



"ORWELL'S VIEWS ON IMPERIALISM"

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In the beginning of the twentieth century imperialism was a complicated issue for the writers and .politicians. They disputed for and against this issue and were not ready to compromise. Political parties used to debate over the question of imperialism. It was time when all the major European countries were trying to expand their empire by establishing colonies in the backward African and Asian countries on the pretext that they were trying to civilize, the savage people of these countries. While the reality was that the Europeans were merely exploiting these savage countries politically, commercially, socially and racially. Explaining the meaning of imperialism Plato says that its essence is to bring the savage people living in darkness to the enlightened world of knowledge. Jefferson Hunter believes :

*"Imperialism is a form of romance, one debater ventures, an enlarged sense of beauty and mystery of the world, or more prosaically, it is the connection under one crown of autonomous nations of one blood, who can spare something of their vitality for the administration of vast tracts inhabited by lower races."*¹

It provides opportunity to one race to exploit and humiliate another kind of race, John Gross elucidated this point in this way:

*"Imperialism is a system which enables one kind of men, if so minded to kick another kind of men with impunity. Its primary aim is profit, and since few imperialist can bring themselves to admit this openly, or at any rate officially, it also involves an endless amount of humbug. These advantages which it has conferred on the natives, usually for reasons of self interest, can never outweigh the resentment which all occupying powers are bound to arouse, even when they come bearing the gifts of sound administration and modern technology."*²

The exploration of new world outside England was the early twentieth century imperialism whose impact was felt on political conflicts. In Edwardian period conservatives were opposing liberals and liberals and liberals were antagonizing imperialists who were against little Englander. During this period three important incidents took place which showed the hollowness of British. Imperialism and its decaying spirit. These three events were disclosure of British cruelties in the Belgian Congo the Boer-war and the triumph of liberal party in British parliament in 1906. The confrontation on the issue of Imperialism gave writers opportunity to come with their criticism of colonial expansion. A. E.W. Mason in his novel, *The Broken Road* (1908) symbolizes road to British Imperial will to hold power over the different races and control them. It is also an abstract of views about British-Imperialism in India. Writers like E. D. Morel In *Affairs of West-Africa* (1903), Arthur Conan Doyle in *The Crime of the Congo* (1909) and Roger Casement in his report on *Belgian Colonial Practices in* (1904) threw light on the financial appetite of the Britishers their ill-treatment and exploitation of African workers, evacuation of villages and cruelties inflicted on the natives. These works also show the basic *Pretension of European-imperialism*.

In *Burmese Days* some Anglo-Indian characters are outright against natives whereas some are prepared to tolerate them with limitations. The conflict between the forces of imperialism and anti-imperialism has been presented by the novelist by offering a close analysis of their conflicting attitudes. Ellis, a timber merchant in Kyauktada, was one of those English men who loathed Orientals as an unclean people and felt disgusted by the idea of having a friendly or intimate relationship with them. His anti-Orientals attitude is expressed at the time when a directive has come from the government to elect native-members for the European Club, because he thinks that it will rob them of their private right. He calls them niggers. His strong hatred for the natives urges him to make the situation worse not only for himself but to other Europeans of Kyauktada. When Maxwell is killed by the villagers of Thongwa due to U Po kyin's plot, the racial hatred becomes tense in Kyauktada and none of the Europeans except Ellis thinks of taking vengeance. In another incident when Burmese students desire him he turns furious with rage and strikes on the eyes of one of them and thus makes him almost blind. This provokes Burmese and they surround the European club putting their life in danger. Ellis' superiority complex is so deep that he cannot tolerate the club-butler to speak in good English. He expects him to speak only pidgin.

In Ellis' view only discriminatory and cruel treatment would make the natives humble and submissive. He admired Dyer and his ruthless killings of innocent people in Amritsar and longed it to be done in other places. Later, after the burial ceremony of Maxwell, when he was going to his office and brooding on his murder, he came across a Burman carrying-bamboo stick who ignored him. Being irritated Ellis gripped his sticks tightly to provoke him for the altercation but in vain. He found the Orientals too clever and gutless fellows. They only used to jeer the Anglo- Indians. He dreamed for a rebellion from them so that they could be crushed like animals:

*Ah, for a real rebellion.....martial law proclaimed and no quarter given: Lovely, sanguinary images moved through his mind, shrieking mounds of natives, soldiers slaughtering them. Shoot them, ride them down, horses hooves trample their guts out, whips cut their faces in slices;*³

The above events show the extreme imperialistic attitude of the Britishers as well as the declining power of British imperialism.

In his treatment of imperialism, Orwell the radical socialist, comes remarkably close to Evelyn Waugh, the arch-conservative, for like Waugh, Orwell insists that the Whiteman's burden is a ridiculous sham, concealing syndical self interest, sadism lunacy incredible stupidity in both the colonialists and the natives. But Orwell could not laugh cruelly and maliciously like the author of *Black Mischief* at the posturing and idiocies of the supporters of the Empire.⁴

The theme of anti-imperialism is dealt with in his first novel, '*Burmese Days*' accusing the British imperialism for its lies, Flory, the chief protagonist, says that British rule in Burma is basically cruel and its chief aim is social and economic exploitation of the Burmese people. The technological progress has been done merely for their own advantage and not for the improvement of natives. Institutions like Schools, Jails, Law Courts, Hospitals are- actually meant for tainting the clean life of natives. Flory exposes how the imperialists have monopolized their trade and commerce through their excessive power and force them to suffer. Their cottage industries have been destroyed and now Burmese are unable to keep pace with modern advancement due to colonial rule. Thus the imperialist have wrecked the economic base of Burma. They have introduced only worst aspects of their civilization to Orientals. Their law and order system is based on racialism and natives are put into the Jail with slightest pretext. Orwell bitterly indicts the imperialistic feelings of Anglo-Indians who are not ready to make any relationship with natives and see them with hatred and suspicious.

Modern English Literature is flooded with the works conveying imperialistic and anti-imperialistic attitude of the writers. Orwell's hatred for imperialism was not sudden but it developed slowly as he lived and worked under Burma Imperial Police as a Police Officer during the dark period of 1919 to

1930s. It was the time when the Government of India Act (1919) was passed and Burma was not included in this reformative act. This enraged Burmese and they began to hate Englishmen. Burmese Student started jeering and mocking Englishmen and organized movement against them for political freedom. They were suspicious of the motives of imperial-rule.

Although Orwell's hatred of imperialism by his experiences in Burma and by his later poverty and sense of failure; these experiences in themselves were not strong enough to give him a secure political stance; neither was the rise to power of Hitler in Germany nor the outbreak of War in Spain. It was only when he went to Spain himself and witnessed at first hand the ruthlessness of both communist and Fascist demands that he reached a firm political stand point.

Thus, Orwell's socialistic conviction sprang not from what he read (that is, it was not doctrinaire), but from what he saw and felt and experienced.

These latter experiences turned the scale; he was no longer 'detached', he aligned himself on the side of socialism. As Raymond William says: "*He thought of himself as an anti-imperialist and an anti-fascist, as a believer in quality, and. only through these position as a socialist.*"⁵

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