

## Chapter I: Introduction: Orwell's Colonial Legacies

The East-West encounter, particularly the one resulting from the British Colonial expansion over the Indian subcontinent, has produced a considerable bulk of literature at the hand of both the members of the colonizing power and the natives too. In this context, George Orwell's debut novel *Burmese Days* stands apart for its exploration of the effect of colonialism on both the colonizers and the colonized. By presenting the story of a colonial officer who starts his adult career in Burma and ends his life there, the novel has executed a critique of the practice of imperialism. And yet, on many fronts, the novel still seems to hold the English view that despite their shortcomings, the British are civilized people, better than the natives or the people who happened to be born outside Europe proper.

Literary texts written on the natives are usually found lacking in terms of presenting a balanced outlook on the subject people. George Orwell's novel also suffers from the same fault though it has been a commonplace knowledge that he was a vehement detractor of British imperialism. Not that Orwell the writer is unknown to the various injustice committed by his fellow countrymen—he very well knew that, but the problem lies in his discursive method of describing the Burmese who happen to be the natives, the subject people. That chasm, racial and power-political, ultimately, is reflected in the overall structure of the novel. Consequently, any possibility of reconciling the ruler and the ruled, the British and the Indo-Burmese, is doomed to fail, as the death of John Flory, the only source of hope in the direction of bringing the two people together, shows. Thus seen, the novel is a saga of the tragic end of a British officer in the Burmese nation as well as the indication that it is really difficult for an English writer to be sympathetic to

the non-English people. In other words, the novel tries to project a picture of a world where people from different geographical and cultural locations meet only to realize their differences more than their similarities. Hence, the novel presents the failure of reconciling both at the political and cultural level.

Process of globalization which effectively began with colonial expansion, and created a hybrid space finally remained unaccomplished. The reasons behind that may be many, but this thesis assumes that because of the unequal relationship between the conquerors and the conquered ones, the attempt, if not the possibility, of bringing the people from the east and west in amicable terms is only faintly likely to yield an encouraging response. In the novel itself, it is made indisputably explicit: all members of the European Club think it unthinkable to have a native as a member in the club, whoever he might be. It is only Flory who has any willingness to bring his pal in the club; otherwise all are opposed to him. This proves the incompatibility of the two races of people, the westerners and the easterners. To shed light upon this issue, this thesis would discuss in some detail the concepts of globalization, hybridity and colonialism, in the novel under study.

Eric Arthur Blair, later to be known by his name de plume George Orwell, was born in 1903 in the Indian village of Motihari, Bengal, which lies near the border of Nepal. The British Empire was at its zenith then, and India was a part of the British Empire. Blair's father, Richard, held a post as an agent in the Opium Department of the Indian Civil Service. His paternal grandfather, too, had been part of the British Raj and had served in the Indian Army. The Blairs led a relatively privileged and fairly pleasant life, helping to administer the Empire. They were not very wealthy—Orwell later

described them ironically as "lower-upper-middle class". In 1907, Eric's mother took him to England and lived at Henley, though the father continued to work in India until he retired in 1912. With some difficulty, Blair's parents sent their son to a private preparatory school in Sussex at the age of eight. At the age of thirteen he won a scholarship to Wellington, and soon after, another to Eton, the famous public school.

However, Eric felt encumbered with all the complexities of the educational system and the expectation of his parents and the school establishment about his high achievement. He seems to have derived a sense of rebellion and cynicism from his experience at Eton. Understandably, he failed to show any distinguished performance there and closed the prospect of winning a scholarship to Cambridge. Following the end of his formal scholarly career, the young Blair turned to a life of travel and action. At the age of nineteen, he came to Burma in 1922, trained and served there in the Indian Imperial Police force for five years. In 1927, while home on leave, he resigned. There had been at least two reasons for this: firstly, his life as a policeman was a distraction from the life he really wanted to live, which was to be a writer; and secondly, he had come to feel that, as a policeman in Burma, he was supporting a political system in which he could no longer believe. Even as early as this, his ideas about writing and his political ideas were closely linked. It was not simply that he wished to break away from British imperialism in India: he wished to "escape from ... every form of man's dominion over man", as he said in *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), and the social structure from which he came, depended, as he saw it, on just that "dominion over others" - not just over the Burmese, but over the English working class as well.

Orwell's first novel *Burmese Days* (1934) is set against the backdrop of a village in colonial Burma. The novel has as its story the struggle of a timber merchant, John Flory, who on the one hand tries to get a membership for his Indian doctor friend Veraswami, and on the other hand falls heavily in love with an English girl, Elizabeth Lackersteen, and finally commits suicide after his failure on both accounts. The unscrupulous native magistrate U Po Kyin who ruins the doctor's imminent entry in the whites' club, lends credit to the myth of how degenerate the Burmese can become for their personal gain.

In *Burmese Days* the world depicted is all too real. Flory tries to change himself; he dismisses Ma Hla May, his Burmese housemaid and also a sort of mistress, drinks less, and almost becomes the gentleman he yearns to be. Doing so, he wants to curry the favour of a short-visiting Elizabeth Lackersteen from Paris. But he does so in an environment where decency is nearly impossible, where his support for Dr. Veraswami gets him called a "nigger's Nancy Boy" (181).

Orwell's next books were *A Clergyman's Daughter* (1935) and *Keep The Aspidistra Flying* (1936). These novels again testify to the autobiographical element that is so conspicuous in his writing whether it is a story, essay, novel or a journalistic piece.

In 1938, Orwell became ill with tuberculosis and spent the winter in Morocco. While being there, he wrote his next book, a novel entitled *Coming up for Air*, published in 1939, the year the long-threatened war between England and Germany broke out. Orwell wanted to fight, as he has done in Spain, against the fascist enemy, but he was declared physically unfit. In 1941 he joined the British Broadcasting Corporation as talks producer in the Indian section of the eastern service. He served in the Home Guard, a

wartime civilian body for local defence. In 1943 he left the BBC to become literary editor of the Tribune and began writing *Animal Farm*. In 1944 the Orwells adopted a son, but in 1945 his wife died during an operation. Towards the end of the war, Orwell went to Europe as a reporter. Late in 1945 he went to the island of Jura off the Scottish coast, and settled there in 1946. He wrote *Nineteen Eighty-Four* there. The island's climate was unsuitable for someone suffering from tuberculosis and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* reflects the bleakness of human suffering, the indignity of pain. Indeed, he said that the book wouldn't have been so gloomy had he not been so ill. Later that year he married Sonia Brownell. He died in January 1950.

### **Orwell as a Critic of British Empire**

Orwell served the British Empire as a colonial policeman in Burma in the 1920's and used his experiences to draw a portrait of colonial life that is almost naturalist in its unsparing, unflattering view of people of all races and creeds, and yet at the same time deeply analytical.

By common consent, Orwell is the most influential political writer of the twentieth century. He earned for himself this position of a novelist and journalist with a mission for his commitment to telling the truth however unsavoury it may be. As a writer of social conscience, his writing shows his concern for the downtrodden and the underdog. This sense of responsibility of a writer to speak for the mass led him to the conclusion—incorporated later into his novel *Burmese Days* and his essays “Shooting an Elephant” and “A Hanging”—that the British Empire was a capitalist mechanism to exploit the subjugated poor. His experience as a sub-inspector in the Indian Imperial Police in Burma for five years disillusioned him enough to make him resign from his job.

His dissatisfaction resulted from his hatred for British imperialism as he became a first hand eyewitness of the vices and crimes committed over the natives by his fellow agents of imperialism to sustain the empire throughout the world.

His essays, “*A Hanging*” and “*Shooting an Elephant*”, depend on detail for their power, but also on double agency, on Orwell’s scrupulous nation of his skewed loyalties: “with one part of my mind I thought of the British Raj as an unbreakable tyranny . . . with another part I thought the greatest joy in the world would be to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest’s guts.” This aspect of his writing brings out the dilemma within him: he is critical of imperialism, but at the same time thinks it to be better than other imperialisms, and wants to take vengeance on the Buddhist monks who spit beetle nut at the British people on the street. And yet it is the same Orwell who wants to see the empire crumble soon, for it is better for both the natives and the colonizers. As he writes in his landmark essay “*Shooting an Elephant*” which is notable for its scathing irony on the useless, oppressive empire, he feels “an intolerable sense of guilt” to be a servant of that mechanism of oppression. These lines are worth citing in this context:

...at that time I had already made up my mind that imperialism was an evil thing and the sooner I chucked up my job and got out of it the better. Theoretically—and secretly, of course—I was all for the Burmese and all against their oppressors, the British. As for the job I was doing, I hated it more than I can perhaps make clear. In a job like that you see the dirty work of Empire at close quarters. The wretched prisoners hurdling in the stinking cages of the lock-ups, the grey, cowed faces of the long-term

convicts, the scarred buttocks of the men who had been flogged with bamboo—all these oppressed me with an intolerable sense of guilt.(2)

Such feeling are not uncommon among the colonial servants, he tells us, who have experienced first hand the inhumanity of the empire both toward its members and its subjects.

Some other excerpts can be cited here to clarify the anti-British streak in Orwell's character as an intellectual as well as a writer with social conscience. *Burmese Days* speaks volume about Orwell's social conscience and political acuteness. Here follows one conversation between Flory and Veraswami:

“Well, doctor,” said Flory—the doctor had meanwhile thrust him into a long chair, pulled out the leg-rests so that he could lie down, and put cigarettes and beer within reach. “Well, doctor, and how are things? How the British Empire? Sick of the palsy as usual?”

“Aha, Mr. Flory, she iss very low, very low! Grave complications setting in. Septicæmia, peritonitis and paralysis of the ganglia. We shall have to call in the specialists, I fear. Aha!”(31)

This fun on the diseased condition provides opportunity for both to express their resentment toward the fake hypocrite British culture.

Flory is dissatisfied with the British Empire which has destroyed the native way of life, of production, and culture. Only a page or two later he tells the doctor:

We've never taught a single useful manual trade to the Indians. We daren't; frightened of the competition in industry. We've even crushed various industries. Where are the Indian muslins now? [...] We can't help

doing so. In fact, before we've finished we'll have wrecked the whole Burmese national culture. But we're not civilizing them, we're only rubbing our dirt on to them. (34-5)

This is the limit of how far a member of the colony can go on criticizing the empire which has been feeding and conferring status on him.

**The Text: *Burmese Days***

The novel uses the story of an imperial timber merchant John Flory's unrequited love for a France-raised girl Elizabeth Lackersteen, and his failure on that account which eventually causes his death as his one-time Burmese mistress Ma Hla May slanders him publicly in the church. Numerous descriptions of the Burmese people, their culture, the hatred the natives have for the British, the British fear and hatred in turn toward the Burmese, Flory's friendship with Dr. Veraswami and the problems that brings to both, the cunning plot of the native magistrate U PO Kyin, Flory's keeping of a Burmese girl who brings about his ruin, the heat in the jungles, and many more Burmese things make the novel an exotic read for any reader, oriental or occidental.

The plot of the novel follows the conflict between U Po Kyin and Flory's friend Dr. Veriswami who would be admitted as the first and only native member of the European Club. Flory's attempts to avoid conflict with the code of the pukka sahib vie with his desire to behave decently towards his friend in an atmosphere "in which suspicion counts for more than proof, and reputation for more than a thousand witnesses" ( 7 ). This is social metaphysics in full flood: the opinions of others count more than the facts of reality. But such utterances finally threaten the authenticity of the very novel by



raising the question whether it is not, like so many literary products by the westerners, marred by what is now known as the viral infection of Orientalism.

John Flory is a timber merchant with a facial birthmark that promotes the left-learning behavior of the mind which makes him different from his companions. The character of Flory, who despises the racist hypocrisy of his fellow expatriates yet is too weak to do anything, is full of contradictions and ultimately these contribute to his tragic downfall. He doesn't always possess the moral courage to stand up for himself. For example, Mr. Flory's character was unique in every aspect imaginable; by the way he tries to help Dr. Veraswami's get elected in the club. He was not always positive, but dared to support the doctor. Malcolm Muggeridge finds autobiographical elements in the novel. Orwell did never quite accept nor could he totally despise the Englishman's morality, and this duality is amply present in the novel too. Emphasizing the dual streak in Orwell the writer, Muggeridge comments:

The two strains are clearly marked in *Burmese Days*. Orwell savagely attacks the shoddy way of life of the English in Burma, their fatuous insistence on their innate superiority to the "natives," their arid isolation as sahibs in a land which they govern but never bother to understand. At the same time, he himself adopts many of the sahibs' characteristics assumptions. Thus, missionaries are contemptible, Eurasians pitiable; the doctor, Veraswami, speaks and writes Babu English, and is altogether absurd in his fawning admiration of his sahib overlords; while the sahibs, with all their faults and deficiencies, prove courageous in the face of a rioting Burmese mob and go about their duties conscientiously. The only

poltroon among them, significantly enough, has a foreign sounding name:

Lackersteen. (xii)

The novel, in respect to Flory's aloofness and introvert character, raises the question: is the failure to socialize extended to the natives? His Anglophile friend, Dr. Veraswami, the highest-ranking native official, seems to be a sure win for Club membership, until Machiavellian magistrate U Po Kyin creates a campaign to discredit him. To support Veraswami or to cross him becomes a kind of litmus test for Flory's character. U Po Kyin, villain who tormented everyone, a man without any sympathy, a man who was known to be notorious throughout the town. Most of the turmoil, which occurred during the book, can be traced back to U Po Kyin's doings. The addition of U Po Kyin adds to the book's mysterious and exotic aspects. And this provides yet another ground to raise the suspicion whether the novel is not bent on exposing the 'other' as less than human and more than sycophant, as the case of Dr. Veraswami refers to.

In *Burmese Days* the world depicted is all too real. Flory tries to change himself, he dismisses his Burmese mistress, drinks less, and almost becomes the gentleman he yearns to be. But he does so in an environment where decency is nearly impossible, where his support for Dr. Veraswami gets him called a "nigger's Nancy Boy" and worse, while Elizabeth gladly flings herself at a surly, laconic visiting officer who happens to be the younger son of an aristocrat, dropping Flory the moment a more likely prospect tops the horizon.

John Flory must count as the hero of the novel, deeply flawed though he is. A factor for a teak-wood company, he retreated to Burma in the face of an inability to come to terms with English society. Disfigured by a birthmark on one cheek, which he

perennially tries to keep turned away from the world, and deeply scarred by the complete social rejection this minor blemish produced in the England of his boyhood and youth, he hides in this most distant outpost of the Empire, running a lumber camp and coming into the town of Kyauktada when he can, spending his evenings at the local European Club, “playing bridge and getting three parts drunk” ( 91 ).

Flory is friendly with Dr. Veraswami, a native physician, but the gulf between Europeans and Indians is too large to bridge the gap of Flory’s loneliness. His fellow-Europeans, united by bigotry and paranoia, and divided by the rare decent impulse that passes through one or the other of them now and again, draw him, control him, disgust him. He tries against his better judgment to live the life of the pukka sahib, trying to conform to the social standard of colonial domination, treating the beliefs of those around him as if they had the status of metaphysical truths, as if they determined reality. To do this, of course, requires him to give up his mind, but he cannot do so, and he is set at odds with his fellow Europeans.

The tension is heightened by the arrival of Elizabeth Lackersteen, the eminently marriageable niece of another European couple in Kyauktada. She is utterly unsuited to a man of Flory’s temperament and interests, but in Flory’s blinded eyes she was the paragon of European beauty and sensibility:

Her presence had changed the whole orbit of his life. She had brought back to him the air of England – dear England, where thought is free and one is not condemned to forever dance the—danse du pukka sahib—for the edification of the lower races. Where is the life that late I led? He

thought. Just by existing she had made it possible for him, she had even made it natural to him, to act decently. (137)

Thus the novel dramatizes the life experiences of a colonial servant who ultimately fails on both accounts: he can neither upkeep his relation with his compatriots nor with the non-Europeans. A pathetic tale of failure and futility, *Burmese Days* is moving in personalizing the pangs of life an individual is likely to face as a consequence of her/his deviation from the established practices, from the norms of “pukka sahibdom”, as it is named in the novel.

Orwell is a writer whom no critic interested in reading about legacies of the British Empire can comfortably ignore. Many critics have tried to interpret Orwell’s stand regarding his personal position as a servant of the Empire whose downfall he had predicted years ago and yet who felt British imperialism was better than other imperialisms. He is the same man who has to poke at the hypocrisy of the British people and yet regards them as capable of manner and valor. Such contradictory attitudes in him make Orwell an interesting literary figure to focus one’s critical gaze on. But more important is the position taken by his novels regarding the issue of imperialism. Produced below are some of the relevant criticisms by diverse critics on Orwell in terms of his intellectual honesty, dilemma and his sense of responsibility and justice.

About the strengths and weakness of Orwell as a novelist, critic Timothy Garton-Ash comments that Orwell is more of a journalist than a creative writer. To his own words:

His weakness as novelist is that he is just not sufficiently endowed with the transforming power of the creative imagination. You can say of any

of his novels what he later wrote to a correspondent about *Burmese Days*:  
 “Much of it is simply reporting of what I have seen.” Half his fiction is  
 little more than dressed up reportage. His weakness as a journalist, a less  
 serious one but still a weakness, is his penchant for ill-founded, sweeping,  
 violent overstatement... (Garton-Ash)

Nancy R. Ives summarizes and comments on *Burmese Days* thus:

He wrote *Burmese Days* from firsthand experience with the British who  
 controlled Burma. The British exercise iron-clad control over their  
 subjects and have few positive attributes. They treat the natives with a  
 cruelty that is hard to comprehend from today’s multicultural perspective.  
 Yet *Burmese Days* is not a period piece. The plot, featuring a corrupt  
 native’s attempt to gain membership in a British club, is concerned with  
 universal human traits not bound to a particular time or place. Orwell is a  
 master at telling stories with a bitter, satiric tone... (Ives)

The editors of “Time” also see Orwell’s novel as the product of his personal experience  
 and feelings:

Obviously, a man as suffused as Orwell was with kindness and ordinary  
 decency had chosen the wrong job. Just as obviously, as a writer, he was  
 bound to write *Burmese Days*. Quite apart from its reflection of Orwell’s  
 personal distaste for imperialism, the book is one of the very few novels  
 that portend the doom of the British Empire. And as a good novel should,  
 it does so, on the basis of the behaviour of fairly ordinary people rather

than in terms of governmental policies and world tensions. (Editors' note to the novel, viii)

Thus the critics cited above have accentuated on the aspect of the writer's critical stance regarding the British Empire. Orwell writes when and if he feels like writing: writing for him is an obligation of being a conscientious person, not a means of gaining fame or earning livelihood. That means, he writes after he has the urge to write. This revelation should tell us why he is so engaging even years after the political scenario of the world has so much changed. Also, he is aware of the danger of all sorts of despotism whatever form they may take, as his novels *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Animal Farm* forewarn of a world ruled by despots and tyrants.

### **Limitation, Scope and Significance of the Study**

The work will make an exhaustive study of the text that is the novel *Burmese Days*. Some other relevant texts by the same author, and also by other authors such as Rudyard Kipling and Edward Morgan Forster will be studied. As regards the theoretical tools with which to analyze the text, the theories postcolonialism, hybridity and globalization, and individual identity will be discussed at some detail in the second chapter.

As a conceptual tool, postcolonialism is an awareness of the reader of any part of the globe in general. But its historical connection goes back to the disruptive and rebellious consciousness of the inhabitants of the colonized part people. Postcolonialism is primarily a method of re-reading texts colonial. The prefix 'post' demands some clarification here, for it can mean either the time frame after colonialism or the difference from colonial practices.

Some view postcolonialism as the era that comes after the colonialism that is after the formal end of the colonial rule of the European powers over the rest of the world. This way of defining the term emphasizes the temporal dimension but fails to take into account the critical aspect of postcolonialism. A text, the second position maintains, is postcolonial to the extent it differentiates itself from the colonial texts that speciously try to justify the project of colonization. Seen thus, even a text produced in colonial period can become postcolonial on the basis of its critical awareness that is pejorative of the inhuman political practice of colonialism which divested millions of people of their right to rule themselves, thereby rendering them, as Frantz Fanon so famously puts it, the 'wretched of the earth'.

The next critical concept used in the exploration of the text will be the concept of hybridity. Originally a term from botany which meant the grafting of a plant into another plant from a different species, hybridity now has come to signify a cross-cultural space in which people turn more and more free of the idea of preserving their native or original identity and see themselves as members of a larger human society. The meeting and conversation of different cultural and geographical modes of life lead to a hybrid space. The practice of colonialism brought the ruler and the ruled at the same geographical space. Thus, colonialism can be seen as a step toward globalization, and consequently toward hybridity too. The novel *Burmese days* being about the story of a colonial agent in Burma where he feels simultaneously drawn to and repelled by the native people, it is interesting to see to what extent the effort of John Flory the protagonist is a success or a failure in his adjustment with the local space.

As this thesis adopts the postcolonial insight as a tool to study the novel, the concept of orientalism will be discussed at some length in the next chapter. This necessarily means a reference to the landmark text *Orientalism* by Edward W. Said. As for the question of how John Flory tries to keep himself apart from his fellow colonial agents, the issue of individual identity and mass identity will be raised and discussed. Further, it also will be clarified how Flory, despite his efforts to stand at an in-between space balancing his identity as an English personnel and a critic of English vices, ultimately emerges out more as a colonial officer than as a neutral person. This paper will try to analyze the novel from a postcolonial perspective based chiefly on the notion that a text creates a reality or world of its own and tries to impose that world upon the real world. But the inclination of the text itself is already dictated by the position of the writer, their political allegiance and loyalty. The slant of the writers due to their political, cultural, and geographical engagement with a particular field inevitably influences the outlook of their writings.

This thesis will illuminate on some of the still unexplored issues such as the historical relationship between colonialism and globalization, globalization and hybridity, and the postcolonial study of the text which itself appears postcolonial as far as its critique of colonialism is concerned. Significantly, this paper will try to expose the duality that characterizes any European when s/he is writing about a non-European people: the relationship of love and hate, of sympathy and fear. Orwell is by now acknowledged as the most influential among the writers who had political concern, who wanted to make their political writing into arts. But, what is the political affiliation of their writings about? Are they supporting the establishment, whether it be the colonial or



the local one but complicit with the colonial, or are they giving voice to the suppressed millions? Have they maintained a fairly balanced perspective in their treatment of foreign people and cultures? This issue becomes a touchstone in judging the neutrality and fairness, and therefore the universally appealing merit of any work of art.

Of our interest here will become the exploration as to how, despite his anti-imperial attitude, the writer is not so sincerely interested in treating the non-European characters with due sympathy. This has a link with the assumption of this thesis that however good their intentions, the British, whether they be writers or colonial crews, cannot be completely well-disposed toward the non-British people. To explore this issue, my thesis will take the help of the critical theory of postcolonialism for reading a text which supposedly is anti-colonial but is really colonial at its heart. In this process, a summary overview of the theories of globalization and hybridity will be mentioned.

## Chapter II: Orientalism: The Politics of Narration

Since this thesis studies the novel *Burmese Days* from a postcolonial standpoint, it is relevant here to briefly touch upon the issue of colonial writing as dedicated to valorizing the western culture and values while dehumanizing the non-western ones. In this context, the novel can be meaningfully analyzed in terms of its complicity with the bulk of colonial discourse about the east, now well known as orientalism. Orientalism, as Edward Said writes in his book of the same title, is primarily a way of describing the East, the cultural other and contestant of the West, from the westerners' viewpoint. This chapter therefore examines how *Burmese Days*, as it is about an eastern geographical space and people, can be designated as a colonial or orientalist novel.

### **Orientalism: Colonial Discourse**

Discourse is a unit of language, whether spoken, written or gesticulated. It also means a long writing or a dissertation on a subject. These notions of discourse in general and also in linguistic parlance were drastically reformulated and given a new import only recently by the French poststructuralist theorist/thinker Michael Foucault (1926-84). The Foucauldian concept of discourse has nothing to do with the traditional theory of discourse. For him, it is a system of statements which makes the world (material reality) known to us. Discourse informs us of the state of affairs, so it is informative or mis-informative. Discourse also tells us of the propriety or impropriety, rightness or wrongness, of something and consequently influences our attitude, opinion and behavior. Therefore it is directive too. In his treatises *The order of Discourse* (1971) *The Archeology of Knowledge* (1972) and *Discipline and Punish* (1972) Foucault gave currency to the terms 'discourse practices' and 'discursive formation' by which he meant

the kind of statements associated with particular institutions and their ways of establishing truths or reality in a given society. In every society, as Foucault writes in *History of Sexuality*:

The production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by certain numbers of procedures whose role is to ward off its dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality. (48)

It would be illuminating to cite what Marx and Engels argue about how the ruling class propagates its interest as the interest of all. To quote them, it is compelled 'to present its interest as the common interest of all members of society, that is, expressed in an ideal form of universality, to present them as the only rational, universally valid ones' (Marx & Engels, Quoted in Guha, 1992).

Discourse is seen as present and operative every where, in any field of human activity, interaction, and knowledge—or mis-knowledge, for that matter—formation. As we have the notorious example of the theory of the Nazi propagandist doctor Joseph Goyabals, even falsities come to occupy the position of truth by the mere virtue of repetition. This unmistakably indicates: truth is nothing in itself; it does not exist outside human interest. What we call truth is an effect of language; it is a discursive formation, a truth-effect produced, sustained, and propagated by language.

Discourse theory is greatly shaped by the Whorfian notion of language. As Benjamin Lee Whorf so famously puts, "we dissect nature along lines laid down by our language"(3) What he is saying is that our understanding of the world is helped, obstructed, or affected by our language, the range of vocabulary we have. The modern

theory of language as ‘constitutive’ also underlines this creative and distorting power of language. The world is not simply there; it is brought into existence by language (which, by extension, is discourse here in our context).

As Foucault writes in *History of Sexuality*, “Indeed, it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together” (100). To see how statements can generate realities or at least truth effects which ultimately get metamorphosed into a tradition of knowledge, let’s cite a statement. Expressing his views—slighting ones, of course—Thomas Babington Macaulay wrote in his (now notoriously) famous minute of 1835 on Indian education:

I have no knowledge of either Sanskrit or Arabic. But I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their value. I have read translations of the most celebrated Arabic and Sanskrit works. I have conversed, both here and at home, with men distinguished by their proficiency in the eastern tongues. I am quite ready to take the oriental learning at the valuations of the Orientalists themselves. I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European Library was worth the whole native Literature of India and Arabia. The intrinsic superiority of the western literature is indeed fully admitted by these members of the committee who support the Oriental plan of education.... It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that all the historical information which has been collected in the Sanskrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the paltry abridgements used at preparatory schools in England. (quoted in Said, p12)

Speaking as recently as 1945 at the University of Chicago, delivering his Haskell Lectures on “Modern Trends in Islam”, H. A. R. Gibb opened his speech with the following comment, emphasizing the point how the Arab mind is intrinsically opposed to, alien to, and abhorrent to rationality and clear thinking:

The student of Arabic civilization is constantly brought up against the striking contrast between the imaginative power displayed, for example, in certain branches of Arabic literature and the literalism, the pedantry, displayed in reasoning and exposition, even when it is devoted to these same productions. It is true that there have been great philosophers among the Muslim peoples and that some of them were Arabs, but they were rare exceptions. The Arab mind, whether in relation to the outer world or in relation to the processes of thought, cannot throw off its intense feeling for the separateness and the individuality of the concrete events. This is, I believe, one of the main factors lying behind that ‘lack of a sense of law’ which Professor Macdonald regarded as the characteristic difference in the Oriental.

It is this, too, which explains-what is so difficult for the western student to grasp until it is explained to him by the orientalist—the aversion of the Muslims from the thought-process of rationalism.... The rejection of rationalist modes of thought and of the utilitarian ethic which is inseparable from them has its roots, therefore, not in the so-called ‘obscurantism’ of the Muslim theologians but in the atomism amid discreteness of the Arab imagination. (qtd. in Said 438)

In his classic text *Orientalism*, which traces origin and development of the discursive practice of describing the east from the westerners' viewpoint, Said cites Anwar Abdel Malek who has aptly pointed out how the orient has been orientalized by the orientalist;

The Orient and Oriental (are considered by Orientalism) as an 'object' of study stamped with an otherness as all that is different, whether be it 'subject' or 'object' - but of constitutive otherness of an essentialist character....This object of study will be...passive, nonparticipating endowed with a 'historical' subjectivity above all, non active, non-autonomous, non-sovereign with regard to itself.... (qtd. in Said 298).

As this reference to Malek clarifies, the discourse of orientalism divests the easterners of all humanity: they lack the volition to express themselves, they cannot understand the world and themselves, therefore they are to be described by somebody else. Such a concept, in effect, treats the Orientals as mere objects, objects of study. The subject, of course, is the west armed with rationality and intellect.

Discourse, as we have seen, creates truths, negates the existing ones, or modifies them as and when it befits the interest of the dominant stakeholder in the power-politics of the times of its production and circulation. Herein lies the power and importance of discourse. It can easily mislead the people under its reach into believing as true what in reality may be a whopper; or, conversely, it may effectively falsify what is true. Creating concrete realities out of imagination or deliberate and purposeful manipulation of language and information has always been at the heart of the task of discourse. The colonialist or the Eurocentric discourse—Eurocentric, for all the colonial powers were

from Europe—which Edward Said designates as ‘Orientalism’ in his book of the same title, has always tried to create an inferior image of the Orient or the East in comparison to that of the west. A brief concept of orientalism along with its history and function is therefore due here.

One of the definitions of orientalism provided by Said maintains that it is a “western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the orient”(3).For Said, orientalism is a style of thought, a corporate project, a system of texts—of history, sociology, anthropology—that differentiates between the West(us) and the Orient (them). It was not an act of imaginative significance only; it had (and still has) an immense political significance for, as Said contends “European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self”(3). This said, Said also makes it clear that orientalism is not just a pack of lies or fantasies. Had it been so, it would not have endured from the ancient times town to the present. What accounts for the durability of orientalism is the fact that there has been a “considerable material investment” in the theory and practice of orientalism which has now been consolidated as knowledge. Moreover, Said’s division of orientalism into latent and manifest makes it clear how this knowledge has been absorbed even into the unconscious or deeper psychic level. Without being conscious that we are upholding the western superiority over the eastern barbarity, even we, the Orientals, will be doing so—this all because of the constant imbibing of the orientalist notions. The same is its effect on the western mind. Consequently, even people with a wide and informed state of intellect can hardly escape from being somehow indoctrinated into the divisive politics of orientalism. Some sort of fear, grudge or distrust is always present in the westerners’

psyche though they may not have come across any such experience of treachery or savagery at the hands of the Orientals.

Orientalism has always been a distinction between the west and the rest (which is the east, mostly). The ontological difference is based on their geographical location: the orient lying to the east of the west, and the west lying to the west of the east. This ontological difference then leads to an epistemological difference whereby the orient becomes the object of knowledge—it is to be understood, captured, and dominated while the knower and the controller is the west, occupying the subject position. Seen thus, the relations between the east and the west are "a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony"(5). The Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci first used the term hegemony to mean "rule by consent". Now, it is not only the orientaslists or the westerners who are informed by the oreientalist (mis)knowledge; it is the easterners too who uncritically accept as true whatever is consigned the status of truth by the discourse of orientalaism. The Orientals or easterners feel proud in following western style of thought, language, literature–lifestyle, in short—because they feel that in doing so their status their own society is uplifted. Orientalism then is a sort of hegemony: the Orientals agree to follow as superior the ways of the westerners, thereby hoping to appear more civilized than their own kinds who are not so receptive of the western influences.

The detrimental impact of orientalism in the psyche of both the easterners and westerners is massive. What is really irritating is the fact that now, more acutely than ever before owing to quick and exaggerating machinery of information technology, news and information bits are pre-selected and annotated so as to suit the material or cultural interest of those involved in circulating the information. This premeditated dissemination



of information prepares a mass ready to accept as the given and true what they are accustomed to being fed as the same. The centuries of literary and political representations of the east as incapable of rationality, logic and restraint have actually gone bone deep in acquiring the consent of the so designated people. One wonders if Said was not aware of what the notoriously outspoken Indian intellectual Nirad C. Chaudhary had written long ago in his *An Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*. Chaudhary maintains that the Europeans degenerated after their arrival in India. Therefore, the Indian Hindus, who are Europeans in fact, should go back to Europe if they want to regain their lost vitality and living spirit.

### **Colonial Text: Postcolonial Gaze**

The justifiability and necessary of the practice of colonialism is always at the heart of colonial discourse, central to which is the assumption that European values—such as rationality, science, civilization, high seriousness of literature—are superior to the values espoused by the non-European peoples. In literature, this takes the form of exaggeration where the unbearability of nonwestern climate (heat and dust of India, the garlic-stinking Burmese, for instance!); presence of fatal insects; and dark, uninhibited or only-beast-inhibited lands are presented as posing threat to the westerners who go there from cool, lenient climates.

Orwell's *Burmese Days* can well be seen as yet another contribution to the bulk of literally texts that portray the non-European or non-western land as hostile to the civilized, artistic sensibility. The filthy and squalid cities, the mud-smearred and stinking Burmese become the synecdoche of the whole Indian subcontinent, corrupt and inclement to the refined people from the land of prosperity, cool and calm. The overmuch emphasis

on the fact that the Burmese are different from the Europeans; that they smack of garlic and sweat; that their physical features are incomparable to their rulers—all this compels one to wonder Orwell the novelist has got the better of Orwell the racist, the Eurocentric. For he never ever questions how odd the lifeless white complexion of the Europeans should appear to the non-Europeans; he always looks at things from the perspective of the colonizers, not from the standpoint of the colonized, the subject races.

As mentioned in the earlier sections, colonial discourse rests upon a dichotomy: the West versus the East. The West (us) is always possessed of all the human virtues that are extolled universally, whereas the colonized (them) is irrational and uncivilized. Hence, the colonizers had to take up their burden to civilize the other. They had to go to the colonial outposts to teach the natives the decent way of life, of government of religion. And in doing so, the colonizer had to become rude even, at times. Of course, colonial discourse never ever questions the motives behind colonial expansion: to gain control over the global market. Was it really to civilize the backward people living in the non-western-lands? The fact is that their resources—both human and natural—were exploited to the extent irrevocable by the colonizing powers is never mentioned in colonial literature or any other forms of discourse. The civilizing mission of the Europeans is unquestionably at the focal point of all the texts produced by the westerners, especially the British ones.

Postcolonial criticism, licensed with the awareness of the insights imparted by the cultural discourse suspicion on the part of colonized people, seeks to undermine imperial subjects and themes. It has forcefully produced parallel discourses which have questioned and even subverted the since long cherished stereotypes and myths about the other. By

this, westerners have become, as Said puts it, “aware that what they have to say about the history and the cultures of 'subordinate' people is challengeable by the people themselves who a few years back were aptly incorporated, culture, and, history and all into the great western empires and their disciplinary discourses' (Culture 195). What is being said here is that the power and authority of western colonial representations have been questioned and challenged by the discourses produced by the supposed-to-be-subordinate people. These postcolonial writers and critics have turned the table and presented the colonial history from the perspective of colonized people’s experience. By doing this, they revealed what the colonial authority had done to them in the name of progress, science and civilization. As a result, westerners, for the first time, according to Said, “have been required to confront themselves not simply as representatives of a culture and even of races accused of crimes—crimes of violence, crimes of suppression" and 'crime of violence'(Culture 195). Such a subversion of and onset on colonial perspective by the postcolonial critics like Said and Fanon, has given birth to many other postcolonial critics.

Frantz Fanon, one of the eminent postcolonial writers and critics, seems to be more radical on this issue. As Said in his *Culture and Imperialism* writes, Fanon “reverses the hitherto accepted paradigm by which Europe gave the colonies their modernity and argues instead that only we are 'the well being and the progress Europe built up with the sweat and the dead bodies of Negros, Arabs, Indians and the yellow races' but Europe is literally the creation of the third world'(197). Elleke Boehmer, too, in *Colonial and Postcolonial Literatures* writes on Fanon that, “In his book *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon called for the entire structure of colonial society to be changed from the

bottom up violently. For him, to decolonize meant that the indigenous be forcefully substituted for the alien, in literature as in life....” That means, “the colonized had to ‘insult’ and ‘vomit up’ the white man’s values” (183).

The adjective 'postcolonial' is more useful as an awakened state of consciousness of the colonized people rather than as a strict periodization. Thus, a text written in the then historical colonial time can be called postcolonial in so far as it goes against the prevalent colonial discursive practices of demeaning and dehumanizing the colonized subject. Here, if a text opposes the inhuman practices of colonialism; if it exposes its vices and dangers; it is postcolonial. The term has also been used in its hyphenated forms (post-colonial, post-colonialism etc.) to stress the time frames and practices that came after colonialism. In any event, it is a disputation of the legacies of colonialism though the presence of the prefix ‘post’ presupposes the perpetuation of colonialism, or its effects, right into the present era.

To understand the significance and need of postcolonial criticism in its full import, one may refer to Chinua Achebe’s much debated, appreciated and talked of essay “Colonialist Criticism”(1975). As Achebe has fairly successfully shown in this provocative analysis, what the West/Europe conceives and celebrates as universal is merely European and nothing more, and therefore quite unacceptable to other cultures:

Does it ever occur to these universalists to try out their game of changing names of characters and places in an American novel, say, a Philip Roth or an Updike, and slotting in African names just to see how it works? But of course it would not occur to them. It would never occur to them. It would never occur to them to doubt the universality of their own literature.

In the nature of things the work of Western writer is automatically informed by universality. It is only others who must strain to achieve it. So-and-so's work is universal; he has truly arrived! As though Universality were some distant bend in the road which you may take it if you travel out far enough in the direction of Europe or America, if you put adequate distance between yourself and your home. I should like to see the word "universal" banned altogether from discussions of African literature until such a time as people cease to use it as a synonym for the narrow, self-serving parochialism of Europe, until their horizon extends to include the entire world. (1193-94)

What Achebe is saying here is that the Europeans have the misguided notion that whatever they write is already informed by universalism because theirs is the only universal civilization. Others have to learn to be universal, and the measuring rod to ascertain whether or not they are universal is to place them in the European setting. A postcolonial reading of the texts colonial—whether they be written in the colonial era or merely in the colonial tradition—defies such Euro-centric arrogance and subverts all such colonial institutions which propagate such ideologies. What was formerly seen and lauded as classic now becomes merely Eurocentric and ethnocentric; whatever was valorized as having been informed of universalism is now brought to its real status as parochial and blinded by the supremacist illusion of European racism.

A typical postcolonial critique of our text *Burmese Days* would maintain that the novel is somewhat hostile to the native people and their way of life to be able to represent

the Burmese reality. Postcolonial reading seeks to locate and question the warrantability of such western distrust or hatred of the native culture.

### **Hybridity and Globalization**

Since the hypothesis of this thesis maintains that the novel recounts the attempts of reconciliation between the east and the west, it is necessary to show how the two worlds come together in the first place. Postcolonial studies precede globalization studies, and cover a wider range of issues too. Postcolonialism is supported by nationalism, as it defies the outsiders' invasion on the strength of nationalism. But globalization, in its contemporary manifestations, it seems, is a product of the west's desire to dominate the rest with newer pretexts of open borders, market economy and cultural hegemony. One irony, as Benedict Anderson points out, is that the nation-state is based on a European, colonial model, and the very nation-state in the colonized part of the globe became a weapon to fight back the colonial aggression. The Indian Marxist postcolonial critic Aijaz Ahmed, categorizing nationalism into progressive and regressive, also recognizes the nationalism as a weapon with which to defy the colonial domination.

The colonial expansion that took place in the wake of the industrial revolution in the eighteenth century Europe also created a space for the encounter between the west and the rest. The European power houses, chief among them Britain, tried, as Karl Mark aptly described, to nestle "everywhere, settle everywhere" as they needed consumers for their products in overabundance. In this sense, globalization is seen as a follow-up process of colonialism. And in turn globalization made hybridity a growing possibility as by the two worlds, the west and the east came into contact.

As stated above, globalization as a worldwide phenomenon was prompted by colonialism. Now we come across a fundamental contradiction: Colonialism was boosted by the nationalism of the European countries in the nineteenth. But globalization is beyond and antithetical to nationalism. If so, one may raise the question, how did colonialism help globalization and hybridity? Certainly, the paradox globalization is that it first developed in connection with the expansion of the nation-state. The nation-state, over-productive and aggressive, demanded newer territories. Hence, the rise of colonial expansion. But the same globalization then started rupturing the concept of nationalism; national borders were seen as barriers in the process of creating free markets for the European products. Thus the history of globalization is inextricably connected to the history of postcolonialism.

Talking about the paradoxes of globalization and its complex relation with nation state, Marwan M. Kraidy writes that postcolonial studies precede globalization studies:

There has to be a more complicated , nuanced, and carefully thought-through position on the relationship between postcolonialism and globalization than the polar one suggested by Loomba, that is, between postcolonialism and forms of cultural hybridity or cultural experimentation and transformation as the evil effects of globalization, and the position that unthinkingly celebrates hybridity and multiculturalism as paths to liberation from the paralyzing effects of cultural fundamentalism wherever they may be. The first position makes a fetish of purity and stasis, ignoring the fact that cultures all over the world have always evolved syncretically in the context of complicated

interactions with one another, and it plays down to the extent to which people subject to contemporary Western cultural forms translate and appropriate them in complex ways. The second position runs the risk of making a fetish of syncretism and hybridity for its own sake, as if culture only liberates when it renounces rigid traditions and embraces syncretism and change. It can represent too enthusiastic an embrace of globalization without a recognition of the price it exacts over the globe. (Kraidy)

Hybridity has always been a continual process in the world. The only difference between this process of intermingling and adaptation is that in the past the process was rather slow and local owing to the way of life then limited to slow speed limit. But in the modern times, unprecedented advancement in transport and communication has made it possible for people from all the corners of the globe to come into contact at any moment and place. The novel *Burmese Days* is a case of the world slowly moving toward globalization though the success of this process is suspect. The natives, save the few ones such as the doctor and the magistrate, are not ready to accept the rule of the British, and the British are not ready to accept the non-Europeans as their equals, as the club members' hatred for the doctor amply shows. In this context, the novel presents a bleak possibility of reconciliation and understanding between the east and the west. The fault may lie with either side, but it is indisputable that no people can think of growing intimacy with an invader who has made them slaves on their own land. What is required for a true friendship and mutual acceptance is the equal relation between the two, not the relation of the subject and the dominant races.



However, the possibility that there will be a world of hybrid therefore tolerant and peaceful cultures is highly suspect. The coming together person from diverse culture, more often than not, helps to emphasize their differences more than their similarities. This means the process of globalization is not always conducive to a mutual understanding, but rather is a threat wherein differences become conspicuous and endanger the relationship between and among people. This is what Professor Samuel P. Huntington argues in his much debated, highly criticized book *The Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of World Order* (1996). We might be persuaded into believing that the world is becoming a global village, that it is getting a more mixed up and tolerant of the postmodern values of impurities and hybridity. But the reality can be otherwise, Huntington suggests. As he maintains:

In the post-Cold War world, the most important distinctions among peoples are not ideological, political, or economic. They are cultural. People and nations are attempting to answer the most basic questions humans can face: Who are we? And they are answering that question in the traditional way human beings have answered it, by reference to the things that mean most to them. People define themselves in terms of ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs, and institutions. They identify with cultural groups: tribes, ethnic groups, religious communities, nations, and, at the broadest level, civilizations. (21)

If we are to believe in what Huntington says, it is really problematic trying to create a hybrid world in the hope of making it a happy conglomeration of differences.

### **Individual Identity versus Mass Identity**

John Flory must count as the hero of the novel, deeply flawed though he is. A factor for a teak-wood company, he retreats to Burma in the face of an inability to come to terms with English society. Disfigured by a birthmark on one cheek, which he perennially tries to keep turned away from the world, and deeply scarred by the complete social rejection this minor blemish produced in the England of his boyhood and youth, he hides in this most distant outpost of the Empire, running a lumber camp and coming into the town of Kyauktada when he can, spending his evenings at the local European Club, “playing bridge and getting three parts drunk.” On the top of that, his ‘bolshie’ ideas and frank talks criticizing his fellow beings put him at odds with the empire at large.

People are born and located in a particular geographical and specific historical time. This positions them in a particular society or nation, and confers upon them a special identity as members of that society which is different from others owing to its religious and cultural practices and mode of life. Identity has many facets. Race/ethnicity, religion, social standing, gender, and regional factors are some important aspects of a person’s identity formation. Of these, cultural and political affiliations have always been the central marker of people’s identity. Though it is not to deny that identity is a dynamic process, people rarely change, nor do they desire to change their cultural or religious identity.

Identity can simply be defined as the characteristics, feelings or beliefs of people or a person that distinguish them from others. To be identified, one needs to be different in one or other sense. The key concept in identity formation, then, is difference. We see that one’s identity is established not so much by one’s intrinsic qualities or peculiarities but

by one's distinctness from others. Therefore, it is required of one that one be different from others if one wants to be known differently, to be taken notice of.

Sure enough, if all were identical or even similar in belief, character or feelings, then there would be no concept of identity. But since people over the world vary among them in terms of their political doctrines, religious beliefs and moral convictions, people happen to be different from each other.

One needs a sense of distinctness to assert their existence as somebody. One tries to create this distinctness by doing or prophesying what others generally hesitate from doing. John Flory who is in no way a distinct person: neither in his intellectual capacities nor in his social standing. But he is unhappy with his hypocrite expatriate fellow Europeans, and makes friend of an Indian doctor.

Friendship with the natives, whether Indians or Burmese, is abominable, even unthinkable to the pukka sahibs. But Flory, perhaps with a deliberate intention of irritating his people, grows friendship with Dr. Veraswami, an Indian physician. Moreover, he also proposes the doctor's name for nomination in the European Club and thereby incurs vitriolic criticism from his companions. But he has no fear for that. How much he is wants to be distanced from his compatriots is explicit in his tête-à-têtes with the doctor:

“Ah, doctor,” said Flory, supine in the long chair “what a joy to be here after that bloody Club. When I come to your house I feel like a Nonconformist minister dodging up to town and going home with a tart. Such a glorious holiday from *them*”—he motioned with one heel in the direction of the Club—“from my beloved fellow Empire-builders. British

prestige, the white man's burden, the pukka sahib *sans peur et sans reproche*—you know. Such a relief to be out of the stink of it for a little while.” (31)

While for the rest of the Europeans in the sweltering Burmese village the club is the only place that strengthens them with the sense of unity and being at home, Flory finds it an utterly abominable place. But he is not consistent and confident in his stand, is full of contradictions and ultimately gets ruined by his lack of timely awareness of the plotting of the native magistrate. And he finally gets ruined, having been exposed to shame for his liaison with Ma Hla May.

### **Chapter III: Failure of Mutual Understanding**

This chapter is dedicated to reading and explicating the novel with reference to the basic assumptions outlined in the hypothesis and the first chapter. Divided into three sub-headings one of which is again sub-divided into two topics, this chapter will prove that though Flory the protagonist of the novel tries to make friends with and understand the natives, as evidenced by his relation with Ma Hla May and Dr. Veraswami, the incompatibility of the people from two totally different geographical locations sets heavily, destroying the lives of all the three. The novelist may deliberately have shown this failure, or it may have been a natural effect of the unequal power relation.

#### **An Outsider in Burma: Flory's Ambivalence**

George Orwell's first output as a novelist, *Burmese Days* (1934) is rife with instances of dilemma a westerner is likely to face when coming in contact with the natives. Against the backdrop of the rural Burmese village of Kyauktada, then under the British colonial rule at its height, the novel recounts the story of a timber merchant who, on the one hand is mortally sick of his white colleagues' hypocrisy, but who at the same time, can not accept the native people and environment with their oil and garlic odor, and parching heat respectively. Summarily, the novel is an account of an outsider's good intention for the natives, gone sour owing to the innate irreconcilability of the two parties, in terms of their way of life and outlook. Keeping this basic assumption as a viable exegetics of the text, this paper intends to prove that *Burmese Days* presents two strands of clash. The first one is the confrontation between Englishmen who have dominion over the native Burmese and the colonized natives, and the second is a conflict within Flory's

consciousness because despite being a member of the colonial bureaucracy, he wants to stand apart from his ingroup.

Flory's love-hate relationship with the doctor can be explained with textual evidence. He feels the doctor's house to be a safe haven from the bore that the European Club is for him. As he tells the doctor, lying supine in the long chair, "what a joy to be here after that bloody Club!" (31). He feels secure at the proximity not of his European blokes but at the companionship of the India doctor. But soon this feeling is transformed into an embarrassing one when the issue of the club membership is raised. Flory especially does not want to give the word to the doctor for the latter's election there: it would bring him trouble from Ellis and the likes of him who openly protest the suggestion of inviting any garlic-stinking Indians or Burmese in their closed circle consisting only of Europeans. The next instance of Flory's dilemma toward if he could be of any help in solving the problem which has been vexing his friend for long is to be found in the following observation made by the writer:

For a moment his manner was so troubled that Flory would have liked to ask whether he could not help in some way, but he did not, for he knew the uselessness of interfering in Oriental quarrels. No European ever gets to the bottom of these quarrels, there is always something impervious to the European mind, a conspiracy behind the conspiracy, a plot within the plot. (39)

So, he is not sure enough whether he should or not intervene into the state of affairs that has been vexing his friend, though "the doctor, after all, was his friend, in deed, almost the sole friend he had in Burma" (40).

As the critic Jar writes that he enjoys the novel which has as its author a man of social conscience and a bitter taste for hypocrisy:

The character of Flory who despises the racist hypocrisy of his fellow expats is too weak to anything about it is very well written. Flory is full of contradictions and ultimately these attribute to his tragic downfall. The English “club members” drink and spout racist nonsense while essentially wasting away in a country they really don’t understand. A young military officer appears briefly and causes quite a stir since he is judged “worthy” based on title and appearance though in reality he is a lout. The plot builds slowly and Orwell waves his views on colonialism and racism into the story with great skill. This is a great novel with a social conscience that I thoroughly enjoyed. (Jar)

So, Flory is destroyed by his dilemma. That he is not strong enough to hold his friendship above the bargain gain and loss of his reputation or relationship with his European compatriots is clarified when he cannot or does not oppose to his name being recorded as one among those who “‘...wish to give it as [their] opinion that this is the worst possible moment to consider the election of niggers to this Club,’ etc., etc.”(55). The reason, as the writer comments, was that, “It was easier to insult his friend, knowing that his friend must hear of it” (56).

There are other moments when Flory feels negatively toward Burma. While he is on his way to England in the sea, he daydreams of making a house in England, and of getting rid of the code of pukka sahibdom and the ruinous heat of Burma: “They would be free forever of the small of pukka sahibdom. He would forget Burma, the horrible

country that had come near ruining him” (62). He is happy to be escaping the life in Burma. But as a telegram informs him of the death of many workers in the jungle and the disturbances in the work of the teak wood company, he is called back with the promise of the soonest leave when everything gets normal. He returns with a heavy heart. But as he gets nearer and nearer, he feels an inexplicable closeness for the same place and people he had thought him lucky enough to escape from:

Something turned over in Flory’s heart. It was one of those moments when one becomes conscious of a vast change and deterioration in one’s life. For he had realized, suddenly, that in his heart he was glad to be coming back. This country which he hated was now his native country, his home. He had lived here ten years, and every particle of his body was compounded of Burmese soil. Scenes like these—the sallow evening light, the old Indian cropping grass, the creak of the cartwheels, the streaming egrets—were more native to him than England. He had sent deep roots, perhaps his deepest, into a foreign country. (63)

This is the limit of what can be described as dilemma: for Flory, Burmese landscape has become more native than the English one, though only sometime before he was happy to leave it for ever. And another of authorial comments captures the divided mentality of Flory as regards Burma: “Someone, who would love Burma as he loved it and hate it as he hated it” (63).

Flory more than once faces the dilemma of whether or not he should ‘entangle’ himself in ‘native’ quarrels. And conclude that: “With Indians there must be no loyalty, no real friendship. Affection, even love—yes” (70). The impossibility of friendship of a



European with an Indian is, one may venture to claim, the authorial conviction too. Such an observation challenges the hybridity concept in the novel, consigning it to the rank of the parochial, orientalist texts.

When Elizabeth Lackersteen is with him roaming in the jungle, Flory feels it his duty and decency to comment: “Scrub jungle. Burma’s mostly jungle—a green, unpleasant land, I call it” (72). Not only call, he might have felt that Burma is not an ideal place for him:

“Have I made myself at all clear to you? Have you got some picture of the life we live here? The foreigners, the solitude, the melancholy! Foreign trees, foreign flowers, foreign landscapes, foreign faces. It’s all as alien as a different planet. But do you see—and it’s this that I so want you to understand—do you see, it mightn’t be so bad living on a different planet, it might even be the most interesting thing imaginable, if you had even one person to share it with.” (163)

While he is in the church, listening to the sermons, Flory’s mind is somewhere outside, dreaming about the life with Elizabeth. He even reaches his homeland, to that civilized society where the piano is a symbol of civilization. This reference is worth citing here, for it helps clarify the sense of alienation Flory feels regarding his life in Burma:

When they were married, when they were married! What fun they would have together in this alien yet kindly land! .... Above all the piano! His mind lingered upon the piano—symbol, perhaps because he was unmusical, of civilized and settled life. He was delivered for ever from the

sub-life of the past decade—the debaucheries, the lies, the pain of exile and solitude, the dealings with whores and moneylenders and pukka sahibs. (249)

Flory is never at home in Burma, despite his wishful thinking that he loves it much. In his lonely hours he cannot help feeling alone in the Burmese village:

Alone, alone, the bitterness of being alone! So often like this, in lonely places in the forest, he would come upon something – bird, flower, tree—beautiful beyond all worlds, if there had been a soul with whom to share it. Beauty is meaningless until it is shared. (50)

Really, Flory is all alone in Burma despite his intimacy with Dr. Veraswami, and despite his keeping the Burmese girl Mha La May.

Flory is not at all happy with the doctor for suggesting that the latter's position would be secure in view of the standing he has maintained with the manager of the tick wood company. Having known this Flory had given the words to the doctor that he would propose his name for election in the club. Now at the nip of the hour when he needs only propose the name, Flory is hard put doing the same. The novel reports:

From what Mr. Macgregor had said, it was clear that it was in his power to secure the doctor's election by speaking the word. But oh, what a bore, what a nuisance it was! What an infernal uproar there would be! How he wished he had never given the doctor that promise! No matter, he had given it, and he could not break it. (214)

So, by just proposing the doctor's name, Flory would have done something very important for his friend. But he is not motivated that way; rather he is worried about how

he would be troubled by doing that. Sure enough, he would incur the displeasure of the Europeans. But what is the meaning of his being in good terms with those whom he so much despises? Is his relationship with the doctor not more important for him? Such speculations remain unexplained, thereby rendering Jams Flory one of the most dubious, most dilemmatic of characters created by Orwell.

### **Stereotypical Images of the Orientals**

If not always and if not all the texts by westerners are dedicated to presenting stereotypical images of the other, that is the subject races—the Orientals—then most of the texts somehow portray them in a negative way. *Burmese Days* too is not an exception to this tradition. The non-Europeans, as represented in the orientalist texts, are either too immoral or too submissive; they are either at the one extreme or at the other. They do not know moderation; they do not have any sense of decency and civilization. This type of generalization, excepting rare exceptional cases, is pretty common to the entire gamut of orientalist or colonialist literary works. This section examines how the novel presents the Indian doctor in contrast to the Burmese magistrate U Po Kyin. One is good natured, trusting and fairly a decent person by all standards whereas the other is totally given to a life of utter depravity.

### **U Po Kyin: Native Crookedness**

The novel begins with U Po Kyin's happiness at the prospect of succeeding to the club membership. His rival, the doctor, is favoured by the British for his loyalty, but the doctor's reputation is going to be ruined in no time: U Po Kyin is trying to ruin the doctor by spreading the rumour of sedition against the doctor. He is reported discussing the ways he should slander the doctor:

Now, let us go into this affair from the beginning. We are going to make a concerted attack on Dr. Veraswami, who is Civil Surgeon and Superintendent of the jail. We are going to slander him, destroy his reputation and finally ruin him for ever. (6)

The attack involves slandering the doctor for a seditious article which he did not actually write nor would give his consent to. This is how the plot-master explains to the clerk his strategy for bringing about the downfall of the doctor:

“Nationalism, seditious propaganda. We must persuade the Europeans that the doctor holds disloyal, anti-British opinions. That is far worse than bribery; they expect a native official to take bribes. But let them suspect his loyalty even for a moment, and he is ruined.” (7)

This intrigue explores the human capacity for falsehood and hypocrisy as evidenced in the Burmese magistrate.

Later on, the same magistrate sends an anonymous letter, purporting to have been sent by a well-wisher, and a friend who cannot help warning his friends about the plots of the native people:

Sir, —I the undersigned beg to suggest and WARN, to your .....  
Great friendship and intimacy with Dr. Veraswami, the .....  
Dr. Veraswami is NOT A GOOD MAN and in no ways a worthy friend of  
European gentleman. The doctor is eminently dishonest, disloyal and  
corrupt public servant. ....  
ESCHEW same Dr. Veraswami and .....

A FRIEND (69)

The letter does all that is possible to poison the mind of Flory towards his friend. None other than U Po Kyin could have contrived such a masterful writing to create clouds of distrust between friends. But as Flory has already been warned, the intention of the letter writer remains unfulfilled.

U Po Kyin's understanding of human nature, the power of superior arms and wealth is indeed subtle. Even as a child he had perfectly understood the invincibility of the British power and had decided to align himself with them. The novelist makes this insightful comment upon his character's parasitical and obsequies nature with reference to how he had already decided to take sides with the power wielders: "To fight on the side of the British, to become a parasite upon them, had been his ruling ambition, even as a child" (2). The Burmese fellow is indeed shameless, cunning, and devoid of any sense of patriotism and dignity. He would lick the boots of his superiors to ingratiate them; he would betray his fellows and would stab them from the back, as the case of the rebellion at the village shows. The fake rebellion proved more successful than he had hoped it to be. He explains the same to his wife thus:

"I could not have arranged it better myself. The one thing I needed to make them take my rebellion seriously was a little bloodshed. The one thing I needed to make them take my rebellion seriously was a little bloodshed. And here it is! I tell you, Ma Kin, every day I grow more certain that some higher power is working on my behalf." (218 )

His villainy is so formidable that even his wife cannot accept as morally acceptable what he has devised and executed. She is a simple village woman with a god-fearing heart and a deep sense of morality. She is shocked of the villainy of her husband whose welfare not

only in this life but also in the hereafter is her concern. The sin he has committed sets heavily upon her heart. This conversation between them clarifies how worried she is about his wicked deeds and how carefree he is about it all:

“Ko Po Kyin, truly you are without shame! I do not know how you dare to say such things. Do you not shudder to have murder upon your soul?”

“What! I? Murder upon my soul? What are you talking about? I have never killed so much as a chicken in my life.” (218)

He might not have killed a chicken in his life, but the depraved nature he has got within him is much worse than any tendency for physical violence.

#### **Dr. Veraswami: Oriental Inferiority and Obsequiousness**

Dr. Veraswami is ludicrously appreciative of everything English. His love for English things can justifiably be called anglophilia. He cannot hear even a slight criticism of the English people and their culture. And thinks his friendship with Flory brings him prestige and power.

When Flory comes to him jocularly asking for his permission to enter his house, the doctor is more than jubilant to have an Englishman tread his yard:

“If you may come up! Of course, of course, come up this instant! Ah, Mr. Flory, how very delightful to see you! Come up, come p. What drink will you have? I have whisky, beer, vermouth and other European liquors. Ah, my dear friend, how I have been pining for some cultured conversation!”(30)

He finds it a privilege that he has at least a European with whom to have a cultured conversation. The European may or may not be cultured, but to Veraswami the

anglomaniac every European is inherently cultured and noble. The writer makes an apt comment on his character thus, “The doctor, a great reader, liked his books to have what he called a ‘moral meaning’” (31). He cannot see the vain, supremacist and, exploitative and brutal aspects in the character of the Englishmen. That is why when Flory expresses relief at getting away from the club, the doctor vehemently opposes him. Here follows the illuminating dialogue between them:

“British prestige, the white man’s burden, the pukka sahib *sans peur et sans reproche*— you know. Such a relief to be out of the stink of it for a little while.”

“My friend, my friend, now come, come, please! That iss outrageous. You must not say such things of honourable English gentlemen!” (31)

So, it is shocking for the doctor to hear an Englishman speak disparagingly of his own people. He goes on explaining how the superiority of the English is indisputable:

But, my friend, what you do not see iss that your civilization at its very worst iss for us and an advance. Gramophones, billycock hats, the *News of the World*—all iss better than the horrible sloth of the Oriental. I see the British, even the least inspired of them, ass—ass—” the doctor searched for a phrase, and found one that probably came from Stevenson—“ass torchbearers upon the path of progress.” (36)

This is the furthest limit of how stooping a member of the subjugated race can become as regards his respect for the conquering race. The worst in the English is better than the best in the Indians. How disgusting a low opinion of oneself! May be the novelist, being a

member of the civilization being overrated, feels satisfaction in depicting his Indian character thus.

Dr. Veraswami's penchant for the English people can be explained better in respect to his precarious plight in a Burmese village where the magistrate is his rival in gaining British favour. The doctor needs a strong support to shield himself from the ingenious intrigues of U Po Kyin. And he perfectly knows his membership in the European Club ensures his prestige forever. He, therefore, wants to acquire the club membership while Flory wants to evade the club altogether. He explains how his affiliation with the club renders him invulnerable to the many plots of U Po Kyin:

“My friend, in these matters prestige iss everything. It iss not that U Po Kyin will attack me openly; he would never do dare; it iss that he will libel me and backbite me. And whether he iss believed or not depends entirely upon my standing with the Europeans. It iss so that things happen in India. If our prestige iss good, we rise; if bad we fall. A nod and a wink will accomplish more than a thousand official reports. And you do not know what prestige it gives to an Indian to be a member of the European Club. In the Club, practically he iss a European. No calumny can touch him. A Club member iss sacrosanct.” (40)

It seems as if the club membership is everything that a non-European can aspire for in their life. The doctor's love and veneration for the English language, people and civilization is more than inexplicable; it is really disgusting.



### **Gesture Only: A Tale of Failed Attempt at Reconciliation**

Written by an Englishman, *Burmese Days* is the only novel that has ever made its setting the backward Burmese village of Kyauktada. The novel recounts, in the main, the story of an English timber merchant, Flory; his tragic affair with Elizabeth, a Paris-raised English girl; an Anglophile Indian doctor Dr. Veraswami; and U Po Kin, a plotting Burman Subdivisional Magistrate of Kyauktada. Owing to the rash act of committing suicide by Flory; the suspicious yet gullible nature of the whites, and the devilish strategies of the corrupt Burmese Magistrate, the possibility of communication and understanding between the natives (represented by the doctor) and the colonizers becomes too slender to be materialize. Thus, though Flory has started his own way of reconciliation between the Europeans and natives, it disastrously ruined.

Flory is at times more attracted toward the Indians and the Burmese. He even determines to propose the name of his Anglophile friend, Dr. Veraswami, the highest-ranking native official, seems to be a sure win for Club membership, until Machiavellian magistrate U Po Kyin creates a campaign to discredit him. To support Veraswami or to cross him becomes a kind of litmus test for Flory's character. U Po Kyin, villain who tormented everyone, a man without any sympathy, a man who was known to be notorious throughout the town. Most of the turmoil, which occurred during the book, can be traced back to U Po Kyin doings. The addition of U Po Kyin makes the book mysterious and full of mayhem. The presence of this very character in the novel accounts for the failure of Flory in keeping his prestige at the club an impossibility; his intention of getting his doctor elected in the European Club, and his public humiliation at the hands of Ma Hla May who is acting as directed to by U Po Kyin, of course.

The physical differences between the eastern and the western people, their cultural differences, and their unequal political power all contribute to widening the abysmal gap of communication, understanding and tolerance between them. The westerners cannot digest the overmuch hot environment of the east; neither can they feel free in a colonial setting where their thoughts and actions are always under the colonial scrutiny, though it is maintained by their own government. This is what Flory muses upon in his lonely hours:

It is a stifling, stultifying world in which to live. It is a world in which every word and every thought is censored. In England it is hard even to imagine such an atmosphere. Everyone is free in England; we sell our souls in public and buy them back in private, among our friends. But even friendship can hardly exist when every white man is a cog in the wheels of despotism. Free speech is unthinkable. All other kinds of freedom are permitted. You are free to be a drunkard, an idler, a coward, a backbiter, a fornicator; but you are not free to think for yourself. Your opinion on every subject of any conceivable importance is dictated for you by the pukka shahib's code. (119)

The novelist seems, at times, to be emphasizing that there is a great difference between the English people and the Burmese. This is made evident in the authorial comment following the rumour that Flory is going to marry an English girl Elizabeth Lackersteen. The two wives of Ko S'la, the servant to Flory, express great concern over the sinister arrival of the woman. Ko S'la, with an aptly placed sigh, has just warned his wife that the

new woman “will be worse than Ma Hla May, and the women undergo a great consternation:

The sigh was echoed by others, even by Ma Pu and Ma Yi. Neither took Ko S’la’s remarks as a stricture upon her own sex. Englishwomen being considered a race apart, possibly not even human, and so dreadful that an Englishman’s marriage is usually the signal for the flight of every servant in his house, even those who have been with him for years. (104)

Surely, such remarks only help to strengthen the misunderstanding between the two races. It seems to suggest that the Europeans are a people of a different make and mentality. This ultimately creates a line of partition, of contrast between the two. May be Orwell is reporting the mentality of his characters, but emphasize this divisive attitude does not bode well for a world wherein people are capable of coming to terms with each other.

### **An Odd-man-out: Flory Creates His Distinct Identity**

Unlike his compeers who live a life secluded from the rural setting they are staying in a Burmese village, Flory tries to commingle with the local people though not without a conspicuous degree of grudge. He has an inexplicable dislike for the European Club, the safe haven for the snobbish imperial agents, and prefers the company of the Indian doctor more than anything else. This unavoidably earns him the epithet “nigger’s Nancy boy” from his club peers.

How different he is from the common lot of the Europeans is exemplified in his critique of the imperial rule there in Burma. In one of his frenzied mood in which he sees

nothing other than innumerable harms the empire has brought to the natives, he expresses his views thus:

“Bosh, my dear doctor. We teach the young men to drink whisky and play football, I admit, but precious little else. Look at the schools—factories for cheap clerks. We’ve never taught a single useful manual trade to the Indians. We daren’t; frightened of the competition in industry. We’ve even crushed various industries. Where are the Indian muslins now? .... The only Eastern races that have developed at all quickly are the independent ones. (34)

He does not see any good that the British Empire has done to the natives. Contrarily, he cites examples how the eastern people went down after their contact with the western civilization which had a detrimental impact on their social and material wellbeing. This portion from his conversation with the doctor expresses his critical opinion toward the empire which has nothing more than destroy the economic and cultural wellbeing of the colonial subjects. Dr. Verawami accentuates the point that the europeans have brought about an “uprush of modern progress”, and Flory does not deny it completely. Accepting the doctor’s argument, he goes on pointing out how the empire has destroyed the native way of life:

We can’t help doing so. In fact, before we’ve finished we’ll have wrecked the whole Burmese national culture. But we’re not civilizing them, we’re only rubbing our dirt on to them. Where’s it going to lead, this uprush of modern progress, as you call it? Just to our own dear swinery of gramophones and billycock hats. Sometimes I think that in two hundred

years all this—” waved a foot towards the horizon—“all this will be gone—forests, villages, monasteries, pagodas all vanished. (35)

This is how he looks at things political, so radically, diatonically opposed to the views of his friends. Despite being fed by the empire, despite conferred whatever power he has in the colonial outpost, Flory can be thus harsh in his evaluation of the same institution.

This self-critical capacity is what makes him stand apart from others, and consequently a worthy novelistic personage to be made a protagonist, albeit a failed one, of probably the most widely read political writer of the twentieth century who believed that the Indian Empire is a despotism—benevolent, no doubt, but still a despotism with theft as its final object.

He expresses similar attitude, while explaining things to Elizabeth, emphasizing how he tries to be different from his peers: “Oh well, I break the rules occasionally. I meant that a pukka sahib probably wouldn’t be seen talking to them. But you see, I try—jut sometimes, when I have the pluck—not to be a pukka sahib” (111). He does not consider it important at all to behave in a prescribed manner as befits an Englishman. But he also does not have the required courage or strength of character to always deviate from the code of pukka sahibdom. Ultimately, we find in John Flory a tragically pathetic figure whose fall is pathetic in that it does not include any heroism, and tragic in that he has the nobility to be deadly offended when he is slandered in the presence of his beloved, though she has by now left showing any sympathy toward him.

#### **Chapter IV: Conclusion: Authorial Dilemma**

The novel studied by this thesis is thus a unique document of one man's dilemma when he leaves his land to settle, though temporarily, on a far away country which is incomparably backward, hot, and inhuman in comparison to his own one. The novel is basically about the plight of a colonial agent in the sylvan Burmese village by name Kyuaktada. The protagonist is one named John Flory, a timber merchant there. He, as shown in the novel, is torn between whether to stay back at the outlying Burmese village or to return England where he would regain his looks and youth, and marry a nice fair girl. But the fact that he keeps a native woman as a sort of concubine closes his chance of being united with his ideal woman, Elizabeth Lackersteen. This very fact also leads to his humiliation and consequently to his death by suicide.

John Flory's unrequited love for Elizabeth Lackersteen, and his devotion to her despite the fact that she has spurned his tender feelings for her does not deter him from harbouring sweet memories for her. This oddity can be ascribed to the fact that Flory, an Englishman is convinced of the nobility of the Elizabeth's character though her immediate attitude and activities speak to the contrary. Trust for a fellow cultural being and mistrust for a friend from a different cultural and geographical location marks Flory's belief system. This is the case of a man who is supposed to be rather radical in the colonial outposts. This is more than enough to prove that Flory is not sincere and sure of his friendship with the Indian doctor Veraswami. Had he been so confident of his friendship with the doctor, he would have no dilemma as to whether or not to raise a decisive voice for the election of the doctor at the European Club. But he cannot trust his friend, and even thinks friendship with the natives is not thinkable, it is not natural. This

is one aspect in the novel which helps support the hypothesis that the novel at heart is not at all free of the prejudice of Eurocentrism which is given to all Europeans as a legacy of the fact that they happened to be born as Europeans. This has been the central thrust of this thesis.

Numerous other descriptions in the novel such as the repeated reference to the garlic-stinking, pale-faced, grotesquely-painted and dark-skinned Burmese are the expressions which are indicative of the xenophobic mentality not only of the novelistic characters but also of the writer himself. When the novelist takes especial interest in portraying the Burmese and the Indian characters either as sycophants, superstitious, and dishonest, while even the worst of the European characters live up to their racial image as brave and rational people, one has much to call in question the neutrality and reliability of the novelist, or the novel for that matter. What could be a more pathetic revelation than this to the reader who had hoped to find a truly non-racist, non-parochial novel by one of the freest minds of the twentieth century world literature? This state of affair reinforces the hypothesis that the novel, in all fairness, cannot be accepted as an indisputable and meritorious work of literature which is unbiased in its treatment of the characters who belong, speaking from the writer's location, to the cultural other.

On the other plane of analysis, one can take the position with a good faith on Orwell's intentions, and vindicate that the novel tries to bring people from different cultures and locations, that is the people coming from the east-west divide. Even then one comes across some unanswered questions in the novel. The natives espouse unfathomable hatred and distrust for their European rulers. The fight between Ellis and the Burmese schoolboys, the blinding of one of the boys whose eyes had been hurt and the almost

murderous assault on the Club by the Burmese, the hacking to death of Maxwell by the relatives of the Burmese he had shot dead in the course of controlling the planned uprising in a village—all these incidents decidedly point to the impossibility of a smooth relationship between the rulers and the ruled ones. The animosity between them is not ameliorated by the end of the novel.

The rulers are supposed to be unquestionably superior to the natives; and even the inferiorized side seems to accept this assumption. The novel brings to light the central false premise that there is a basic difference between the coloured and the fair races, between the blacks and whites. Both oppressor and oppressed implicitly believe that the English—which is to say, the Europeans—are more worthy, more capable, more human and more real than the Burmese and the Indians, the non-Europeans. The villain of the novel, U PO Kyin has grasped early in his childhood that his own people were no match for the race of giants, the British. Hence his efforts to curry favour with the white rulers. Similarly, an educated person like Dr. Veraswami also is ridiculously fawning in his appreciation of the English everything.

Such a portrayal of people and their character suggests whether there really is a fundamental difference between the westerners and the easterners. May be the Europeans came to rule this part of the globe because they, being educated and civilized, were made for that. This way of documenting the east-west relationship is not helpful in conveying the sense that the world is or is becoming a place where people live with differences but without trying to superimpose their values and beliefs upon others.

The next issue treated in this thesis was that colonialism led to the domination of the Asian and African countries at the hand of the European powers. But the same



colonial practice also opened the new era of globalization and hybridity, since it became imperative for the trading countries to make contact with new people and countries. But the relationship remained one sided: it was incomparably easy for the people, commodities, and ideas and images from the European countries to flow into the less developed part of the world, than it was for the people and commodities from the non-European countries to enter the European continent. This unequal relationship ultimately led critics and theorist to question whether the so-called global and multicultural era was not yet another guise for the former colonial powers to hold down the rest of the world.

By way of concluding, it can be said that the novel *Burmese Days* is a controversial novel as regards the portrayal of the non-European characters in a debased light. The infiltration of colonial values and mentality in the novel sometimes outweigh the critical faculty even of so radical a writer as George Orwell. And the tragic death of John Flory, the protagonist of the novel who was the only person who stands for the reconciliation between the eastern and the western people, suggests how difficult it is to bring the two sides on an equal and friendly relationship.