

THE FICTIONAL DEPICTION OF INDIA IN RUDYARD KIPLING'S *KIM*

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ABSTRACT

*India has always been a land of deep fascination and irresistible appeal for the foreigners. It certainly exercised a powerful influence on the English literary imagination. Proverbially known as “the bird of gold”, India allured the Britishers with her riches, pearls, magic, rope tricks and lastly with its mysticism, a unique feature of its spiritual design. Kipling’s image of India as projected in his fiction especially in *Kim* marks an achievement that is yet to be equaled even after a century since it was written. Although his earlier writing smack of political philosophy, *Kim* compensates all. It is not the Kipling looking at India and its people from the view of the ruler but the Kipling who sickly yearns for his land, which he referred to as his “Home” in many of his non – fictional writing, who is present in the novel. *Kim* looks at India so does his creator like an insider.*

KEYWORDS: *Fictional, Diversities, India, Landscape, Ethics.*

The inexhaustible variety of India, the complex nature of its spiritualism, the unfathomable depth of its ethics and the free flow of its knowledge from the field of a peasant to the hut of a saint sitting in the forest or on the inaccessible heights of a mountain are the things that astounded the westerners who are, even today, the regular visitors to its shrines and reverse. India is too vast a country to be reduced to a principle. A close study of the diversities of India contrasted with its unity produces a chaos of idea and these ideas remain a medley unit they are properly explained and understood. He was the man who has highlighted Indian through his works but he was also never free from the obsession of the glory of imperialism. There is no doubt that he used to think about the mysterious natives but the imaginary law of the jungle dominated much of the greater part of his literary work.

In order to understand appreciate the image of India which Kipling has portrayed in their books, it is essential to know the state of Indian society at that when they appeared on the scene. The influence of India on their works

has been no small one; he indeed grasped its contents and range. There fiction is flavored with the essence of the perception and imagination of the thoughts and feelings which came to them as they looked at the vast, varied empire, changing yet unchanged, between Calcutta and Karachi (now in Pakistan) between Peshawar and Pondicherry. The essence has given satisfaction instinctively to their hunger of mind and heart. We cannot ignore the fact that this hunger was more than a mere craving for the exotic and without which they could not assimilate, appreciate and evaluate India. India reserved her value and fascination for them. In fact, their love for her was the restless adventure of imagination and active longing for what is rare and intangible in life. Kipling enjoys and enviable position among the English writers who have written comprehensively on India. India rendered him the base for his creativity which proved to be outstanding in the tradition of creative writing about India. Kipling made India very canvas on which he executed his best creations. He was gifted with prodigious powers of perception and acute sensibility to view an also a wonderful memory. As such, he could see things in their real prospective. His memories, travels and experiences- all bear Indian stamp. He experienced India with an intensity and completeness that made it possible for him “to show the many faces of the country in all their beauty, power and truth.” As a writer on the Indian scene he has not, so far been surpassed by any other writer, English or Indian. Kipling’s image of India is from the vantage of a western eye that stereotypes, categorizes and universalizes complete knowledge about India. His contemporaries dealt that with monuments and memorials, princes and heroes, tours and bazaars etc. Kipling merged in to the very soul of India. Kim is the product of Kipling’s nature brain. There is no imbalance or prejudice, but calm and poise. India now had become a part of his life and lent him a better perspective. It represented the unchanging East, as he remembered it from his childhood, so he described it lovingly in Kim. Kipling called Kim “not a novel but nakedly picaresque and plot less”. No other English novelist has written of India with such loving interested as Kipling. It can be ascertained that Kim is neither a political romance nor a piece of allegorical fiction. Kim is the hero, who leads the life a vagabond in India. This is the tale of the woes of a boy roving through India, loving it and causing us to love it. Politics, the Empire, the law, Kim into limelight but nothing is explained or excused or justified the author just tolls the bells and makes us smell the hot scented dust and see the people of the land. As the lama and Kim begin their journey first by train, then on foot, we are given remarkable description of the Indian landscape and her people. “It is here” says Dr. Belliappa „that a majority of Anglo Indian novelist had failed, and a clue of Kipling’s success is offered by the epigraph to the second chapter

“And who so will, from pried released, Contemplation neither creed nor priest,
May feel the soul of all the east about him at Kamapura”.

Kipling has very deftly focused his concentration on Kim's relation with for natives of India the Pathan horse-dealer, Mahbub Ali , the Bengali, Hurree Chunder, the old dowager, sahiba from saharunpore and the Tibetan Lama who is the hero of the book:

The lean ferocious Pathan and the Suabe Sophisticated Babu seen at first to be stock Characters, until they burst in to life by showing the contradiction of living persons The faithless, cruel Mahbub is gradually revealed as true and even lender, the volatile, Timid Babu as discrete and courageous when put to the test, and the interaction of these characters illumines Kim's slow adolescence.

The relationship between Kim and the Lama seems to be based on contract, it is traditional Each dependent of the other, Sara Subri is of the opinion that:

“His (Lama's) need for Kim – and Kim's need

For him- suggested an alternative colonial Cartography upon where classifications cannot occur, for the road and the river can no Longer determine those proper distinctions that separate their aims. Instead, land and water melt in to new geography both more troubling and surprising in their ability to mirror one another.

It is only because Kim wanted to be lama's, chela“ (a disciple) the following reveal his Intention:

“I have never seen anyone like thee in all this my life. I go with thee to Benaras: I think That so old a man as thou... is in great need of a disciple.”

The above statement suggest otherwise. The Lama grants Kim and extra ordinary sight- a Pisgah sight to view the world in clear perspective. He expects of Kim to reject all the outward appearances of the world as illusions, including significant symbols of eternity like his well- accustomed hills.

Kim is now fully grown in to maturity. As such, he is in a position to take decisions. He is no longer a vagabond or a ruffian roaming in the streets, but a purged, handsome, god- like young man to opt between contemplation and action. He fills divided in loyalty. On the one hand he becomes conscious of the union of the East and the West and, on the other hand he is inclined to support the Calcutta trained Babu or the Pathan. In the last stage of the Lama's pilgrimage, Kim quite forgets his own task in the world. While engrossed in the common duties of love and gratitude.

“He begged in the dawn, set blankets for the Lama’s meditation, held the weary had on His lap through noon day heats, fanning Away the flies till his wrist ached, begged Again in the evening and rubbed Lama’s feet Who rewarded him with promise of freedom-? Today, tomorrow, or, at furthest, the next day.”

Consequently, the day came when the Lama convinced Kim that he was a Sahib. He should realize his own identity and peruse another course of life. However, the writer does not come out of the dilemma – East or West, the jungle of the village, the world of fancy or the world of fact, renunciation or action, he has left or the readers or garner any meaning they like. Yet Kim feels:

With an almost audible click, he felt the Wheels of his being lock up a new on the world without. Thinks that rode meaningless on the Eyeball an instant before slide in to the proper proportion Nirad Chaudhary regards Kim the finest story about India- in English:

In the first place, like a good artist, he stood on the firm round of personal experience. His Interest in Buddhism was roused by the Gandhara sculpture in the Lahore Museum, of which his father was curator..... I think there was also a second reason. Hindu Specialty, even at its most unworldly and Serene, has a suggestion of the power and action a kind of super magical motivation which is not consistent with perfect be attitude and Mystic quietism”.

Lama’s quest to complete he reaches the River of the Arrow often meditating for two days and two nights. He says:

I was meditating in that body and did not here .so thus the search indeed for the Merit is that I have acquired, the River of the Arrow is here. It broke forth at our feet, as I Have said. I have found it. Son of my soul, I have wrenched my soul back and from the threshold of freedom to face thee from sin, as I am free; and sinless. Just is the wheel certain is our deliverance. Come (Kim, p. 375)

CONCLUSION:

Here Kipling’s fondness for Hindus scriptures is traceable. He seems to be inspired by the popular episode in the Mahabharata. At the Battle of Kurukchetra when Bhishma the old patriarch who laying on the bed of arrows thirsty, Arjun, the great archer shot an arrow in to the earth and water gushed forth assuming the shape of a river which quenched Bhishmas thirst in the vary way he wanted. Kipling must have been struck by the novelty of the story and the mystery associated with it which lead him to consider it as a metaphor for spirituality in India. He

attempts to cast a mystical aura about the Lama's experience. However, Kipling could not explore the spiritual aspect of life in India in the way as Forster or Myers did. Thus, Kipling's image of India as projected in his fiction especially in Kim marks an achievement that is yet to be equaled even after a century since it was written. Although his earlier writing smack of political philosophy, Kim compensates all. It is not the Kipling looking at India and its people from the view of the ruler but the Kipling who sickly yearns for his land, which he referred to as his "Home" in many of his non – fictional writing, who is present in the novel. Kim looks at India so does his creator like an insider.

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