

تصویر هند در ادبیات داستانی رودیارد کیپلینگ

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در حالی که ادبیات داستانی و واقعیت به طور ظریفی در هم تنیده‌اند خواندن اثر رودیارد کیپلینگ قرائت تازه‌ای از واقعیت به خواننده القا می‌کند. تصویر هند و خلق شخصیت هندی بر اساس پیش زمینه امپراطوری بریتانیا که از طرح‌ها و نقشه‌های معین تشکیل یافته ترسیم شده است. به عبارت دیگر، مکان خلق شده توسط ذهن نویسنده یا همان هند کاملاً در چارچوب این امپراطوری جای می‌گیرد. آیا نقش ادبیات در این میان صرف اهداف امپریالیستی یا فراتر از آن است؟ محقق می‌کوشد تا شگردهای رمان‌نویس در جهت خلق شخصیت‌های قالبی و دورگه و غیره را بررسی کند. اشاره‌ها به متن مذکور در جهت روشن نمودن مطالب نظری به کار رفته است. شواهد بسیاری در رمان وجود دارد که نقش خیال‌پردازی ادبی در حفظ نظام امپریالیستی را نشان می‌دهد. پرداخت کیپلینگ به این موضوع به هیچ وجه آزاداندیشانه نیست.

واژه‌های کلیدی: ادبیات دوره استعمار و پسااستعمار، امپراطوری بریتانیا، امپریالیسم،

رودیارد کیپلینگ، کیم، شرق‌شناسی، هند.

An India of the Imagination: A Postcolonial Reading of Rudyard Kipling's Kim

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Abstract

While fiction and reality are delicately interrelated in literature, reality plays a special role in the final impression the reader gets after studying Kipling's *Kim*. India's image is drawn against an imperial background with well-defined designs. In other words, an India is created imaginatively which fits in with the framework of the British Empire. "Orientalisation was the result of this effort to conceive of Indian society as devoid of elements hostile to the perpetuation of British rule..." This article is an attempt to study the ways and techniques exploited in this popular novel to postulate that he has not maintained an open mind on this subject. Textual reference, like the Mutiny of 1857, reinforces and documents the theoretical discussion. Such highlights in the novel provide evidence to show the role of literary imagination in maintaining the imperial system.

Key Words: British Empire, imperialism, India, Kim, orientalism, postcolonialism, Rudyard Kipling.

Since the genesis of the novel, finding reference to the real world and its phenomena in a fictitious work has been one significant aspect of studying it. The archetypal problem is the extent of interaction between fiction and reality. Authors usually draw upon their surroundings. If they have unlimited right to use outside reality, they will be criticized as far as reality is concerned. It is not fair to mix the real and the fictitious and reflect the outcome as a part of a literature that is assembled merely through the medium of creative writing. An author's responsibility grows as his or her reliance on the actual happenings in the world increases. In this paper, two important scenes from the history and the society of India are investigated in *Kim*: the Mutiny and the museum. The Mutiny is a climactic point in the history of British-Indian relationship while the museum scene focuses on social matters and things beyond.

Kipling mostly wrote short stories and poems but he also wrote several novels. *Kim* is his most popular novel. He tells the story of Kimball O'Hara of Lahore streets, known as an Anglo. Kim is the orphan son of an Irish sergeant and a nursemaid. He meets a Tibetan Lama in search of a mystic river. Fearful that the innocent cleric will be victimized on his travels, Kim becomes his disciple. The Lama and Colonel Creighton then agree to send him to St. Xavier's school, for training in mathematics, map-making, and other skills of the Great Game (espionage) along with a classical education. Ultimately, Kim rejoins the Lama and, at the same time, undertakes a mission for the Secret Service. He helps both the cause of the Empire and the Lama to find the river. Nevertheless, the conflict within Kim is that he is torn between the spiritual world of the lama and the political world of the Great Game.

Kipling's fiction, on the whole, shows contrapuntal ironies despite the

presence of obvious imperial themes.¹

Doubtless, Kipling has created an imaginary society in his greatest work *Kim*. But what are the major elements of this image? Has the Empire relied on it? If so what are the favourable conditions for building up an Empire in the first place? Finally, is the role that literature plays in this regard merely a peg to hang imperial ideology on? Creating stereotypes, imagining divides, producing hybrid characters, going native, contrasting the “self” and the “other”, and so on are among the prevalent imperial techniques prescribed for literature in general and for *Kim* in particular.

To start with stereotypes, it has to be admitted that native individuals are deprived of their personal features. The native Indian or the Oriental in general is defined according to the Orientalists’ criteria. Creating stereotypes helps widen the divide between different races and groups in general. One imperial rule in this respect is to “divide and rule” the masses while insisting on the superiority and inferiority of the white and nonwhite, respectively. According to this rule, inferior races need to be “educated” by the superior races. Still this matter is carried out very deliberately in the literary text. To highlight this point, the relationship between the lama and Kim should be closely studied. On first looking into Kipling’s *Kim* the reader might get the impression that Kim is subordinate to the Tibetan priest. He acts like his servant. But underneath, the strategy is adopted deliberately. Going native and playing the equal of the native is meant to uplift and uphold the position of the Empire. Kim outwits all natives in the novel, manipulates and imitates them to better exercise the “Game.” The white-nonwhite racial divide becomes clear when one reflects on the fact that a nonwhite nation is ruled by a white race. It is still further clarified once one considers Kipling’s famous statement of the “Whiteman’s burden.”

1- Seyyed Mohammad Marandi, "Life After Postmodernism and Contrapuntal Textual Analysis" (Pazhuhesh- e- Zabanha-ye-Khareji, No. 20, Special Issue, English, 2005), P.6.

Although Kim was English and white he is brought up among native Indians. This fact alludes to the hybridity of his character:

Though he was burned black as any native; though he spoke the vernacular by preference, and his mother-tongue in a clipped uncertain sing-song; though he consorted on terms of perfect equality with the small boys of the bazaar; Kim was white – a poor white of the very poorest.¹

So, one aspect of Kim's character is his picture as an Oriental. He knows perfectly well about the native manners. "Kim could lie like an Oriental."² "He returned the money, keeping only one anna in each rupee of the price of the Umballa ticket as his commission – the immemorial commission of Asia."³ "[H]e abandoned the project and fell back, Oriental fashion, on time and chance."⁴ These clichéd statements prove two facts. On the one hand, they depict Kim as a replica of an Oriental and on the other hand they show the Orientalists' attitude towards the Oriental character as a stereotype.

One way to approach Kim's identity is to consider him as a hybrid character. If the Orientalists' method is adapted, then Kim will be stereotyped as an Anglo-Indian and, consequently, he will get all his generic attributes from this group. However, Kim's character may be studied as an individual. Kim's character, like that of his creator, is vague and difficult to define. At some critical moments in the plot Kim wonders about his complicated identity and attempts to make a resolution:

But I am to pray to Bibi Miriam, and I am a Sahib.' He looked at his boots ruefully. 'No, I am Kim. This is the great world, and I am only Kim. Who is Kim?' He considered his own identity, a thing he had never done before, till his head swam. He was one insignificant person in all this roaring

1- Rudyard Kipling, *Kim* (London: Wordsworth Classics, 1993), p.1.

2- Ibid.p.20.

3- Ibid.p.24.

4- Ibid.p.91.

whirl of India, going southward to he knew not what fate.¹

Kim is a displaced character. He is geographically and culturally displaced. Even on the two sides of the white-nonwhite divide he is lost. Is he Irish or English? As a nonwhite native he is bewildered: "What am I? Mussalman, Hindu, Jain, or Buddhist? This is a hard knot."² That is why Kim sometimes feels that a well-defined identity can be confining and he very often escapes from it. Kim likes to shuttle between worlds and groups. To stick to his hybrid character is his fate.

When the Tebetan guru betrays his astonishment at how Kim serves him, he compares him to Ananda and is surprised that Kim is a Sahib. Kim utters his response in this way:

'Thou hast said there is neither black nor white. Why plague me with this talk, Holy One? Let me rub the other foot. It vexes me. I am not a Sahib. I am thy chela, and my head is heavy on my shoulders.'³

It seems that Kim condescends to uphold the Empire. He seems to serve the lama but actually he is serving the Empire. Multiculturalism and postcoloniality become the strategic camouflage to conceal the imperial politics of the Empire. Kim helps preserve and maintain the British Empire as if he does everything by the book.⁴

In order to maintain the status quo in India, an imaginary ideal was created:

An India of the imagination was created which contained no elements of either social change or political menace. Orientalisation was the result of this effort to conceive of Indian society as devoid of elements hostile to the perpetuation of British rule, for it was on the basis of this presumptive

1- Ibid.p.101.

2- Ibid.p.123.

3- Ibid.p.232.

4- Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p.488.

India that Orientalizers sought to build a permanent rule.¹

How does Kipling relate the reality of India to the fiction of *Kim*? This is the subject of a couple of extracts that will be studied here. *Kim* is an imaginative work of art while its author is the product of British India and a clever reader might predict how external reality could have a degree of refraction in the novel. The Mutiny of 1857 is one important event through which the author may express his attitude toward the nature of the relationship between colonized and colonizer. What is said and what is unsaid about the Mutiny in *Kim*? Inclusion and exclusion are significant elements in a contrapuntal reading of a text.

Needless to say, the Mutiny was a national event after which many colonial reforms took place. The East India Company itself was replaced by the government of India. This critical event in the history of India was dishonestly trivialized in the novel. The lama who hardly knows about this national event asks the reason for the Mutiny and a soldier responds to him in this way:

‘The Gods, who sent it for a plague, alone know. A madness ate into all the Army, and they turned against their officers. That was the first evil, but not past remedy if they had then held their hands. But they chose to kill the Sahibs’ wives and children. Then came the Sahibs from over the sea and called them to most strict account.’

‘Some such rumor, I believe reached me once long ago. They called it the Black Year, as I remember.’

‘What manner of life hast thou led, not to know The Year? A rumor indeed! All earth knew, and trembled.’²

Is it fair really to describe the Mutiny simply as an act of madness?

1- Francis Hutchins, *The Illusion of Permanence: British Imperialism in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), p.157.

2- Kipling, pp.45-46.

British vengeance on the natives is described and prescribed as a “moral” act. The delinquent native is contrasted with the disciplined British soldier. Edward Said claims that the author is quite removed from showing two worlds in conflict.¹ So one attitude towards this historical event has been excluded from the text. The common reader’s imagination would be more exercised once the two sides of the problem are presented. Dialogue is the ideal form for disinterestedness, while monologue inflicts pre-defined attitudes.

The imagined India of Kipling is reflected in another scene. The Ajayeb-Gher or Wonder House is the setting where many important issues might be scrutinized. The overall idea is to persuade the lama that he can be more successful if he adopts the “white ways.” This fact has been shown symbolically when the curator of the Wonder House offers the lama white paper and (white) spectacles. Another aspect is that the lama, who is among the most important religious personalities, seeks help from the British curator for realizing his religious ideals and dreams. Thus he asks the curator: “Where is the river? Fountain of wisdom, where fell the arrow?”²

The lama bows before the “law” within the museum. He pauses “before the great statue of a Bodhisat.” It seems like he is subordinated to the “law”, power, and control of the Empire. Here Kim turns to the prophet of Kipling’s Utopian British India. When the lama left the curator,

Kim followed like a shadow. What he had overheard excited him widely. This man was entirely new to all his experience, and he meant to investigate further: precisely as he would have investigated a new building or a strange festival in Lahore city. The lama was his trove, and he purposed to take possession. Kim’s mother had been Irish too.³

1- Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage 1994), p.179.

2- Kipling, p.8.

3- Ibid.pp.10-11.

The lama has lost his chela. Sometimes “he felt old, forlorn, and very empty.” So he urgently needs a chela and Kim would be an ideal disciple. When Kim asked the lama, “And whom didst thou worship within?” The lama retorted that he had worshipped none. He continued, “I bowed before the Excellent Law”. Therefore, Kim is the best one to be the guru’s chela.

The Empire is best ruled when the colonialist becomes the “shadow” of the natives, to direct them and to teach them. Kim plays the role of the investigator in British India. The lama like “a new building” or “a strange festival in Lahore city” is to be under imperial scrutiny and control. Kim is the one to manipulate him, to befriend him, show him the way, and protect him against native atrocity! This is a part of the imperial design to sympathize with native beliefs, traditions, and customs, as far as they are helpful to the Empire. The lama, for Kim who represents the British Indian system, is described as the treasure “trove” which is usually unknown to its owner. The lama thus turns to a metaphor to describe the whole colonial-imperial relationship. Kim discovers the lama: “This man was new to all his experiences, and he meant to investigate further.” In the same way, India like America was “discovered,” and since the British found it in a disorderly state, they annexed it to the British Empire. As India’s ownership was undetermined, it went to the Crown as a “trove!”

The last sentence of the last quote seems to be redundant, but it is really not. In the early pages of the novel the reader realizes that Kim’s parents are Irish. Now this sentence finishes with his parentage: “Kim’s mother had been Irish too.” This gives Kim the right to represent the colonial and be “one of us.” He is the surrogate of the Crown in India: “The lama was his trove, and he purposed to take possession.” So the task is done. His father and his mother are of white blood, he is quite friendly with the whole world, whether Eastern or Western: “he could lie like an oriental” and “he purposed to take possession” of India. This is the ideal formula imagined by the author

for ruling India, and Kim is the ideal character in this regard. What makes Kim “Friend of all the World” is his double-sided character. His parentage refers to his white side while his breeding in India his other side.

Kipling’s imagined India is based on Orientalism, which is at the service of colonial control. Orientalism’s major function is to produce different categories of knowledge about the natives. This knowledge may take various forms. One form emphasizes the static Oriental character. In *Kim*, for instance, derogatory stereotypes such as the babu are drawn and a large number of “statements of truth” have been stated about Orientals. Despite the fact that Kipling avoided clichés and stereotypes in his works, *Kim* is full of pejorative statements targeted at Orientals. Bennett’s statement negates all the stereotypical statements, which refer to the inferiority of the Orientals: “My experience is that one can never fathom the oriental mind.”¹ The same idea is repeated in Kipling’s verse: “You’ll never plumb the Oriental mind, and if you did, it isn’t worth the toil.”² It is quite possible that the human mind is indeed unfathomable in its smallest detail; but it is equally undesirable to stereotype the Oriental mind as disorderly, illogical and worthless. And this position is taken by the narrator and is not merely a single character’s point of view. This is the predominant air of the novel. Another instance, alluding to this orientalized attitude, is expressed by Colonel Creighton whose voice is the closest to the authorial voice: “The more one knows about natives the less one can say what they will or won’t do.”³

Another example of orientalized general truths about Orientals is the treatment of the always-untruthful Oriental! “Kim could lie like an oriental”, but “The English do eternally tell the truth.”⁴ Alas! Williams puts in

1- Ibid.p.77.

2- Williams, p.486.

3- Rudyard Kipling, *Rudyard Kipling’s Verse* (London: Definitive Edition, 1942), p.96.

4- Kipling, 1993, pp. 20, 121.

parentheses the point he makes in this regard:

It is perhaps worth setting beside these “truths” the fact that in the book it is the English who are involved in the perpetration of deception and lies on a massive scale, in the shape of the Secret Service.¹

Details are very deceptive. To exclude the inherently bestial and deceptive formulas designed for imperial domination is hardly a way of being truthful.

The aim of this short study has been to show that *Kim* is an outstanding contribution to the imagined and orientalized India. Therefore, the author of this novel has invented an ideal India that corresponds with the British Empire. Kipling is greatly indebted to the tradition of Orientalism. His close relationship to Orientalism proves the monolithic nature of its strategies. This is reinforced by Kipling’s narrative techniques, especially his narrative voice. The narrator has an omniscient point of view and this fact makes him aware of all happenings and secrets in the narrative. The control of the narrator and his knowledge overshadow the whole novel. This brings a feeling of safety, security, and domination for both the author and the British presence in the colony.

Kim who is of a bicultural, hybrid and displaced character defies any confining clear-cut definition. This anomalous character facilitates the shuttle between the two different worlds of the natives and the imperialists. Thus a Kim and an India of imagination are created that artistically and imperialistically fit into the Empire.

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