Chapter I

Introduction
Orwell's Biographical Sketch

George Orwell was the pen-name of an Englishman named Eric Blair. He was born at Motihari in Bengal on June 25, 1903. He was the son of a custom officer of the Empire. No papers relating to Eric's early childhood survived with Eric's mother barring her diary for 1905, when Eric was two years old. The entries threw some light on Ida Blair's character and Eric's frail health. He spent the first four years of his life in India and was then sent to England for his schooling. He was the second child of Richard Walmesley Blair and Ida Mabel Limouzine. His father was at that time an agent in the opium department of Indian Civil Service. His paternal grand father had served in the Indian army and had later become a clergyman. His maternal grand father had been a timber merchant in Burma and later a rice grower.

When Eric Arthur Blair was four, the family returned to England and settled at a place called Henley-on-Thames though Richard Blair himself continued to work in India until his retirement in 1912. Eric Blair attended the local primary school at Henley-on-Thames and lived in the strange atmosphere that Anglo-Indian families recreated in order to protect themselves from the realities of life in England. Eric Blair later wrote that his early childhood was not altogether happy. "One ought to love one's father" Orwell wrote, "but I know very well that I merely disliked my father". Nor did Orwell feel any deep affection for his mother.

At the age of eight years, Orwell was sent to a mediocre preparatory St. Cyprian's school in Sussex. Orwell's stay at the school was not pleasant. He later wrote that one of the codes of this school was "an almost neurotic dread of poverty, and above all, the assumption that money and privilege are the things that matter"2. Orwell's essay, called "Such, Such Were the Joys" contains the memories of his life at St. Cyprian's school. This essay was written in 1948, but was published only after his death because the memories recorded in it were not only unpleasant but too painful. It seems that oppression and humiliation formed the dominant pattern of his personal life during his stay at school.

Next four and a half years, Orwell spent in a public school at Eton. Here one of his teachers was Aldous Huxley, who was teaching English and French, but Huxley's influence on Orwell was very limited. There were no signs of genius in his performance at schools. He was poor even at games, though he did serve in the Officer
Training Corps.

From Eton, Orwell did not join University and appeared, in 1922, in a competitive examination held for the selection of officers to be trained for the Burmese Police and was appointed a probationer in the Burmese Police and sent to Rangoon where he studied Burmese, Hindustani, law and police procedure.

Although he joined police service yet he was not contended with the job as he hated imperialism and felt humiliated by the shabby treatment that he received from one of his British bosses and so he went on home leave from August 1927 and later requested his superiors to permit him to resign from his post of Assistant Superintendent of Police from 1st January, 1928.

In the autumn of 1927, Orwell had been moving among the poor sections of the population of London in order to observe their conditions of life. After resigning from his post, he went to France and rented a shabby room in a working-class quarter of Paris. There he published his first article, on the subject of censorship in England, in a weekly newspaper called Monde. In February 1929, Orwell had an attack of pneumonia and had to spend some time in Paris hospital as a charity patient. His stay in this hospital left certain memories, which were as bitter as those of his life at St. Cyprian’s.

In the summer of 1929, Orwell wrote several short stories and two novels, which he could not publish. Being short of money, he worked for ten weeks as a dishwasher in a luxury hotel. His experiences among the poor of London and Paris now became the subject of his first book, Down and Out in Paris and London, which was published in 1933, under the pen-name of George Orwell.

By the end of 1929, he returned to England and served in two small schools. From 1930 to 1935, he contributed literary reviews to a magazine, called Adelphi. As a journalist his output was enormous. In less than twenty years, he produced more than seven hundred magazine articles, besides his books. His novel, A Clergyman’s Daughter, appeared in 1935, and the novel called, Keep the Aspidistra Flying, was published in 1936. In the same year, he was commissioned by the Left Book Club to write about the economic and social conditions in the depressed industrial regions of northern England. He spent three months in gathering material for the book called The Road to Wigan Pier that was published in 1937.
In June 1936, Orwell got married with Eileen O’Shaughnessy, a rather frail but attractive student of psychology at the University of London who was three years younger than he. She was sophisticated, fastidious, highly intelligent and intellectual lady. In December 1936, he went to Spain where the Civil War broke out. Orwell’s sympathies were on the side of the Leftist cause and he offered himself for training as a soldier to fight for the revolutionaries. His wife, Eileen O’Shaughnessy, joined him in Spain in February 1937 and started working at the Labour Party Office in Barcelona.

Orwell fought as a volunteer on the Aragon front in the north-east Spain and was badly wounded in the throat in May 1937. When he began to recover from his wound, the following month, he volunteered to return to the battle. But being pursued by the Communist police, he and his wife barely managed to cross the frontier into France, and found themselves safe. These events became the subject of one of his best books, called *Homage to Catalonia*, which was published in 1938.

In March 1938, Orwell fell ill with tuberculosis, a disease which he had suffered as a child. He and his wife spent the winter of 1938 in Morocco where he wrote the book, *Coming Up for Air*, which was published in the following year in 1939. Unfortunately, neither his nor his wife’s health improved during their stay in Morocco and they returned to England in the spring of 1939. In June 1939, Orwell’s father died of cancer at the age of eighty-two.

When World War II broke out, Orwell tried to enlist himself in the British army but he was rejected as medically unfit. The bad health that prevented him from taking an active part in the war was a great disappointment to him. In January 1941, Orwell wrote a number of wartime articles for a magazine. From August 1941, he spent about two years as Talks Producer for the Indian Section of B.B.C. Afterwards, he used his B.B.C. experiences as the basis for the bureaucratic Ministry of Truth in his novel, *Nineteen Eighty Four*.

In 1944, Orwell completed his novel *Animal Farm* and was shocked when a leading publisher rejected it on the political grounds. Eventually the book was brought out in 1945 by a different publisher. *Animal Farm* proved a very successful book, and for the first time in his life, Orwell found himself financially well off.
Orwell's literary success was, however, marred by a personal tragedy. His wife Eileen, who was not keeping good health, had to undergo an operation and she died at the operation-table in February 1945.

In the winter of 1946, Orwell went to the island of Jura in the Hebrides. Here, partly as a consequence of his wife's death and partly on account of his own distaste for social life, he began leading an arduous and taxing existence. While here, he wrote his last book, *Nineteen Eighty Four*.

*Nineteen Eighty Four* was published in 1949. But Orwell's health had been getting steadily worse. By the end of 1948, he was seriously ill and was hardly able to write anything. In September 1949, he went back to London and entered a hospital. In October of the same year, he married a girl by the name of Sonia Brownell. But his days were now numbered. On January 21st 1950, he died.

Orwell lived and celebrated the life of action, uncompromising on matters pertaining to society, politics and culture. He gave utmost priority to ethical values both in public and private life. His commitment to his cause encouraged critics to admire his integrity, decency and honesty. It should not be an exaggeration, if we say that Orwell lived his values both in his works and in his actions.

**Background of the Age and Formative Influences**

As a novelist committed to the improvement of the society, Orwell gave clear hint to his readers how a satisfactory social climate could be created by their desisting from certain political system. Orwell's experiences as a dish-washer in the cheap hotels of Paris, his tramping experiences in London and his grim realization of poverty and unemployment in the economic depression of the thirties, were cognizable factors in projecting Orwell's dilemma about his age. He has exposed in one of the briefs of 1935, the meaninglessness of age, which retarded the growth of mind and the spirit:

"I dreamt I dwelt in marble halls,  
And work to find it true;  
I wasn't born for an age like this;  
Was Smith? Was Jones? Were You?"³  
(From 'A Happy Vicar I might have been')

This poetic expression shows the difference between illusion and reality of the modern age. Every sensitive human being was aware that the age would usher in
something new, something bright. But when they confronted with reality, all their hopes were dupes. They were aware of the dreadful changes of life that were responsible for widening the gulf specially among various social classes. Forster tried to highlight the importance of social relationships in a society in which there are different races with conflicting loyalties in *Passage to India*. In *The Man of Property*, Galsworthy upheld the social values and attempted to show the exploitation of the labourers by the capitalists. In his dramas like *Justice*, *Strife* and *Loyalties*, he showed that social prejudice and bourgeois values are responsible for social problems and he viewed them with strict impartiality. Arno Bennett wrote on subjects like the futility of existence in his novel *Old Wives Tale*.

All the novelists of that age were aware of the crisis outside and within themselves. In the hands of Joyce and Virginia Woolf the crisis was felt within. Whether it concerned Stephen Dedalus’ spiritual development in *Portrait of the Artist* or Mrs. Dalloway’s experiences in *Mrs. Dalloway*, it was the novelist’s skill to convey the inwardness of experience that struck one’s thoughts. The novelists and poets of the first two decades of the twentieth century refused to remain indifferent to the social changes brought by industrial capitalism, science and technology. G.H. Bantock discovers a deep-rooted socio-psychological crisis baffling the sensitive individual “...... by the mid twentieth century every newspaperman has become aware of a crisis, a translation into journalese of Adam’s intimation of moral confusion, ushered in, as he saw it, by the final triumph of the Dynamo over the Virgin.”

The fast changes brought about by science and technology came to be felt by writers and poets and they shared a distasteful feeling of the strange rhythm of modern life. Man’s links with his traditions, his community life and everything became loose and he became more isolated and self-centred. The severance of man from his roots created a general atmosphere of saplessness and a climate of cultural alienation and social rootlessness. Confronted with grave moral crisis, poet like T.S. Eliot felt the loss of traditional values in the society in his poems such as “The Waste Land,” “Sweeney Agonistes” and “Four Quarters”⁵. In the stern asceticism of these poems, one can feel a strong restatement of Christian beliefs and traditional values.

By the twenties a good number of poets began to sense a kind of crisis and change in society. E.M. Forster felt the loss of his fictional energies as early as 1924
and attributed this change within him to change in human relationship as a whole. "I think one of the reasons why I stopped writing novels is that the social aspect of the world changed so much. I had been accustomed to write about the old fashioned world with its homes and its family life and its comparative pace". He further said in an agonizing tone:

"We are passing through a much rougher time, perhaps, the roughest time that has ever been".

C.P. Snow took up novel writing after the thirties. Snow's observation of changing social morals and manners in the society is peerless in his novels as The New Men or A Time of Hope. He shows that in the vastly altered English society of the post War decade neither culture nor manners matter much. It is a place where the power hungry people climb up the ladder of power by their resourcefulness, tact and acumen. In his self-revealing essay "Why I Write", Orwell confesses:

"In a peaceful age I might have written ornate or merely descriptive books, and might have remained almost unaware of my political loyalties. As it is, I have been forced into becoming a sort of pamphleteer".

In his essay "The Preventing of Literature", Orwell confesses that the writer's predicament arises from his unwillingness to sacrifice the intellectual liberty and integrity despite the social pressures. "In our age, the idea of intellectual liberty is under attack from two directions. On the one side are its theoretical enemies, the apologists of totalitarianism, and on the other its immediate practical enemies, monopoly and bureaucracy".

George Orwell was conscious of his age. It was an age of crisis in trade, which led to bankruptcy and unemployment. After the Second World War, the balance was tilted in favour of materialism at the cost of spiritualism. Man had lost his soul.

Influence of Contemporary Writers on Orwell

Orwell perceived clearly that numerous countries were not only bankrupt but they were in the grip of terror and mass hysteria under the dictatorship of totalitarian and fascist states. The totalitarian states were making a world-wide propaganda in order to feed their selfish and materialistic appetite and to expand their colonies or homogenous groups, to exploit people socially, morally, politically, racially and, perhaps, economically
too. They wanted to uproot the identity of the common people by propagating their ideology in the name of socialism.

Marx, Engles and Lenin awakened the people and they stood against the established feudal system of the society. Soviet Union had to be stripped off its mythological stature. By the early thirties, the society became so chaotic that current events demanded attention for their own sake. The society was on the verge of the collapse because there was no guiding principle. As a consequence, the contemporary intellectuals like Orwell felt it their duty to take a political stand outside the narrow range of British parliamentary politics. As a result, British intelligentsia turned towards communalism. To this shift in values, a principal rival was religious ideology.

The Catholicism and Communism were singled out in the thirties as the alternative cures for the sickness of a generation. But the younger generation sought anchorage in the extreme Left, or in a new radical Catholicism. On the extreme were Yeats, Pound and Wyndham Lewis. The Left-wing intelligentsia expressed their aversion on the whole and they refused to go with the currents of the time. Left-wing writers like W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender, Cecil Day, Lewis and Louis Mackneice were partially or fully committed to Marxism. They believed in revolution and political action. So they wrote their committed novels from working class or lower middle class perspective in which they evoked an exploration of ‘Socialist Romance’. Edward Upward believed Marxism as the source of explaining spiritual realities in terms of material realities of nature and human society. In his essay entitled “The Cult of Power”, Rex Warner perceives the importance of political action. He says:

"We have learnt that a novel can exercise as much or even more political influence as can a procession or an official leaflet. So long as man has the leisure and desire to read, literature is sure to be a force not only in life but in politics".¹⁰

At the same time D.H. Lawrence was advocating his belief in the philosophy of blood and sex. He felt that the fundamental instinct of love, feeling and compassion could alleviate the suffering of the faceless men and women. Contrary to D.H. Lawrence, Warner rejects his belief in “blood and sex”:

"The only reply to the cult of individual or racial power and violence is the actual practice of general justice, mercy, brotherhood and understanding." ¹¹

Like Orwell, Warner regarded the existence of evil as necessary for the
creation of positive values.

Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh were committed to Catholicism and believed in Catholic dogmas in order to achieve permanence in the society. Like Greene and Evelyn Waugh, Orwell was in search of certain permanent and spiritual values for human existence. In Graham Greene's view, human existence is not pointless. Evelyn Waugh looks at the society with anger and horror. He is unhappy at the deep-rooted corruption, loss of human and spiritual values, which are the main destructive forces of individual's soul. Greenblatt comments:

"Evelyn Waugh, like Charles Ryder, is an architectural painter who sees with anger, horror, and a kind of fascination, the destruction of old homes, the decay of institutions and the death of meaningful values."\(^12\)

Orwell's democratic socialism is juxtaposed to Waugh's world of self-seeking bright young people. Waugh is not concerned with results. Waugh "avoids issues and controversies while Orwell clearly writes about poverty and social disintegration."\(^13\) Waugh, Orwell and Huxley grew up in the same society and lived through the same national and international crisis. Yet their perspectives differ from one another. Unlike Waugh, Orwell does not proclaim that modern man is hardly aware of his absurd and chaotic state. To Orwell, common man expects sympathy and appreciation from the society. Of course, there is a Dickensian vision in his novels. According to him, common man retains inexhaustible vivacity, truth, generosity and integrity and as a social reformer he aspires to restore the lost dignity and worth of the ailing generation.

Waugh was a conservative and Huxley a mystic while Orwell was a revolutionary reformer. They have different conceptions of evil and they utilize different methods of exposing and combating evil forces and they use different methods of presenting their beliefs. Huxley as a mystic attacks the forces of hedonism. He believes in "a sort of romantic conception of nature as the embodiment of universal mind"\(^14\). He adopts the philosophy of non-attachment, a mystical belief which keeps man away from the ugliness, horror and filth of the society.

Orwell's position is peculiar among his contemporaries. He is an intellectual writer who cannot pretend to be ignorant of the prevailing oppression, tyranny, torture and physical pains and does not afford to remain detached and unaffected from the ugliness and filth of the society. He exposes to pretence and hypocrisy of the
totalitarian powers; now they change and control human wishes. To him human freedom, privacy and instinct are of great significance. In *Coming Up for Air* Orwell powerfully explores the devastation of the post-World War era which disrupted the quintessence of agriculture. He looks at the sombre post World War era and realizes that mushrooming of industries and growing intellectual ambition have set the world at the brink of confusion and disaster. Like D.H. Lawrence, Orwell expresses his disgust with the age as the man has become slave to machine. In *The Road to Wigan Pier*, Orwell writes:

"Machine production suggests socialism, but socialism as a world system implies machine production, because it demands certain things not compatible with a primitive way of life."

According to Orwell the function of the machine is to frustrate the human need for effort and creation. D.H. Lawrence in *Rainbow* shows that the Brangwen women are not satisfied with their state. They wish to return to their peaceful and blessed pre-industrial world. Like D.H. Lawrence's *Rainbow*, Orwell's *Coming Up for Air* attempts to explore the vanishing pre-industrial world. In order to search for his identity, George Bowling goes to Lower Binfield, but strangely enough, he no longer finds it existent. He laments:

"But where was Lower Binfield? Where was the town I used to know? .... All I know was that it was buried somewhere in the middle of that sea of bricks."

D.H. Lawrence in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* also exposes the wretched and tragic state of the age and feels sorry for man's limitations and loss of control over the rapid change. He says:

"We've got to live, no matter, how many skies have fallen. Having tragically wrung our heads, we now proceed to peel the potatoes, or to put on the wireless."

T.S. Eliot felt that man has himself cringed to be entrapped into the knots of meaningless evolution. The deep-rooted feeling of pain and agony finds beautiful expression in the following lines:

"This is the dead Land
This is the cactus land
Here the stone images
Are raised, here they receive
The supplication of a deadman’s hand
Under the twinkle of a fading star.”

Moreover, George Orwell’s writings reflect the growing isolation of ailing generation suffering from a sense of loneliness and alienation; all men remain locked in their own prison. In Coming Up for Air, George Bowling goes to Lower Binfield and does not identify himself with the transformed world-alien and indifferent. He utters these words with a sense of amazement:

“All strangers! They’d all come crowding in while my back was turned. And yet it was they who’d have looked me as strangers, they didn’t know anything about the old Lower Binfield, they’d never heard of shooter... you bet.”

In Homage to Catalonia, Orwell explores the horror, disaster and banality of the Spanish Civil War in which hundreds of men were slaughtered cattle-like. Orwell’s Coming Up for Air echoes a deep-seated fear, a sense of panic, bewilderment and despair in the gloomy and gruesome atmosphere of war:

“A noise like the Day of Judgement, and then a noise like a sheet of tin. That was falling bricks. It seemed to kind of melt into the pavement. “It’s started”, I thought, “I know it, old Hitler didn’t wait. Just sent his bombers across without warning.”

Orwell’s criticism of machinery and scientific inventions had echoes of Swift and Butler whom Orwell had read with delight. In Swift’s Gulliver’s Travels, Gulliver’s description of what he saw at the Grand Academy of Lagado was stupendous. Samuel Butler in his celebrated anti-Utopian work Erewhon rationalised the futility of man’s dependence on the machines for better health and comfort.

The influence of Swift and Butler on Orwell was tremendous, as it is evident from a passage from The Road to Wigan Pier. Orwell makes a satirical attack against all the advocates of mechanical progress:

“There is really no reason why a human being should do more than eat, drink, sleep, breathe and procreate; everything else could be done for him by machinery.”

Comparing H.G. Wells’ The Sleeper Awakes with Huxley’s Brave New World as studies in dystopia, Orwell argues that Wells’ novel gives a mixture of mechanical progress but it is full of contradictions because of the fact that Wells, as the archpriest of ‘progress’ cannot write with any conviction against “progress.”
Apart from the impact of science and machinery on the thought processes of the novelists and poets of the twentieth century, there was the impact of new psychological knowledge. Freud's analysis of human psychology brought about significant changes in the outlook of the novelists towards the delineation of their characters, particularly in their understanding of the psychological determinism inherent in the characters. Freud's interpretation of the unconscious conscious also left its impact on Orwell.

In *A Clergyman's Daughter*, he went back to Joyce's method of handling plain narrative with the stream of unconscious technique. In Orwell's last novel, *Nineteen Eighty Four*, he was able to show through the dream sequence of the protagonist that unconscious spills over the conscious and brings to the surface feelings that we deliberately try to suppress. Smith's guilt feelings for his deceased mother and his deceased sister emerge in dreams and he is able to atone for his guilt. This is an impact of Freudian theory on Orwell's writings.

**Orwell As a Writer**

George Orwell is in the tradition of humanist writers. He was dogmatic, sententious and impersonal writer. Orwell died in 1950, but that in no way diminished the popularity of his writings. Till date, a little more than twenty volumes of critical essays and innumerable reviews have kept the reader's interest in Orwell unflagging. Each critic has approached Orwell from his own ideological standpoint; strange enough, each has found something in common with Orwell's ideology. Critics have delved into the thought processes of Orwell and have discovered some qualities that he always cherished. These qualities include his liberal humanism, his purity of candour, vividness of expression, his objectivity, his moral earnestness, his decency, his witty humour and above all, his impeccable truthfulness. Both the Marxian and the non-Marxian critics have been unsparing in their denunciatory criticism of the contradictions, disconnections and paradoxes in Orwell's work. But all said and done, Orwell's strength as a writer far outweighs his limitation—the gold left after sifting is always pure and attractive.

Orwell's gifts were an inspired commonsense and a power of steady thoughts, attitudes and catchwords; the courage of the lovely man who is not afraid of
being lonely, and has learned, in his loneliness, to regard himself with same
detachment. These, however, would have made Orwell no more than an unusual citizen
in the tradition of English individuality, a tradition which happily still survives, despite the
pressure, towards convention and conformity from the Right and a pressure towards
levelling and uniformity from the Left. Orwell’s distinction is that these gifts, in his case,
were completed by talent for writing nervous, flexible and lucid prose. So deeply indeed
was writing a part of Orwell’s nature that qualities are manifest in his work, which did not
reveal themselves in his life.

Orwell’s Novels

Orwell’s writings, however, particularly his essays, are full of wit, and his
masterpiece, Animal Farm, is a river or at least a sparkling brook of witty observation
and lively, vigorous expression. All his novels are alike. They are all tales of solitary
characters, each in one way or other an expression of Orwell himself, seen against his
odd background. The backgrounds are vividly drawn, often with a painful grittiness,
which shows that author is doing his utmost to be fair over what was really an intolerable
situation.

First of all, the essence of his novels is that they are unforgiving and the
author’s own anger conveys a sense of discomfort to the reader who feels he is being
nagged at for something which is only indirectly his fault, and is drawn to resent that an
author of such uncommon talent should care so little whether he conveys enjoyment to
his readers.

Secondly, Orwell’s concentration on himself leads him to see the outside
world as an enlarged projection of his own personal world. He was, from childhood,
from infancy indeed, hampered by lack of money, and he sees the world as
a succession of money-rackets. He regards class distinctions, not as temporary
phenomena doomed to a rapid disappearance, but as part of the basic order of human
existence, conditions and written into lease under which man holds tenure of the earth.

Thirdly, he tends himself to multiply the sub-divisions already existing,
as when in A Clergyman’s Daughter, he makes the grim head-mistress class her
pupils into three categories-those who may be illtreated, those with whom some care
should be exercised, and those who must, on no account, be touched and whose work
must always be described as excellent-according to how promptly parents pay their
Fourthly, his weakness was that he lived in present. He did not hold historical perspective and regarded future simply an extension of the present. In his last book, Nineteen Eighty Four, Orwell shows that his own mind was similarly stuck, and that he expected the future to resemble the present but in a more stupid, more oppressive, more miserable, dirty and illfed form.

Fifthly, Orwell’s pre-occupation with present prevented his seeing not merely the past and future, but the present as it really is. His pre-occupation with himself and his own experiences prevented his enlarging that experience by sympathetic understanding of others.

Orwell, like Shelley, was a rebel. The cruelties and inadequacies of life troubled him. He too quivered like the poet with the frenzied desire to bring fire to mankind and no sacrifice was great in this Promethean task. His humanistic approach to life with all its problems is a brave endeavour on the part of the writer. His aim is to present a man in a proper perspective.

Orwell is one of the novelists of proletarian class. His novels along with his non-fiction and essays reflect sympathy for the poor and the down-trodden. He realistically defends the plight of miners, workers, dish-washers, beggars and tramps in his artistic forms. Orwell feels the individual integrity is enjoyed only by the poor. The down and out of Paris and London and the miners of Wigan have to keep themselves underfed and have to continue their painstaking job under different circumstances. This also makes them suffer from complex diseases from which they hardly recover. He says:

“The struggle of the working class is like the growth of a plant. This plant is blind and stupid but it knows enough to keep pushing upwards towards the light.”

Orwell classified anyone’s motives for writing under four headings; “egoism (Desire to seem clever, to be talked about, to be remembered after death); aesthetic enthusiasm (Perception of beauty in the external world, or... in words and their right arrangement); historical impulse (Desire to see things as they are, to find out true facts and store them up for the use of posterity); and political purpose (Desire to push the world in a certain direction, to alter other people’s idea of the kind of the society that they should strive after).”
Orwell's literary career can be conventionally divided into two clear-cut phases. The first phase commences with Orwell's resignation from the Imperial Indian Police Service in 1927, continues till 1936 when he leaves on a commissioned tour across the Industrial North of England, eventually leading to The Road to Wigan Pier. The second phase that begins in 1937 with Orwell's joining the Spanish Civil War continues till the fag end of his life and sees him through his work.

The pre-Spanish Civil War writings of Orwell, as it were, are marked by a narrowness of vision, vagueness, confusion and a perceptible want of conviction. Besides, the whole body of writings that comprises three full-length novels, one memoir and a documentary are essentially a medley of autobiography, fiction and documentary.

Orwell nearly dismisses his pre-Spanish Civil War writings as humbug generally because they lack a political purpose. He says:

"And looking back through my work, I see it is invariably where I lacked a political purpose that I wrote lifeless books and was betrayed into purple passages...and humbug generally."  

Aspects of Orwell's Fiction

All of Orwell's novels are autobiographical and spring from the psychological need to work out the pattern and meaning of his personal experience. With great ability, he is successful in transforming his early guilt and awareness into a compassionate writing about the degradation and suffering of the common man. In all his novels and work, Orwell has emerged as a writer who was bitterly conscious of his age and has attempted to expose the barbarism and injustice without fear and with full truthfulness. Though he is not a writer of par excellence yet his contribution to literature as a radical pessimist claims artistic integrity and personal commitment. E.M. Forster writes:

"He tried to ameliorate a world which is bound to be unhappy, true liberal; he hoped to help through small things."  

Orwell's novels deal with two dominant themes—poverty and politics— or, as he put it, "the twin nightmares that beset nearly every modern man, the nightmare of unemployment and the nightmare of state interferences".
The novels, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* (1935), *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936), and the reportage *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) deal with the first theme. *Burmese Days* (1934), *Homage to Catalonia* (1938), *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty Four* (1949) with the second, while *Coming Up for Air* (1939), an apocalyptic novel that records the vision of a world destroyed, is a transitional work that proceeds the major wartime essays and concerns an unsuccessful attempt to escape from both nightmares. There is continuity, consistency of Orwell’s major ideas; and a unity, pattern and development in all his books, which are closely related to each other and to the essays.

Orwell’s weapon was his language and the qualities that Orwell characteristically associate with good prose are honesty and directness. He is the great master of colloquial ease, and believes that “concrete words are better than abstract ones, and that the shortest way of saying anything is always the best.” 29 His vivid and direct, flexible and far ranging style is always readable and interesting, and moves from witty aphorism.

Orwell has always emphasized the importance of stylistic care, clarity and precision in his note books and in politics and in English language. He admits:

“Virtually all that I wrote was written at least twice, and my books as a whole three times- individual passages as many as five or ten times.” 30

Butler also asserts, “a man’s style in any art should be like his dress-it should attract as little attention as possible.” 31 This is very close to Orwell’s belief that one “can write nothing readable unless one constantly struggles to efface one’s personality. God prose is like a window pane.” 32

Orwell developed a forceful and persuasive prose style by skilfully arranging facts and the attempts to efface his personality paradoxically produce a distinctive style and recognizable persona. He often ridicules himself and points out his own mistakes and misconceptions, always identifies with his persona. His most sophisticated use of this persona is in *Homage to Catalonia* a war memoir related the novels about the Great War narrated from victim’s viewpoint, in which Orwell combines personal narrative with factual reporting, and creates a unique form by uniting two different kinds of truth. In his early novels he is successful in producing effective novelistic projection of the self, but it inhibits the creation of an imaginative world. Thus
he could not create characters outside himself and is not successful in grafting social analysis and political purpose on to the form of the traditional novel.

But the analysis of Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty Four, however, shows how this kind of art literalness could be extremely successful once discovered the appropriate form of expression. As a result he is able to combine elements of fantasy in Animal Farm. Orwell engages himself with political reality through the union of conscience and commitment; he enlarges our sense of the social and political entity that surrounds us. Orwell's honesty and political purpose influenced his literary experiments in several genres. He once remarked:

"The major problems of our time is the decay of the belief in the personal immortality, and it can be dealt with while the average human being is either drudging like an ox or shivering in fear of secret police." 33

George Orwell's two novels, Coming Up for Air and A Clergyman's Daughter, deal with man's rootlessness and spiritual sterility. To him it is essential that man should cultivate some degree of compromise in order to sustain his religious worth and viability of life. He wishes to restore man to his normal and healthy self, to the law of heart. He condemns typical way of living of a modern man. He writes:

"Everything slick and shiny and streamlined; mirrors, enamel, and chromium plate whichever direction you look in. Everything spent on the decorations and nothing on the food. No real food at all. Just lists of stuff with American names, sort of Phantom stuff that you can't taste and can hardly believe in the existence of everything comes out of a carton or a tin, it's hauled out of a refrigerator or squirted out of a tap or squeezed out of a tube. No comfort, no privacy." 34

George Bowling, an insurance inspector, is a typical modern man, never likes his profession and feels himself entrapped in the commercial world. He no longer wants to sell his conscience and suggests that his creation of new kind of personal narrative, which has become a distinctive contemporary form, made him the greater modern essayist and reporter.

Orwell As a Writer: Aims and Perspectives

Orwell happened to be the earliest among the intellectuals and political thinkers of the time to observe with conviction that "communism is now a counter
revolutionary force." Orwell's experiences in the Spanish Civil War revolutionized his world-view and eventually led to such works as *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty Four*, which secured an enduring literary position for George Orwell.

George Orwell's novels seem to penetrate the threshold of humanitarian perspective. The objective of his literary writing is to expose to the world that the expansion of industries and advanced technology, in the socialistic and capitalistic systems caused the delinking of man from the significant past in the post 1st World War period. His dominant motive is to show that loss of faith has made man to grope in the darkness of fear, bewilderment and alienation. The greedy aspirations of capitalistic and socialistic societies have affected the happiness of life. Man has been dragged into dehumanized patterns of regimentation, violence and human suffering. Perhaps, it is this disintegration of flesh and spirit, which Orwell wants to restore to health.

To Orwell, the harmony between "body and soul" seems to be the matrix of individual integrity. He foresees that one of the major causes of spiritual sterility is the loss of faith. He writes eloquently and morally. He clarifies:

"I was down among the realities of modern life. And what are the realities of modern life? Well, the chief one is an everlasting, frantic struggle to sell thing."

This, of course, links the novel with *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*. Like Bowling, Gordon also feels himself entrapped in the hollow, frigid and mercantile world. His conscience pricks and he resigns his job with the advertising company and declares war on money in order to pass a human and viable life.

In *A Clergyman's Daughter*, Orwell shows that the man performs his religious rituals as if it is perfunctory. For him religious worship and church-going have become a routine. He wants to unfold the dilemma of spiritual hollowness of a man on one hand and on the other hand, the restoration of spiritual values, the Hamlet-like problems of the modern man. However there is a little bit of optimism that in *A Clergyman's Daughter*, Dorothy Hare returns to the existing society with renewed sense of courage and compromise.

Orwell realizes that the dehumanization is not merely political and military or superficial, it has penetrated the very fabric of human existence. In *Animal Farm*, *Nineteen Eighty Four*, and *Coming Up for Air*, Orwell examines the outside forces, which deprive man of his essential goodness. But the inner forces too play havoc with
man leaving him thoughtless, callous and at the mercy of the same external forces for
the society, which are the agents of dehumanization. In A Clergyman’s Daughter,
Dorothy Hare loses her faith in Christianity.

“Either life on earth is a preparation for something greater and more
lasting, it is meaningless, dark and dreadful.” 37

She seems to lose the meaning and existence of the universe. While
talking to Warburton, she says:

“My Faith. Oh, you know what I mean. A few months ago, all of a sudden,
it seemed as if my whole mind had changed. Everything that I’d believed in till
then-everything-seemed suddenly meaningless and almost silly.” 38

In spite of different opinions, the writers of this age present a common
belief which forms their particular form of literary perspectives. Each one of the novelists
thinks that a severe malaise lies with the society. They seem to identify man’s spiritual
sickness and highlight his depravity. In the same vein T.S. Eliot writes:

“April is the cruellest, breeding
Lilacs out of the deadland, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.
Winter kept us warm.” 39

In the world of George Orwell, man loses his individuality and identity by
choosing to play a social role.

What Orwell attacked is the money-god that controls man’s morality and
conscience. In Keep the Aspidistra Flying, Gordon Comstock perceives the fallacy,
hollowness, treachery and triviality of the modern world. Gordon, like other
protagonists, finds himself a misfit in the hostile world. Gordon, no longer, wants to sell
his conscience and thus renunciates the world as ‘money god’. He says:

“That was what I meant to worship the money-god! To sell down, to Make
Good, to sell your soul for a villa and an aspidistra.” 40

War plays a dehumanizing role. It brings animality in man. In Coming
Up for Air, Orwell writes:

“The bombs, the food- queues, the rubber truncheons, the barbed wire,
the coloured shirts, the slogans, the enormous faces, the machine guns squirting out
bedroom windows. It's all going to happen".\textsuperscript{41}

Orwell belonged to the most torturous phase of the century and the horror of the war shook him. Ian Kilvert Scott observed frankly:

"You can't ignore Hitler, Mussolini, unemployment, aeroplanes, and the radio; you can only prevent to do so, which means lopping off a large chunk of consciousness".\textsuperscript{42}

**Orwell's Political Insight**

Orwell was primarily a political writer. All his best works deal with the political or social problems. In his early works politics is rarely discussed directly. There is often a political implication but it is never laboured and it is not until *The Road to Wigan Pier* and *Homage to Catalonia* that political aspects begin to be stressed.

By the time he was writing *The Road to Wigan Pier*, he calls himself a socialist. This conversion was the result of his experiences of poverty. Orwell said that the ordinary workingman is often a truer socialist than the Marxist because he never forgets that socialism would mean justice and common decency. Orwell doubted very strangely whether the Marxist intellectual was actuated by a love of working class. He gives the example of barren socialism of Shaw. All Shaw's workingmen were regarded by him as figures of fun. Orwell's socialism opposed Fascism. During his age Fascist thinking was at its zenith. To him it was not enough to accept communist doctrine that economic equality would bring the political virtues in its train. It was necessary to eliminate great variation in wealth. He remarked over the shocking difference in people's income:

"I do not believe that a man with £ 50,000 a year and a man with fifteen shillings a week either can, or will co-operate."\textsuperscript{43}

George Orwell's writing was a response to the immediate issues of the age he lived in; and those issues, as he saw them demanded writing that was clearly rhetorical. In his 1946, "Why I Write", Orwell commented:

"Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism..."\textsuperscript{44}

Orwell was against all types of totalitarianism. He reacted not only against imperialism but the capitalistic ways of life and governance. The two world wars
exposed fascism and dictatorship and shook the faith of democrats, socialists, Marxists and all those who believed in human values. Orwell's disgust for his age was due to his belief that mid-century western world did not allow the individual any freedom. He also had a deep sense of disgust against the intellectuals who sought to escape through orthodoxies. He writes:

"The common people, on the whole are still living in the world of absolute good and evil from which intellectuals have long since escaped." 45

Orwell's readings of the works of Lenin moulded his views on imperialism. Lenin was one of the most prominent political figures during Orwell's schooling and Lenin's political philosophy was widely read all over the world. In The Road to Wigan Pier he tells us of Lenin's charismatic personality:

"Of sixteen boys in the class (our average was about seventeen) fifteen included Lenin in the list. This was at a snobbish expensive public school, and the date was 1920, when the horrors of the Russian Revolution were still fresh in every one's mind." 46

Lenin held the view that "the empire exists to create a financial oligarchy and it is for this reason that the territorial division of the whole world among the great capitalist powers is made. The colonial policy of monopolistic possession of the world is the sole objective of the imperialist." 47

On the basis of Orwell's readings, his personal experiences and his observations, we may contend that Orwell was critical of imperialism and he raised his voice against it. At the same time his personal experience as a police officer in an imperialistic society gave him a sense of detachment towards the whole mystique of the Whiteman's domination and Burmese Days is the example. It is a powerful exposition of racial discrimination and colonial hatred. It brings fresh insights and spiritual revelation for it inhumanly draws a line between Blacks and Whites, brothers and brothers. This suits the imperialistic design of the one to subdue and subjugate the other demarcation between slaves and masters. The confrontation between the two races might be studied from two aspects. On the one hand, the imperialists were aware of their concept of White superiority. Therefore, they tried to uphold the ruler-ruled relationship. George Orwell speaks emphatically to resolve the Black-White discord for
he believes earnestly in the integrity and viability of man.

Orwell's personal readings have largely shaped his anti-imperialistic views. Besides Lenin, Orwell also read Kipling and his liking and disliking of Kipling at different periods of his life tailored his opinions against imperialism. In 1936 Orwell wrote:

"What is much more distasteful in Kipling than sentimental plots or vulgar tricks of style, is the imperialism to which he chose to lend his genius...The imperialism of eighties and nineties was sentimental, ignorant and dangerous, but it was not entirely despicable. The picture then called up by the word "empire" was a picture of overworked officials and frontier skirmishes, not of Lord Beaverbrook and Australian butler. It was not possible to be imperialist and a gentleman, and of Kipling's personal decency there can be no doubt." 48

A close reading of the passage shows that imperialism of the eighties and nineties was neither detractable nor admirable to Orwell. But towards the third decade of the twentieth century a reactionary trend towards imperialism was perceptible. The essay which Orwell wrote on Kipling in 1942 shows that by that time he had become more anti-Kiplingesque in his outlook.

"He could not understand what was happening because he had never had any grasp of the economic forces underlying imperial expansion. It is not notable that Kipling does not seem to realize anymore than the average soldier or colonial administrator, that an empire is primarily a money making concern. Imperialism, as he sees, is a sort of forcible evangelising. You turn a gritting gun on a mob of unarmed natives and then you establish law." 49

On the basis of Orwell's readings, his personal experiences and observations, one may contend that Orwell was critical of imperialism. He believed in Lenin that "empire exists to create financial oligarchy and it is for this reason that the territorial division of the world among the great capitalist powers is made. The colonial policy of monopolistic possession of the world is the sole objective of the imperialist." 50

In Road to Wigan Pier, Orwell in his own way conforms to Lenin's view. "For apart from any consideration, the high standard of life we enjoy in England depends upon our keeping a tight hold on Empire, particularly the tropical portions of it, such as India and Africa under the capitalist system, in order that England may live in comparative comfort, a hundred millions Indians must live on starvation". 51
According to Orwell, imperialist, and indeed all capitalist social relations were founded on power and for Orwell it was immaterial whether those who held power believed themselves to be motivated by a desire to improve the lot of their fellows or by a cynical desire for the gratification: the effect was same. To attempt to place self-denying ordinances on the powerful, as Confucius and Plato and many latter had done, was simple illusion. Power itself had to be defused and "imperialism" as the base of social relationships replaced by social equality. He added to this analysis of transformative insight by which he recognized in the lives of the oppressed a set of values, which could form the basis of democratic and equalitarian society. So much for Orwell's model.

The motives which impelled so many countries to participate in the imperial enterprise could not realistically be written off as invariably exploitative; the intentions of socialist, intellectual and ideologies to improve the lot of the poor. Contrary to the assumptions, the oppressors are not always wrong. Nor does the evidence, even Orwell's evidence lend such substance to claim that the oppressed are always right. Violence as well as decency has always played a large part in working class life; so has gross gender inequality and so, for that matter, has paternal authoritarianism. Consider, for example, *Sons and Lovers* by D.H. Lawrence himself the son of a miner. Does the opposition in Burma today believe that their government is less imperialist than were the British former masters. Have not some of the oppressed become oppressors?

There is another deeper line of criticism of Orwell's alternative power model. When he speaks the value of working class life, he is, infact retreating from the public to the private realm. Nowhere does he write like Forster. Orwell came to believe that many races might create cultural, racial and spiritual harmony if they cultivate a sense of personal relationship. He himself admitted: "Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been for democratic socialism." Orwell was evidently on the side of the socialists as far as they believed in restoration of human dignity. Stephen Jay Greenblatt rightly says:

"Orwell believed that a regime based on democratic socialism could enable men to live in a tolerable, even mildly pleasant life and that such a regime could isolate and destroy the forces of violence, injustice and tyranny."
He identifies the demerits of English people as hypocrisy, snobbery and privilege. "England is the most class ridden country under the sun. It is a land of snobbery and privilege, ruled largely by the old and silly." 54

Conclusion

Orwell was by no means the first to extol the virtues of the oppressed. Dickens and Tolstoy, among others, could have said to have done so far more comprehensively. Contrary about power structures within the working class political movements such as the trade unions whereas even Machiavelli recognized the value to the polity of private virtue. He thought it had little place in statecraft.

One should not think that Orwell was not aware of this criticism. But the truth is that what Orwell passionately cared about was the better treatment by men for their fellowmen. Orwell wrote against those who exercised cruelty even through the rhetoric of human equality. The values of non-ideological, non-imperialistic socialism that he fought for, were, in fact, fundamentally the same as those of non-doctrinaire Christianity. In attributing these qualities to the working class in greater measure than any other is surely forgivable; after all, fundamentally he agreed with Huxley's Illidge, in Point Counter Point, who declares:

"If you live on less than the 5 a week, you've damned well got to be a Christian." 55

The aim of British imperialism was to spread wisdom, learning, and education and to civilize the Orientals racially, morally, culturally and spiritually. Macaulay believed in the Whiteman's responsibility towards the ignorant and uncultured natives:

"We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect." 56

The British imperialists completely wrecked the Asian from within and without but they also acted as agents of the renaissance, the reformation and the enlightenment in the East. Orwell has expressed his indignation against the spread of imperialism that brought the native suffering, inflictment and endless humiliation. Tom Hopkinson is right in his opinion that Orwell had inexhaustible fund of sympathy for the downtrodden. Because of his intuitional attachment with the lives of ordinary men and
women, he chose subjects "other writers overlooked."87

Orwell engages himself with political reality through the union of conscience and commitment; he enlarges our sense of the social and political entity that surrounds us. This thesis reveals how Orwell's works and ideas evolved from his personal experience and masochistic guilt, but it also considers the kind of literature produced by a sensitive and committed artist. It shows that Orwell's political, artistic and satirical purpose influenced his literary purpose in several genres. His love for this kind of unspotted political culture has grown out of his deep respect for the Puritan tradition, of which the English race is irrevocally a part and parcel. The Puritan tradition which always gives highest priority to intellectual and moral development has always influenced Orwell in the shaping of his moral and aesthetic sensibility.

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