CHAPTER-V

Eastern Ode to Western Thought: The Burnt Offering

“Oh! East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet”

These renowned lines by Rudyard Kipling from his celebrated poem “The Ballad of East and West” forms the basic skeleton of the novel The Burnt Offering written in 1910. This was the last novel written by Sara Jeannette Duncan on the theme of British-India. The novel deals with the imperial debate going on in India and it seems to be a parallel of The Imperialist, a well celebrated Canadian novel written by Duncan dealing with the theme of Canadian imperialism. According to Thomas Tausky:

Imperial troubles of another sort are examined in Duncan’s final Indian novel, The Burnt Offering . . . Duncan’s novel is simultaneously a condemnation of violence and the most sympathetic image of the Indian character to be found in her fiction. The result is an uneven work, nonetheless fascinating for its revelation of the extent to which Duncan had come to realize that Indians could be complex individuals, but it is also filled with melodrama and strident defenses of the principle of British rule. (1990, 103)

It is pertinent to mention that the Canadian counterpart of The Burnt Offering that is The Imperialist stands out as the most effective and comprehensive work by Duncan. This novel deals with the theme of imperialism in Canadian aspect. It is Duncan’s one of the most prominent, perhaps most worthwhile novel. This view is subscribed through
Anna Snaith’s remark that, “The Imperialist is Duncan’s only novel with a substantial Canadian setting and signifies literary home coming for Duncan, who had left Canada in 1885” (n.p.).

_The Imperialist_ is a novel written about Canada and its study leads to penetrate deep into the author’s attitude towards her own nation which was earlier a British colony. The novel deals deeply with the question of imperialism in Canada. Duncan’s wit and sharp observation led her to create such fictional characters and their constant struggle with the society, that the novel immediately grasps the attention of the readers. The style of writing is so objective that the reader feels distantly placed from where he can have a look towards the whole scenario without feeling any partial inclination towards either Canada or Britain. In _The Imperialist_, the protagonist, Lorne Murchison, loses the election because of a clash between his idealistic imperialism and the practical politics of the town of Elgin.

_The Imperialist_ is recognized as a regional novel set in Elgin and in its regional settings the novel can be compared to Thomas Hardy, Margaret Lawrence and R.K. Narayan. Duncan’s deep love and conviction for her home town gets reflected in this work of fiction. The dilemma in the mind of the British settlers has been beautifully portrayed in the novel. K. Mallika in this context observes that, “British in Canada are immigrant settlers who have ventured out of their native soil in search of freedom and best fortunes” (218). _The Imperialist_ is also a highly autobiographical novel as the characters of the novel conforms to Duncan’s family members and her close acquaintances. Thomas Tausky in _Dictionary of Literary Biography_ confirms this point and says:
The Imperialist is Duncan’s most personal book in that the town of Elgin and its central characters are clearly based on Brantford and the people most central to Duncan’s youth there. The Elder Murchisons in the novel are modelled on Duncan’s own parents, and Advena Murchison in her independence of mind and intellectual inclinations, has much in common with Duncan herself. Dr. Drummond, another important figure is based on Duncan’s own childhood minister Dr. Cochrane. (102)

The novel allows us to peep into Canadian society and have a glimpse of the turmoil going on there at the turn of the century when Canada was growing as an industrial nation. John Moss in A Reader’s Guide to the Canadian Novel writes:

Duncan has created an image of the times that extends from the family to the community of Elgin, to Canada and to the Empire. She renders the town with affectionate authenticity. Elgin is more than an accumulation of people and their statistics: it is the customs, manners, memories, and dreams of a whole organism, where place and people merge – the quintessential Canadian town. (95)

The novel emphatically portrays the life of the white community of British origin living in Canada. The Imperialist is dealing with the theme of colonial isolation and survival of the colonized. Lorne Murchison, the protagonist of the novel is a visionary and his active persona leads him to take an active interest in local politics. Lorne Murchison is a Canadian but he has firm faith in imperialism, and it is because of this faith that he joins the liberal party, which appears to support the imperialistic idea of
expansion. The Canadian format of imperialism requires a little description as it was not like the Indian version of the same. Misao Dean in the introduction to *The Imperialist* states that the 19th century Canadian imperialism was:

... that movement for the closer union of the British Empire through economic and military co-operation and through political changes that would give the dominions political influence over imperial policy. . . . They felt that the economic depression of the late 19th century could be remedied by creating a sort of free trade zone or in the language of the times a zollverein that would encompass all the colonies and former colonies of British Empire, and thus provide secure access to British markets for Canadian agricultural products and resources like lumber and coal. (18-19)

Lorne’s attitude towards the social and political life of Canada existing at that time was measured by British standards. When Lorne was selected by Henry Cruickshank to proceed with him on a deputation to England, Lorne felt excited and asked Dora in this connection, “Isn’t the very name great?” (*The Imperialist* 62) He felt a kind of fascination towards England. His idea was to establish a firm and never ending relationship with Great Britain. Although, Lorne was an imperialist and wanted to establish strong ties with the ‘old country’ but, during his visit to England he found people of England to be ‘resigned’ and ‘callous’. His observations made him think that people in Britain were poor and conservative; therefore he was very enthusiastic about the idea to get a chance to lead the empire. In *The Imperialist* the author seems to
celebrate the difference between the Canadians and the Englishmen. *The Imperialist* calls for a change in the attitude and the policies of the empire.

According to Lorne, the best way to give shape to his political ideas was to enter into the political set up of his nation through the medium of the elections. He was of the opinion that England should now give up the charge of domination and be ready to be led by the commonwealth nations. Although Lorne is conforming to England but, not their domination. For him the imperial idea meant that the old folks in Britain would come to accept the leadership of their future generations. For him imperialism was not the idea that he and his nation would submit to the domination of England but to attain powers enough to govern the Empire. He wanted this old country to bank upon its sons and daughters. It is apprehended:

Lorne is noble but not heroic, not because he fails to achieve his goals, but because his failure is not sufficiently heroic. In epics, nations are founded by heroes like Aeneas or Brute, the legendary ancestor of Britain, whose familiarity with the gods exalts their exploits. Modern nation-states also legitimize themselves by celebrating valiant founders whose quasi-divine powers are bequeathed to their descendents. (Kertzer 5)

Lorne fails in his pursuit to establish unique ties among his nation and England because he lost all touch with concrete social life. According to critics Vimal Dhawan and Jitesh Parikh, “Duncan rejected the idea of Canada as a dependency of England; she considered the Canadians and the Britishers as equals” (57). For *The Imperialist* Duncan “evidently worked hard . . . seeking documents on imperialism while in India and working industriously on the proofs while on an extended visit to Brantford” (Tausky
The Imperialist definitely has a tinge of postcolonialism as it is talking about identity and self assertion. There is a whole lot of exploration of the new ventures on part of the Canadians so that they may get a chance to run their own government.

Coming to the Indian scenario there is a counterpart of The Imperialist that talks of imperial relations between India and England and the novel is titled The Burnt Offering. Sara Jeannette Duncan’s ambiguity is clearly visible in The Burnt Offering as the Indian scenario has been taken into account and the Indian freedom movement also succeeds to find a place within the novel. The chaos can however be found as both the English as well as the Indian characters seem utterly confused. There is one globetrotting M.P, like Mr.Batchan of The Simple Adventures of a Memsahib, named Mr. Vulcan Mills who is “overcome by the ‘romance’ of India and the emotional adulation of Indians, and he begins to despise his working class constituents” (DPV 92) and there is a Swami Yadava, a Brahmin, totally believing in imperial order and wanting “a marriage of traditions between ‘Mother India’ and ‘Father England’” (DPV 91).

As the novel opens, many a times the narration leads the mind to think that the author has taken up an objective point of view however as the story moves further this assumption proves wrong. It appears that in her fictional world, Duncan can never have a word of compassion for India and its countrymen. British imperial forces find full justification with the author. Misao Dean in the introduction to Duncan’s novel The Imperilaist states that, “like Kipling whom she characterized as the inescapable forerunner of any novelist writing about India, she was interested in the future of England and the empire in an era of weakening British influence and burgeoning local nationalism” (13).
The novel unfolds very dramatically, when one Bepin Behari Dey, a Cambridge graduate, was not allowed to enter into a first class railway carriage by two Englishmen. “You can’t get in here, baboo. There isn’t room” (1) and upon enquiring about the number of passengers is the coach, he was replied, “never mind about that, Baboo. There isn’t room for you,” (1). Although Bepin was being insulted, yet he kept his temper low as he and his countrymen were accustomed to such kind of rude behavior on part of the colonial authority. Bepin looked inside and found enough space in the compartment and said, “I must insist upon coming is here’ he said. ‘You are but two passengers.’ ‘No, you don’t’ replied the English Sahib, ‘Get out of this,’ he exclaimed, ‘or damn it, I’ll hoof you out’ ” (2).

The Englishmen could not tolerate Bepin’s presence in their compartment and scolds him a lot but “the young native certainly showed self-control. There was a cloud in his glance but no lightning” (3). Those young English rulers kicked his luggage out and slammed the door on his face. It is very ironic to note that Bepin, who is a M.A. from Cambridge, a student from London and Paris is given such a treatment just because he is a ‘native’. This kind of opening of the novel highlights the high-headedness of the English rulers. This kind of behavior on the part of the colonized towards the colonized was very common. A critic G.K. Das is of the opinion:

The system in effect became a bureaucracy which, by concentrating a lot of power under British officers and by virtually excluding the Indians from high authority, perpetuated a type of imperialism which the Indians resented fiercely. For them the system meant their perpetual subjugation under the British though, an authoritarian official rule and they considered
it as one more proof that the ruling class regarded them as their inferiors.

(36)

Not only this, the kind of attitude, the British-Indian community had towards the natives, irrespective of their high education, ultimately exposed their racial arrogance. Their doctrine of superiority and “racial prejudice led not only to overbearing and rude behavior in railway carriages but to savage acts of repression” (Eldrige 169).

This entire episode of Bepin’s humiliation was viewed by a tall English girl Joan Mills, who was standing nearby. She was given a very harsh look by, the all degenerated, Bepin who felt that the English girl would inflict him with more insult, but here the case was altogether different. Joan offered Bipin to join her in her compartment. Bepin resented but later agreed to join her and her father Mr. Vulcan Mills in their compartment. Bepin during the course of their journey narrated, the father daughter duo, about the humiliations faced by his father when he was made to open the boots of an Englishman. Joan was shell shocked to hear from a native about his plight and commented, “In your own country! She exclaimed. ‘How can you bear it!’ ‘I think you are strangers,’ young Dey replied, always with the laugh which defended him from sympathy, ‘only strangers would ask that. We have no alternative’” (9). The Indians were the helpless victims of the atrocities of the empire in their own country. For Bepin “that is very common. European gentlemen in India do not like travelling with the people of the country. We are to always able to assert our rights” (8).

Indians have no voice and even the law is not in their favor. The author seems to be painting a real picture of colonial India, the plight of Indians and the arrogant nature of
the Anglo-Indians. Joan’s behavior is a total opposite of those Englishmen who shooed away Bepin from their railway coach. Being very kind hearted and concerned, she tells Bepin, “we have heard such things happened, but we could hardly believe it” (7). She is an English girl, who is, new and concerned for India. She can be compared to Helen Peachey who was fresh with ideas so that she could help the natives on many fronts. She is not at all like her fellow countrymen, residing in India, who have become callous and indifferent towards their subject race.

The difference between the two approaches of the west towards the east lets the reader to analyze the kind of deterioration, the Englishmen have gone through. They cannot be called as human beings. Not only the Englishmen, but the Indians were also embittered to such an extent that Dey hardly felt any inclination towards Joan’s father Mr. Vulcan Mills who tried to comfort him, as he (Bepin) felt that Vulcan was another missionary. “Missionaries did kind of thing; it was part of their character and errand. Such benevolence covered purposes of their own and would have been extended as readily to anyone a sweeper” (6). Later when Bepin came to know about him, he felt elated and relaxed. He felt that a savior of their nation has arrived. Vimal Dhawan and Jitesh Parikh believes the opening of the novel to be:

Very promising. It gives an impression that here is a writer who has selected to project reality very ‘objectively’ who is out to cut British down to size, who would tear off the mask of civilizing mission, who would show the naked effect of colonization, and one who would perhaps stand up for the rights of the Indians, here at last, is a white person who would not close here eyes in the face of the bitter truth even
if it meant criticizing her own race, her own people . . . But all such hopes are belied. Duncan very quickly falls into the conventional groove. (46-47)

A similar kind of racial approach, as depicted by the European gentlemen in the railway compartment, was also taken up by Mrs. Foley when she asserted to measure the skulls of the Bengali’s as for her, “It doesn’t hurt them” (121). Author’s capacity to create and show the difference between the two races has been praised in the New York Times when it says “. . . not even Kipling has better shown the invisible, intangible and impassable, barrier of race” (1910, 5).

As stated earlier, the English community residing in India could not tolerate any inference from their hometown into their lives and thus whenever some M.P. or any other official of the empire used to come from England, in order to assess the works done on ground zero, these Englishmen would feel most discomforted. In The Burnt Offering Mr. Vulcan Mills replaces Mr. Batcham of The Simple Adventures of a Memsahib. Mr. Mills is not welcomed by the Englishmen as they believed him to be a trouble-maker. For the narrator these M.Ps travelling all over the globe “make courageous figures standing there is the mantle of their ignorance and the fire of their enthusiasm” (25). The Foley family also supports the narrator’s view that this Vulcan Mills would create a whole lot of difficulties in the path of the ruling class. The Foley’s were aware about the wrongs being done on their part to the natives and felt that Mills may react very violently and he would make the lives of Englishmen really tough. “In a place like this where the things are rigid, he’s bound to do harm” (15).
It is one of the policies of the colonizer that he doesn’t allows the colonized people to unite and in the novel, Duncan throws some light upon the ways these Englishmen used to invent upon in order to prevent Indians to gather at a place and “The prevention of Seditious Meetings Act”(18) was one of them. The empire tried its level best to avoid such situations that could ultimately harm their rein.

By this time, as when Mr. Vulcan Mills arrived in India, the Indians were well aware of their rights and a spark of nationalism was implanted in their character. Mr. Mills wanted that spark to turn into a massive flame and this was the only reason why the British-Indian community was offended by Vulcan Mills. The New York Times also conforms to this point and comments that for Duncan. “In the Foleys and John Game we have the best type of governing English, those who ‘love their job’, who find in it ‘opportunity of service’ and who with no flourish of trumpets quietly and simply take up the white man’s burden” (1910 BR 5).

The concept of white man’s burden has been very brutally used by the colonizing west. It has camouflaged every single act of theirs in the east against this burden of the white man. This white man’s burden, a self-imposed one, no doubt helped the colonizer to establish themselves firmly on the colonized lands.

The Burnt Offering deals with the serious issue of Indian nationalism but the stance taken up by the narrator is that of a colonizer and not of the colonized. The narrator views everything through coloured glasses and thus observes each and everything in a distorted and biased manner. The research cannot however overlook that a
very realistic plight of the ‘natives’ has been portrayed and this realistic description definitely requires a word of appreciation.

Vulcan Mills and his daughter, Joan, have come to India, which is burning with wrongs being done to her, as its saviors and crusaders. Vulcan being aware of the brutalities of his race tells Jotindra Pal, Ganendra Thakore and Bepin to ‘Agitate.’ This character Vulcan Mills has been modeled on “a secretary of state of India, John Morley, who was far more sympathetic to the views of Indian leaders than any viceroy or secretary for decades” (Tausky Canadian Literature 46). When Vulcan Mills met Jotindra Pal, a revolutionary, and Pal uttered a few words of praise for the empire, Vulcan lost his temper and said:

Mean well, Mr. Pal! With famine stalking the land and pestilence following after! With the people groaning under the most corrupt and oppressive police known to modern civilization! With the masses still slink in – is their primitive ignorance, and the educated classes debarred from and voice in the affairs of their own country. (26-27)

Vulcan was of the opinion that people must govern themselves. Bepin, Ganendra Thakore and Jotindra Pal were the nationalists fighting for the cause of freedom of their motherland. Ganendra Thakore believes that, “The worst home rule is better for people than the best foreign rule” (28). The narrator, however conforming to the colonizer’s mental capacity turns the Indian revolutionaries into the notorious terrorists and traitors against the Empire.
Ganedra Thakore’s character is based upon Bal Gangadhar Tilak who beyond doubt was a fiery nationalist but in the realms of *The Burnt Offering* this Ganendra Thakore is a degraded fellow trying to create hurdles for the reigning government. John Game, a loyal English official, defines him in front of Joan Mills and Vulcan as “a very clever fellow. Charming personality, dangerous politically, religiously quite mad” (54). He also terms him as a “dangerous agitator” who “feeds his anger with but religious fervor” (146-47). However, throughout the text this dangerous and angry image of Thakore was barely found. It is not actually Thakore’s image, but a revolutionary’s stereotype. It was apprehended by the British that Thakore was against the empire not because of his love for his motherland, but because he has lost his son and feels that the empire is responsible for that. In this connection Vimal Dhawan and Jitesh Parikh remarks:

To impute some personal motive to the nationalists’ dissatisfaction against the British was a popular method among Anglo - Indian writers to denigrate them. Duncan used this play very effectively, as with one stroke the hero is turned into a villain, his cause is falsified and, in the process the British are justified. (48-49)

In this fictional narrative by Sara Duncan, any character’s attitude towards the Empire determines whether the character is positive or negative. Misao Dean in *Sara Jeannette Duncan: A Different Point of View* states that “the introduction of Western education and political ideals has resulted in the figure of westernized Indian, represented in *The Burnt Offering* by Sir Kristodas and his daughter Rani Janaki” (146). The people who conform to the English standards are projected as heroes and the ones negating it are
the anti-heroes. Thus, Vulcan and Joan Mills, who are English but favoring the Indians are villains whereas Sir Kristodas, Rani Janki and Swami Yadava who, despite being Indians, favor the empire are positively portrayed. These Indians were somehow hybridized during the colonial reign. They try to adjust themselves to the colonial setup by adopting the colonizer’s values and manners.

Kristodas Mukherjee and his daughter Rani Janki play a significant role in the novel. These Indians were allotted a little space in the novel because of their very strong inclination towards the empire. Kristodas who used to be an ascetic leader of the Brahmin community changed drastically after his visit to England. He is a well-reputed employee of “the government which rules; and for many years must continue to rule this land” (250). He who used to take a bath after shaking hands with the Englishmen “now dined at their table, soon smoked their cheroots, finally drank their champagne” (38). He was totally in favor of the empire and in his publications he described about the consequences, if progress was not made and that, progress can only be made if India conforms to the English norms and standard. The narrator is not criticizing the Indian Kristodas because he believes in the empire and the English ways of life. For him “the crown under heaven was not to be criticized” (42) and “to free the country of the British yoke, was a thing that had never occurred to him as a practical preposition” (42).

Rani Janki, daughter of Kristodas, was also very critical of the empire when she was young however she was liked by the English ladies belonging to high official positions because she had spent five years in England and was acquainted with their manners and mannerisms. Indrani Sen in *Memsahib’s Writings* observes:
By late nineteenth century there had gradually started to emerge a generation of Indian women who were highly educated. They were intelligent and talented and some even had college degrees . . . It is also striking that this category of ‘advanced’ Indian women appear in the writings of a number of memsahibs. (263)

The narrator appreciates her because of her liberated mindset and her attitude towards the empire. During Janaki’s conversation with Joan Mills “it was always Janki who deprecated rashness, who talked of British protection and western civilization, and even of security of investment as a compensation for the alien rule, Janaki who cried “we could not defend ourselves for ‘half-a- day’ ”(108-9). Huble Teresa also comments that:

As an Indian woman in an imperialist society, she is twice removed from the dominant power group, for she is neither white nor male. That Duncan was, if not entirely aware of, at least sensitive to the doubly subordinate position of the native woman in British India is evident not only in her compassionate portrait of Janaki but also in her characterization of John, who is in many respects the embodiment of a benevolent British imperialism.(16)

Both the father and the daughter have been allowed a space as they are mimicking their colonizer in order to be visible on their (Colonizer’s) social circle. Mimicry has been defined by Homi Bhabha in The Location of Culture as “the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which ‘appropriates’ the other as it visualizes power” (122). So, this father daughter duo tend to camouflage
their self behind the image of being English so as to gain access to everything they desire, which is otherwise denied to the colonial subjects.

Misao Dean’s article “The Paintbrush and The Scalpel” asserts the view:

Like many of the other ‘native’ characters in Duncan’s books, Sir Kristodas and his daughter have almost wholly forsaken ‘native’ society or been forsaken by it because their decision to dine with Anglo-Indians and adopt English ways had led to the breaking of many complicated rules of religious caste. (90)

In an incident when Vulcan calls Macaulay “one of India’s greatest benefactors” Sir Kristodas replied in negative and said, “You will not find everybody to agree with you there. Macaulay inoculated us with higher education before we had the board school. He tried to finish what had not been begun” (50). This proves him to be a total conformist to the English and their policies.

The anti-hero of the novel, Ganendra Thakore, a revolutionary, had a house in Nagtollah but it was not his permanent abode. He used to visit there off and on. He published his paper titled The Lamp of Youth and it was through this paper that Thakore used to cover a vast army of Indian youth. His paper was very popular among natives, especially youth and the officials of the empire were plotting hard to stop its publication. He had very strong views against the empire. For him, “he has the soul of a dog, and will be born a dog, who licks the hand of strangers” (67). He was in favor of self-rule. Contrary to Thakore’s views there were the ruling British officials who were only concerned about their administration and not the ‘natives’. “Duncan takes ‘colonial’
position of explaining and justifying Anglo-Indian society from the point of view of one who is conversant with the values of the centre and margin” (Dean PS 88). Duncan appears to be marred by a misjudgment that the Englishmen residing in India were marginalized as was the case with Canada. This thinking led her to unintentionally create Indians as doubly marginalized. The resident Indians are well-versed with India, a country they are meant to rule, but Indians are rarely visible and whenever they want their voices to be heard, they are snubbed. It is thus aptly stated:

Force and violence also have legitimacy in particular context. If the British become brutal in order to preserve their rule, that is called civilizing mission, and if Indians use force to liberate themselves that is sedition, that is villainy. It is all a question of ‘means’ and ‘end’ . . . The British aim or end in India is to perpetuate their rule for which they can adopt any ‘means’ – expediency, suppression, compromise with principles or ideals, injustice - they are all acceptable. The end of Indian revolutionaries is to get independence, and they can adopt any means even violence. But violence is repugnant to the British, so the aim also becomes repugnant; hence the Indian revolutionaries are villains. ( Parikh 50)

Ganendra Thakore was arrested by the police as he was addressing a public meeting and a case was put forth in the court and “the Anglo-Indian newspapers rejoiced frankly, published their rejoicings next morning and dismissed the matter . . . the Indian ones repressed their feelings for some days, and then began singly and in twos and threes, a long recurring lament, touched with hysterias” (96). There was great anger in the Indians
against Thakore’s arrest, Vulcan Mills was aghast to such an extent that he could not stop himself of being ashamed “not of my country, but of my country’s interpreters” (99).

The difference between people of the east and the west also finds expressions throughout the text. One such incident occurs during a party where the ‘Ladies of Zenana’ that is the native Indian ladies and the ‘Ladies of Gymkhana’ that is the English memsahibs were present but they did not intermingle. Although the party was arranged so that the gap between the two races could be erased, but there also a kind of cultural and ethical divide was observed, even the refreshments, “our kinds and their kinds” (110) were served. The viceroy’s bands could hardly play any Indian music because “our instruments aren’t adapted to it” (122). Even the friendship between Joan Mills and Bepin was criticized because they represented two different cultures. According to Allen J. Greenberger:

The Keystone to maintaining their position of leadership is not to be found in the treatment of the Indians. It is after all, in the English blood and the important thing is to keep the blood ‘pure’. For this reason intermarriage is dangerous. Equally dangerous, however is the adoption of Indian customs and attitudes. There is something of a contradiction in this feeling that, despite the emphasis on pure blood, it is equally important to keep ‘culturally pure’ . . . Indian culture must therefore be rejected as a destructive element. The strength of the British lay is being British through and through. (15-16)
Janki, who is a liberalized Indian Lady, is also not being allowed by Duncan to marry John Game as she is after all an Indian. For Game she is just “an uncommonly loyal, useful little person” (204). Janki although was loved and appreciated by the English ladies but she was not however permitted to get too close to John Game. Misao Dean in *The Different Point of View* also contends that, “Janaki’s love and sacrifice for Game are never acknowledged; instead she is treated with unconscious condensation by Anglo-Indian ladies and receive only a bare intellectual friendship from Game” (147). The English people being overtly conscious about themselves as a superior race could not tolerate the adulteration of their blood. C.C. Eldridge holds the opinion that, “a white person who gets too close to Indians or Africans runs the risk of gradual deterioration” (165) and therefore towards the end of the novel we find that although everything was fixed yet the marriage of Joan and Bepin was not solemnized on account of Bepin’s arrest. The narrator avoided the indigestible inter racial marriage which was not at all accepted by the people of the west. G.K. Das in his book *E.M.Forster’s India* is of the opinion that:

> Under the imperial system, the officials who come to India in large numbers through competitive examination from the English public schools and from Oxford and Cambridge were in reality normally required to ‘govern’ Indians rather than be interested in them personally or socially. (37)

Moving on the same pattern as stated by G.K.Das is the character of John Game who is not at all concerned about the ‘natives’ and forbids Joan to believe them. When Joan tells him about the sad plight of the natives in a famine hit village, John coldly
refutes everything and tells her that it was all an illusion created by Ganendra Thakore. He also informs her about the “difficulties and hindrances and complexities” (92) which accompany the English community in a place like India and labels India to be a “perplexing country”.

Joan tells him about the death of a native person on account of starvation in front of her, during her visit to the famine hit village, and in reply, the height of indifference for the natives comes into forefront when Game asks her roughly, “I hope to God you didn’t photograph him” (89). Game is more concerned about bad publicity of the administration than the calamity. He is a perfect administrator of the empire who tries every possible thing to impede Joan from her cause and send the disturbing Vulcan Mills back home.

Misao Dean remarks:

. . . notions of helping Indians through legislation, education and example persist among Duncan’s Anglo-Indian characters. The direction such impulses should take is often disputed. . . Joan Mills and John Game (In The Burnt Offering) dispute whether continued English government will produce the desired outcome of peaceful, prosperous life for the Indian populace. (111)

Joan was of the opinion that Indians must be provided with a chance for self-rule, but John opposed the idea, as for him, the Indians are not competent enough. This attitude and thinking on part of John Game is typical of the western approach towards the east. Vulcan Mills’ visit to Ganendra Thakore in the hospital leads him to offer his daughter Joan to the cause of Indian freedom movement. Thus we have on one hand an
Englishmen, striving hard to fight for the cause of the natives and on the other hand we have the English administrators trying to take control of things and plotting against Ganendra Thakore.

Duncan’s position is quiet ambivalent though out the narrative as it seems difficult for the narrator to determine what all she wants to convey through her narration. On one hand she favors the British and their constant struggle to survive in a colony and on the other hand she also lets the Indians play their limited role in her work of fiction. During Ganendra Thakore’s trial in the courtroom his speech has been magnificently worked upon by the author. Thakore gets a tremendous reception when he reaches the courtroom by his countrymen. He was epitomized by the Indians as their savior and thus they were showering flowers on him. When asked if he was guilty or not he replied, “That I uttered the words complained of I admit, but that they constitute any crime against the law of God or man I absolutely deny” (239). Thakore also describes his so called hatred and disaffection directed not towards “any person or disaffection to any potentiate, but hatred and disaffection toward the political conditions which were numbing the manhood, and silencing the voice, and destroying the traditions of my own great and ancient people” (246).

Gandendra urged, “the men of my race must come out of political bondage; they must tear themselves at any sacrifice from ignoble dependence upon an alien power” and for him, “India is the guru of nations” (247). Its mission “is to proclaim and to prove the union of God and man, the supreme, universal and eternal necessity of knowledge. India holds the torch of the spirit, and would hold it high. This is the mission of nationalism, miscalled hatred and disaffection” (247). Misao Dean remarks that, “Thakore, the
nationalist leader, is identified in the courtroom scene as the soul of India, betrayed by the indecision and materialism of Victorian British rules. His final courtroom speech conveys the justification of his agitation against British rule” (DPV 148).

Thakore refutes the materialist ideology of the west and wants his people to follow spirituality. “Let others invent their luxuries, build their ships, forge their great instruments of war. The mission of India is to proclaim and to prove a union of God and man, the supreme, universal and eternal necessity of knowledge” (247). His thinking, his philosophy and the way he used to work was not appreciated by the English administration and thus the administration sentenced him for ten long years in jail.

The notorious policy of divide and rule also finds expression in The Burnt Offering. The Englishmen very shrewdly submitted Ganendra’s case in Sir Kristodas’ court as they did not wanted to create a new problem on part of the empire. They did not wanted to be labeled as prejudiced so they played this game. They also therefore avoided the charges of being biased towards an Indian nationalist and thus saved their skin and made a villain out of Sir Kristodas, for the Indians. The so called “traitor” was sentenced and the two opposite poles, the east and the west, reacted differently and the reactions are described as:

Part of the world ate its breakfast bacon with indifference, another part shut up its shops and fasted, blew conch shells and festooned the street in black . . . The big pillared houses of the English quarter stood serene; even the thorough fares of European shops were hardly aware of disturbance;
but in the packed, bazaars, the native squares and student’s quarters the pot was boiling hard. (253)

Swami Yadava is the only Indian character who has been able to win over the sympathies of the narrator. He is an Indian religious priest, but the mouth piece of the author. “Yadava does see a place for the English in governing India which Duncan also sees” (Dean Canadian Literature, 91). For swami Yadava, “England is the husband of India” (165) and this is the sole reason why he does not support those who want to get rid of the empire as according to him it “would make their mother a widow” (165). The metaphor of marriage between the east and the west is deliberately used in order to make England the husband and thereby establishing its supremacy over India.

Misao Dean contends that, “Duncan believes, like Canada, India is taking part in a natural growth towards self-government that will culminate in the adoption of British institutions as native, and the establishment of a sentimental and ceremonial tie between Britain and India” (DPV 92). It therefore seems that Duncan wanted to establish the superiority of the British administration over the Indians and to prove her point she resorted to everything she could. Marian fowler in her biography opines that “India’s existential chaos has indeed turned her sensibility to cork, ‘The Burnt Offering’ of the title, the sacrifice on the altar of empire of such finely principled men as John Game, killed by an Indian assassins’ bullet, is a metaphor for Redney’s own burnt offering, the sacrifice of her talent in India’s burning sands” (280-81). It seems from Fowler’s biography that Duncan was wasting her talent in a wasteland called India and thus her writings were not up to mark. In her celebrated Canadian novel The Imperialist, Duncan holds the idea of a companionship between England and Canada but in this Indian
context the companionship although has been proposed but, is not accepted at all on the front of being India as ‘the other’.

It has been interpreted by Teresa Huble that, “the novel finally stands as a testament of the internal conflict that Duncan herself must have felt as an imperialist and a woman, who was also distrustful of patriarchal dictates, in a country struggling to throw off the oppression of a paternalist system” (75).

Unlike the theme of *The Imperialist* which focuses on the British and colonial perceptions of Canadian reality, here in *The Burnt Offering* the situation in India has been projected pessimistically and the research finds that the novelist keeps the colonial power superior to the Indian tradition. The English husband and fatherland has been kept on a higher pedestal than the Indian motherland.

Germaine Warkentin in introduction to Duncan’s *Set in Authority* states that, “In *The Burnt Offering* (1909) we finally meet with Indians who have tested the boundary line and are beginning to make their own decisions about crossing it” (42). This fact cannot be denied that Indians made their strong impression in the novel and that they are also properly given their due space by the author however, the author seems to fear about the direction, the empire is going forward on and which may result in its destruction and ultimately the dissolution of the colonial powers and to save the empire she sacrifices John Game for the same cause. Ambivalence is definitely a part of the novel and there is a whole lot of indecisiveness about the fate of the colonizer and the colonized.