CHAPTER - I

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Colonialism is one of the dominant ideologies of the late nineteenth century. It is not simply a political doctrine, though it functions under the political umbrella of imperialism. Both colonialism and imperialism result from the expansion of a prosperous country. In the case of colonialism, the purpose of this expansion is trade leading to transplants of large population from the mother country to distant lands. Expansion of trade is basically the ground for establishing colonies in far away lands and controlling of routes of trade becomes necessary to safeguard commerce. To consolidate trade the colonial agents usually capture administrative control of the settlements often by overpowering the native rulers by show of strength. Hence from trade empire begins. But in exchange of the sovereign administrative power, the colonial agents often solemnly profess a civilizing role and undertake to ameliorate the condition of the backward societies and to administer justice. Thus colonizers used to maintain a philanthropic pretension despite the fact that their principal concern was the consolidation of power for trade and
commerce. This civilizing mission distinguished the latter-day colonialism from the earlier imperialism based on conquest. The earlier form was a mere expansive drive to capture imperium or power for extraction of wealth while the nineteenth century colonialism considered itself as a humanitarian project despite its commercial and political motives.

In this specific sense of what used to be called liberal imperialism, colonialism made its presence felt as a dominant ideology in the second half of the nineteenth century. It is by this time that colonialism claimed a superior status for itself as a mission-conscious ideology in contradistinction to crude military conquest. But generally we do not make any finer distinction between 'colonialism' and 'imperialism' and use them as interchangeable terms because colonialism could not come into existence without imperial intention. But there are occasional confusions on this point and the words are used rather carelessly. While Frances B. Singh argues that Heart of Darkness is a record of Conrad’s ambivalent attitude to colonialism, Chinua Achebe is ruffled by the novel’s imperialistic overtone as he finds in it a deep-seated racism, M.M. Mahood assesses Heart of Darkness as an exposure of colonial exploitation, and Martin Green feels that in this novel Conrad’s centre of focus is imperialism. So we see that these two words are used by critics without much distinction. Of course in the late nineteenth cen-
tury imperialism was sought to be given a liberal or enlightened mission which made it seem an enterprise of welfare rather than of imperium. Our study of Conrad will focus attention on Conrad's attitude to this form of colonialism.

Since the fifteenth century, the Western peoples took up journeys beyond the seas for trade and commerce and made efforts towards dominion over native populations and to create settlements in distant lands. But the political annexations of native-ruled states that took place in the late nineteenth century differed significantly from the earlier natural expansionism. This 'new imperialism' marked a remarkable shift from the earlier prototypes in its subversive aggressiveness and economic exploitation. Progress in science and technology put sophisticated weapons in the hands of the Western powers, thereby making the rest of the world powerless to resist their aggressions. Exclusive economic domination was another criterion of the 'new imperialism.' The great nineteenth century upsurge of imperialistic expeditions was the natural outcome of European Industrial Revolution which began in the 18th century and led into the development of the present capitalist system.

Capitalism is an economic system characterized by private and/or corporate ownership of production and means of distribution. Capitalism changed the economic and social structure of
Europe. The Industrial Revolution necessitated the use of wealth abroad as investment for expansion of the market. The 'new imperialism' of the nineteenth century was a result of that: a compulsive necessity to impose the order of the capitalistic countries on the underdeveloped nations to exploit their natural resources and to control their market. This led to vast colonial activities for the spread of domination upon the peoples of Africa and Asia. The attempt necessarily produced a clash of civilizations on a scale never previously known. But side by side with its overt aggression and conscious commercial objective, a new facet of humanitarianism came to be stressed: an ideology of colonialism or an assumption of a mission of civilization to cover up the cruder aspects of exploitation.

Colonial ideology is closely connected with the spread of liberal ideas. England is a country where the concept of liberty or freedom has been uppermost at least since the so-called Glorious Revolution in 1688. The origins of present-day liberalism, in spite of its continental anticipations in the Enlightenment ideology of the French philosophers and the tolerant commercial regimes of the Venetian and Dutch republics, can be seen most clearly in the constitutional idea and politics linked to this English Revolution (1688). Liberalism has been influential not simply as a political ideology, but as a principal force influencing the cultural and social life of the people. Free trade,
constitutionalism, religious toleration, and concern for individual freedom promoted since the Glorious Revolution became a standard for the liberals in the eighteenth century. Gradually up to the first World War liberal revolutions and reforms occurred throughout the European continent, although often in alliance with nationalist and democratic movements. Liberal thinkers such as Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) and J.S. Mill (1806-1873) began to consider how to make democracy consistent with individual liberty, and how to reconcile particular national (ethnic) loyalties with universal human rights.

Now when England became an imperial power, and domination and conquest of the countries of Asia and Africa went on in an accelerated pace, a conflict arose in many minds: has a nation, committed to liberty and freedom, any moral right to tyrannize over other nations? We have had an exposition on the question in the speech of Edmund Burke on the impeachment of Warren Hastings (1786). The American War of Independence led to the declaration of human rights. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the liberal justification for military intervention in another state was debated in the writings of T.H. Green (1836-1882), L.T. Hobhouse (1864-1929), and others. These writers disowned the extreme individualism of certain nineteenth century liberals and tried to reconcile individual liberty with the recognition of state intervention on matters of general welfare.
As it appears, the impulse of colonialistic domination in the late nineteenth century was bolstered up by a consciousness of racial superiority which was a by-product of Darwinian theory. This new attitude was generally known as social Darwinism. The main focus of social Darwinism was on the legitimacy of strength. The stronger nations will conquer the weaker nations. Those who are strong are the fittest to live and rule in the world. Thus Darwin's theory of "survival of the fittest" in biology heralded the new theory in sociology, "domination by the strongest", as most Victorians, consciously or unconsciously, assumed that the British were inherently superior to the "dark races" by "blood". As Patrick Brantlinger has noted: "Racist theories of history were prevalent well before the development of social Darwinism, and these theories were often used to explain Britain's industrial and imperial preeminence."

Hence Darwin's theory provided a rationale behind the assumption of racial superiority. The British have gloriously survived because they are strong. And because they are strong, they have the right to rule the world. This belief in white superiority was given a powerful impetus by the accidental happening of the consolidation of power over India and the spread of Empire over Africa. Along with this success in expansive drives,
by and by, colonialism was in the process of acquiring an ideology of the superior race assuming a moral responsibility. The responsibility was to ameliorate the condition of the conquered natives and to introduce them to the civilization of the West. This is how liberalism overcame its conflict over the situation of colonial rule: how could a country, professed to freedom, suppress other people's freedom? So this suppression must be for the good of the people. They are to be made free from the darkness of superstition and physical impoverishment.

Advocates of colonialism used to concentrate on such types of certain specific merits, leaving commercialism out of sight. A close ally of the colonialists were the missionaries. Christian nations took the opportunity of colonial expansion to spread the mission of Christianity over the world. Christian missionaries used to accompany traders, mostly from the Catholic countries like Spain and Portugal, as they considered the conversion of infidels to be their bounden duty. The Protestant countries like Holland and England were not so enthusiastic as, for them, trade was more important than religious zeal. In England it was a most debatable question whether missionaries should be allowed in the colonies but it was realized that to consolidate power, stronger bonds than trade were necessary. Besides, with the new ideology of the civilizing mission of colonialism, missionary activities became most welcome. The Christian missionaries worked in order
to establish the point that the white men who came to the colonies had exemplary characters.

This superior image of the white men was fundamental to the ideology of colonialism. Colonial agents endeavoured to keep up this image of a non-materialistic benefactor. What they emphasized in their public speeches was their commitment to the uplift of the underdeveloped nations and to the administration of higher norms of justice irrespective of any material self-interest. In their version of their presence in the colonial dominions, the act was justified by the purpose which it served. According to them, domination and possession of the colonies were only accidental and temporary. Their principal objective was to enlighten the natives. It would be of interest to recall here the view of T.B. Macaulay on the Government of India. Lord Macaulay who played an important role in shaping Indian education since 1834, made his famous speech on India in the House of Commons on 10 July 1833 where he emphasized the civilizing mission of his country:

What is power worth... if we can hold it only by violating the most sacred duties which as governors we owe to the governed, and which... we owe to a race debased by three thousand years of despotism and priest-craft? We are free, we are civilised, to little purpose, if we grudge to any portion of the human race an equal measure of freedom and civilisation....
The sceptre may pass away from us.... Victory may be inconstant to our arms. But there are triumphs which are followed by no reverse. There is an empire exempt from all natural causes of decay. Those triumphs are the pacific triumphs of reason over barbarism; that empire is the imperishable empire of our arts and our morals, our literature and our laws.  

Here Macaulay stressed the need to make the natives of India conscious about the spiritual fruits of the Empire. He wanted to remind his fellow-countrymen that the greatest achievement of the imperial adventure should not be mere material possession nor any military triumph. Such victories are temporary. The most remarkable feat of success for the Empire would be the interest and awareness generated within the natives of India about the glories of Western civilization. The natives will be weaned away from their superstitious life-style to enjoy civilized living aided by reason and to overcome barbarism. And this achievement would be the irreversible victory over superstition and darkness. The ideology of the Empire sought to promote this dream among the natives so as to make them submit to the cultural hegemony of the white men and to their just rule spontaneously.

Among the eminent Victorians who concentrated on the positive aspects of the colonialist ideology were J.R. Seeley, Joseph Chamberlain, Rudyard Kipling and Lord Curzon. J.R. Seeley, the
English historian, in his lectures (originally delivered at Cambridge University in 1881-82) interpreted the connection between the mother-country and the colonies to be a "family-bond". He deprecated "the barbaric principle" of treating colonies as conquered dependencies and ascribed it to the practice of Spain.

Joseph Chamberlain as the Secretary of State for the colonies, made an evaluation of colonialism in his speech delivered at the annual dinner of the Royal Colonial Institute on 31 March, 1897. He frankly conceded that imperialism in the eighteenth century was a one-way process: grabbing, snatching, exacting. Colonies were "possessions valuable in proportion to the pecuniary advantage which they brought to the mother country." Chamberlain criticized this attitude and thought colonies should not be controlled mainly for economic returns, otherwise, the term 'mother-country' would be a misnomer. Chamberlain thought that in the last two decades of the nineteenth century the attitude had changed and the Europeans had reached a consensus about "the mission" they have to fulfil in their respective areas of control. It was assumed that as active members of a great governing race, the colonial rulers would bring "security and peace and comparative prosperity to countries that never knew these blessings before". With the aid of these gifts the backward nations could move forward to a civil society through its periods of transition during the imperial rule. This great responsibility
may necessitate stern military and administrative drives which Chamberlain accounts for in the following way: "You cannot have omelettes without breaking eggs; you cannot destroy the practices of barbarism, of slavery, of superstition, which for centuries have desolated the interior of Africa, without the use of force..." This civilizing mission of colonialism justifies, in Chamberlain's view, the claim for superiority of the white race.

Rudyard Kipling, the great novelist of the Empire, also regarded the British Empire as an instrument of civilization. In his view, it is the bounden duty of the British to take up the over-all responsibility of the vast colonial possessions stretched far and wide. Kipling's most prominent contribution to the ideology of liberal imperialism was the concept of the "white man's burden". This was enshrined in a poem addressed to Theodore Roosevelt at the time of America's war with Spain which led to the annexation of Cuba and the Philippines. On 10 December 1898, the United States and Spain came to terms among themselves and the war ended. Kipling celebrated the occasion by the poem "The White Man's Burden." The poem depicts his views as to what he thought the relationship among Cuba, the Philippines and the United States should be. But on a more general level, the poem is a colonialist manifesto as well as a warning to the white power, a reminder of the grave responsibilities ahead:
Take up the White Man's burden---
Send forth the best ye breed---
Go bind your sons to exile
To serve your captives' need;
To wait in heavy harness
On fluttered folk and wild---
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
Half devil and half child.¹²

So the motto, the "white man's burden", was to fulfil the responsibility of the ruler towards his dependencies. He must apply harsh method if necessary to exorcize the devil and apply paternal care to nurse the child. The ruler should guide the ruled to peace and civilization to which he himself had access on account of his being a member of the civilized white race.

Viscount Curzon who was Viceroy of India from 1898 to 1905, was another theorist of the liberal school. For him the responsibility of the Empire was that of a "secular religion, embodying the most sacred duty of the present, and the brightest hope for the future", as he emphasized in a speech delivered in Birmingham in 1908. He further said:

In Empire we have found not merely the key to glory and wealth, but the call to duty, and the means of service to mankind. Empire can only be achieved with satisfaction, or maintained with advantage, provided it has a moral basis.¹³
So Curzon did not deny the material advantages that the colonies can bring but he reminded that the colonial agents should repay their economic gain through their service to humanity in the colonial settlements. Their concern for trade, Curzon asserted, should not make them blind to their moral responsibility in the colonies. This moral responsibility is the resounding cry of the ideologues of the Empire in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth.

Side by side with such flamboyant admirers, the nineteenth century also had many who voiced opposition to colonialism. Though there was often no sharp division between the liberals and the conservatives concerning colonial issues, a considerable portion of the conservatives were anti-imperialist. Even Disraeli, the conservative leader, who, by the Royal Titles Act, 1876, made Queen Victoria the Empress of India, was not originally a pro-imperialist in his views.\(^{14}\) Winston Churchill in his younger days as a roving journalist understood the gap between colonial promises and their materialization perfectly well. In his view, the positive results generated by colonial domination are "the greedy trader, the inopportune missionary, the ambitious soldier, and the lying speculator, who disquiet the minds of the conquered and excite the sordid appetites of the conquerors."\(^{15}\) Hobson, the famous economist, was also a bitter critic of imperialism, though for a different reason. In his book *Imperialism* (1902) he criti-
cized capitalism which siphons off investment abroad and neglects investment at home. Accordingly he did not view colonial annexations favourably. Apart from the fact that the colonies were objects of exploitation, they had to serve other useful purposes for the mother country which shocked others. The colonies used to be the dumping grounds for the increasingly dangerous army of the poor and unemployed at home. Several thinkers openly preached emigration as a panacea for problems of poverty and unemployment. Since the mid-nineteenth century, Carlyle, Kingsley and many others including Dickens preached this doctrine.

Socio-political problems have a great bearing on literature. The debate on imperialism was quite loud in the nineteenth century and it was reflected in literature. The imperialist views coloured the travel narratives and the adventure fiction. The main purpose behind these two literary types was to glorify the white men’s, especially, the Englishmen’s, incursions into the foreign land. Though the travel narratives appeared earlier, their spirit corresponded with that of the later nineteenth century adventure fiction. The travel narratives were often produced by officials and, in Andrea White’s view, were in actuality, "shaped in large part by official thought and prevailing ideologies and in turn shaped the attitudes of readers towards the English presence in the outposts of empire." So they drew idealistic pictures of the imperial drives which served to expose
the gap between the civilized white man and the "savage" Other. The renowned authors of travel narratives were Captain James Cook (1728-79), Rajah James Brooke of Sarawak (1803-68), Captain John Hanning Speke (1827-64) and David Livingstone (1813-73), to name a few.

Like most explorer-travellers of the period, Cook undertook his voyages to the South seas as officially financed projects for commercial, political as well as scientific purposes. Though as a geographer/navigator he belonged to the eighteenth century, yet he set the pattern in many ways for the explorations to follow in the nineteenth century. Besides being a great saga of discovery, Cook's journals also seek to affirm the rightful privilege of a superior power to conquest and domination of the underdeveloped regions of the world. Rajah James Brooke of Sarawak left England in 1838 for Borneo and became the British government agent there. He struck a different note from Cook. Reviving the note of disinterested knight-errantry, he wrote that he had undertaken the project to "awake the spirit of slumbering philanthropy with regard to these islands." Further he said "Fortune and life I give freely, and if I fail in the attempt, I shall not have lived wholly in vain." He displayed what we have called in our discussion the positive spirit of the colonialists who wanted amelioration along with conquest. Similarly J.H. Speke and many other nineteenth century explorers in Africa, not only saw them-
selves as discoverers of geographical facts, but even more compellingly as harbingers of a new life into the desolate islands. To justify the white men's incursions into the native territory, Speke presented a picture of a Utopian future. If the native population of the underdeveloped regions come in contact with white men, then "industry and commerce would clear the way for civilization and enlightenment". David Livingstone's writings, the products of his voyages in Africa, also invoked the spirit of an ideological thrust behind explorations. He added in his introduction to his work *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambesi and its Tributaries* (1865) that slave trade should be suppressed and the Christian missions should be strengthened in Africa. In his discourse the phrases like "the blessings of civilization" and "the blessings of the Gospel" recurred often synonymously.

In form, the adventure fiction of the nineteenth century closely followed travel-narratives. It attempted to present the contemporary adventures in overseas territories which were undergoing exploration and domination. But in doing so it took careful steps to boost, as Martin Green narrates it, "the energizing (sic) myth of English imperialism... the story England told itself as it went to sleep at night." On account of the prevailing enthusiasm of the age, almost every adventure fiction writer enjoyed considerable reputation and the most famous among them were Frederick Marryat (1792-1848), R.M. Ballantyne (1825-
Frederick Marryat, for a time, fancied himself "a liberal reformer." But in spite of that Marryat’s attitude towards the colonies is unmistakably that of an imperialist. In his Masterman Ready (1841) for example, William Seagrave and his family, together with the old sailor Ready, reach a desert island after a ship-wreck. Their untiring energy and acumen help them establish a veritable colony there. When young William asked about the nature of a colony, his father enthusiastically related the saga of the British ascendancy over the French, Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch rivals and how in the real sense of the term the sun is said never to set upon the English possessions. This description has become the copy book version of the glory of the British Empire which was related ad infinitum.

R.M. Ballantyne’s depiction of the natives and the whites appears clearly to follow the same tradition of the travel-narratives. In his first book on North America called Hudson Bay or Everyday Life in the Wilds of North America (1848) Ballantyne describes the Indians as primitive children of the forest. The idea of the natives as children is linked with their natural inferiority which is inscribed on every narrative. In shifting winds (1866) Ballantyne casts Englishmen in heroic moulds engaged
in facilitating trade, saving life and greatly improving the condition of mankind, thus keeping the commercial and the civilization mission at the same level.

In his adventure-fiction Charles Kingsley projected a Utopian vision of colonization. A churchman and a Christian socialist, he thought the problem of poverty and unemployment in England could be solved through emigration. In his novel Alton Locke (1850) he sent the hero to Canada. The hero Alton in his youth dreamt of going to the Eastern colonies as a missionary. Kingsley was an admirer of Rajah James Brooke of Sarawak and must have read accounts of his Eastern life. To Kingsley colonization appeared the most effective strategy to bring about moral improvement through manual labour. This is a moral and Christian version of the Empire which was upheld by many.

G.A. Henty was more political and he stressed the need for the white intervention in underdeveloped regions overseas for the benefit of the natives. In his estimate, the natives were lagging far behind the white men and needed contact with the white men to improve their plight. Mr Goodenough, the hero of Henty's By Sheer Pluck (1874) assesses the natives of Africa to the following effect:

They are fluent talkers, but their ideas are borrowed. They are absolutely without origi-
nality, absolutely without inventive power. Living among white men, their imitative faculties enable them to attain a considerable amount of civilization. Left alone to their own devices they retrograde into a state little above their native savagery. 22

This view of the colonial people had wide currency and could be seen even in E.M. Forster’s presentation of Indian characters in A passage to India (1924) where Fielding said to Aziz: “Away from us, Indians go to seed at once.” 23 It upholds the need to spread the beneficial effects of the Empire far and wide and offers arguments in support of the white men’s uninvited presence on foreign lands.

Regarding the imperial scenario, H. Rider Haggard and Robert Louis Stevenson offered challenging perspectives and made a significant shift in the presentation of racial stereotypes. The native appears in Haggard’s fiction no longer as the fierce, aggressive or backward sub-human being but as an individual who can triumphantly chant, with his foot upon the chest of his headless foe, in King Solomon’s Mines (1886), “a paean of victory, so beautiful, and yet so utterly savage”. 24 This is the heroic and emotionally resourceful picture of the native not met in earlier narratives. Haggard’s criticism of commercialism reflected his misgivings about the achievement of liberal imperialism. To him the new commercial middle classes, the most impor-
tant agents in the machinery of commerce-oriented imperialism were "money-grubbing (sic) reformers at home and the meddlers abroad," as he called them. And Haggard's ageing hero even questions the fundamentals of the imperial vision: "Civilisation is only savagery sliver-gilt. A vainglory is it, and, like a northern light, comes but to fade and leave the sky more dark." Here Haggard's opposition to the professed mission of imperialism is overt in the assertion that civilization is but a camouflage and trade-oriented enterprise. In the simile of a fading northern light, ending in darkness, he seems to describe the impermanence of such civilizing efforts.

In his South Seas stories Robert Louis Stevenson questioned the legitimacy and the efficacy of the white men's presence in primitive societies. His "The Beach of Falesá" (1893) is an indictment of the deplorable state of trade in some colonial settlements as well as the activities of the white men there. The inglorious picture of degeneration of the colonialist is an indirect commentary on the civilizing mission of the colonial rule.

The enthusiasm over colonialism in one type of fiction and its disparagement in some others underline, however, one vital point, the popularity of fiction on colonial themes. The celebration of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887 and then the
Diamond Jubilee of her reign in 1897 created frenzied emotion over the empire at home and beyond the seas. Rulers and heads of all colonial states came to London from all over the world, dressed in an endless variety of national costumes to celebrate these occasions. They were seen taking part in resplendent processions to honour the queen. Very naturally interest and curiosity rose high about their life-style, their behaviour, their societies. In those days colonial stories or stories with characters planted in the tropical colonies were hot favourites with the British readers.

II

Joseph Conrad (1857-1924) is not known as a theorist of colonialism. But he happened to have used the backdrop of the colonies in most of his works. By birth a Pole, his original name was Józef Teodor Konrad Nalecz Korzeniowski. In his early childhood he had suffered from the trauma of foreign rule in Poland, his birthplace, which was then under the imperial control of Russia. Later in his youth he made extensive tours all over the world as a sailor and had the opportunity of seeing a considerable number of colonial outposts. In all these travels, the state of the natives which he had observed in the colonies could have revived in him memories of his Polish experiences under Russian imperial power. And those early experiences were too harsh for Conrad as he viewed them and remembered them as the child of an
avowed Polish nationalist, Apollo Korzeniowski.

Conrad inherited from his father some inspiration for Polish nationalism. Conrad's mother too was a devout follower of her husband's political idealism. On account of this lineage, Conrad was never wholly free from political interest. As Douglas Hewitt observes:

An Englishman of his generation might have thought that politics was an activity into which he was free to dip or not. The son of Apollo and Evelina Korzeniowski could not and this was not merely because of any specifically familial situation, though it must have been that, too, but because anyone born into the educated classes in what had once been Poland but was now a part of the Tsarist Empire would have known that every significant detail of social life was political. 27

It was their political affiliation and involvement which shattered the family life of Apollo and Evelina Korzeniowski. As their only child, Conrad had to bear the brunt of the Russian oppression inflicted on his parents. At a very tender age Conrad became an orphan losing both his parents who died out of broken health which was the outcome of being exiled from their homeland. Hence, for Conrad, politics was an integral part of consciousness. To him imperialism was a glaring reality of human existence.
To understand the depth of Conrad’s father’s involvement in patriotic nationalism, we may look at a poem written by him. The poem scornfully upbraids the Polish gentry for their servitude to the Russians and the betrayal of the people:

Noblemen-pedlars, Noblemen-sugarmongers, sheep-farmers, chapmen, merchants, beermongers; friends of the Government which lets you drain the people’s blood under the protection of the Russian whip; evil bodies - muddy spirits; in your health is the people’s sickness! Begone! for I prefer, O Probity, your bread, though it be dry.28

The poem lashes at the middle class people for their greediness, their materialistic outlook and their tyranny over the common people by ingratiating themselves to the Government under Russian protection. Apollo distinguishes himself from such opportunists and self-seekers. In his political journalism also he reiterated that “Russia is synonymous with barbaric servitude.”29

Conrad was too young at the time when his father wrote this type of work. But there was ample reason to surmise that Conrad paid serious attention to them afterwards. In addition to that, Conrad’s family must have been familiar with the romantic literary culture of the time, which was mainly patriotic in sentiment.30 Hence it is not illogical to infer that Conrad inherited
a bitter antipathy towards the imperial oppression in his blood.

Family connections and his father's writings can be assumed as the shaping influences for Conrad. At the same time his own exposure to the imperial tyranny gave a violent jolt to his impressionable mind. In his tender age, when a child's world is confined within his or her family, Conrad was a witness and a co-sharer of the sufferings and the ignominy inflicted on his parents on account of their political involvement in an occupied country. Imperial Russia was ruthless in suppression of any insurgency. Conrad's father suffered political banishment to an unhealthy remote corner of Russia which affected the health of Conrad's mother. Four years after her death, Conrad's father, already a broken and impoverished man, also died. Conrad became an orphan at the tender age of eleven and was placed in the care of his maternal uncle. The childhood familial distress and the physical inconveniences that he had to suffer must have planted in him a hatred against all imperial oppressions. Later on, in his writing career Conrad paid homage to his father as a man opposed to any enslavement of the spirit: "He was simply a patriot in the sense of a man who believing in the spirituality of a national existence could not bear to see that spirit enslaved." 31

So Conrad was proud of his father's involvement in insurgent activities and therefore could understand the noble motifs of
nationalist protests. In this way Conrad's childhood memories might have made him sympathetic towards protests against imperial oppression. So to Conrad imperialism could not have appeared as a desirable development of human civilization as it resulted in a flagrant denial of human freedom.

But during the transition from Conrad's childhood to his youth, he witnessed a marked shift in the ideological transformation of imperialism. By this time imperialism put on the mask of liberal imperialism or colonialism with a civilizing mission as its ploy. As we have noted, this idealistic aspect of liberal imperialism coloured contemporary literature accordingly. In spite of his disapproval of imperial aggressions, Conrad had great respect for the civilizing work of the explorer-adventurers of the day. He was a voracious reader of adventure literature. As Andrea White has observed, he was influenced by the legends about and the writings of these heroic figures and he wrote appreciatively about the civilizing work of Captain James Cook, Sir John Franklin, Rajah James Brooke and David Livingstone. So colonialism as a civilizing mission could have been perhaps a welcome development to Conrad in his younger days. Later on through his sea-faring career, Conrad had the rare opportunity to monitor the civilizing projects of colonialism as they were practised in distant settlements all over the world and he could verify whether this practice tallied with the expectations laid down by the
idealists. To quote Andrea White,

... the realization he arrived at, ... resulted from the great disparity he himself witnessed between the aspirations and reported achievements of these figures, on the one hand, and the actual conditions at the outposts themselves, on the other.\textsuperscript{32}

So Conrad's naval life was an eye-opener for him and he could assess the nature of colonial practice in contradistinction to colonial ideology.

During Conrad's marine-life experience round the world, there was one significant conclusion that he seemed to have made. His attraction to the British way of life made him opt for British nationality. Conrad became a naturalized British citizen in 1886 and, in lieu of his Polish name, adopted the name Joseph Conrad. He confessed in a letter to Spiridion Kliszczewski that "When speaking, writing, or thinking in English, the word 'home' always means for me the hospitable shores of Great Britain." (13 October, 1885)\textsuperscript{33}. Obviously Conrad had his roots in England and had absorbed the English language and English environment to such an extent that accepting England as his home was but a natural decision. Still this decision was a bit ambiguous to Eloise-Knapp
Hay that Conrad who was an anti-imperialist should have declared loyalty to imperial Britain in 1886. We think Conrad wanted to identify himself with the liberal idealistic aspects of British civilization and society which had sheltered him and given him his language for imaginative experiences.

Conrad opted for a marine career in his youth. His sea-faring life began with the French Merchant Navy. But he was keen on becoming a British seaman. And after four years of service in French ships, he managed to join the British Merchant Marine in 1878. During the early period of his marine life, he sailed over the Atlantic, got involved in smuggling arms to Spanish Royalists and sailed to Australia. But these were episodes in his life which were purely incidental. Little connection can be established between them and Conrad's fiction-writing career. The two localities which left more lasting impression on Conrad are the East and the Congo.

About his visit to the East and his immediate reaction, not ample factual details are available. The account of these years takes up, as Norman Sherry has shown, only 51 out of the 687 pages of Jean-Aubry's biography of Conrad and about 30 of the 451 pages of Jocelyn Baines's biography. Norman Sherry has pointed out that Conrad made trips to the East three times and that is between 1883 to 1888. The first two visits centred on Singapore. There
Conrad came in contact with seamen who had succumbed to the easy life of the East and a few of the merchant adventurers. Perhaps it would not amount to taking too much liberty if we speculate that in Singapore Conrad wished he had met the legendary Rajah James Brooke for whom he had great respect. As we have said earlier, James Brooke left England in 1838, became the British agent and ruler in Borneo, and came to be popularly known as Rajah Brooke. Conrad admired Brooke from what he had read about him. It seems that in his fiction Brooke was the model for both Captain Lingard and Tuan Jim. In Singapore Conrad got a first-hand acquaintance with the socio-political milieu within which an agent or ruler has to work and which poses a very serious threat to philanthropic idealism. In his fiction both Captain Lingard and Jim failed in their plans to bring healthy changes and establish confidence in the native society in spite of their genuine idealism.

In his third visit to the East (1887) Conrad signed on as mate with the Vidar. This engagement acquainted Conrad with the Malay Archipelago. On her way, the ship called on the native settlements up the river where one or more Europeans or half castes could have been living; traders, expatriates, probably married to native women. Obviously it was a bird's eye view. Conrad apparently knew no Malay and therefore could not have obtained any deep insight into Malay life. He certainly had no
intimate Malay friends, and his acquaintance with other Malaysians does not appear to have extended beyond shipping clerks, waiters in colonial-style hotels, and other persons whom a visitor or seaman will encounter of necessity during his travels. We think what Conrad lacked in intimate knowledge, he compensated with his sensitive understanding. Even on the basis of his limited personal knowledge, Conrad could have visualized the deplorable and anarchic state of the Malay Archipelago despite its official status of a dependency under white control.

Compared to his journeys to the East, Conrad's visit to Africa up the Congo was a more memorable event of his merchant-marine career. In his youthful days he planned a visit to this land of the adventurers as he had read about H.M. Stanley and his feats in Africa. Conrad reached Africa in 1890. And then he had the fiercest encounter with colonial reality. Thirty three years after these experiences Conrad could not forgive the folly and greed of the Europeans taking part in what he called in "Geography and Explorers", "the vilest scramble for loot that ever disfigured the history of human conscience and geographical exploration." (Last Essays, P. 25). The picture of the exploitation of the Congo by Leopold, the Belgian King, and other greedy adventurers, shattered Conrad's childhood idealism regarding the white men's vaunted claim to be the founder of liberty and
civilization. The Congo which Conrad saw was a hellgate of anarchy.

The Congo had without question attracted a mixed variety of white men. The most heinous group consisted of those lured by the vision of immense riches. Then there were others who for some reason left Europe for an area where their pasts would not haunt them. And though there were rough adventurers and ardent missionaries, Conrad could find nobody except the Irishman Roger Casement who could be called a disinterested figure. It was Casement who played one of the leading parts in 1903 when as British Consul at Boma, he helped in the exposure of the appalling abuses perpetrated in the Congo by the Belgian colonial adventurers. Casement's long, factual report documented the atrocities committed by the colonialists upon the poor, helpless men and women of the Congo.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century Conrad retired from his seafaring career. And evidently enough, this career had a vital influence on Conrad in framing his own attitude to colonialism. In this context we may refer to the observation made by Frances B. Singh:

When Conrad grew up he chose to follow the sea as a career because he felt it would provide him with the sense of openness, freedom, and democracy he had not been able to feel in his
childhood. Ironically the profession which he thought would take him away from the horror of colonialism often brought him closer to it. 37

Hence his naval career was no relief from the excruciating memories of his childhood. Rather it was responsible for a close contact between Conrad and different shades of colonialism. This contact coupled with his childhood memories must have helped Conrad to arrive at a comprehensive vision of colonialism.

Perhaps it is a significant co-incidence that when Conrad turned towards a full-fledged literary vocation after his Merchant Marine career, it was the high-tide of imperialism. As the sovereign ruler of the greatest Empire in the world, Queen Victoria had celebrated the Golden Jubilee of her reign in 1887 and was heading for her Diamond Jubilee in 1897. There was a noticeable growth, during the decade, of high hopes and euphoria about imperial activities. Though there were sharp differences of opinions as to how the Empire had been won and how this wave of the "new imperialism" had come into force, yet there was no denying that the Empire, whether it had been conquered "in a fit of absence of mind" or consciously through ruthless conquests, was a reality. The saying that the sun never sets in the Empire was an expression of the assured faith in the permanence of Empire in the minds of the public. This new vigour in the celebration of the Empire was due to the fact that through territorial acquisitions
England had achieved expansion never reached by any Empire before, and offered opportunities to its people never anticipated before. This slogan of "new imperialism" sought to differentiate itself from the barbarism of earlier periods, specially those achieved by the sixteenth century Spanish or seventeenth-century Dutch invasions which survived in the nineteenth century in Leopold's Congo. Specifically, as we have mentioned earlier, enlightened imperialism, which was basically the guardian of capitalism, considered itself heir to the liberal, nationalistic ideals inaugurated by the French Revolution. Though Hobson accused "new imperialism" as only a mask for capitalist exploitation, Chamberlain and Curzon counteracted it on the ground of a moral responsibility. In their view the commercialism and the noisy jingoism of the new imperialists were redeemed by a serious and even stoical concept of trusteeship in terms of the white man's burden.

However, to the judicious observers of the age, the imperial undertaking did not appear so moral after all. In our discussion we have referred to Macaulay and his recommendations for introducing English culture among natives of India. Basically Macaulay was an advocate of Western culture and wanted it to penetrate into all veins of Indian life. Though he provided lofty arguments in support of his non-material idealism, his remarks gave away his ulterior objective. His principal anxiety was that "the sceptre
may pass away from us." To check this disaster, he suggested that the best way to keep an empire intact was to spread a cultural bond between the ruler and the ruled. What military conquest fails to achieve, cultural hegemony would be able to accomplish: consolidation of the white power over colonial settlements. That was the dream of all colonialists. It would be wrong, however, to say that all paternalistic efforts of spreading Western norms of culture among the natives were always hypocritical. One can see some sincerity in what Livingstone said in the context of Africa:

... the great and fertile continent of Africa to be no longer kept wantonly sealed, but made available as the scene of European enterprise, and will enable its people to take a place among the nations of the earth, thus securing the happiness and prosperity of tribes now sunk in barbarism or debased by slavery;...38

Livingstone expressed some genuine concern for the "tribes". What was wrong however was the assessment of culture of another race and geographical region as barbarism. Despite Livingstone's concern for the uplift of "tribes", it is evident that the essential aim behind the magnanimous project of Livingstone was to make African continent available for "European enterprise". And the disbanding of the slave trade was mixed up with making "free labour" available for work under European industrial drives. The use of the word "pilgrims", to refer to mercenary soldiers and traders, as we find in Conrad's Heart of Darkness, is an instance
of the holy facade that colonialists created to hoodwink themselves as well as others. This broad gap between colonial promise and colonial practice was apparent to sensitive minds like Edmund Morel who was instrumental in exposing the horror of the Belgian Congo.

Thus at the time of Conrad's venture in fiction-writing, an imperial fervour permeated the socio-political and the literary scene. In both these fields the pro-imperialists held sway though the anti-imperialists were also not so mute. Amidst these cross-currents Conrad first appeared in print. With his childhood memories of the sufferings under imperial Russia and his exposure to the various colonial outposts all over the world, Conrad's treatment of colonial themes could not be an enthusiastic and onesided approval of all that had happened in the outposts of the Empire. Most of his predecessors in colonial fiction were innocent about their ideological involvement in the anxieties over the Empire, though they also dramatized the situations. In their fiction the finer and subtler understanding of the issues of imperial ideology was absent. But Conrad was politically conscious and morally sensitive. He had a perfect understanding of the implications of the situations and actions which he dramatized so memorably. In his fiction, the innocence of his predecessors was replaced by a deep scrutiny. But noticeably enough, Conrad adopted an unusual narrative method where, as Andrea White
has noted, he "practised a certain amount of ventriloquism." A British citizen now, with many British friends, writing in the midst of imperial euphoria - Conrad could thus escape from taking sides by being ambiguous in the presentation of the imperial scenario in his fiction.

In my title I have used the word 'critique' to assess Conrad's scrutiny of colonialism. Lexically critique means a critical essay. But it is different from criticism in its meaning or its assumptions. This difference has been explained by Seyla Benhabib to the following effect:

While criticism... stands outside the object it criticizes, asserting norms against facts, and the dictates of reason against the unreasonableness of the world, critique refuses to stand outside its object and instead justaposes the immanent, normative self-understanding of its object to the material actuality of this object.

In this view criticism is an external probing which assesses facts against norms or principles. It is an objective rational estimate. A critique is more intimate, more inwardly involved in the subject of its study. It makes an incisive analysis of one's response to the object and then measures its acceptability in
terms of reality or the actuality of the object. Hence the latter has a more complex as well as sympathetic approach, keen on identifying factors responsible for the present state of its object. Criticism glances over and comments, critique excavates, explores and brings to light the reality of the object in terms of itself as well as of our response. Criticism is primarily concerned with the author's judgement on the issues, critique takes a more ambiguous position and calls for a considerable intellectual as well as emotional involvement of the author in the issue. My study is a very humble attempt to present Conrad's critique of colonialism in this sense. I have taken up some of his fictional works where Conrad has subjected distinctive features of colonialism under reflective scrutiny.

A work of fiction and imagination cannot be studied in expectation of a systematic exposition of a thesis, belief or idea. Such an attempt would obliterate the distinction between a tract and a work of fiction or imagination. A theoretician or a tract-writer is unambiguous in presenting his theories and that is what is expected of him. What he writes and suggests will be judged in terms of verifiable truth. But an approach to a creative work or a fiction cannot satisfy similar expectations. A work of fiction has an interiority over and above its surface course of action. The subjective and the objective mix freely in such works. It is a synthesis of the artist's craft and his response
to the different facts of life. That is, in a work of fiction while delineating the course of events, the author puts a perspective which is the product of the author's ideology. Above all, actions presented in a fiction are framed with a vision which we may call a critique of the actions. No creative work is free of such critique or an intellectual or philosophical direction generated by the author's world-view. The greater the artist, the greater will be the realization that the creation is enveloped in a vision and the thought and context of the work reveal the vision.

So the world of fiction presents how the author transmutes his observation of life - his subjective responses to the realities of the world through the medium of language into an aesthetically pleasing or pleasurable form. It is not an exact replica of reality, nor an exact imitation of life but is a re-creation by the artist within the framework of a literary form. It presents a panoramic life which is also a vision of the life framed in terms of both objective and subjective life of the artist. The teller is often invisible in the tale but the teller's perspective controls the tale as far as it is practicable within the limitations of the language or the medium the teller uses. So we have to dig for the teller's view, which lies buried, conscious or unconscious, in the tale.
Since a fiction-writer places his world of imagination in the framework of life reached through his experiences, he is not always able to maintain his artistic detachment. Quite naturally, he is likely to betray his personal feelings or ideological orientation while he builds up his world of fiction. It may not be advisable to isolate a few aspects or ideas out of context. But a critical survey of the major works of an artist does show his dominant attitudes or points of view. Hence, our endeavour to study Conrad's novels in terms of his attitudes to colonialism may not be a critical aberration altogether. In fact, many critics have done this before. Now I would like to mention some important critical studies on Conrad which have a bearing on this work and to indicate the areas of my agreement and disagreement with them.

Avrom Fleishman in Conrad's Politics (1967) studies Conrad in relation to his anti-colonial bias which, as he thought, started in the wake of devastating discoveries about colonial ventures. However, having concentrated on politics, Fleishman oversimplifies the complexity of Conrad's approach to the problem of imperialism when he says that Conrad is concerned chiefly with the socio-political effects of imperialism on the native communities. In my view, Conrad's study of politics is inseparable from man's moral and psychological responses to it. Fleishman mentions the effects of Dutch colonialism on the native states in
Almayer's Folly to the following effect: "What appears, ... as the most unsavory aspect of Dutch colonial administration is its cooperation with, use of, and even assistance to the most unscrupulous and predatory native rajahs." This, in Fleishman's view, distinguished the British East Indies policy which intended to suppress "local autonomy to the extent that it was disruptive of good order." And Fleishman thinks that this distinction of the British was Conrad's personal assessment as in practice "both nations used the native rulers to administer the collection of taxes and produce, and both stand responsible for the rajahs' brutal rule." If we leave aside the debate on Dutch-British respective superiority, this view explores the evils of colonialism exclusively on the political level. But Conrad's study is actually an eye-opener to the corrosive effects of a colonial situation on human minds. I think Conrad wants to show that the degenerate white rule is responsible for the political anarchy as well as the moral chaos which overtake the people. The relationship between Almayer and his coloured wife is a case in point.

Alan Sandison in his book The Wheel of Empire (1967) holds the view that because of his severance from the organic ties with his own community, the white imperialist gradually loses grip on himself and he disintegrates:

Transposed to an altogether alien milieu—to the field of empire from which, by definition,
organic unity and social cohesion are debarred—he is made brutally aware of his vulnerability when confronted with the malevolence of the unfamiliar. Not only is he deprived of all the mechanical aids to self-consciousness which man’s social organisation exists to provide, he finds that these are now replaced by a primitive and malignant environment which calls in question the very foundations of his moral integrity.

In the present study I have tried to emphasize that what Conrad wants to highlight is not the malignancy of the primitive environment alone but the inherent fallibility of the colonial system. The primitive natives are happy to live in their respective surroundings and do not encroach upon the whites. It is the whites who enter into their territories on the pretext of the civilizing mission. So when their morality succumbs to the native environment, the blame is not necessarily to be laid on the natives. Advocates of colonialism mistakenly promise to bring about a happy coalescence of white and native cultures. But the gap between the two is unbridgeable due to the colonial situation or the colonial assumptions. Here either one has to lose one’s restraints despite one’s idealism as does Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness* or one has to sacrifice one’s life despite one’s good intentions as does Jim in *Lord Jim*. In both cases the evil is embedded in the colonial system.
Robert F. Lee in his book *Conrad’s Colonialism* (1969) thinks that for Conrad the white colonizer is a tragic figure who feels that he is carrying out the dictates of his destiny in his work in the colonies. As Lee observed it, for Conrad it is a glaring reality that the white man does not receive recognition and gratitude for the good work he does in the colonies: "... the lack of gratitude and appreciation by the East for the genuine benefits derived from the white man is another of the negative aspects of Conrad’s treatment of the white man’s burden." We can understand this view partially with regard to Lingard and Jim but not without reservation. The magnanimity of Lingard and Jim is not totally innocent. Lee feels that notwithstanding this tragedy of fate, Conrad is firm in his conviction that the colonial ruler must assume the burden if he is to remain true to others and to himself. One would like to think that Lee’s view tells us something about the standard liberal ideology as he understood it, but not wholly about Conrad. Conrad is by nature sceptical and conservative and resents any uncritical acceptance of current ideology. This stereotypical imposition of doctrines on Conrad’s fiction leads to misreading of his novels. For example, we cannot agree with Lee’s comment, after reading *Nostromo* that “Charles Gould is one of the very few who are able to be true to others, to their own, and to themselves". This point I have refuted in my discussion of this novel in chapter V.
Benita Parry in Conrad and Imperialism: Ideological Boundaries and visionary Frontiers (1983) echoes Fleishman’s idea that Conrad resents the hypocrisy of the colonizing mission. As she says, "... Conrad perceived theoretical imperialism to be a dissimulation of the conditions and relationships it purported to explain..."

According to Benita Parry, being a dedicated member of the Merchant Navy, Conrad initially thought that the virtues of service and heroism which he himself witnessed in the Merchant Marine were reflected in the action of some of the pioneers of colonialism. But, as Ms Parry thinks, with his hindsight and his experience of and exposure to the historical reality of the imperial practice, Conrad realized that there was a big gap between profession and practice. So he attempted to "destroy the pretensions of the abstract idea" in his novels. In Ms Parry's view, Conrad ultimately felt that even Merchant Marine, though set up as the model of the authentic human community, could not be absolved of participation in the guilt of colonial trade and administration, hence this particular organization was a "party to imperialist conquest". So while attempting to "chronicle the lives of colonisers as Promethean figures, he is obliged to show them to be fallible adventurers." At the same time, Benita Parry detected in Conrad, along with this antipathy, a search to discover redemptive features in the imperialist idea. It seems that in Benita Parry's view, Conrad, in his colonial fiction, was
engaged in a thesis on colonialism on this line. But I do not see such an overt engagement in Conrad in this matter. He is not writing a thesis on colonialism to foreground the redemptive features of it, nor does he display any political hatred toward it. In his colonial fiction, his centre of focus is man's fallibility and limitation in the colonial situation. In his critique of colonialism, Conrad subjects to ironic reflection the lofty claims put forward by its promoters and the subversion caused to it by the system of the latter-day imperialism.

Andrea White in her book *Joseph Conrad and The Adventure Tradition* (1993) thinks that Conrad subverts the idea of Britain's superiority to other colonial nations. While discussing G.A. Henty, one of Conrad's predecessors, Ms White comments that Henty's fiction distinguishes the Englishmen in the tropics from all other "lesser white men whose imperial motives are not as pure". In her view, this highlights Conrad's difference with Henty for Conrad's "admiration for Brooke provided more of a contrast than a comparison." In her observation of the career of Conrad's Englishmen in Borneo, she finds only "diminishment not continuing glory." As she feels, neither Lingard's Sambir nor Jim's Patusan bears witness to any progress which Brooke brought about in the East. I feel in Ms White's view here, Conrad's main intention has gone out of focus. Conrad conceived Lingard and Jim as not just two colonial agents who are unsuccessful despite
their British identity. Rather the lives of Lingard and Jim in the East underline the parameters within which colonial agents have to work and within which good and conscientious administrators like Lingard and Jim go to seeds.

As Indians living in the post-colonial era we have our own experience to bear on the colonial situation. As an Indian reader, I am trying to examine the findings of other critics on Conrad in the light of our own colonial experience in India. Most of the Conradian critics are either Europeans or Americans. So they come from a socio-political and cultural background different from ours. As the member of a race which had experienced colonialism directly, I have attempted to register my responses to Conrad's presentation of the colonial scenario. The colonial situation is such that it leaves a deep dint on the human mind. In spite of liberal education at home, we found that British colonialists were not eager to practise liberalism in the colonies because of the master-servant relationship which constituted the framework of colonial establishment and vitiated the minds of those who exercised power as well as of those who were forced to submission. This is the universal paradigm. So no one can escape the evils of this obsessive situation. In my study I have tried to trace in Conrad a general awareness of the evils of colonialism in almost all colonies irrespective of their nationalities. I have tried to trace in colonialism an inseparable socio-political setting in
which Conrad’s characters are placed and are made to interact. So what emerges as action and thought in his novels spring from the colonial background and has to be judged keeping in view the colonial situation. The colonial situation plays the controlling role over the protagonists, confounding their individual identity and their morale and eventually destroying them. Though Conrad relates the subversion of the colonialist ideology to the greedy, vile activities of the main actors, his irony goes deeper than the surface reality. That is why many critics tend to think that his critique of colonialism is only incidental, his approach to life is moral and metaphysical. As Richard Curle says, for instance, “... in all his stories he was concerned deeply with one thing—human nature. Everything else was the mere setting, ...” 52. Of course, this crystallization of human nature is important in his fiction but the setting is organic with that crystallization.

The colonial setting is something that seeps into the psychology of the dominated race, perverting their vision of themselves as well as that of the white race. Substitution of rapacious rulers by benevolent ones will not bring any relief, the evil is internalized through the system. Conrad reached a proper understanding of colonialism because he did not separate the responses from the setting. Despite the external differences, the colonial setting is unique and no colonial power can claim to be free from the influence of its structure. Though shades of dif-
ference in separate colonial administrations may be seen on the surface but the effect of colonial rule is more or less the same. Perhaps Conrad’s loyalty to his second home, England, urged him to exclaim "... liberty... can only be found under the English flag all over the world." 53

Conrad’s own view in the matter of fictional narration and characterization is that he strives for perfection. In his letter to Sir Sidney Colvin on 18 March, 1917, Conrad says, "... all my concern has been with the 'ideal' value of things, events, and people. That and nothing else." 54 Here ideal could mean that which is raised to the highest point of possibilities both of good and evil, a study of extreme situation. The artist takes liberty in his imagination for creating characters of diverse types by representing them as higher or lower than surface reality. But the fact is that the setting is paramount. In his 'ideal' presentation Conrad wanted to explode the myth of colonialism that placed itself above its setting by projecting an ideology based on Utopianism and philanthropy which the setting could not prop up. In his letter to Józef Korzeniowski, the historian, on 14 February, 1901, Conrad expressed his desire to earn recognition by writing “in a style which serves the truth as I see and feel it”. 55 It seems that the expressed truth that he wanted to show about colonialism was that man cannot go beyond a certain point on account of his limitations and because of con-
straints imposed by the situation that overpowers everyman. Mere ideological stipulation, Conrad seems to suggest, cannot rescue man from the gravitational inevitability of the moral situation.

But Conrad's criticism of colonialism does not come from an inveterate ideological animosity. His letter from Calcutta to Spiridion Kliszczewski shows how deeply he was concerned over the security and permanence of the Empire against the spectre of socialism that the announcement of the results of the English General Elections in 1885 brought to his mind. He asked, "Where's the man to stop the rush of social-democratic ideas? The opportunity and the day have come and are gone! Believe me: gone for ever! For the sun is set and the last barrier removed. England was the only barrier to the pressure of infernal doctrines born in continental backslums." (19 December 1885)\textsuperscript{56}. This statement refers to Conrad's fear of anarchy which was expected to follow the victory of the Labour Party. Conrad was afraid that if the imperial power became weak at home, it could not be strong overseas. Conrad's fear of the rise of social-democratic ideas shows his alignment with the Empire. Conrad's uncle, Bobrowski also confirms that Conrad was "an imperialist" at heart.\textsuperscript{57}

But being a writer, concerned with truth, he could not but castigate colonialism as he saw it in practice. Conrad's experience as a Merchant Marine officer had of course offered him
constant contact with the practice of colonialism. Conrad could not fail to understand that colonialism in practice not only sanctioned physical torture on the natives, snatched their political rights, denied them civil facilities, but, it corroded their culture, crippled their minds and vitiated their family-bonds with problems of miscegenation and half-caste children, etc. In Conrad’s fictional world, colonialism is presented as a physical-mental phenomenon that engrossed the whole society.

This study is an attempt to read Conrad’s novels not simply as satirical reports on colonialism, or as expressions of political hatred on behalf of an oppressed society, but as attempts to see the consequence of domination through the nuances of human behavioural responses. While partially accepting Richard Curle’s observation that Conrad’s principal subject is human nature, we would like to point out that, human nature is not an absolute entity. It cannot be above its socio-political context. In Conrad this context is the determining factor on human behaviour and responses.

In this study I have taken up for detailed discussion the novels which are set in colonial setting, namely, the Malay novels (Almayer’s Folly, An Outcast of the Islands and The Rescue), Heart of Darkness, as well as the short story “An Outpost of Progress”, Lord Jim and Nostromo. In the end, I will try to sum up with some generalization on Conrad’s moral vision vis-a-vis
the colonial situation.

The Malay novels owe their inspiration to Conrad's visit to the East. Tom Lingard, an upright colonial figure representing British standard, adopted two European protégés, Willems and Almayer, and engaged them as agents in his colonial settlements. Willems and Almayer turned out to be moral wrecks in addition to their incompetence for business. But Lingard who committed this blunder of misjudgement and brought his business on the verge of collapse, had also a moral offence to expiate for. He fell for a married European lady, Mrs Travers, as shown in The Rescue, and forgot, out of this infatuation, his earlier promises and commitment to the natives and abandoned them to their fate. The age-old colonial idea of the white man's solidarity among themselves and cynical apathy towards natives was seen in operation here despite Lingard's goodness.

*Heart of Darkness* and the short story, "An Outpost of Progress" record Conrad's nightmarish memories of the Belgian Congo. In the novel, as the official representative of the Belgian Government, Kurtz belies all expectations and vies with the natives in savagery and barbarism. This flagrant denial of the code of civilization stresses another more important point: the lure of wealth which colonial setting promotes and which corrodes the moral values of the so-called civilized man. Kurtz was an idealist of
a sort, a white European, a journalist by profession who charmed every man by his gift of eloquence. Yet he succumbed to the combined pressure of greed, power and vainglory and fear of the colonial setting, the wilderness and isolation of the remote region. The novel explores his transformation as "An Outpost of Progress" records the tragic end of the two colonial agents in similar circumstances.

Lord Jim tells the story of the defeat of men's dream in a colonial milieu. The hero Jim failed professionally when he jumped from the boat and abandoned his charge of the non-white pilgrims on board and thus violated the sailor's moral code. To this he probably could not have been drawn so easily had not the colonial situation made it easier for him to disregard the humanity of the native pilgrims. Professionally it was a great dereliction of duty for Jim who had cherished high ambitions. He realized it immediately and resisted all persuasions to run away instead of facing the trial. The background of all this dream is set in a society which has gone to seeds in a colonial backwater. Jim moved from place to place in search of an opportunity to atone for the professional lapses. But he was baffled everywhere. In Patusan he was partially successful in creating an ideal society committed to the uplift of the natives. But in the end the colonial situation intervened and overpowered Jim's goodness.

Nostromo explores the question which is of most practical importance in modern colonialism, the financial control of a
state power. The narrative is devoted to the demonstration of this through the operations of various agents. But the material interest which they seek to attain disintegrates their personal lives and thus undermines their commercial gain. Charles Gould, Nostromo, Decoud - all these characters have to sacrifice their domestic lives for silver, the centre of commercial interest in the novel. In itself laying down one's personal values for material interest would be considered unhallowed. But the colonial enterprise projects commercial gain as the *summum bonum*. Within the colonial framework this material gain is valorized and life and higher values go by the board.

Conrad's moral vision presents with admiration human struggle for retaining integrity in challenging situations. His own childhood sufferings and the parental inspiration of Polish nationalism must have planted in him a conscious need for right political structure for the maintenance of human values and freedom. In Conrad's fiction, the political setting is mostly colonial. Conrad depicts how, in such a background, moral development and moral sensitivities are blunted or thwarted. In this context the concept of the white man's burden sounds hollow. The novels which I will take up in the following chapters are Conrad's explorations of the questions: how far is colonialism adequate for human development and how far is it dehumanizing?
NOTES AND REFERENCES
CHAPTER - I


20. Quoted by Andrea White, Joseph Conrad and The Adventure Tradition, p. 56.


33. Zdzislaw Najder (ed.), *Conrad's Polish Background*, p. 25.


42. Avrom Fleishman, *Conrad's Politics: Community and Anarchy in the Fiction of Joseph Conrad*, p. 86.


46. Robert F. Lee, *Conrad's Colonialism*, p.105. For this point I am indebted to Ivo Vidan's criticism of Lee's book in *Conradiana*, 70-71, 3, 1, p.120.

48. Benita Parry, Conrad and Imperialism : Ideological Boundaries and Visionary Frontiers, p. 16. The previous two quotations are from this page.


50. Andrea White, Joseph Conrad and The Adventure Tradition, p. 76.


