arouse. Most of the games in recent days are of prehistoric origin. Especially in the Roman times and the nineteenth century, the sports have not been taken seriously. Even in the English public schools, the games cult did not initiate till the latter part of the last century. Dr. Arnold is regarded as the exponent of the modern public school. According to him,

*'Games are nothing but simply wastage of time.'*<sup>9</sup> (TSS: Page 5)

United States and England are the countries which encourage sports and elevate adequate funds for the enlargement of games. They invest money in profoundly financed activities, magnetize enormous crowds and provoke dreadful excitements. They broaden the infectivity of sports like football and boxing from one country to other. The main rationale of promoting these games is intensifying of chauvinism spirit among the players and the citizens as well. This self-importance and xenophobia creates the predisposition of recognizing oneself with outsized influence units and witnessing the competitive reputation. This is regarded as the outrageous contemporary convention. These

prearranged games prosper in urban communities where the middling human beings do not get many opportunities for imaginative industriousness. In villages as well as big towns everyone indulges in group activities and wants an outlet for their corporal power or aggressive inclinations.

George Orwell offers an idyllic example of sportsmanship of the countries like London, New York, Rome and Byzantium where the games are taken critically and played with much physical viciousness. The most noteworthy thing is that these games are not assorted with polluted political affairs and a sense of group hatreds. On the contrary, there is an enthusiastic sentiment of ill-will during the football matches played between Indians and British, Jews and Arabs, Russians and Poles, Italians and Jugoslavs, Germans and Czechs by a diverse audience of one lakh spectators. By seeing these most horrible circumstances of sports, Orwell sarcastically concludes the essay with the observation,

*'I do not recommend that sport is one of the most important origins of global enmity. In fact, it is big scale sport. I suppose, simply one more outcome of the causes that have fashioned patriotism. Still we propel a team of eleven men, sticker as national champion, to do encounter against some opponent team and permit them to overcome other team or nation with 'lose face'. Here we give confidence our young men to put the boot in each other on the shins among the roars of exasperated spectators.'*

### • **To Sum Up:**

George Orwell holds a conviction that when a game is played between two nations, they both should have equal probability of winning and losing. He powerfully asserts that both teams should demonstrate sportsmanship and vigorous competition against opponents. Orwell here expresses his anguish that there is lack of sporting spirit among the players who engage themselves in the games at international level. It is the hostility which keeps apart two countries and generate bitterness among them. Competitive sports are generating viciousness and it should be absolutely exterminated. In today's world, sports are become the foundation of satisfaction and advertising platform. Thus sporting spirit infringes the maxim *'unison is strength'*.

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