

The Staggering Elephant

Imperialism forces its followers to adopt its own beliefs by binding people against their own will. Throughout Orwell's short story "To Shoot an Elephant", a person becomes torn between traditional beliefs and how imperialism can affect a wide range of lens from history to one single country. Orwell's proves that when a dictator shoots an elephant, the dictator will learn how a revolution can end slowly, because their ignorances perpetuate following the imperialist way; thus leading to the spark of revolution towards a perfect utopia.

New ideals for a country are born when a new imperialistic ruler comes into power. Such imperialism becomes structured way to keep an impoverished country in check, but "all this was perplexing and upsetting[to the people of Burma]." (paragraph 2) The Burmese natives would jeer out at Europeans in disgust, of how splendid they are able to live without a controlling government. Being jealous was common at the time, majority of the native people wanted to leave and move to another country but couldn't because the nation needed people to work the land. Eventually critical minds that can break through all of the propaganda and brainwash begin to believe that "imperialism was an evil" to the people; for there is no free will left. (paragraph 2) Orwell uses personification to reveal that imperialism can take over a human and control their body. Consider that the person continues to follow the idea in which the author shows that imperialism is pure evil. This realization of imperialism's destruction led to countries coming out of poverty. A strong foundation of government has it's perks but it all comes down to whether the person rules over the nation with justice or not.

Following such an imperialist ruler blindly can affect beliefs which had shaped of the killer's ignorance towards the natives who were following imperialism. Being a European in Burma would mean "[receiving]hate by large numbers of people"; to the point that the mind is able to become confused towards the Burmese people. (paragraph 1) Orwell characterizes the main character to realize that the locals that lived in the country were being forced to do work that many of natives were against like heavy surplus produce. Thus making the character become torn between what to believe after taking in that knowledge. Beliefs were restrained by the imperial government so there was no ideals or thoughts that could be fought against the government. Of course in a 3rd world country "[having] no guns and [they]

quite helpless against it” making it so that the government would have complete power over the natives of Burma. (paragraph 3) When a government has the power to completely enforce all law without anyone revolting for the time being, the people of Burma have no free will of only doing farmwork. By this time, the killer’s ignorance has grown to a limit because of how the people are and the conditions that he is never used to living in. Ignorance towards beliefs and ideals can lead to ways of thinking about what would be a perfect utopian world.

Protests against new ideas tend to be very common at first coming in like a bullet but like the elephant, die out slowly. After the first blow of pain was dealt, “it paralyzed [them]... [then fell] sagged flabbily to [their] knees.” (paragraph 11) Dragged out blows have effect but during that time of wait people can regroup and try to get stronger, but when not covering up weaknesses the government is vulnerable. Orwell uses personification to stimulate the elephants actions as a revolution. Considering that the elephant continues trying to stand up, the author shows that putting down a revolution to an end is difficult. After the paralyzing blow, one would have to “[wait] a long time for [the opposition] to die.” (paragraph 12) The elephant here was slowly bleeding to death, much like how most rebellions are slow to end. Trying to go free but not knowing how to do so was the elephant’s way of going “must” and free without a master. Without proper control people can roam freely and do as they please, but with a government that is fair to the people a stable peace can be made so that everyone can live a plentiful life.

While talking about imperialism, no matter how the concept is being used, historically or through modern day countries, it is all evil if it were used by a power hungry dictator. The leader has the ability to force someone to follow the ways of Imperialism even if the subjects reject the belief because blind followers can’t live without a proper leader or figure to “guide” them.