



## Swift's Use of Satire in *Gulliver's Travels*

Ankit Tyagi. PhD Scholar- English, S.R.M. University, Haryana

**Abstract:** This paper satirizes the politics involved in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. Through *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift attempted to satirize the proud eighteenth century population, who were too proud of the rapid scientific progress. Through my paper, I am trying to show how Swift uses *Gulliver* to satirize the society in the eighteenth century England and beyond. In showing Swift's satire of the social condition, the discussion of Lemuel Gulliver's voyages to four different lands becomes symbolic and significant. After going through his all four volumes of "*Gulliver Travels*" I believe that Swift does not hate men rather hate Satan in men.

**Key words:** satirize, voyage, Lemuel Gulliver, politics and Criticism

**Introduction:** *Gulliver in Lilliput* starts as a normal travel narrative with Gulliver describing himself and his life so far to the reader. He tells us of his intension of travelling and how he got a position as a surgeon on board ship. He sailed for a while before settling in London, marrying and starting a business that ultimately failed. The failure of his business prompts him to return to the sea where the adventure and real story begins.

**Voyage 1 and voyage 2:** His ship sailed into a rock and sank while he got away and finds himself shipwrecked on an island. Weary with battling the elements, Gulliver falls asleep on the ground at the island only to awake to find himself tied up. He then sees small figures all around him and realizes that his captors are small humanlike creatures. Gulliver surrenders himself to them and the Emperor of the island has him moved to the capital, where he is bound to an ancient temple which is only just big enough to house him. The Emperor appointed teachers for Gulliver to learn the language which he slowly does. Gulliver gets in the Emperor's favor because of his manners and receives permission to travel freely with some

restrictions though, such as not to enter the city. He has multiple conversations with the Emperor and the nobility and describes everything he sees with much detail, comparing the differences with his native England. Gulliver goes on to describe his stay on the island and what he does while he is there, how he prevents an invasion and a fire by his sheer physicality, and is given the highest honor for this by the Emperor. He then describes how he fell from favor with the Emperor and was impeached, so he makes his escape to the neighboring island of Blefuscu where he is celebrated. However, Gulliver has growing doubts about these small people and wishes to get home. He gets lucky as a small boat washes ashore and he makes his way from the Kingdom of Blefuscu. He had with him some provisions and a few of the miniature cattle and is rescued at sea by a passing ship which in turn returns him to his native England. He then tells us that he made some money by displaying his small animals from his previous journey and that he only stayed in England for two months. He sells his cattle and heads out for another adventure. On his second journey, the ship is carried off the intended course by a great storm. At last they see a land and



Gulliver is one of the people who go ashore for provisions. However, he is left behind when a giant scares the others, who flee on the boat. Gulliver is captured and brought to a farmer who takes him in. He gives descriptions of all the large things around him and his troubles with it as well as battling with rats. The farmer's daughter becomes fond of Gulliver and teaches him the language and takes care of him. The farmer finds a way to make a profit of displaying Gulliver to his fellow countrymen and brings him on the road to small towns and to the capital. The Queen of this land, Brobdingnag, learns of this peculiar being and has Gulliver bought from the farmer. Gulliver is brought to the King and has conversations with him, giving him great descriptions of his native England and Europe in hopes that the King can utilize some of the knowledge from Gulliver's society. Swift describes to the reader all the things Gulliver witnesses in the country and the country's political system compared to England's. He has several adventures, which he describes, most stemming from his littleness. These adventures, such as quarrelling with the Queen's dwarf, almost being squashed by an apple, playing with boats and houses specially built for him and being carried off by a monkey, are all described in detail. He also tells the reader how his relative size makes him see the ugliness of many things from this perspective of being much smaller than usual and of the many defects he can find with the Brobdingnagians. He grows homesick and as luck would have it, he is carried away by a bird and dropped into the sea, where he is saved by a passing ship. He returns to England and tells of his difficulty to adjust to normal sized society again, shouting everything he

says and finding everything very small, before telling us that he is heading out for a third voyage.

**Short Analysis of Book 3:** At the Grand Academy of Lagado, great resources and manpower were employed on researching completely ridiculous schemes such as extracting sunbeams from cucumbers, softening marble for use in pillows, and he was uncovering political conspiracies by examining the excrement of suspicious persons.

**Short Analysis of Book 4:** In the land of the *Houyhnhnms*, there were savage human-like creatures called *Yahoos* for which Gulliver conceived a violent hatred, and a race of horses, *Houyhnhnms*, meaning 'the perfection of nature'. Gulliver became a member of a horse's household and adopted their lifestyle and rejected the *Yahoos*. After his return to England from his forth voyage, Gulliver spent much to his time in his stable conversing with the horses. He was so disappointed after all his adventures into different lands and among different people that he rejected the whole of mankind and chose horses as company.

**Satire:** *Gulliver's Travels* had appealed to everyone; it was an interesting simple story for children and a challenging satire for adults, complicated enough to confuse them. Jonathan Swift, through *Gulliver's Travels*, showed the need for reason in the political interactions of England and Ireland during the reign of King George II. The ideas included the unjust ways and actions the royalty and the privileged class took against the working and lower class. Swift's work became prophetic and implied for 18th century England. Gulliver never fell short on 'new supply' or aspects of the



society to criticize. This enticing satire attacks several recurrent issues of Swift's satire and brings them all together under the same book. Thus, Gulliver surmises all of Swift's objects of satire beautifully, making *Gulliver's Travels* Swift's best piece of satire.

**Corrupt Politics:** Swift was certainly an interesting and in some ways peculiar man. He was somewhat of an opportunist, and he wrote of what he felt was needed. He criticized and satirized what he felt was wrong in society and especially in politics. Swift had his own opinions and did not blindly follow any party or social constitution. His views seem to have mellowed over the years and not be as radical, arguably the reason being that the government was always looking for dissenters and enemies to investigate or prosecute. Swift did not see members of other political parties as enemies but only those who truly were corrupt and not fit to be in charge. He does not offer concrete answers to the things he is criticizing in his writing but rather points out what is wrong and what can be done better. He was an idealist, even though he sometimes seems misanthropic towards the human condition and about people in general. He felt that man is in his nature corrupt and those who get to power are often the ones who are the most corrupt. However, he seemed to hope to open people's eyes and make them realize this with his writing. It is admirable to see that Swift stood up for what he believed in and tried to raise people's awareness. He masterfully defied the government in such a way that they could not impeach him since he was not breaking any laws

or making direct accusations or comparisons.

**Swift: Keen observer of Men:** Swift intended *Gulliver's Travels* to be a satire of eighteenth-century society in Europe, but much of what he wrote is still relevant today. Of course his criticism of the Hanoverian regime is aimed at British eighteenth century society, but the larger picture of being critical of the government is still a real point of truth and relevance. Even though contemporary scholars who analyze the book are mostly interested in the politics of the time, the book is a timeless classic in many other aspects. Pointing out the government's shortcomings and corruption of values is a leading aspect of critical thinking regardless of the reader's nationality or culture. The morality of man is another element that we are constantly looking at and judging and has a real relevance in today's society.

Much of the books' satire is, though, just reports of what Lemuel Gulliver sees and they would doubtless have been a success even though it had only been accounts and reports of the picturesque kingdoms which Gulliver came across during his travels. In fact countless children's versions of it have been made without saying anything on the moral or political context. Much of its attractiveness was to come up with the story between the large people and the small people but the books as they stand still owe most of their brilliance to their satire and hidden messages. Swift achieves this by incorporating Gulliver in the story and not making him a mere observer.

**Conclusion:** Through this book Jonathan Swift is attacking human pride and corrupt political system. Human beings



are micro but they possess macro pride. For swift Animals are more sane because in the world of animals there is no

politics or crime. Honestly this book arouses trivial prejudice in my mind for the entire mankind. Hats off to mr.swift.

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