CHAPTER – I
THE CONCEPT OF IMPERIALISM

1.1 Imperialism: Its meaning

Imperialism means the building of an empire – the domination by a stronger nation over one or more weaker ones. Imperialism has two meanings, one describing an action and the other describing an attitude. Most commonly, it is understood in relation to empire building, as the forceful extension of a nation’s authority by territorial conquest, establishing economic and political domination of other nations. In its second meaning, the term describes the imperialistic attitude of superiority, subordination and domination over foreign people. In his seminal book, *Imperialism: A Study*, J. A. Hobson used the term ‘imperialism’ to indicate the “expansion of Great Britain and of the chief continental Powers” (27). For Hobson the meaning of the word imperialism was very clear: it was the establishment of political control. He was also explicit about the forces behind it. Various people such as “an ambitious Statesman, a frontier soldier and an overzealous missionary” might play some role in it, “but the final determination rests with the financial power” (59).

1.2 Imperialism: Its definition

The following definitions are stated to sense its common perception.

i) “Imperialism is the policy of a state aiming at establishing control beyond its borders over people generally unwilling to accept such control. The imperialist nature of a policy is sometimes difficult to discover. The manifold political, financial, economic, technical and
cultural activities of one state in another may aim only at the creation of sympathy, friendship, or influence, but they may also be techniques to gain control” (Britannica Encyclopedia).

ii) “Imperialism broadly, the extension of rule or influence by one government, nation, or society over another. Early Empires Evidence of the existence of empires dates back to the dawn of written history in Egypt and in Mesopotamia, where local rulers extended their realms by conquering other states and holding them, when possible, in a state of subjection or semi subjection” (The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition).

iii) [Imperialism is]
1) “the policy and practice of forming and maintaining an empire in seeking to control raw materials and world markets by the conquest of other countries, the establishment of colonies”.

2) “the policy and practice of seeking to dominate the economic or political affairs of underdeveloped areas or weaker countries” (Webster’s New World Dictionary).

iv) “Imperialism is a policy of extending the control or authority over foreign entities as a means of acquisition and/or maintenance of empires, either through direct territorial or through indirect method of exerting control on the politics and/or economy of the countries. The term is used by some to describe the policy of a country in maintaining colonies and dominance over distant lands, regardless of whether the country calls itself an empire” (Literary Encyclopedia).
1.3 Factors responsible for the rise of Imperialism:

Various factors contributed to the rise of ‘Imperialism’. A few relevant and perceptible factors are noted below:

i) **Economic factors:**

Probably a stronger impetus to imperialism was economic factors. Businessmen and investors saw in colonies a chance to make profits. Tariff walls were going up in Europe, and the idea of colonies as markets and sources of materials became popular. Products that could not be produced in Europe such as tea, spices, cocoa, and bananas could be obtained through colonial possessions. The Industrial Revolution tended to increase Europe’s imperialist tendencies. It created a great need for raw materials. Asia and Africa offered most of the raw materials such as rubber, tin, petroleum, cotton, silk, vegetable oils and rare minerals. Owing to the Industrial Revolution, Great Britain, Germany and other European nations, began to produce ‘surplus goods’ for which they required market abroad. Asia as well as Africa served this purpose well. The trade interest constituted the primary objective of the English people who came to these territories and the involvement of merchants in such enterprises was the normal condition.

As the trade practices changed and a growing internationalism accompanied the Industrial Revolution, economic considerations played an important part in the consolidation of the British Empire. What resulted from all this, of course, was a frenzy of overseas exploration and colonization, with European nations claiming lands all over the world as their own.
ii) **Excessive surplus capital:**

Capitalism was springing up in Europe and some people were concentrating in their hands large reserves of wealth. These people were looking for new ways and new markets to invest this wealth in order to make yet more money. Thus they invested their excessive surplus capital in foreign lands. Political control over these lands would thus act as guarantee of security of their investment.

iii) **Progress in transport and communication:**

The Industrial Revolution introduced great progress in the means of transport and communication. Ocean liners could carry heavy articles like manganese ore from any part of the world. The telegraph linked the whole world and reduced great distances. The development of railways speeded the movement of goods between colonies and to the mother countries.

iv) **The activities of political groups and intellectuals:**

The activities of political groups and intellectuals, who desired to ensure national security and self-sufficiency, instigated colonial imperialism. Often Presidents and Prime Ministers worked towards colonial imperialism owing to the influence of business or other interest groups. Colonies became useful bargaining chips in the international game of diplomacy. As well, these colonies, it was hoped, would add to the imperialist power’s security and provide soldiers in case of war.

v) **Spirit of national pride and prestige:**

Strong motive for imperialism was the spirit of national pride and prestige. The nineteenth century saw a rise of nationalistic feelings. The desire for the status and glory implicit in empire-building was definitely a motivating force behind imperialism. The British Empire had set the
precedent that it was essential to have colonies in order to become a world power. Hence both Germany and Italy entered the colonial race. Some parts of Africa and the Far East served as valuable naval bases and ports of call for trade, commerce and investment.

vi) Urge to spread Christianity:

There was an inner urge to spread Christianity among Christian European Nations. Both Catholic and Protestant missionaries went to the colonies with a view to proselytize non-believers into Christianity. The old belief that it is a Christian’s duty to spread the word of God also played its part: the late nineteenth century was an age characterized by a strong sense of duty. Along with the sense of missionary duty typical of this era, there went a belief in the duty of the “civilized” world to educate and westernize people of other races. At this time Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution was gaining much popularity. A school of thought known as Social Darwinism developed out of these evolutionary ideas. It stated that civilizations, like living creatures, go through an evolutionary process. Social Darwinists believed that European cultures were the most advanced cultures on the earth, and hence it became the moral duty of Europeans to raise the level of all those less civilized.

vii) Activities of explorers and adventurers:

As Europeans heard the stories of returning crusaders and of explorers such as Marco Polo, who in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries traveled through China, Japan, and India, they longed to learn more about the exotic places of which they spoke. Of course, European rulers, on hearing of the riches of foreign lands, often wanted to increase their own wealth through contact with these lands by trade or through military force. Such rulers also desired the prestige they would gain by
adding new lands to their dominions. The activities of explorers and adventurers like the Frenchman Du Chaillu and De Brazza in Equatorial Africa and the German Karl Peters in East Africa, helped to promote the new wave of ‘imperialism’.

viii) Expansions of population:

The expansions of population also contributed to the spread of ‘imperialism’. This was further aided by the periodical recurrence of unemployment, which compelled millions of Europeans to emigrate in search of new homes and careers abroad.

ix) Lack of international consensus:

There was international anarchy. Every nation was free to do what it pleased, because of the lack of any international machinery to enact laws for nations and force them to respect such laws. This state of affairs encouraged the colonial race.

These various factors and forces were working towards the spread of ‘imperialism’ in different countries.

1.4 Imperialism: Its Consequences

There were far-reaching effects of ‘imperialism’ in several respects. The effects, of course, varied tremendously from place to place, but everywhere they were profound. The consequences dramatically changed the face of the world.

Western ‘imperialism’ converted the lands of Asia and Africa into European colonies. Owing to simultaneous colonial expansion of Western Powers into Asia and Africa, there were frequent colonial collisions all over Asia and Africa. This led to the formation of political and military
alliances and counter-alliances, which ultimately brought about World War-I (1914-1918).

An important result of ‘imperialism’ was that Asia and Africa got westernized. The process of Europeanization in language, culture and civilization began in the sixteenth century. In India the English introduced the British educational system (Macaulay’s “Minutes”: 1835) with western education taught through English, from the primary schools onwards to the university level.

Europeans often imposed their ways of life and culture on the people they imperialized. Owing to the process of Europeanization some of the colonies lost their culture and civilization. They became Europeanized and lost their identity as a nation.

However, the British rule in India in the nineteenth century left a lot of issues unsettled and in fact aggravated some that were already in existence. They imposed their laws upon the colonized. Poverty was a major problem in colonial India with extreme situations resulting in famines. Britain forced Indian farmers to grow cash crops like tobacco on their farms instead of food. The booming population was unable to afford the amount of food that was grown and thus starved.

Imperialism drained India’s wealth. The East India Trading Company sold processed goods at a steep rate while buying materials at a low one. Prices of goods made in India which keep money in India were too high to compete with imported goods.

Imperialism destroyed India’s previous economy and its small-scale handicraft industries. The rural economy of India received a body blow because the products of the British industry easily outmaneuvered the handicraft items that were made in the villages. Many other handicrafts such as the metal industry, carpentry, clock-making etc were
destroyed again because of the superior and cheaper manufactured imports.

It is generally assumed that India became dependent due to imperialism. The destruction of the previous industries, businesses meant that nearly all processed goods were imported from Britain. As India was a protectorate it was made to trade only with Britain. Goods not found in India were imported by Britain as it had done in order to “get its foot in the door” prior to its annexation of India. This was also done in China, Africa, Japan, and Indonesia …. India basically became unable to support itself anymore because of European, mostly British interference and trade.

In education, the problems multiplied when the British introduced the English model in 1833. Even though English was used as a medium of instruction, the infrastructure was not there in most parts of India. As such, a majority of the Indian population remained illiterate. In 1835, Thomas Macaulay articulated the goals of British colonial imperialism most succinctly. As an arch-racist, Macaulay had nothing but scornful disdain for Indian history and civilization. In his famous minute of 1835, he wrote that he had never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.

While the strategy of divide and conquer was used most effectively, an important aspect of British rule in India was the psychological indoctrination of an elite layer within Indian society who were artfully tutored into becoming model British subjects. This English-educated layer of Indian society was craftily encouraged in absorbing values and notions about themselves and their land of birth that would be conducive to the British occupation of India, and furthering British goals of looting India’s physical wealth and exploiting its labour.
Britain needed a class of intellectuals meek and docile in their attitude towards the British, but full of hatred towards their fellow citizens. It was thus important to emphasize the negative aspects of the Indian tradition, and obliterate or obscure the positive. Indians were to be taught that they were a deeply conservative and fatalist people – genetically predisposed to irrational superstitions and mystic belief systems. They had no concept of nation or national feelings or history. If they had any culture, it had been brought to them by invaders – that they themselves lacked the creative energy to achieve anything by themselves. But the British, on the other hand epitomized modernity – they were the harbingers of all that was rational and scientific in the world. With their unique organizational skills and energetic zeal, they would raise India from the morass of casteism and religious bigotry. These and other such ideas were repeatedly filled in the minds of the young Indians who received instruction in the British school.

However, the British were not content to influence Indian thinking just through books written in the English language. Realizing the danger of Indians discovering their real heritage through the medium of Sanskrit, Christian missionaries such as William Carey anticipated the need for British educators to learn Sanskrit and transcribe and interpret Sanskrit text in a manner compatible with colonial aims. In this manner, India’s awareness of its history and culture was manipulated in the hands of colonial ideologues. Naturally, British educated Indians absorbed and internalized such characterizations of themselves and their past. They grew up learning about Pythagoras, Archimedes, Galileo and Newton without ever learning about Panini, Aryabhata, and Bhaskaracharya. The logic and epistemology of the Nyaya Sutras, the rationality of the early Buddhists or the intriguing philosophical systems of the Jains were generally unknown to them. Neither was there any awareness of the
numerous examples of dialectics in nature that are to be found in Indian texts. They may have read Homer or Dickens but not the Panchatantra, the Jataka tales or anything from the Indian epics. Schooled in the aesthetic and literary theories of the West, many felt embarrassed in acknowledging Indian contribution in the arts and literature. What was important to Western civilization was deemed universal, but everything Indian was dismissed as either backward and anachronistic, or at best tolerated as idiosyncratic oddity. Little did the Westernized Indian know what debt “Western Science and civilization” owed (directly or indirectly) to Indian scientific discoveries and scholarly texts.

1.5 British Imperialism in India

The British people were not the first Europeans to reach India. In the 4th century BC Alexander the Great with his conquering army penetrated deep into the Punjab, and opened up trade ways that lasted for over eight hundred years. The fall of the Roman Empire and the rise of the Arabic power in the Middle East virtually cut off Western Europe from India, and it was not until the 16th century that Portuguese explorers began to reestablish contact. With their superior knowledge of maritime technology and proselytizing fervor, the Portuguese soon created a large empire for themselves in the Indian Ocean. But in 1580 Portugal was annexed to Spain, and in 1588 the Spanish Armada was defeated by the British Naval force. Thus the collapse of the Portuguese Empire opened up the route for the British to sail into the Indian Ocean in search of trade and profit.

It was during the Mughal Rule that the riches of India attracted the Europeans to the glorious land which was full of wealth and richness. The British East India Company received a charter from Queen Elizabeth-I to do business in India in 1600. By the 17th century, defeating the
Portuguese and the French the British acquired complete control over India. Thus the foundation of the British Empire in India was laid by Robert Clive by winning ‘the Battle of Plassey in 1757’. Thereafter Warren Hastings and Lord Wellesley forced most of the Indian rulers to submission. Finally Lord Dalhousie by his policy of Lapse (The Doctrine of Lapse) annexed much of the territories of the Indian Princes. This completed the work of the British conquest of India by 1856. It was during this period that they acquired confidence of an imperialistic power. They looted India wholesale. K. R. Shrinivas Iyengar put it appropriately in his review ‘British Influence on Indian Thought’-

It was a triple invasion…. the merchants came to make quick money, the missionaries came to save pagan souls, and the soldier-politician came for achieving the conquest of the country (Iyengar, Indo-British Review, Vol. 4, No. 3).

The revolt of 1857 was a momentous event in the history of India. It marked a turning point in the history of British imperialism. Its significance as a decisive event in the British rule in India has been adequately recognized by Englishmen in a series of historical accounts. After ‘the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857’, British India was transferred from the hands of the East India Company to those of the British Crown.

The appointment of the Governor General was an important step in this regard as it smoothly shifted the power structure to the British government. Although it was not until ‘the Sepoy Mutiny’ that technically the control of India went to the British government, the process had started much earlier, with ‘the India Act of 1784’ being one milestone of this phenomenon. The British control over Indian territories
in the eighteenth century was achieved through a variety of ways, some of which were neither ‘noble’ nor organized to benefit the natives.

The Mughals, rulers of India since 1526, found their dynasty declining during the 18th Century; while the emperor still reigned in Delhi, strong local centers of governments were emerging in the rest of the country. The traders of the British East India Company, like their other European counterparts, had long maintained a presence on the Indian coastline. British and French armies maneuvered for territory, each forming alliances with Indian rulers, and each depending partly on Indian recruits to maintain their forces. But British victories between 1746 and 1761 established the East India Company as the predominant European force in India. Robert Clive took charge of Bengal, agreeing to pay the Mughal emperor a fixed annual fee in return for full control over the state’s revenues. With this move into administration, the East India Company began its gradual transformation from a trading company into an autonomous state, the reigning power in India.

Nevertheless, the imposition of British rule had substantial effects on the indigenous societies of India. Bengal suffered economic decline and famine in its first years under the control of East India Company government. Especially in Bengal, changes in the relationships between landholders, farmers and the state tended to disadvantage the old aristocratic classes, as well as leading indirectly to the growth of a strong middle class. By the middle of the 19th century, the East India Company’s long standing practice of controlling states through ‘protective’ alliances had been replaced by a drive to impose direct rule. The British administration took over control of kingdoms where a ruler had died without a recognized male heir and thus many powerful kingdoms were annexed on the ground that they had been misgoverned. This produced a disaffection among the people of all classes in India which contributed to
the 1857-58 uprising against British rule which traditionally known as ‘Indian Mutiny’.

The Mutiny at large effectively cast the British into the role of victim and Indians into the role of executor; in effect, these roles provided justification for the British military – to regain control of the empire through whatever means necessary. In this manner, British efforts to regain their dominance over India serve not only as re-compensation, but a re-enacting of imperial power. The response of the British military to the Mutiny was fierce, and theirs were not only attempts to regain control of the empire, but to strike terror and fear in their Indian victims – in other word, to reassign Indians their role as oppressed and colonized through the spectacle of violence.

The British attitude towards India underwent significant changes along the passing years. In pre-Mutiny times the Englishmen were romantically motivated towards India. But later they felt that they were the only dominant rulers in India. But after the First World War, their illusion of permanence in India was shattered. In the final years of the Raj, the British were full of melancholy for the loosening grip over India.

An empire does not come into existence by merely conquering the territory of others. It has to be supported by the ideology built upon the notions of the imperial community, about itself and also about the people whose sovereignty it is going to control. Seeley says that “some of the Europe’s overseas empires were acquired absentmindedly” (J. R. Seeley quoted by Edward Said in Culture and Imperialism 9).

But in the case of the British, we can say that they were already conscious of their being imperial people. They had tried to justify their conquest of Ireland in the second half of the 16th century saying that the Irish, though Christians, were barbarians. The Irish were considered
barbarians because they were a pastoral community wandering from place to place with their cattle. In their act of Irish conquest the British considered themselves to be following the Romans whose conquest had civilized England. The British became the new Romans whose duty was to civilize the backward people in the world. The rationale they used to justify the conquest of Ireland was also useful for them to conquer India.

Though the British are compared with the Romans, the motive of the British was not to establish a Roman kind of Empire of federal states, where the states in the federation have relation of equality. The industrialized England needed a colony to sell its goods and acquire labour and raw material from it. In Marxist explanation of imperialism, it is the highest stage of capitalism. The capitalist state needs non-industrial countries for its own benefit and therefore conquers them. This need was justified by the British rulers and thinkers with an excuse of civilizing the barbarous nations. Sir J. R. Seeley in his *The Expansion of England* (1983) considers India as the extension of the English state, a Greater Britain: “an empire similar to that of Rome, in which we hold the position not merely, of a ruling but an educating and civilizing race” (J. R. Seeley quoted by Edward Said in *Orientalism* 8-9).

In this way, within a very short span of time, the British dominated Indian cultural and political life and started exerting its influence on the social life. The British in India undertook a number of crucial works. The list of the works is so long that it cannot be mentioned here for want of space. However, some aspects can be reviewed about the substantial work:

Having acquired the vast empire, India, the East India Company had to devise suitable methods of government to control and administer it. The administrative policy of the Company underwent frequent changes
during the long period between 1957 and 1857. However, it never sought
sight of its main objects which were to increase the Company’s profits,
enhance the profitability of its Indian possessions to Britain, and maintain
and strengthen the British hold over India; all other purposes were
subordinated to these aims

The administrative machinery of the Government of India was
designed and developed to serve these ends. The main emphasis in this
respect was placed on the maintenance of law and order so that trade with
India and exploitation of its resources could be carried on without
disturbance. The British created a new system of administration in India
to serve their purposes. The British administration in India was based on
three pillars: the Civil Service, the Army and the Police. This was so for
two reasons. For one, the chief aim of British administration was the
maintenance of law and order and the perpetuation of British rule. Again,
the British, being foreigners could not hope to win the affections of the
Indian people; they therefore, relied on superior force rather than on
public support for the maintenance of their control over India. The British
also laid the foundations of a new system of dispensing justice through a
hierarchy of civil and criminal courts. The British established a new
system of laws through the processes of enactment and codification of old
laws. The same laws now prevailed all over the country and they were
enforced by a uniform system of courts. Thus it may be said that India
was judicially unified. The British introduced the modern concept of the
rule of law and equality before law in practice; however, there emerged
another type of legal inequality. Justice became expensive as court fees
had to be paid, lawyers engaged and expenses of witnesses met. Courts
were often situated in distant towns. Lawsuits dragged on for years. The
complicated laws were beyond the grasp of the illiterate and ignorant
peasants. Thus while the new judicial system marked a great step forward
insofar as it was based on the laudable principles of rule of law and
equality before the law and on rational and humane made laws, it was a
retrograde step in some other respects: it was now costlier and involved
long delays.

Till 1813 the British followed a policy of non-interference in the
religious, social and cultural life of India, but after 1813 they took active
steps to transform Indian society and culture. This followed the rise of
new interests and new ideas in Britain during the nineteenth century. The
three outstanding characteristics of the new thought were rationalism or
faith in reason and science, humanism or love of man and confidence in
the capacity of man to progress. The policy of modernising Indian society
and culture was also encouraged by Christian missionaries and religious
minded persons such as William Wilberforce and Charles Grant,
Chairman of the Court of Directors of the East India Company who
wanted to spread Christianity in India. They supported a programme of
Westernization in the hope that it would eventually lead to the country’s
conversion to Christianity. After the revolt of 1857, the British stopped
promoting social modernization and gradually started supporting socially
orthodox and conservative elements of society. They also encouraged
casteism and communalism.

Official British efforts at reforming Indian society of its abuses were
on the whole very meager and therefore bore little fruit. Some of their
reforms were outlawing the practice of Sati (1829), banning female
infanticide etc. All these official reforms touched no more than the
fringes of the Indian social system and did not affect the life of the vast
majority of the people.

However, the British were more successful in the introduction of
modern education. Of course the spread of modern education was not
solely the work of the government: the Christian missionaries and a large
number of enlightened Indians also played an important part. In 1835, the Government of India decided to devote the limited resources it was willing to spare to the teaching of Western science and literature through the medium of English language alone. The Government acted quickly on the decision and made English the medium of instruction in its schools and colleges. It should be noted that though they made loud claims, the British did not really take serious interest in spreading Western learning or any other learning in India. The major weakness of the educational system was the neglect of mass education, total neglect of the education of girls, neglect of scientific and technical education.

From 1600 to 1757 the East India Company’s role in India was that of a trading corporation which brought goods or precious metals into India and exchanged them for Indian goods like textiles and spices, which it sold abroad. After the battle of Plassey in 1757, the pattern of the Company’s commercial relations with India underwent a qualitative change. Now the Company could use its political control over the Indian subcontinent to acquire monopolistic control over Indian trade and production and push its Indian trade. Moreover, it utilized the revenues it gained in India to finance its export trade.

The Industrial Revolution in Britain completely transformed Britain’s economy and its economic relations with India. During the second half of the eighteenth century and the first few decades of the nineteenth century, Britain underwent profound social and economic transformation, and British industry developed and expanded rapidly on the basis of modern machines, the factory system and capitalism. With this transformation, a new phase in Britain’s economic relations with India began. Agricultural India was to be made an economic colony of industrial England. Thus, the commercial policy of the East India Company after 1813 was guided by the needs of British industry. Its main
aim was to transform India into a consumer of British manufactures and a supplier of raw materials.

The British exported to Britain part of India’s wealth and resources for which India got no adequate economic or material return. This ‘economic drain’ was peculiar to British rule. The drain took the form of an excess of India’s exports over its imports, for which India got no returns. The drain went on increasing after 1858. By the end of the nineteenth century it constituted nearly 6 per cent of India’s national income and one-third of its national savings.

The British rulers soon realized that a cheap and easy system of transport was a necessity if British manufactures were to flow into India on a large scale and her raw materials secured for British industries. They introduced steamships on the rivers and set about improving the roads. But real improvement in transport only came with the advent of railways. The British also established an efficient and modern postal system and introduced the telegraph.

The Revolt of 1857 gave a severe jolt to the British administration and made its reorganization inevitable. The Government of India’s structure and policies underwent significant changes in the decades following the revolt. But more important for the changes in Indian economy and government was the inauguration of a new stage of colonialism in India. After 1850, a very large amount of British capital was invested in railways, loans to the Government of India and to a smaller extent in tea plantations, coal mining, jute mills, shipping, trade and banking. It was necessary that, to render this British capital secure from economic and political dangers, British rule in India be clamped down even more firmly. Consequently there was a renewed upsurge of imperial control and imperialist ideology which was reflected in the
reactionary policies of the viceroyalties of Lynton, Dufferin, Lansdowne, Elgin and above all Curzon.

An act of Parliament in 1858 transferred the power to govern from the East India Company to the British Crown. Though a Legislative Council was provided by an act in 1861, the Indian representatives nominated were wholly unrepresentative of Indian populace mainly consisting of princes, big zamindars, big merchants or retired government officials. The Government of India remained, as before 1858, an alien despot. The British divided India for administrative convenience into provinces, three of which - Bengal, Madras and Bombay- were known as Presidencies. They also started process of financial decentralization of power to provinces and local bodies. However, it should be noted that measures of financial decentralization did not really mean the beginning of genuine provincial autonomy or of Indian participation in provincial administration. The Indian army was carefully reorganized after 1958, most of all to prevent the recurrence of another revolt. The organization of the Indian section of the army was based on the policy of ‘balance and counterpoise’ or ‘divide and rule’ so as to prevent its chance of uniting again in an anti-British uprising. Discrimination on the basis of caste, region and religion was practice in recruitment to the army. The Indian army became in time a very costly military machine and was the chief instrument for the expansion and consolidation of British power and possession in Asia and Africa.

In the public services, the Indians were appointed on low posts and kept away from all positions of power and responsibility. In the bureaucracy, police, public works, medicine, posts and telegraphs, forests, engineering, customs and railway Departments, the superior and highly paid posts were reserved for British citizens.
The administration of the British was characterized by racial antagonism. The British in India had always held aloof from the Indians believing the social distance from Indians had to be maintained to preserve their authority over them. They also felt themselves to be racially superior.

The British conquest had a profound economic impact on India. There was hardly any aspect of the Indian economy that was not changed for better or for worse during the entire period of British rule down to 1947.

The economic policies followed by the British led to the rapid transformation of India’s economy into a colonial economy whose nature and structure were determined by the needs of the British economy.

There was a sudden and quick collapse of the urban handicraft industry which had for centuries made India’s name a byword in the market of the entire civilized world. Thus British conquest led to the de-industrialization of the country and increased dependence of the people on agriculture. India now became an agricultural colony of manufacturing Britain which needed it as a source of raw material for its industries. Nowhere was the change more glaring than in the cotton textile industry.

The peasant was also progressively impoverished under British rule. The evil of high land revenue deteriorated his material condition and he steadily sank into poverty. The harmful effects of excessive land revenue were further heightened by the rigid manner of its collection. Whenever the peasant failed to pay land revenue, the government put up his land on sale to collect the arrears of revenue.

As a result of overcrowding in agriculture, excessive land revenue demand, growth of landlordism, increasing indebtedness and the growing impoverishment of cultivators, Indian agriculture began to stagnate and even deteriorate resulting in extremely low yields per acre.
An important development in the second half of the nineteenth century was the establishment of large-scale machine based industries in India. The machine age began when cotton textile, jute and coal mining industries were started in the 1850s. However, on the whole industrial progress in India was exceedingly slow and painful. It was mostly confined to cotton and jute industries and tea plantations in the nineteenth century and to sugar and cement in the 1930s.

A major characteristic of British rule in India, and the net result of British economic policies, was the prevalence of extreme poverty among its people. The poverty of India was not a product of its geography or of the lack of natural resources or some ‘inherent’ defect in the character and capabilities of the people. Nor was it a remnant of the Mughal period or of the pre-British past. It was mainly a product of the history of the last two centuries. Before that India was no more backward that the countries of Western Europe.

The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed the full flowering of national political consciousness and the growth of an organized national movement in India. In December 1885 was born the Indian National Congress under whose leadership Indians waged a prolonged and courageous struggle for independence from foreign rule, a struggle which India finally won on 15th August 1947.
1.6 Colonialism and Imperialism: A critique of East-West encounter

The history of imperialism is the history of discourses about the colonized regions, whether in the form of official government reports, personal travel narratives, or imaginative fiction set in exotic foreign lands. In this connection, Edward Said argues that the creation of discourse about a colonized culture, about ‘the other’, arranges also to suppress that colonized culture, which cannot talk back or write about itself. Rather, such discourse renders the people of the colonized culture the powerless subjects of Western power, and anything the colonized culture tries to say or write about itself is considered illegitimate and nonsense.

British colonialism is depicted in the nineteenth century Victorian literature which is known as Britain’s imperial century. It was a period when ‘the sun never sets on the British Empire’. It is interesting to understand the views of the Victorian English society about the colonial people and how colonialism in foreign lands affected British attitudes in England, as the nineteenth century progressed. Colonialism reflected and shaped British assumptions on race and gender and class. The representations of Britain’s colonial empire are found in the English fiction, travel literature, historical writings, paintings, scientific writings and government policy documents. All these provide historical context of literature.

According to the twentieth century Palestinian critic Edward Said and a number of other Asian and African writers and critics, the travel writing by the European explorers and traders inspired interest in colonization. Shakespeare’s last play *The Tempest* (1623) can be regarded as the manifestation of the British Imperialism. In this play the protagonist Prospero settles on an island and establishes his rule by exploiting the native inhabitants of the island. In the seventeenth century
novel *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) of Daniel Defoe, the hero Robinson Crusoe also discovers an island. He too establishes his rule on the natives by treating them as their slaves. In *Minute on Indian Education* (1935) Thomas Macaulay presents the imperial intention to rule the Indians. Though Macaulay’s plan was to civilize the backward Indians, his real intention was to protect the British imperial interests. In Rudyard Kipling’s famous poem *The White Man’s Burden* (1899), he suggests that European values and culture are superior to the Asian and African cultures. It celebrates the ethnic superiority of white people of the Western world. The world view described in this poem encouraged powerful European nations to adopt imperial role. The non-white European cultures are looked upon as childlike as well as savage. It also suggests that the West European people have a moral duty to rule them and encourage their development till they can take their place in the world by fully adopting western ways. Great Britain justified its expansion (colonization and imperialism) into other people’s lands by declaring its civilizing mission based on its moral, racial and national superiority.

The Victorian science writers Edward Taylor and Benjamin Kidd tried to prove that non-Europeans were less evolved, biologically and culturally. Other writers like W. Winwood Reade and Priclord Marsh held the view that the people living in the colonies of British Empire were not perfectly evolved and they were like fearsome cannibals and beasts.

The themes of colonialism can be found in other literary works. For example, Wilkie Collins’ book *The Moonstone* (1868) presents colonial attitudes after the revolt of Indians against the British Empire in 1857. It suggests that tolerance, respect and understanding of Indian culture would reduce Indian resistance to British rule in India. In Trevelyan’s Prose selection *Cawnpore*, the Englishmen are described as
strong and masculine and the native Indians are describe as weak and womanish. In Joseph Conrad’s famous novel *Heart of Darkness* (1902) there is a bitter criticism of colonialism and imperialism. It describes the colonial mindset. In Matthew Arnold and Walter Scott’s work there is a reference to the dark side of ‘Oriental and Celt’ colonialism. In W. B. Yeats’ political poems there is a resistance to colonial rule and demand for nationalism. In Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The Sign of Four* we find class prejudice and race prejudice. In Charlotte Bronte’s novel *Jane Eyre* (1847) there is a reference to gender oppression, race oppression, colonialism and the rights of women. Scott’s story *The Two Drovers* (1827) suggests that in a fight between the civilized and the primitive, the primitive people must accept the civilized as their leaders. In Collin’s *The Moonstone* and Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* there are colonial images of the Indian and the African. In Kipling’s book *Kim* (1901) and Forster’s *A Passage to India* (1924) we find traces of colonialism and the British imperial attitude towards the people in the colonies. In *The Descent of Man* (1871) the famous biologist Charles Darwin compares the European (White) race with other savage races (non-white and non-European i.e. Asians and Africans).

### 1.7 Post-colonial theory of literature: Redefining the subalterns

Post-colonial theory of literature is the most recent development in literary criticism. The first mention of post-colonial studies is in David Lodge’s *Modern Criticism and Theory* (1988). In fact, it came forward in 1990s. The first person to write about the impact of colonialism on literature is Frantz Fanon who in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), argues that the first step for colonized people in finding a voice and an identity is to reclaim their own past. Long before him Dr. Douglas Hyde had written his famous article ‘De-Anglicising Ireland’ in which he had
raised the voice against British cultural imperialism. Influenced by him, W. B. Yeats wrote a number of articles and advised his people to reclaim the past and launched the famous Irish Dramatic Movement.

But the real thrust came with the publication of *Orientalism* (1978) by Edward Said. Taking the late 18th century as a very roughly defined starting point, Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it by teaching it, setting it, ruling over it; in short, Orientalism is a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the orient.

Said’s Orientalism is based upon another Palestinian Abdel Malek’s article ‘Crisis in Orientalism’ (1963) where he wrote “on the level of the position of the problem… the orient and orientals (are)… an object of study, stamped with an otherness.” In the same article, Malek quoting Marx, Engels and Gramsci, speaks of the minority hegemony. Said’s another Book *Culture and Imperialism* (1994) is the foundation of post-colonial criticism. The other critics like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds* (1987), Bill Ashcroft, *The Empire Writes back* (1989), Homi K. Bhabha *Nation and Narration* (1990) and *Location of Culture* (1994) and Aijaz Ahmed have the same point of view towards the West and view its domination with concern. However, they do not agree entirely with Said and are critical of him on certain points.

Post-colonial criticism is not a school of criticism like Russian Formalism or New Criticism of America or the Scrutiny Group of Britain. However, there are certain points of view which are common to all. They are briefly summarized as under.

First, the post-colonial criticism examines the texts written in the pre-colonial period and traces the West’s attitude towards the East. The general attitude is of distinction and contrast. The distinction is that of
‘we’ and the ‘other’. The ‘other’ is the man of the East, uncivilised, barbaric, less intelligent and badly in need of order and discipline. It is the duty of the westerners to improve their lot.

Secondly, as imagined by eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth century critics and creative writers, there is no universality in literature. As Peter Barry in his book *Beginning Theory* precisely puts it,

If we claim that great literature has a timeless and universal significance we thereby demote or disregard cultural, social, regional and national differences in our outlook, preferring instead to judge all literature by a single, supposedly “universal standard” (192).

Thirdly there is a marked contrast between the literature of the colonizers and the colonized. For example, Jonathan Swift is in contrast with Joseph Addison and so is the case with Edmund Burke as compared with other English writers.

If we look at Indian literature, we find the principle of *adopt, adapt* and *adept*. First the Indian writers adopted the English ideas and forms; later on adapted them and finally they became adept. In other words, they accepted the ideas and forms of literature of the English faithfully. After some time they adapted them according to their culture and society and finally assumed their own cultural identity. The same thing happened in Africa where Chinua Achebe adopted the English model but later on Thiongo Ngugi adapted the French ideas and literature and asserted his own culture. Post-colonial criticism highly influenced by Marxism and Gramsci’s sociology is in its nascent stage. But within this short time it has made its presence felt and the old texts are being analyzed and interpreted from a different angle.
This shows that postcolonial theory deals with the politics of the study of English literature and culture from the perspective of those who were colonized by it. For foremost British colonies, Postcoloniality begins in the late twentieth century, when most of the British colonies, such as India, struggled for their independence from the British Empire, and became independent nations. Postcolonial theories begin to ascend in the 1960s as scholars and thinkers from the former colonies began to produce their own forms of knowledge, their own discourses to oppose the discourses of colonialism. These postcolonial discourses articulated the experience of the colonized, rather than the colonizer, giving what is called the ‘subaltern’ – the inferior non-white, non-Western subject of colonial rule – a voice.

Postcolonial theorists examine how Western cultures created the colonial subject, the subaltern, through various discursive practices, and examine how subaltern cultures both participated in and worked to oppose colonization, through various direct or subversive means. Postcolonial theory is thus centrally concerned with examining the mechanisms through which the colonizing powers persuaded the colonized population to accept a foreign culture as ‘better’ than their own native methods of government and social organization.

It should be noted that the narratives selected for comparison can be focused on the multiple marginalities pertaining to nation, identity, culture, politics, history and civilization. The researcher has followed an interdisciplinary approach across disciplines such as history, sociology, law, religion and philosophy. The texts are located against a socio-cultural background along with the emergence of ‘colonizers’ and ‘colonized’ exploitations that call for the restoration of dignity and self-respect. Through the comparative study one gets a glimpse into the life of a native community struggling against the politics of evil, imperialistic