

# Big Brother In “1984” & The Modern Era Surveillance

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**Abstract:** Mass surveillance is blessing and curse for our life. Modern Day surveillance has made our life risk free and at the same time our privacy is compromised. In the Book, 1984, the writer assumed a surveillance state where each and every aspect of human emotion is controlled by the ruling state. The key factors of our life like language, emotions are controlled and monitored by the state. People doesn't have anything to say anything as they are being manipulated psychologically to abide by the rules and regulations. In recent days people are also being watched and our movement is checked. The reason is our safety by eliminating the human threat, assessing the crime scene after checking the cctv footage, apprehend a crime in progress, monitor unlawful activities by the law enforcement agencies. On the other hand, we are being watched everywhere, we cannot express our opinions independently as for the controversy issues, our track record is kept for analysis, our personal data is being collected and checked which is really a matter of concern as we all have something to keep private. In this paper, the varying dimensions of surveillance are discussed and analysed in an empirical manner.

**Index Terms:** Big Brother, CCTV, Liberty, Privacy, Prism, Security, Surveillance, Tempora

## 1 INTRODUCTION

ERIC Arthur Blair, pen name George Orwell[1] was a writer, novelist, journalist, essayist as well as a critic. His views about British democracy and its future depending on some circumstantial evidence has resulted here in the book "1984"[2]. Here his imagination of being Britain, not a democratic state instead had some leadership like the then Germany, Russia, has been expressed clearly with a story in his book. In the book, the Big Brother is the so-called leader of the ruling party, and he is capable of tracking every citizen of the state and not only that also being able to understand the notion and vision of the citizens. Before jumping into the story, itself and the modern age consequences, a brief introduction and overview of the writer's life and his career is discussed. In this modern era, it seen that our privacy and security is also hampered in several ways. We are being watched always and our activities are being tracked both in virtual world and also in real world itself. Various concerned organizational body in the name of security is violating our privacy issues and our hands are tied every time someone tries to do good. In this paper surveillance on the common mass, its affect and effect is described based on the scenario of the boo "1984".

## 2 GEORGE ORWELL, 1984

### 2.1 The Writer

George Orwell was rather a controversial man than looking into everything in a very straight way. He used to see things differently. Not only the things, but also the events and situations happening in real words, like every little piece of happenings in and around us. There is one quote which is as follows "By putting the tea in first and stirring as one pours, one can exactly regulate the amount of milk, whereas one is likely to put in too much milk if one does it the other way round – A Nice Cup of Tea", London Evening Standard, 12 January 1946. [3].

Another famous quote of him is – “You are noticed more if you stand on your head than if you are right way up-” –collected form a biography article written in The Guardian in February 17, 2007[4]. So it is likely to be seen that, his vision towards the way of life was a bit more analytical and it influence him in his writing.

### 2.2 The Novel

The novel 1984 is one of the best crafted novels of George Orwell. It is also one of the most analytical novel of him. It gave a reflection of how a totalitarian government would look like and how the state will be autocratic toward the people. The totalitarian government can also be said as a surveillance state, where the people are surveilled almost all the time. They do not have any kind of privacy for themselves It is a novel or utopian and dystopian genre. Though the utopian is in negative sense. In his book George Orwell envision a state of surveillance, rather called as a surveillance state. It is the ultimate state of dictatorship. The people in this state will be controlled by one dictator both physically and mentally. They will be forced to limit their way of thinking. The citizen of this state will be instructed to think and to apply this in their real life too. The leader of this state will gain the ultimate psychological where he can materialize the thinking of his ever-ruling seasonal era.

### 2.3 The Plot

The reflection of his analytical and deep thinking has been introduced in this novel as stated before. The plot of this novel is more descriptive and explanative, it is represented in a rather brief manner below. The situation here is like, there are several characters in this novel. One of the main character is Winston Smith. He is a low-ranking citizen. As the plot is based on the state of London which is included in Oceania. But in London there are people who belong to various status. The citizen of the state is divided into different categories. According to the categories their rules characters are defined. So, Winston Smith is a working-class citizen, but he is watched everywhere he goes and everything he does, right from his home and on the way back home again. His life is his no more. He can't think and do anything freely. The “free” does not exist in the state of Oceania. Tele-Screen is lifted up everywhere. It is a device that watches over people's movement and activities, and even in this novel it is described

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that, the device can also catch peoples thinking and send them to the leader of the Oceania. The ruling party controls everything through this tele-Screen. It helps the party to monitor the people everywhere. Now, the party is planning and forcing on implementing a language in this state. If the language is implemented, the people will automatically be limited to think further. They will not be able to show or express emotions. The name of the language is Newspeak. If the thought of the people are controlled in an effective manner, people will not be able to commit crimes, because it will not be in their head. Moreover, they will not be able to any rebellious activities against the state. This kind of crime is called and it is one of the worst crimes in Oceania. Even if we compare it with our real life it is also a very dangerous crime, because before doing something we think of doing it, so if we can control the thought, we can control the crime Winston is frustrated and depressed about the state and his way of life. Actually, not only his but also the way of life of the citizens. The citizens are not allowed to think, not allowed to have sex or show any romantic feeling towards their partner. They do not have any individual feeling rather, should have a communal feeling towards the state. They are bound to be devoted to the party of the state rather than being an individual opinion. For all these reasons, he has negative feeling towards the party and develops a rebellious opinion towards the party. Very secretly, Winston manages to become a member of a illegal organization, which is planning to do some untoward activities against the party. He bought a diary, where he wrote his thinking. Another person named O'Brien, whom Winston believes to be a member of the Brotherhood knows about it. He among with the so-called Brotherhood plans to destroy the party and make the state as normal one. Winstons workplace is the MiniTru (Ministry of Truth). His job responsibility was to analyze and gather the records needed for the party. While doing so he realizes that, the state has always been in a constant state of war between Eurasia. He also tries to wonder if this was not true, if the country has not always been like this. But this state is now like this only for the leader of the party Emmanuel Goldstein. E spends his time wandering and wandering. He walks through the proles (Proletarians) of London. Meanwhile working in the Ministry of truth, he gets a note from a dark-haired girl whom he thought was the member of the party saying "I love you". After this incident, things have started to change. All his thinking have started to take into a new turn. The two person started to be in their secret but illegal love affair. They take a apartment in the same building here Winston bought the book. They started to live together. Though Winston knows the crime that he is committing is punishable. He will and must be punished sooner or later. "One of these days, thought Winston with sudden deep conviction, Syme will be vaporized. He is too intelligent. He sees too clearly and speaks too plainly. The Party does not like such people. One day he will disappear. It is written in his face."

#### — George Orwell, 1984

Meanwhile Julia (Winston's lover) gradually becomes optimistic towards being together. This also affects Winston's mind. The hatred grows stronger and stronger. Meanwhile, he receives message from O'Brien to meet him. O'Brien is member of the inner party and tells Winston as a rebel against the party. He also wants to destroy the party. He hands in book to Winston which is a manifesto of the Brotherhood. Now Julia

and Winston starts studying the facts of the book in their room. Within no time they are being arrested by the army along the shopkeeper who sold the diary to Winston. They both are taken to Ministry of love where they O'Brien again, who was actually a spy on behalf of the party. The torture begins for Winstons. He is tortured for months and even brainwashed for being a rebel. At last he is transferred to the most dangerous and final stage for the rebels, room 101. Here the rebels are tortured to the highest level and breaks their physical and mental strength. The mental condition are broken into the lowest point, where they won't have any further feelings and emotions. It is said that, they are tortured so much that, they will believe "2+2=5". So it is easily imaginable how their capacity and way of thinking are crushed into muds. In the end the party succeeds and Winston is released. Winston meets Julia once but he doesn't have not even a drop of feelings for her. The writer tells that; this is the thing that O'Brien wanted. To destroy the feelings of human. At last the party has succeeded and Winston now Loves Big Brother (the leader of the party). The quotes in this case is like following:

*"Power is in tearing human minds to pieces and putting them together again in new shapes of your own choosing." — George Orwell, 1984*

#### 2.4 Extracts from the Book

The totalitarianism is always harmful. The novel was kind of a warning towards the people of the world how an ultimate totalitarianism looks like, how their life will be in case of such state exists in real life. If such a state exists they will watch your every move. You are not an individual anymore. The most dangerous part of this thing is that, they will try to control your thoughts and your emotions. That means everything that you think of or even everything that you are thinking of doing next month will be revealed and if it is a slightly against the party, you will be destroyed. Psychological manipulation is also one of the main factors of this book. The citizens are watched everywhere. Their independent thought is not been considered and no oven given any opportunity. The giant telescreens are fitted into every citizen's room monitoring and showing everything. Even they can't be turned off. So this kind of things are also a hindrance toward the psychological manipulation of the people. The signs are on the street saying "Big Brother is Watching You". The constant torture and manipulation made people numb. Physical torture was also a part of the findings. The persons are also physically manipulated to control the psychological parts. Like the movements of a person's body persons were also recognized and reported. If any suspicious things occurred it is reported and punished by the party. And it is also written in the book that through physical torture people are believed to say that "2+2=5". Information about different facts were also manipulated. The citizens of the country were also not allowed to write anything. The individuals were not allowed to keep any historical records. The records, newspapers were motivated. So by reading these news people were really confused and they developed an very vague feelings inside themselves. In fact, it is in fact controlling the past and the present. Because, it is very easy to control the present if someone can control the past of some people or a nation. Technological motivations and advancements were also present in this time of the book. Telecreens were also an example of this. Moreover, whole city was bugged with microphones and cameras. People could not even speak of

anything. In the industries, the large scale of control of economic and financial productions existed. This were used upon the enemies.

### Language for mind Control

The main aim of the party was to control the feelings and emotions of the people. The party invented a whole new idea to do that. If we can limit the capacity of peoples' language that is limits the capacity of expressing the ideas of the people would not be able to bear any kind thoughts. For this reason, a new language was implemented which is called Newspeak [5] [2]. It is a new type of language which was to be implemented within 2050 to gain a total control over peoples' minds and thoughts. Some of the aspects of this language is:

- It is a fictional language of the book "1984" and to be implemented in 2050.
- It was kind of controlled of language of the Oceania.
- The language was mainly aimed at controlling the thoughts of the thought.
- The language limits the people's expression.
- The negative words would be removed. E.g. there will be no words like bad, rather it will be replaced by the word "ungood", but the sentence "Big brother is not good cannot be spoken"
- Synonyms and antonyms are eradicated. For example, think is thought are same meaning. one is noun and another is verb. So, the word thought is removed.
- The words are sometimes changed in the following manner.
- Suffix are to be added in case of adverbs like "-full" or "-wise". E.g goodthinkful, goodthinkwise

Better	Gooder
Best	Goodest
Great	Plusgood
Excellent	Double plusgood

There are some other words which are to be implemented also like MiniTru(Ministry of Truth), MiniLuv (Ministry of Love), MiniPax(Ministry of Peace). The prime aim of the paper is to bring an orthodox meaning of every word that is used. So that people will not be able to understand the meaning of the words that are used. The orthodox meaning helps to limit he express ability of the people and also the limit the thinking capacity of the people.

### 3 MODERN DAY'S BIG BROTHER

The big brother and the surveillance state the the writer imagine in 1949 was an imaginary state. Nowadays some article writers write about the modern big brothers and the surveillance state. In the modern era people are being watched everywhere almost in every place too. So now is it related to the modern ages too! Is it like the writers that has written in 1949 is true in modern ages? Some might think so and some might. A cultural club reading material of Oxford University [6] depicts that in London every people are monitored almost 300 times a day while moving. The cameras are mounted everywhere like in the parks, streets, parking lots, literally everywhere. There are some talking cctv cameras also which literally speaks up if any kind of mishap happens and provides instructions. So, it is a wired if people are watched on the streets and being talked about the instructions every time. Some students say that it makes them uncomfortable because

the cctv cameras are mounted everywhere even in the toilets. Some others also say that it makes them feel safer in the streets and even at home. If the people are mugged or hijacked the police can recognise the criminals very easily they say. The cctv cameras can prevent crime also. In the London bomb attack in 2005, the criminals were caught because of the courtesy of the cctv cameras mounted in different places. So it is not only the privacy issues but also the issues of decreasing the crime rates in the country, separated by periods. Initial paragraphs after the section title are not indented. Only the initial, introductory paragraph has a drop cap. So, the question is how does it even relates to the book 1984. In the novel, the writer envisioned about an imaginary surveillance state. Now, if we look closely we can see that the same thing is happening with us also. The cameras everywhere. We are being watched everywhere and anywhere. Our every movement are also being tracked. Our phone calls email and every other communication we make are being tracked and analysed. Even any word we speak over the internet or we write while searching are being tracked. People searching some suspicious words are watched in close and secure manner. Some whistle blowers have been able to identify these mechanisms and records. Edward snowed is one of them. He wan NSA analyst and has been able to disclose about the surveillance program Prism [7] [8] and Tempora[7][8]. Prism is a surveillance program of NSA and Tempora is a surveillance program of the British Government. While people felt safe communicating over the internet in some cases and also talking over the internet about some things which might make them prone to danger. It is opposite on the other hand. The whistle blowers and activists raise the issues of privacy here. The data are not being protected and kept secret, the data is revealed in to the concerned organizations for threat detection and also for some other purposes. But is it really only a liberty or privacy issues! Of course not. Some other issues are also involved here. The government have also to ensure the security of its citizens. The citizens vote for the government and elect their representative. They need to feel safe. So the implication rises here too.

### 4 LIBERTY OR SECURITY

These are the two complementing factors [10] now a day. These two words some times are opposite to each other. Liberty gives people not be under surveillance. They can move and walk freely, talk freely without having the fear of being watched over. But there are some problems also if this is happening. The any mishap happens; he can tell the police about it but the solving the problem would be very hard as they will not have any clue about the criminal. They will have a hard time solving the case and convicting the criminal. The criminals and terrorists will have ample opportunity to conduct their heinous activities. It will hamper the security condition of the society and the state. On the other hand, security removes all the confusion of these kinds of harmful activities and improve the law enforcing agencies activities. The police and the law enforcing agencies can have the opportunities to catch the criminals in right time. The terrorist activities can be apprehended. They can be tracked and their next activities can be known. So the comparison between liberty and security is never a win-win condition. We have to compromise the situation between these two terms as always.





**Figure 1:** Liberty or Security

#### 4.1 Concerned organizations

Nowadays there are some organizations which conducts mass surveillance on the people. In USA, the National Security Agency (NSA), after the 9/11, USA implemented the patriot act and under that act almost all the people had to go and still are under surveillance. The mass surveillance includes each and every data to be saved. Prism[7] is a surveillance program of NSA. It was revealed by Edward Snowden. It said that, every phone call, texts, videos are being tracked and watched for suspicious activities. The British government also conduct surveillance on its people. As already explained people are being watched almost 300 times a day in London. Moreover, any data that goes over the UK are being tracked and stored. It means that if any data from China through internet goes through or into UK, that data will be checked. Tempora[8] is a program run by British government[9] for conducting surveillance on the people of UK. In Germany, the data are also being checked over the internet and off the internet. These are some incidents happened in Germany which reveals these facts. Due to the data protection act in the EU, the surveillance is not done in a mass manner, but still due to the sake of security and protection of the people of the country and the state this has to be done. In other cases, the intelligent agencies of different countries are also considered to be the big brothers of these age. Because they are checking every data in their countries and also in other countries. These big brothers also analyze human behavior. After long time of study, they have been able to identify the behavior of the human doing illegal or terrorist activities. So these organizations also look for eye movement, facial expression and other body language to identify the potential threats for the society There are both advantages and disadvantages of this mass surveillance techniques. Both are given below to have a clear picture of the both sides.

#### 4.2 Advantages

In medical sectors, there are actually a lot of advantages of tracking the patients. For keep tracking about the health conditions of the patients, there are tracking activities going on. Especially for heart patients, it is very important for the doctors to keep track of their conditions. Moreover, the doctors and other hospitals also keep track of the major health issues

for cancer detection and cure also. Different health insurance companies keep track of their clients for getting their activities done like, whether they are not listening to the recommendations and also taking medications or not, so that they can conduct their services fruitfully. NSA[7] conducts global surveillance for counter terrorism and counter intelligence. The conduct this to watch if there are any suspicious activities going on around the world or not. Other different intelligence agencies also do so. Different car companies, specially in automated cars conduct tracking because of monitoring the driving skills and their conditions while driving. It helps them to improve their product and also to provide suggestions to the drivers. In the job sectors, the employees are monitored to check if they are working properly and also improving the job performance and other activities properly. Sometimes also the companies check if the employees are abiding by the rules and regulations too. There are also some advantages regarding the wellbeing of the citizens and people across the state.

#### 4.3 Disadvantages

There is always another side of the coin. So there is also some disadvantages of the surveillance and big brother. Sometimes this is done in a mass level so that, people feel annoyed and had to go some unexpected situations too. It is said that, those who have nothing to hide has nothing to fear. But, it is a very relative matter what to hide and what not. As there has been several incidents relating to this matter. Some example is given below. An academic from Humbolt University, Berlin had to go under surveillance for using just two suspicious words in his journals [10]. These two words are 'gentrification' and 'precarisation'. These words are used by the criminals' while admitting the crimes to the police after they have surrendered to the police. A few days ago there was terrorist attack in one of the international restaurants in Dhaka, Bangladesh. There was mass killing. The law enforcement activities were able to identify the attackers through the cctv footage of the restaurant and the road. So here we can see a whole different example. A teenager in Texas named Justin Carter [11] has to go to jail for just making a joke after exchanging message with this girlfriend. Though the text was about shooting the school students and eat them, but considering the whole scenario, it was really a joke that he made. So un necessary harassments also do happen often. So it is very hard to define what to say and what not to say in fact. Because if there is any kind of slightest activities or suspicion are shown that concerned person is doomed.



**Figure 2:** the joke of the teenager from Texas

## 5 CONCLUDING FUTURE

If we consider the factors of the book that has been considered here and implement the system fully in our real life what would be the consequences. It can be easily imagined like-

- We can't not read any unnecessary things
- We cannot think anything, even as a joke or for the purpose of argument
- We cannot joke around with friends and do anything like that.
- We will not be ourselves as a n individual
- It would be impossible to think of giving opinions too.

Probably, there will be a system where people will be tagged and tracked with some devices anywhere and everywhere they go. There will be all kind of information available. This might seem like a fantasy or science fictions right now, but who knows, it might be true some day! Now a day's people are being under close supervision to protect any kind of unprecedented incidents. Behavioural analysis [12] of human being has taken this technique to a new step. Using artificial intelligence this type of surveillance technique is also under way. It is to be noticed in some recent news that, the artificial intelligence [13] is trying to learn the human behaviour trough face detection and body part movements. The day is not far when it will reach a level where the writer's imagination in the book "Nineteen Eighty-Four" becomes true, but if the effect of this technique is same as the book it will not be a blessing for our society rather will be a very sad part of human history Might there will be something like Human finder website or a web portal dedicated for this purpose. Who knows!

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