

## **Representation of Indian History in Rudyard Kipling's Kim**

**Amarjit Singh**

**Research Scholar (Dept of History)**

**G.N.D.U Amritsar**

**India**

The paper analyses how the writings of Rudyard Kipling mark the tidemark of literary reflection of the Indian culture. His writings conjure images of contemporary Anglo Indian setup. Rudyard Kipling has given a pen picture of the city of Lahore and Simla which had by 1882 started wearing the look of a colonial city. His novel Kim portrays an imperialist view of the colonial India. He reproduced in his personal life both the painful cultural changes that had taken place in his society and the history of British colonialism in India. Kipling's writings seem to center mostly around India. Kim actually show a real love and understanding for India. Here the author displays a vast knowledge of India, its culture, its many religious, and the lives of common folks especially the native poor. He tells good stories. Rudyard Kipling spent his early childhood with a Hindu bearer Meeta and a Goan Catholic *ayah*. He had spoken Hindustani before he spoke English. Though his stay in the India was short, yet it provided impetus to Rudyard Kipling to crystallize and consolidate his ideology of culture. It is elaborated with the help of his work Kim.

Some of the questions that could be raised at this juncture are:

What is the Relationship between history and literature, what was socio-cultural and intellectual milieu of Rudyard Kipling in England and India? Could he capture the ethos and pathos of the Indians? .What could be his sources of understanding the Indian and the Punjabi culture? The paper would answer all the above questions.

### **Paper**

Rudyard Kipling was, in many ways, the major figure in the nexus between British imperialism and images of the East. He stands out as the presiding genius who almost single-handedly created India and the East for the English and also for the West. In his mind, Imperialism was not only pride of empire, jingoism and racial superiority, but the bringing of civilization; it was a mission, a responsibility before God. Essentially, the fiction of Rudyard Kipling represents the empire and its conscious legitimating. In his writings, Imperialism was

a missionary spirit; the English, a chosen people, had a duty to rule the 'lesser breeds without the law'. In fact, Rudyard Kipling, the most creative builder of political myths, was more than a rabid imperialist. The psychological coordinates of his imperialist ideology have often been the coordinates of the West's image of the non-West. He reproduced in his personal life both the painful cultural changes that had taken place in his society and the history of British colonialism in India. Consequently, Rudyard Kipling and his White Man emerged out of complex historical and cultural circumstances. His imprint persists in the English literary world. In the mind of Sir V.S. Naipaul, a Nobel laureate of Indian ancestry, 'no writer was more honest and accurate than Kipling'. He remained in the Punjab from mid October 1882 to mid November 1887, a period of Lord Ripon representing Gladstonian liberalism and Lord Dufferin reverting to conservative imperialism. Rudyard Kipling echoed anxiety of the British in the wake of 'reforms' in India. (Naipal,191).

The Punjab came to acquire a distinct identity in the colonial setup and a large number of British officers along with their families came to stay in the district headquarters and at imperial summer capital Simla. Moreover, concerns of health and safety developed urban designs of the settlements of the British. In the cities, these areas were labeled 'civil lines', with associated 'cantonments' for the military. In mountainous regions, they established 'Hill Stations' that served as summer refuge not only for individuals but for the colonial governments. Of all the hill stations of India, Simla was by far the most glamorous so much so that some critics considered it 'not really part of India'. Simla provided a summer residence for the viceroys as well as for the Delhi and Panjab secretariats. Kipling was the first Englishman to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature (1907). His most popular works include *The Jungle Book* (1894) with such unforgettable characters as Mowgli, Baloo, and Bagheera. The book was adapted into screen by Zoltan Korda and André de Toth in 1942. Walt Disney's cartoon version was produced in the 1960s. Rudyard Kipling was born in Bombay, India, where his father, John Lockwood Kipling, was an arts and crafts teacher at the Jeejeebhoy School of Art. His mother, the former Alice Macdonald, was a sister-in-law of the painter Edward Burne-Jones. India was at that time ruled by the British. Ruddy, as Kipling was affectionally called, was brought up by an *ayah*, who taught him Hindustani as his first language.

Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,  
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat;  
But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,

When two strong men stand face to face, tho' they come from the ends of the earth!

Loved him even more than they did." (From "The Ballad of East and West')

Kipling returned to India in 1882, where he worked as a journalist in Lahore for *Civil and Military Gazette* (1882-87) and an assistant editor and overseas correspondent in Allahabad for *Pioneer* (1887-89). The stories written during his last two years in India were collected in *The Phantom Rickshaw*. It that included the famous story 'The Man Who Would Be a King.' In the story a white trader, Daniel Dravot sets himself up as a god and king in Kafirstan, but a woman discovers that he is a human and betrays him. His companion, Peachey Carnehan, manages to escape to tell the tale, but Dravot is killed.

Kim on which Kipling worked intermittently for at least eight years, is widely considered his best novel. Set in India, it depicted adventures of an orphaned son of a sergeant in an Irish regiment. Kim meets a Tibetan Lama and attaches himself to the old man as a discipline. Working for the British Secret Service, Kim carries a vital message to Colonel Creighton in Umballa and is helped by the Lama on his journey. The chaplain of his father's old regiment recognizes Kim and he is dispatched to the school of Anglo-Indian children at Luckhnow. Kim rejoins the Lama in an expedition to the hill country of the North and his destiny is left undecided - the life of an adventurer and the values of contemplation both attract him. Kim was fearless in encounters with police, army, priests, princes and women of all types, quick-witted and clever in repartee, observant and watchful and begging world wise knowledge of all customs of India.

The writings of Rudyard Kipling mark the tidemark of literary reflection of the British Imperialism. His writings conjure images of contemporary Anglo Indian setup. Rudyard Kipling has given a pen picture of the city of Lahore and Simla which had by 1882 started wearing the look of colonial cities. His novel Kim portrays an imperialist view of the colonial India. Set on the canvas of society of Lahore against the backdrop of political developments of the age, Kim is a brilliant example of a contemporary literary evidence for studying society. Kipling's mind was shaped by the writings published in *The Civil and Military Gazette*, English daily which mirrored the society of the times. Kipling's tale from the Raj is an interesting piece of study revealing cultural pattern of the British society. The novel embodies a panoramic celebration of India, presenting as it does, a magnificent picture of its landscapes, both urban and rural, and a fascinating array of native characters who, for the most part, are warm, generous and tolerant.

The friendship between this unlikely pair is one of the main attractions of 'Kim', which is a novel about male friendships, primarily between Kim and Teshoo lama, but also between Kim and Colonel Creighton and his colleagues.

Women do play a role in the novel, but not as objects of romantic or sexual attachment. Women feature as prostitutes, or providers, though some respect is shown for the two principle women characters, the woman of Shamlegh, and the widow of Kulu, the latter taking on a motherly role towards the end, healing Kim when he is ill.

The two companions become interdependent, Kim's association with the lama providing him with an excuse to travel around India, and an ideal cover (later in the story) for his role as a spy, while the lama often relies on Kim to do their begging and find them

At the climax of the novel Kim is sent on a mission to intercept two foreign spies, one Russian, one French, who are operating in the Himalayas.

One theme which might be felt to be running under the surface of 'Kim', is Kim's search for parents. At the beginning it is emphasized that Kim is an orphan, who never knew his mother, and that his deceased father was a drunkard. Perhaps he is looking for new parents, and finds a combined father figure in the lama, who in the closing scene calls him 'Son of my Soul' and Colonel Creighton, who has been a father-figure since his time at St. Xavier's. in the final chapter, as well as receiving 'mothering', Kim comes as close as he ever does to feeling he has discovered his identity:

'I am Kim. I am Kim. And what is Kim? His soul repeated it again and again . . . tears trickled down his nose and with an almost audible click he felt the wheels of his being lock up anew on the world without.'(Kim, 260).

But more importantly in kim we can see the typical scenes of Indian culture in great detail. for eg the picture presented by 'he line of baskets' of vegetables; the reference of tram rails, the description of the bull itself, complete as to colour, moist blue noise, and hump such as most Indian cattle have. A hint o the modernization of India under British rule is also given. The description of peasants of India, Indian arts and manufacturers is given. The reference of irrigation system in India and dams are given to prevent famine in India;

All India was at work in the fields, to the creaking  
Of well-wheels, the shouting of ploughmen behind  
Their cattle and the clamour of the crows. ( qtd in Kim)

He also gives the reference of the primitive method of irrigation, in which the labourer pumped water from his well all day to flow over his little plot of land. The description of women travel in India from Lahore to umballa the cultivator's wife, being a woman of the

working classes, traveled with her husband in the ordinary coach. Class struggle is also presented in the novel. Kim's encounter with the Brahmin bull illustrates yet another Hindu belief. To the Hindu the cow is sacred, and so they are allowed to wander at will about the streets. So at last the structure of the story in that it is not based on any involved plot, is exceedingly simple. It is exceedingly easy to follow the thread of the story since, to a great extent; it relates a series of episodes in Kim's career.

Three years after Kim was published, Kipling received the Noble Prize. India has far the first time become the major theme in English Literature. And for that we all Indians are indebted to him He wrote many fine stories set in his native England. But today when anyone speaks of Kipling it is of his Indian Stories in verse that they speak and this one immortal c story i.e. Kim.

**Works Consulted:**

Allen, Charles, *Kipling Sahib: India and the Making of Rudyard Kipling*, Abacus, London, 2007.

Bauer, Helen Pike, *Rudyard Kipling: A Study of the Short Fiction*, Twayne, New York, 1994.

Birkenhead, Lord, *Rudyard Kipling*, Worthing Book Services, Littlehampton, 1978.

Carrington, Charles, *Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Work*, Macmillan, London, 1955.

Kipling Rudyard. *Kim (With an Introduction by Ruskin Bond)* New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 2012.

M.A,J.R Frost *Kim ( coles Notes)* New Delhi: Rama Brothers Inda PVT LTD, 2021

V.S. Naipaul, *An Area of Darkness*, Vintage, London, 2003.

**Web Reference:**

<http://www.online-literature.com/kipling/kim/>

<http://www.english-literature.org/essays/kipling.php>