Chapter II

Burmese Days
Introduction

Most critics regard Orwell's first novel, *Burmese Days*, as simply a polemic against the British Raj. It would be naive to contend that there is no anti-imperialism in *Burmese Days*; but there is more to the novel than political comment. To examine *Burmese Days* on literary grounds, to view the book as a fictive world, is to see that it is a novel built on a series of symbolic patterns, some obvious, some subtle. Such a method is, perhaps, typical of a first novel, for symbolism lends to the apprentice novelist a ready-made richness, a kind of convenient shorthand that must be appealing. Dangers lie, of course, in the possible heavy-handedness of the symbology; but it may be that the obvious Freudian bias of the symbols Orwell employs are, for current tastes at least, overdone. But the crucial point is, that such is an artistic judgement, and that Orwell's concerns were artistic. The novel is not merely a propaganda; it exists other than as a polemic.

Background

Orwell's first novel, *Burmese Days* (1934), is anti-imperialist; as it is an attack on Fascism, Communism and capitalism. Orwell spent five years as a policeman in Burma, and was responsible for the kicking, flogging and torturing of the men. The early essay "A Hanging" (1931), his first treatment of the colonial theme, is a paradigm of his guilt and responsibility. In "How the Poor Die", Orwell relates how the patients were treated as things rather than as people; in "Marrakech", he writes that when you walk through a colonial town, "when you see how the people live, and still more how easily they die, it is always difficult to believe that you are walking among human beings."¹

Orwell saw the dirty work of Empire at close quarters and the horribly ugly, degrading scenes offended him all the time. He realized that an Indian coolie's leg is often thinner than the Englishman's arm. His words are a clear expression of his perceived agony and guilt. "I hated the imperialism I was serving with a bitterness which I probably cannot make clear... it is not possible to be a part of such a system without recognizing it as an unjustifiable tyranny... I was conscious of an immense weight of guilt that I had got to expiate."²

Orwell managed to relieve this intense guilt in two ways. He resigned from his position, and to expiate his political sin, submerged himself among the
oppressed-poor of Paris and London and took their side against the tyrants by
becoming one of them. Orwell also relieved his guilt through a creative exercise by the
writing of Burmese Days.

Theme

The theme of Burmese Days is not anti-colonialism, but rather the failure
of community—of two persons and of society. In the attempt to impose the standards and
modes of a far-distant world upon an alien and unyielding landscape, the English people
of Kyauktada estrange themselves from reality. They simply forget that it is Burma that
is to be accommodated, not England; the implacable jungle takes its toll, alters the mode
of life in accord with its own, allows the superficiality of the club to become only a more
hidden, more savage jungle. The community is corrupted because the life is solitary
and murderous, because the enforced existence in Burma becomes based on envy
rather than reality.

Ellis’ and Mrs. Lackersteen’s views on race relations in Burma signal
that Orwell was already making connection between overseas and
domestic “imperialism.” “Really I think the laziness of these servants is getting too
shocking”. She complains further:

“We seem to have no authority over the natives now-a-days, with all
those dreadful reforms and the insolence they learn from the newspapers. In some
ways they are getting almost as bad as the lower class at the home.”

Burmese Days tells the story of a small outpost in upper Burma,
Kyauktada, of a middle-aged timber merchant, John Flory, and of his relations with the
expatriate community. Flory is an archetypal Orwellian hero, an outsider whose status
as such is indicated by a disfiguring birthmark on one side of his face—a physical
manifestation of his alienation from society. His friendship with an Indian doctor in the
community earns him not only the contempt of the members at the local club but also
enmeshes him, unknowingly, in the machination of a ruthlessly ambitious Burmese
Magistrate, U Po Kyin. The club at Kyauktada has been advised to give membership to
an Asian, as part of government policy, and U Po Kyin has set his sights on being the
member. Veraswami the doctor, befriended by Flory, his only competitor and the
magistrate sets about discrediting Veraswami. As a subplot, Flory, too, has an objective
to marry Elizabeth, the niece of the Lackersteens, an attractive but small minded young
woman who takes Flory seriously only after the departure from Kyauktada of an arrogantly patrician military policeman who possesses all the social graces and martial virtues that Flory so palpably lacks.

Flory's marital prospects are suddenly enhanced by his having proved instrumental in putting down a minor revolt, which actually threatened the club and its members. His equally sudden humiliation and disgrace is engineered by U Po Kyin. Elizabeth spurns him and Flory takes his own life. Without the support of his White friend, Verawami is undermined by the magistrate and U Po Kyin achieves his objective of membership of the club and indeed all his ambitions. This is a story without heroes, a story of mendacity, treachery and hypocrisy, of racial and social repression and hatred.

The story provides the author an opportunity to expose the imperial elite to ruthless analysis. Amongst the ex-pats is Ellis, an intelligent and able timber executive who felt for all Asians 'a bitter restless loathing'. Ellis' feelings were roused to a fury by the government's policy of encouraging the admittance of non-Europeans to clubs.

Characterization in Burmese Days

Orwell's portrayal of the characters is noteworthy. He is mainly concerned with how his characters face responsibility, and Flory's inability to meet responsibility under the pressure of an overwhelming guilt is shown in his relationship with Dr. Verawami, whom he proposes to the club only when it is too late; and with his Burmese mistress, May Hla, whom he abandons and then bribes after a mutually destructive liaison, and who decays in a brothel after exposing him before Elizabeth and the English community and finally with Elizabeth herself, whom he can neither enlighten nor engage. His suicide, a violent yet appropriate gesture of physical courage and moral cowardice, is his terrible protest against these failures. Flory's suicide is a way of concluding the novel, but it is an essentially weak device that resolves neither the themes of the book nor the problems inherent in the colonial experience.

Orwell's descriptions are full of lively compassion, reinforcement, intensity and vividness. In his description of the death of an elephant, we see his style. "A mysterious, terrible change had come over the elephant.... He looked suddenly
stricken, shrunken, immensely old....But in falling he seemed for a moment to rise, for as his hind legs collapsed beneath him, he seemed to tower upwards like a huge rock toppling, his trunk reaching skywards like a tree". The final sentence suggests an enormous natural disaster—a landslide of an earthquake. The effect that Orwell achieves, of vividness, intensity, pain and penetration, is similar to Hemingway's description of the wounded lion in 'The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber'.

The elephant, Orwell writes, 'was dying, very slowly and in great agony, but in some world remote from me....It seemed dreadful to see the great beast lying there, powerless to move and yet powerless to die.' The echo of Arnold's 'Wandering between two worlds, one dead, the other powerless to be born' stresses the symbolic connection between the dying elephant and dying Empire. And, this is, of course, related to the two major themes: that injustice leads to political self-destruction, and that "the British Empire is dying." 

Flory As Orwell's Spokesman

Flory declares his own position to be not so much anti-empire as anti-humbug. He, too, wants to make money but not to the extent of participating, in the 'slimy whiteman's burden humbug.' Let's not pretend, he argues, 'that the whiteman is in Burma to uplift the Burmese; he is there to rob them'. The whole business of empire, Flory concludes, may be summed up as follows:

"The official holds the Burman down while the businessman goes through his pockets." 

The drama is played out against a jungle background, reinforcing the themes of the novel by a subtle symbolic pattern—namely, the linking and contrasting of two jungles. The natural one and the artificial, the still beast filled jungle of the club.

Flory is made bitter by the corruption around him. Yet his failure to renounce the corruption demonstrates a crucial fault in his character. Insight does not lead to action, and that "unbreakable system" will eventually become the cause of Flory's death. His birthmark suggests both strength and weakness.

Flory is heavily bearded; like the buffalo, Flory will become feared for his virility and power; like the animal, he is in reality harmless. The symbol of the birthmark and the image of "chalk-faced" define character through the context of the setting. Elizabeth and Flory are set against various backgrounds, which regulate their
relationship. Besides Flory, Elizabeth, U Po Kyin and Dr Veraswami, the English colony consists of the bigoted and malicious Ellis, the drunken and lecherous Lackersteen, his scheming and snobbish wife, the blood thirsty and stupid Westfield, the boring and pompous Macgregor, the innocent and inoffensive Maxwell and, later on the arrogant and cruel Verrall. There are no redeeming characters in Orwell’s negative novel only the “dull boozing witless porkers,” who exploit the country and observe the fine beatitudes of the pukka sahib.

Like E.M. Forster, George Orwell cherished to defend the natives of the sub-continent. He also unveils the poverty-stricken life of the Burmese society where the natives are deliberately kept underfed, uneducated and are unpatriotic in order to continue their master-slave relationship. In Kyauktada Orwell exposes the political-economic exploitation committed by the imperialists. Of course, Orwell’s exposition of poverty is realistic and concrete. Flory and Elizabeth go down the bazar and watch the endless slums and “filthy disgusting habits of the natives.” From the Western point of view, she perceives it as ‘disgusting’. The filthy scene is noteworthy:

“There was reek of garlic, dried fish, sweat, dust, anise, cloves and turmeric. The crowd surged round them, swarms of stocky peasants with cigar-brown faces, withered elders with their grey hair tied in a bun behind, young mothers carrying naked babies astride the hip.”

And she feels that she could not endure the place any longer and tells Flory ironically, that they hardly appeared civilized. To her, the poor peasants seem to be “exactly disgusting people.” Orwell writes, though the natives are poor but they remain uniquely honest and morally upright.

The natives are attracted by the white-complexioned beauty, Elizabeth. She appeals to their innocence. But her indifference and reserve keeps them away. Here poverty and difference between social class acquires a racial overtones too. Orwell writes:

“A chill fell upon the Orientals; they realized that the English girl, who could not join in their conversation, was not at her ease. Her elegance and her foreign beauty, which had charmed them a moment earlier, began to awe them a little.”

Orwell gives priority to the problem of poverty which should be ‘tackled’ first:
"It is merely that privation and brute labour have to be abolished before the real problems of humanity be tackled."\textsuperscript{13}

Further, Orwell suggests the minimum requirement of the common man to live a worthy and human life. He writes:

"All that the working man demands is what these others would consider the indispensable minimum without which human life cannot be lived at all. Enough to eat, freedom from the haunting terror of unemployment, the knowledge that your children will get a fair chance, a bath once a day, clean linen reasonably often, a roof that does not leak and short enough working hours to leave you with a little energy when the day is done."\textsuperscript{14}

**Burmese Days and Politics of Imperialism**

George Orwell’s *Burmese Days* is a powerful exposition of racial discrimination and colonial hatred. It brings fresh insights and spiritual revelation as it draws a line between Blacks and Whites, brothers and brothers. His *Burmese Days* is a powerful exploration of Anglo-Burman life. He unveils the fact that Black men did not get the proper place before the White imperialists. Henceforth, he was deprived of social, political, economic and cultural status. Kyauktada is a typical Burmese small town with a population of natives, some Europeans and Eurasians. 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. This shows the reason why the offsprings of the natives were yoked to work in diverse painstaking jobs. On the other hand, the natives, in the British 'Raj' were embodiment of integrity and uprightness. Therefore, they hankered after establishing their identity when they found themselves surrounded by galloping exploitation, snobbery and hypocrisy. Orwell has tried to present the native Burmese in correct perspective, their exploitation, their struggle and their aspirations. He has boldly exposed the falsity of the Whites who were governed not by human values but by their imperialistic callous designs.

In the novel, Orwell unfolds the pretence and hollowness of the British imperialism. Flory, the protagonist of the novel, is thirty-five year old timber merchant, suffering from a sense of alienation. When he perceives his own countrymen exploiting
and discriminating against the natives, he extends sympathy for natives who were victimized and assaulted by the imperialists and is conscious of hatred they bore against the Englishmen. He renounces the British for such inhuman and callous acts. Flory, in spite of being White himself, denounces what was corrupt and mean. While talking to Dr. Veraswami, Flory says:

"My beloved fellow, empire builders, British prestige, the Whiteman's burden, the 'Pukka Sahib' sans peur et sans repoche you know. Such a relief to be out of the stink of it for a Little while." 15

It is ironical that Veraswami being a native justifies the dominion of the British Empire in order to enjoy favour and facilities after developing friendship with whiteman, Flory. In his opinion, to be a native is to serve the Empire. Veraswami accepts Whites as his masters in order to pose himself as a superior among the inferiors. He says to Flory:

"But truly Mr. Flory, you must not speak so! Why is that always you are abusing the 'pukka sahibs', ass you call them? They are the salt of the earth. Consider the great things they have done, consider the great administrators who have made British India what it is, consider Clive, Warren Hastings, Delhousie, Curzon." 16

The club becomes the symbol of White and Black dichotomy. When an order was passed by the British Empire to include a native member for the representation of Orientals in the Club, Ellis, Mr. Macgregor, Mr. Lackersteen, Maxwell, Westfield and other members of the European club were not ready to bear a native member before themselves. Ellis, a member of the European club, expresses his anger and disgust:

"... my god, I don't understand you chaps. I simply don't. Here's that old fool Macgregor wanting to bring a nigger into this club for no reason whatever, and you all sit down under it without a word. Good God, what are we supposed to be governing a set of damn Black Swine who've been slaves since the beginning of history, and instead of ruling them in the only way they understand, we go and treat them as equals. And you silly b-s take it for granted." 17

In Orwell's opinion, imperialism causes decay of cultural considerations and values. An imperialist, no longer, remains a man if he becomes tyrant and therefore, like William Blake, he raises the fundamental question from racial,
cultural and even from existential point of view. That is why the natives were discriminated against. The little Black boy’s query is pertinent. “And I am Black, but O my soul is White!”

George Orwell’s *Burmes Days* 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 masters and slaves. His *Burmes Days* is a powerful exploration of Anglo-Burman life. He unveils the fact that the Blackman did not get the proper place before the White imperialists. Henceforth, he was deprived of social, political, economic and cultural status. Kyauktada is a typical Burmese small town with a population of natives some Europeans and Eurasians. 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. This shows the reason why the offspring of the natives were yoked to work in diverse painstaking jobs. On the other hand, the natives, in the British ‘Raj’, were embodiment of integrity and uprightness. Therefore, they hankered after establishing their identity when they found themselves surrounded by galloping exploitation, snobbery and hypocrisy. Orwell has tried to present the native Burmese in correct perspective, their exploitation, their struggle and their aspirations. He has boldly exposed the falsity of the Whites who were governed not by human values but by their imperialistic callous designs.

George Orwell remonstrates against the taste of imperialism and its abuse of power. He speaks emphatically to resolve the Black-White discord for he believes earnestly in the integrity and viability of man. He extends profound sympathy on behalf of the natives because they are exploited and squeezed from different angles. Being a novelist of humanitarian concern, on the one hand, he extends sympathy for the oppressed; on the other hand, he expresses disgust and anger against any kind of oppression and tyranny. He perceives the imperialists’ abuse of power and denounces them for the torment and hatred the imperialists inflicted on the poor natives. The Asians did not enjoy equal status and liberty. They were kept under the British heads, humiliated and subjugated - racially inferior. It was the imperialistic strategy to show the Asians to
be culturally inferior and helpless. They did not have the facility of expression to defend their plight. Orwell, like Forster, saw the possibility of cultural harmony and unison of different races through the medium of personal relationship. It was part of Orwell's sense of responsibility that he wished to rescue the natives from being exploited by the imperialists and totalitarians. Such sense of responsibility might be felt earnestly in Orwell's poem:

"Awake! Oh you young men of England,  
For if, when your country's in need,  
You do not enlist by the thousand,  
You truly are coward indeed!" 19

The aim of British imperialism was to spread wisdom, learning, education and to civilize the Orientals racially, morally, culturally and spiritually. Macaulay believed in the Whitman's responsibility towards the ignorant, 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. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population." 20

From Kipling's point of view, imperialism was a sort of rescue service for the natives or it was the concept of "Whitman's burden". Even Rudyard Kipling believed the Asians to be the "Whitman's burden". In fact this was the stock attitude of the White British towards Asians – Indian or Burmese. They by making Asians accept their inferior role not only wished to teach them the White man's lessons but also tighten the claims of masters by enslaving them, physically, politically, economically as well as culturally and spiritually.

The British imperialists completely wrecked the Asians from within and without. But in their attempt to educate the natives to help them run the government gave the latter an opportunity to become aware of the western thoughts and wisdom. This resulted in an awakening in the Indian peninsula. Thus the imperialists acted as agents of the
renaissance, the reformation, and the enlightenment in the East, I.A. Sinai writes:

"It was one of the far-reaching consequences of that magnificent outburst of creative energy which recast the traditional European society and the surplus energy of which was drained off and turned against the primitive, decaying and stagnant societies of non-European world."\(^{21}\)

Contrary to the concept of Whitman's burden, Orwell expressed his indignation against the spread of imperialism that brought the natives suffering, inflictment and endless humiliation. In addition, Orwell's contempt against imperialism or against any orthodoxy might be felt in his non-fiction, *The Road to Wigan Pier*. He writes:

"I felt that I got to escape not merely from imperialism but from every form of man's dominion over man. I wanted to submerge myself, to be one of them and on their sides against tyrants."\(^{22}\)

In *Burmese Days*, Orwell unfolds the pretence and hollowness of the British imperialism. The same purpose and intention he expresses in "Why I write", which shows his humanitarian concern and antagonism to any group. Orwell writes:

"When I sit down to write a book I do not say to myself "I am going to produce a work of art". I write it because there is some lie that I want to expose, some fact to which I want to draw attention and my Initial concern is to get a hearing."\(^{23}\)

Flory, the protagonist, attacks the snobbery and pretence of the British imperialists who were posted at Kyauktada and tormented the natives. The tyranny of the place is clearly shown here:

"You don't have t listen to the honourable gentlemen talking, doctor, I start it as long as I could this morning. Ellis with his "dirty nigger", Westfield with his joke, Macgregor with his Latin tags and please give the bearer fifteen lashes."\(^{24}\)

Flory's consciousness of the purpose of his being an Burma makes him a typical imperialist. "God forbid: I'm here to make money, like every one else"- is a simple statement of facts. Yet this utterance reveals the designs behind the pose of a 'Pukka Sahib'. Veraswami fails to understand the integrity of his own countrymen and goes onto support the British Empire. he found "great sterling qualities" in Englishmen and
their arrogance seemed justified to him. In fact he does not feel the need to think about his position as a native once he accepts his pre-ordained role of the subject.

This signifies that to be a native is to serve the British Empire. Slavery has been imposed upon the natives so that the Whites should realize their roles as masters. The indictment of colonial exploitation, human suffering, and master-slave relationship has been explored in Samuel Becket's *Waiting for Godot* through Pozo-Lucky relationship. Pozo symbolizes the imperialistic power, he asks chained Lucky to dance, therefore he dances. This symbolizes unbounded annihilation, and human suffering. Man can do nothing except be servile before the powers.

Michael Carter is right in his opinion that they conform "to the whiteman's concept of genetic inferiority". If the natives and slaves do not work, they are bound to be persecuted. Michael Carter says, "Any Black who deviates from this concept threatens not only the continuing dominance of the Whites but the White's concept of themselves."

Therefore, to believe in this myth and to make others also accept it is the demand and the need of imperialism.

The club becomes the symbol of white Europeans in which unfolds the deepening myth of Black and White dichotomy. A number of clamorous scenes take place in the European club over the issue of nominating a native member. The racial and colonial hatred between the two races might be felt by the event when Maxwell shoots two natives while crushing a rebellion. Guided by hatred and anger, the natives also kill Maxwell that exposes the inner deep cleavage among the natives and the Britishers. It suggests Orwell's exposition of deep-seated hatred and colonial exploitation, which exists between the two separate groups. Again, the evidence of hatred and animosity between them, gets stronger, when the natives surround the European club and attack them.

European-Asian relationship wherever turned out to be the master-subject relationship racial hatred was born. Forster in his novel, *A Passage to India*, has presented a similar situation, though his attitude towards Indians was quite different. Dr. Aziz is arrested on the charge of raping one European young lady and later on is acquitted on the verdict of the supposed victim. The Indians react sharply to the injustice. In fact what Adela experienced in the cave could have been a mere hallucination but Dr. Aziz
is subjected to humiliation, arrest and a court trial not because anyone believed him to have acted in a ghastly manner but just because he was an Indian. As an Indian he invites the vociferous reaction of the European community. To consider the natives immoral and capable of such dastardly act is again a typical imperialistic British attitude which has also been explored by Paul Scott in the *Raj Quartets*.

In *Burmesse Days* Flory condemns British imperialism for it did not provide an opportunity for any sort of social understanding or cultural exchange. It is the policy of siege and holding out which provided the imperialists with their myth of superiority. Ellis says: "We are; and what's more, we're damn well going to go on holding out. I'll die in the ditch before I'll see a nigger in here". 26 Through the characterization of Ellis, Orwell presents racial and cultural discord between the two races.

Orwell does want to awaken a sense of cultural and above all humanitarian understanding through the utilization of personal relationship and common decency. It is important to note that Flory develops friendship with a native doctor, Veraswami, which shows Orwell's desire to build a society on the basis of personal relationship. Like Forster, Orwell, came to believe that many races may create cultural, racial and spiritual harmony if they cultivate a sense of personal relationship. In Orwellian dynamics of humanitarian perspective, common decency and dignity alone can make life complete and happy, the basis being balanced personal relationship. He himself has written, "every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been for democratic socialism." 27

Orwell was evidently on the side of the socialists as far as they believed in restoration of human dignity. Upokyn, a sub-divisional Magistrate is a man of Machiavellian temperament. He is guided by power and prestige. he not only betrays the natives but also the British Empire. Thus, he annihilates the basic human values. It seems that there is spurious duality in his voice. To become a native member, he wants to eliminate the civil surgeon, Veraswami, whose membership of the club is obstructed by him. Veraswami's friendship with Flory, entitled him the 'Europeans' support for his membership and other facilities too. The trampling of the natives' liberty by their own
countrymen makes Flory burst with anger. Such inhumanity and callousness, according to him, was against the concept of the Whiteman's role. Michael Carter says, "Flory is loathed because his association with Blacks injures the White prestige for it blurs the distinction between White and Black." 28 His own countrymen hate Flory because he has deep ties of friendship with Dr. Veraswami and it irks the Whites. This confirms their master-slave relationship, beyond which they could not see:

"Butler! Yelled Ellis, and as the Butler appeared, 'go and wake that bloody chokra – up!'

'Yes Master;'

'And Butler!' 'Yes Master!

'How much ice have we got left'?

'Bout twenty pounds, master will
only last today, I think, I find
if very difficult to keep ice cool now.'

'Don't talk like that, damn you,' I find it very difficult.'"

'Have you swallowed a dictionary?"

'Please, master, can't keeping ice cool- That's how you ought
To talk. We shall have to sack this fellow if he gets to talk
too well. I can't stick servants who talk English. Do you hear Butler? 'Yes master', said the Butler and retired." 29

Orwell wants to condemn master-slave relationship which makes the ruled servile before the rulers. This shows Orwell attacks man-made rules, which were made from imperialistic and capitalistic pursuits in mind. Seeing his own countrymen, debasing and violating the code of human conduct, Flory becomes an alien to himself. Of course
he developed a sense of guilt-consciousness which caused him suffer from isolation under this pressure, he will nominate Veraswami but he will not support him. "I'll give you my vote, but I can't do more than that. I am sorry, but I simply can't." Thomas Edward rightly says that Orwell tried to peep into the whole of England: "It confirmed him as the outsider, the man who could look at England as a whole, and it confirmed his sense of responsibility." It is ironical that the outsiders have become insiders. Suffering from a sense of failure, Flory wants to shed his guilt-consciousness by bringing harmony and reconciliation between the two races. Furthermore, Orwell, exposes the "inauthenticity" and false pride of the natives.

Burmese Days, echoes a sense of personal relationship that provided Veraswami and Flory a common platform to stand on. Michael Carter rightly says: "To convert reason why Flory enjoys Veraswami's company is that he is given the relief without any obligation to remedy guilt by act." Orwell in his other writings exposes the same fact with a note of objectivity that he was part of the oppressive system. He unfolds the suffering of 'aged peasants,' coolies and prisoners in the dock: This shows that Orwell, with 'full throated ease', writes not only against sinister designs of imperialism but also against all forms of totalitarianism, which cause relentless suffering to the mankind. Hence, Orwell, unflinchingly identifies himself with the downtrodden and suffering humanity.

Upokyn started his life as a clerk. By tricky and underhand practices he became a magistrate. He took bribe from both the sides and disposed the cases often on the legal grounds. In order to reject the candidature of Veraswami in the European Club, he outstrips Veraswami after writing libelous articles. Laurence Brander, seems to record the nature of the British 'Raj': "In the tragedy of human relationships, the British 'Raja' never really knows its friends and foes." Upokyn's surge of pomp and power, greed and glutony seem to signify the possibility of natives' in authenticity. The Europeans posted at Kyauktada lack the capacity to understand the nature of their friends and foes. Terry Eagleton is of the opinion that Flory lacks sincerity. He writes:

"It is difficult to believe of Flory, we are externally shown that his anti-imperialist feelings are merely selfish; but he point once more, is to qualify the possibilities of explicit commitment by insisting upon the
“unremarkable” bond between moral judge and situational judge, by seeing man as a puppet of his environment.”

To consider Flory’s anti-imperialism mere egoistic flourish is to be too simplistic. Flory’s dilemma is not the doubt of a man of uncertain moral bearings, rather it is the voice of humanistic cravings which were completely lacking in the British. It is another matter that in their role of imperialistic masters they often subdued their urges and attitude of the cruel and thoughtless masters because dominant. Flory denounces his countrymen for their deceptive and hostile attitude towards the natives. Therefore, it does not seem to be “egoistic” rather it seems to be realistic. While Milton justifies the ways of God to man. Orwell justifies the ways of man to men, Orwell no doubt, condemns his own countrymen who were demolishing and trampling the bond of humanity but on the other hand, he admires the very English aspect of the English. Of course, there is Kipling’s aspect in Orwell’s vision. He does admire the solitude of jungle, hunting and bravery.

Flory, in the jungle scene, shoots of tiger and kills it. At various places, we do have a vivid description of jungles, flowers, animals and birds. This enhances Orwell’s love of country-life. Besides, this also shows that Orwell was on the side of the people and land he attempts to bring to light. With his understanding and appreciation of the animal and vegetable presence in Burma, he adds another dimension to realize the humanistic urge. Humanism for him meant a complete relationship between man and man, as well as between man and nature. It is a natural phenomenon in man and other living creatures to love each other and live a life of harmony together. The exploitation of imperialistic ways of life distorts this harmony. Orwell has tried to bring back life in its original form in which man and nature will find a harmony with industrialization and progress. Therefore it might be said that Orwell appreciated his own countrymen on the basis of love, hate relationship. Muggeridge rightly says: “But it is also true that there was Kipling’s side to his character which made him romanticize the ‘Raj’ and its mystique.”

Muggeridge mentions that such description is presented when Flory goes along with Elizabeth on the hunting expedition and shoots a tiger. Secondly. When the English men were attacked by the enraged mob of the natives, Flory was the hero of the occasion. Herbert Read appreciates Orwell’s profound sympathy and his humanitarian grounds:
"Orwell was a humanitarian always moved by sympathy of human values". Richard Rees also in his book justifiably appreciates Orwell's concern: "Old fashioned side of Orwell - the deep English patriotism, the distaste for machinery and modern psychology, the love of the country, of animals, even the lingering nostalgia, for the Edwardian age."

Lionel Trilling, in his "Orwell and the Politics of Truth" traces Orwell's ambiguous attitude. Trilling writes:

"He has spoken with singular honesty of the ambiguousness of his attitude in the imperialist situation. He disliked authority and the manner of its use, and he sympathized with the Burmese; yet as the same time he saw the need for authority and he used it, and he was often exasperated by the use of the natives."

Orwell's popular culture seems to be humanistic. Keith Alldritt rightly says:

"It is a vision of an England in which the culture is paramount, and England in which the present middle class either disappears or becomes converted to the humanity of common culture."

_Burmese Days_, powerfully, evokes a sense of culture shock when the native offsprings, the victim of apartheid, are not given proper place in the modern society. They grope with a sense of bewilderment when they feel the loss of economic, social, political and cultural status. This deepens the awareness of smouldering hatred and anger in the multicultural colonies. The exciting pains of culture shock, in Orwell's opinion, can be relieved through democratic socialism and common decency. To Orwell it seems to be a kind of apocalyptic vision.

The imperialistic image of a 'sahib' has to be maintained at every cost. This shows the process of dehumanization as well as the puppet-like action of the Britishers. Orwell writes:

"For it is the condition of his rule that he shall spend his life in trying to impress the natives and so in every crisis he has got to do what the 'natives' expect of him. He wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it. I had got to shoot the elephant. I had committed myself to doing it when I sent for the rifle. A 'sahib' has got to act like a 'sahib'."
Use of Symbols

The worst fate an individual can face is isolation; simply to talk is to reject such a fate, and is thus to be saved. The community of Burmese Days is so corrupt and contemptible that we are likely to feel that the protagonist's suicide is a preferrable alternative to life in such a world but Orwell does not share such a view and that we are meant to see this suicide as a wrong choice.

In Burmese Days, above all judgments, Orwell's concerns are both symbolic and artistic. Flory is alienated from his countrymen not only by his superior intellect, but by his willingness to accept, enjoy and even like the local natives. Elizabeth Lackersteen with whom Flory hopelessly falls in love, makes a final break with Flory at the instigation of his ex-mistress. Orwell reinforces the themes of the novel by a symbolic pattern-namely, the linking and contrasting of two jungles. The natural one and the artificial the still beast-filled jungle of the club. The dominant symbol in the book is the birthmark which finally becomes responsible for his death.

"And at all times, when he was not alone, there was a sidelongness about his movements, as he manoeuvred constantly to keep the birthmark out of sight."41

The birthmark suggests Flory's separateness and thus his superiority to corrupt values and moral lassitude. For Frederick R. Karl the birthmark suggests the mark of Cain; it "identifies him and disallows his escaping his fate, which is, obviously, to be marked from birth for some role."42 "Unbreakable system" eventually becomes the cause of Flory's death. Ultimately, her incompatibility with the natural world becomes final and the cause of suffering and death.

In the club, nature is shut out; the natives are barred. There, Elizabeth is at home precisely because the world is artificial and superficial. At the same time the club is itself a jungle, with its predators and victims hidden behind the veneer of civilized cruelty. The two jungles of the story-the natural one and the club-show Elizabeth's motives to be essentially animalistic. Elizabeth's latent capacity for violence and sex limits the success of their relationship:

"She was conscious of an extraordinary desire to fling her arms around Flory's neck and kiss him;...."43
Flory's relationship with Elizabeth is "goatish". As all the other members of the club are beasts, so too is Elizabeth.

If the jungle is at one remove the symbolic assailant of John Flory, it is at the same time his sole refuge from the more dangerous jungle of the English colonialists. This strategy is defined mainly through recurring patterns of water imagery, a conventional literary symbol but one which Orwell uses with great facility. Alone in the jungle, Flory is revitalized from his swim in clear water. Flory is immersing himself in the water of the Club to save the Club. In the literal act of trying to protect the values which he detests and abjures, he is symbolically accepting them, but those values must be maintained if he is to have their epitome, Elizabeth Lackersteen.

The secular absolution by the very temporal High Priest of the Club is, of course, parody, both at the efficacy of the organised religion and at the concepts of the Club; one of the earliest descriptions of the Club is that it is "the spiritual citadel of the town". Religious structures and metaphors are consistently used in negative or ironic contexts to illustrate the meaningless of organised religion in the modern age.

Disaster arrives in the person of Ma Hla May, who at U PO Kyin's instigation abases herself in the Church. She accuses Flory in front of the English, in effect violating all the social conventions of the society whose values Flory is in the process of accepting. Ma Hla May creates a terrible scene; she tears her clothes open and makes only too clear the nature of her relationship with Flory. The Club members are scandalized: "Everyone was upset by it. Even Ellis was disgusted."

The hypocrisy is plain, and tried to the theme of the failure of language in the novel; as long as things are not said, they are all right, no matter how well-known is the wrong doing. As long as heresy is not committed to language, it does not exist conversely for Flory, that which would have prevented all the tragedy would have been the simple articulation of betrothal. The Club world is doubly damned: It is corrupt; it corrupts language. Finally, Ma Hla May is forcibly removed. "She hated him now for his birth mark. She had never known till this moment how dishonouring, how unforgivable a thing it was."

Flory runs after Elizabeth, begging forgiveness, offering the denial of his own masculinity in return for mere communication. "But I can't go on with my life alone,
always alone. Can't you bring yourself ever to forgive me." The answer is "Never, never". Equally noteworthy is the epithet which Elizabeth has for Flory just before his final rejection. He is to her a "beast". The pattern is complete. As a beast at the outset brought them together, as the beast of the earthquake momentarily separated them in another crucial scene, so finally does Flory become the overt beast which again menaces her and implicitly the whole system of the club's values.

Throughout the novel, there are repeated references to imprisonment. Not only do the English literally imprison the Burmese, but, metaphorically at least, the entire novel displays the captivity of the characters.

**Estimation of the Novel: Achievements and Shortcomings**

Orwell's first novel, *Burmese Days*, can be termed as anti-imperialist. It is a creation of author's guilt of working as a policeman in Burma. There he was responsible for the kicking, flogging and torturing of men. The early essay "A Hanging" (1931) is a paradigm of his guilt and responsibility. "The ritualistic requirements of a hanging from fixed bayonets to bag over the head of the condemned help to create that anonymity that is officially desirable during the inhuman circumstances of an execution. The prisoner-brown, silent, passive and puny, with bare feet and torso is reduced to an eternal level. Both he and his crime are nameless. Because we are unaware of his guilt, we are able to feel the sympathy that is tacitly conveyed by the narrator, who shares the anonymity of the prisoner." 

Orwell wrote *Burmese Days* as he was also impressed by the beauty of landscapes in Burma. He himself admits:

"The landscapes of Burma, which, when I was among them, so appalled me as to assume the qualities of a nightmare, afterwards. Stayed so hauntingly in my mind that I was obliged to write a novel about them to get rid of them." 

In *Burmese Days* Orwell has spoken with singular honesty of the ambiguousness of his attitude in the imperialistic situation. He disliked authority and the manner of its use, and he sympathized with the natives, yet at the same time he saw the need for authority and he used it. Expression of complexity of emotions is best characteristic of Orwell's writing. He finds the dead coolie and describes him in vivid and precise detail that contrasts the martyred pose with the meaningless death, the grin
with the torture:

"He was lying on his belly with arms crucified and head sharply twisted to one side. His face was coated with mud eyes wide open; the teeth bared and grinning with an expression of unendurable agony." 52

One of the values which exists in tenuous perception in *Burmese Days* is the concept of artistic communication. For Orwell, communication is the necessary step toward and corollary of community. Language and its uses are the major concerns of Orwell's career. *Burmese Days* is an "enormous naturalistic" 53 novel full of detailed descriptions and arresting similes, and also full of purple passages in which words are used partly for the sake of their sound.

Thus *Burmese Days* meets the highest standard of success in art. It reads us, concretizes that which we already suspect, puts in form that which we know; it substantiates us. Through language Orwell's view of language as cause as well as result, as the essence as well as the manifestation of human tyranny and suffering, becomes evident.

**Conclusion**

To summarize the argument, it is clear that Orwell's fusion of political satire and artistic perspective was shaped by his Burmese experiences, which provided him framework of analysis of contemporary capitalist society. It must be borne in mind that he had gone to Burma with two conflicting sets of values concerning imperialism. The first was the product of his upbringing. It esteemed the traditional imperialist virtues as a modern adaptation of the classical concept of virtue. The second was the product of his intellectual nourishment at Eton and was iconoclastic, dismissive and Shavian. Christopher Hollis, a native from Eton described him as torn between two visions of imperial project. Imperialism might or might not be justified as a concept, but it involved so much inhumanity as to be unjustifiable in reality. Like Arthur Koestler, he was unimpressed by the "necessity of breaking eggs to make an omelette" argument he said that "those who justify their actions in these terms never finish with an omelette". 54

Indeed, Orwell was primarily concerned much with the moral thought and the human conflict. He intended to end a capitalist dictatorship, which seemed to
him degrade the human life as much as colonialism did. But he wanted to be sure that weapons forged in the struggle were in better hands than those of many of the members of the Labour Party as he saw them in the mid thirties.

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