



## The Representation of India in Rudyard Kipling's Fiction

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### ABSTRACT

*Some writers in English literature were influenced by Indian culture or spirituality. Rudyard Kipling and E.M.Foster were leading among those. Especially Rudyard Kipling portrayed India in his works. Spending early years of his life he spent in India which influenced his mind and that he reflected it in his works. This research paper throws light on how Rudyard Kipling represented India in his fiction.*

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Rudyard Kipling is one of the few English writers who have written extensively on India. He spent his infant years in Bombay before he was sent to England with his sister to be educated. He recorded his earliest impressions of the streets of Bombay with his Portuguese Roman catholic ayah and Hindu bearer Meeta who often took him to Hindu temples. He thought and dreamt in Hindustani and spoke in English to his Mama and Papa only. In England, he stayed at the house of a retired naval officer where he underwent a calculated torture religious as well as scientific'. He recorded his experiences in one of his stories, "Baa, Baa, Black Sheep" very touchingly. He was treated almost like a 'moral leper.'

Later Kipling was educated at the United Services College at Westward Holl. The principal Mr. Cornell Price became instrumental in nurturing literary talents of Kipling. Mr. Cornell was a sort of intellectual elite who had connections with intellectuals and literary figures of London. Kipling made good use of Cornell's library reading voraciously. He suffered from isolation and feeling of loneliness.

India occupies a central position in Kipling's writings. India has a special place in his heart as he had spent his impressionable years of childhood and formative years of his young age in India. Therefore the main character in his works is India. He had seen India with her many faces in all her beauty power and truth. Kipling possessed insatiable curiosity, minute power of observation and photographic memory.

Rudyard's father Lockwood Kipling was the Principal of the School of Art in Bombay and young Rudyard learnt a lot about India from his father. Even Rudyard's father Lockwood Kipling was not free from prejudices that we usually find in white man's attitude. He failed to understand the basic aspects of Hindu mythology. He could not differentiate between the legends and reality. In his book 'Beast and Man in India' he makes many observations that smack of white man's prejudices against India. It is natural that these views influenced Rudyard also. Therefore many of Kipling's stories suffer from such prejudices and biases.

As a young journalist, Kipling was exposed to Indian realities. He called his life in India as "Seven Years' Hard." his parents and sister left for the Hills in summer, he was all alone in Lahore with its sickly heat. Though he had special problems of the people. He wants to explore the possibility of bestowing electoral institutions on the people. Here he meets Congress workers and people. Pagett after his experiences comes to

the conclusion that India is certainly very curious place. He dismisses Congress as the movement of a limited class, a microscopic minority. Here Kipling's portrayal of Indian people and politics of India are essentially prejudiced. His portrayal of the British is also the same as the views of imperialist. He believed that the British rule has a utility as it helped in maintaining law and order. He seems to hold like Churchill that India without the Britishers would not have been able to escape bandits, massacre, flood, famine and plague.

For Kipling, an Englishman is an emblem of authority, discipline, fidelity, devotion and fortitude. The soldiers and civilians are both empire builders. For him, public schools provided training for gentlemanly conduct and intellectual ability. The English civilians are hardworking people for whom work for the Empire is the only duty. Many died in India due to strange sickness but they went on working heroically. Kipling sings praise for such heroes 'William the Conqueror' is a different kind of story that celebrates work duty and pleasure that labour brings.

In Plain Tales from the Hills, Soldiers Three and We Willie Winkie, Kipling portrays Mrs. Hawksbee, the most wonderful woman in India who mends broken marriage, helps the eligible candidates to secure better posts and rescue innocent youngmen from the clutches of monstrous females. Here Simla is depicted with all its beauty as well as its sordid realities. 'The Man who would be King' is the story in which Kipling for the first time probes into the ugly sides of imperialism. The myth of civilizing factor of the British regime is unmasked. It is an authentic image of the British rule and its ulterior motives.

The Tomb of the Ancestors is a story with an accurate description of the 19th century imperial in India. It is about the Chinn, one of the English families that spent its time administering the central states and their relationships with the Bhils. Bhils were wild, shy people, full of superstitions. Centuries of oppression made them cruel thieves and cattle stealers. John Chinn's grandfather won their love and confidence by helping them. John Chinn like his grandfather goes to the Bhils and they take him as the reincarnation of the dead man. When the Government sends vaccinators to the Bhils to inoculate them against small pox, they resist. John Chinn manages to persuade them with his influence over them.

There are some stories by Kipling in which the landscape of India plays villainous role. The heat of the Indian summer turned the house into a house of torment. The City of the

Dreadful Night describes a hot night in Lahore where streets are littered with sleeping men who lay like sheeted corpses at night. The rainy season brought sicknesses in a row. When there is no rain, there is famine. Kipling describes famine in a very moving language.

"Here the people crawled to the side of the train, holding their little ones in their arms; and a loaded truck would be left behind, men and women clustering round and above it like ants by spilled honey."

Kipling has used Lahore, Simla and Himalayas as the backdrop of his stories besides Rajasthan, the Seonee Hills of Central India. In *The Miracle of Purun Bhagat*, Kipling is free from racial bias. He seems to have developed sympathy for the Hindu way of life. Puran Bhagat who was the Prime minister of Mohiniwala renounces the world and becomes a Sanyasi. He goes to the Himalayas and lives in an old temple subsisting on food brought by the people of the hills living in the valley. He befriends langurs, monkeys and Barasingh the big deer. He calls them 'brothers'. During an incessant rain, langurs and deer wake him up warning him of impending landslide. Bhagat, the man of meditation becomes the man of action and rushes down in torrential rain to save them. He manages to take them to safe place before the landslide buries the entire village. The people find him dead sitting cross-legged under a tree. Angus Wilson interprets the story as "a tribute to the western code of action rather than the Hindu way of passivity." However, this story certainly depicts, Kipling's changed image of India.

Kim can be considered Kipling's classic on India. Nirad Chaudhari called it 'the finest novel in the English language with an Indian theme, but also one of the greatest novels in spite of the theme.' The novel was written after 1889, the year of his departure from India. Here we find more balanced, matured and unprejudiced image of India. Kim is a story of a 14 year old Irish orphan brought up by a Eurasian woman and Teshoo Lama, the holy man from Tibet. Kim is in search of a great Red Bull on a Green field, while the Lama is in search of a river that washes away all sins. It can free a person from the wheel of life. Kim is nicknamed as the 'Little Friend of all the world.' Kim takes the Lama as his Guru. They travel together to the Himalayas. Kipling for the first time admits that pride and racial superiority must be shunned if one wants to know the soul of India.

The Lama is always in deep meditative mood ignoring the life around him. Kim on the other hand is excited to see the broad smiling river of life. He finds new people and new sights everywhere. Kipling succeeds amply in describing people of various walks of life very graphically. Kim enjoys all these

spectacles but the Lama never raises his eyes. He says that all these people are bound to the wheel of life. When they come across a snake, Kim's reaction is that of an average Westerner. He wants to pick up a stick and kill it like D.H. Lawrence in his poem 'Snake.' But Lama tells Kim that like all other creatures on earth, the snake is also bound upon the wheel of life. He says "Let him live out his life." He addresses the snake as brother and wishes him the earliest release from the bondage of life. Kim's response is typically Western while that of the Lama Buddhist. Kim belongs to the world of action but he appreciates the worth of meditation and compassion.

Kim's search comes to an end with his sighting the device of the Mavericks, the Great Red Bull on the background of Irish Green. He is caught by Father Bennet and his parentage is established. Kipling seems to have no sympathy with the missionaries as he calls them Church of England. His sympathy is with the Lama whom Father Victor calls 'a street beggar'.

One search ends for Kim but another search starts. His parentage is established but he wants to search for his identity. He is torn between "antithetical demands of East and West". There is a conflict between his genes and environment. Kim is sent to St. Xavier's to be trained as a Chairman for the Survey of India. When Mahbub Ali tells him, "once a Sahib, always a sahib", he replies, "I don't want to be a Sahib". He wants to remain just Kim. Kim studies at St. Xavier's but never forgets the simple, austere of life in the Himalayas.

At the end of the novel Kim realizes that the Lama's path of renunciation is not for him. But he had certainly taught him that "there is neither black nor white". As Kim's search ends, so does the search of the Lama. He gives up food and water, sits in meditation for two days and two nights. On second night, he tells Kim that his soul is free.

Angus Wilson remarks, "Kipling has established for the reader — and established with considerable dramatic effect — the contrast between the East, with its mysticism and sensuality."

In Kim, we find almost a complete change in Kipling's attitude towards India. He does not aim at contrasting the East and the West and prove the superiority of the West but he aims at the synthesis of the worldly and the saintly. He dwells on India with tenderness, nostalgia and profound understanding. Kim certainly proves to be a prose Odyssey of Hindustan.

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