

Orwell's message in shooting an elephant



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The East is not known, culturally, to be a logical bunch. Most of the magical fairy tales come from the East. Take for example the Arabian Nights. One of the main ways the East deals with information is through stories and prophecies. That's what they have always been doing. Now, this does not mean that there never was science in the east. No, on the contrary, some of the best inventions come from the East. However, the East, in general, is a culture that mostly passes stories around. It is quite interesting for Orwell to state although this was written many years before the wars and crisis in Iraq, yet it still rings true to the state of the time. After all, was said and done everyone around the world thought they knew what was going on, but that was far from the truth.

It is quite interesting how the narrator, supposing it was Orwell himself, says that he had almost made his mind about the elephant not being there in the first place and being a lie. In the first paragraph, he makes it clear that he had made up his mind about Imperialism. The writer does tell us that he had made up his mind, but he never mentions how. And as he goes through gathering information about the elephant, he almost makes up his mind about the elephant not being true at all. The lack of physical evidence almost convinced him that the elephant was not there. While just some lines before that he uses the word "professed" to describe what someone told him about the place of the elephant. This is a beautifully crafted example for a compare and contrast situation between the Western way of gathering information and the Eastern way. For it shows us how the writer or any Westerner for that matter would go about gathering information. So maybe he did lots of research to realize that Imperialism was evil, but what research did he do to

know about the elephant? He simply asked around. The two situations are different, for sure, but it makes you wonder if they are so different after all.

The story cannot be taken at face value especially since we know Orwell was a writer with vision and message in his writings. Orwell makes a perfect comparison between the East and the West. He also takes it further to a philosophical question of whether Imperialism is good or bad. Orwell reflects on the many aspects of the time when the British Raj ruled. Let's take for example the expression of the elephant in the room, let's suppose the elephant that Orwell is trying to shoot is a problem or some major issue that he is trying to put an end to. We should ask an educated question here, which is: what is the issue? Well, Imperialism, the elephant stands for the British Raj. And the narrator is just trying to search for, shoot, and put an end to it. At the beginning of the story, he starts asking around. The people there, who are under the rule of an Imperialist, are aware but don't see its features. So some of them do not even know where the elephant is while some of them only profess where it had gone. This is not only the case with political news around the world, but it also speaks on a social level. However, it is quite interesting that it is not until someone shouts out, and only then the narrator sees a dead body on the soil ground that he knows for sure that the elephant was there. This is a reflection of how the West, or anyone, does not go to help or are unconvinced at the existence of a problem until some physical evidence appears, or in this case as in many other cases, someone dies.

The essay is a reflection on so many levels. Orwell might be talking about some tangible real-life experience. However, we cannot ignore the

<https://assignbuster.com/orwells-message-in-shooting-an-elephant/>

multilayered narrative. The story does not only recount the shooting of some elephant. It is a portrayal, a showcase, a study even, of the West and the East. Orwell's message has never been easily received or deduced from his stories, and this essay is no exception. But as rule of thumb, we can safely assume that Orwell, like many other writers of his generation, was sick and tired of unnecessary conflicts. Orwell simply wanted peace, freedom, and strength.