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**COLONIALISM AND KIPLING'S
SHORT STORIES**

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The Imperialism of the late Victorian period went deeper than any political action or political theory. Its greatest exponent was not sir John Seeley, nor even Joseph Chamberlain, most notable of Colonial Secretaries. Imperialism was a sentiment rather than a policy; its foundations were moral rather than intellectual; its greatest exponent was Rudyard Kipling.

(D.C. Somervell: English Thought in the Nineteenth Century. London: Longman, 1929, p. 186.)

INTRODUCTION

Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) the Victorian Colonial writer was born in Bombay, India. He received part of his education at United Service College in England and returned to India in 1882. The India to which Kipling returned as a grown up was a land of hard work, poverty, heat, drought, fever and death. Different from his school friends who joined the army and the Civil Service, Kipling was debarred by his poor eyesight and had no alternative but to join the press.

He worked as a newsreporter and editor for the local newspapers: *The Pioneer* and *The Gazette*. According to *Something of Myself*, Kipling "represented fifty percent of the editorial staff". ⁽¹⁾ For five years he was on *The Gazette* where his duties included "more than [his] share", ⁽²⁾ of proof "reading and trying at least to verify references". ⁽³⁾ Even at *The Pioneer*, there were only three others with whom to share responsibility and in all probability Kipling himself wrote a number of the reviews. Kipling's experience in India was rich and supplied him with knowledge for his future career as a writer and endowed him with a sense of manhood and self-respect. It was also his Indian experience and his newspaper training which taught him his tight economy of style and turned him to short story writing which became his permanent literary medium. His work in the press offered him the facility of publishing and hence of being known in India and consequently in England. Most of Kipling's collections were first published in India before being published in England. Hence, it is important to consider the different newspapers and publishing houses in India, also Anglo-Indian literature and its audience.

Anglo-Indian newspapers, reviews and periodicals numbered several score by the 1880's. These played an important role in the transmission of the culture

literary endeavours. *Hickey's Gazette* was founded in Calcutta as early as 1780, the second wave of development in this field came in the 1830 when *The Pioneer*, *Bombay Times*, *Times of India* and *Friend of India* began publication. *The Bengal Annual* (1832) was the first important review, followed by the *Calcutta Literary Gazette* (1832) and *Kay's Calcutta Review* (1844). The significance of these publications was that they were entirely devoted to Indian subjects and Indian questions. Also *The Pioneer* newspaper published works by poets like Alfred Lyall (1835-1911), H.G.Keene (1781-1864) and *The Gazette* welcomed Kipling on its pages at the beginning of his writings. Both *The Gazette* and *The Pioneer* produced regular summaries of the contents of the more important reviews and the catalogues of the Provincial registers of books, published quarterly. All publishers were required by law to contribute regularly to these summaries since the Press and Registration Act of 1867. *The Pioneer*, for example, reviewed Kipling's *Italics* (29 October, 1884) and his *Departmental Duties* (6 July, 1886).

Other establishments helped the development of a local, autonomous culture. There were printers and publishers in the sub-continent from the eighteenth century. By Kipling's time, a wide variety of publishers succeeded in establishing themselves in India. The most important of these were Thacker and Spink (Calcutta and Bombay), Newman (Calcutta), Higginbotham (Madras), and Charles Wheeler (Allahabad), but there were a great number of smaller institutions such as Britannia (Calcutta) and the Pioneer publishing press (Allahabad). While these tended to be concentrated in the larger cities even the most far away and unlikely parts of India were publishing fiction. It was not until the 1850's that there was any significant challenge to the attractions of London as a place to publish. But certain works were published exclusively in India, confirming the argument that a distinctly Anglo-Indian audience had at large emerged . If a

work was particularly successful, the rights might be transferred to a London publisher. Kipling is the most famous example moving from Wheeler to Macmillan.

The growth of Anglo-India as a literary market is reflected in developments in the system of distribution of books as the century progressed. Metropolitan publishers such as Murray, Low and Chapman and Hall began to produce editions and lists specifically for sale in India and the colonies. By Kipling's time every large administrative centre had its bookshops. In Calcutta there were Thacker and Spink, Pettit, Newman and Brown; in Bombay, Cambridge and Cooper Madon; in Allahabad, Lyell. In the 1880's the major booksellers advertised for their books throughout India using newspapers such as *the Gazette* and *Pioneer*. These publications and booksellers played a key role in fostering a taste for Anglo-Indian literature. By the 1880's, however, the Gazette could congratulate itself that there was a sufficiently large demand in India itself to make the publication of a book in which the plot and the characters are all confined to India not altogether unprofitable or uninteresting.

The transmission of the Anglo-Indian literature was no doubt facilitated by social circumstances particular of the British Community. Many of the leading writers were distinguished and well known in other spheres of public life. This is true of, for example, Meadows Taylor (1808-1876), H.M. Durand (1812-1871), H.S. Cunningham (1814-1893) and Sir Alfred Lyall, who were all distinguished officials. Also, the relatively small-sized nature of the British community in India helped them to know of new writers in the field. In "a land where every circumstance and relation of a man's life is a public property" ⁽⁴⁾ as Kipling recalls in his autobiography, an event like publication could not pass unnoticed.

Actually the majority of Anglo-Indian writers chose to publish in England. This in itself might be considered an argument against the autonomy of Anglo-

Indian fiction. But while the commercial disadvantages of publishing in India were evidently an important consideration, this has no definitive bearing upon questions of the specificity of the literature. Since so much of the fiction devotes itself to educating the British reader about the real conditions of imperial rule, it was appropriate that it should be produced in and directed at the heart of its intended audience.

By Kipling's time Anglo-Indian literature began to identify itself as a specific audience. There was a great stimulus to literary activity in the sub-continent and affected its nature in different ways. Writers began to respond to the existence of separate audiences in India and England. Writers were a bit torn between their different readers in India and England; Kipling himself felt the same. To the British readers India was always pictured as part of the Gorgeous East where shawls, turbans, diamond necklaces and elephants prevail. Indian culture was also represented by writers as a compound of idolatory, necromancy and fabulous wealth. Writers before Kipling presented many historical improbabilities. Wilkie Collins represents India in *The Moonstone* (1868) as associated with treasure, hidden riches particularly the fabulous jewels:

A yellow Diamond- a fabulous gem in the native annals of India.

The earliest known traditions describe the stone as having been set in the forehead of the four-handed Indian God who typifies the Moon. Partly from its peculiar colour, partly from a superstition which represented it as feeling the influence of the deity whom it adorned, and growing and lessening in lustre with the waxing and waning of the moon, it first gained the name by which it continues to be known in India to this day-the name of *The Moonstone* ⁽⁵⁾

Collins' novel represents what the British people truly thought of India as a land of hidden riches to be ravished by the British. The novel begins by describing the gem and gives its history from the eleventh till the eighteenth century. Finally it

falls into the hands of the protagonist's cousin. The story is divided into First Period: The Loss of the Diamond, Second Period: The Discovery of the Truth, Third Period: The Finding of the Diamond. The novel mainly deals with the diamond and does not delve into the Indian society with its problems. It deals with the diamond as symbolical of India and the former's relation to England and the British people.

The Pioneer stated that the efforts of such Anglo-Indian writers as Wilkie Collins, had, however, done little to modify conventional metropolitan ideas about India. The paper was careful to state that "profound ignorance of Indian life and manners exists in England"(24 Feb, 1882, p2).

Kipling introduced to the reading public something new and different from his predecessors. He presented India as a land of reality not as part of the Gorgeous East where magic and mystery and romantic love prevail. Kipling presented India as a land of famine, disease and misery. Even superstitions and magic are not arrayed in mystery and glamour as his predecessors did, but they become part of the hard conditions under which Indians and British have to survive in India.

Many of the London Critics who first reviewed Kipling's work hailed him as something quite unique. J.M. Barrie referred to "The Eureka over his discovery".⁽⁶⁾ To Edmund Gosse, he was "a comet flaring across the sky".⁽⁷⁾ To S.R. Crocket, Kipling was "a new planet",⁽⁸⁾ and Dixon Scott was convinced that "a new star had arisen".⁽⁹⁾

Such critics and readers were all in agreement that the esoteric novelty of the world that Kipling presented was a paramount factor in his success. To Andrew

Lang, Kipling seemed to have ploughed an "unbroken field of actual romance", ⁽¹⁰⁾ and Sir Crocket hailed the young writer as "The Revealer of the East". ⁽¹¹⁾

On the other hand academic critics overlooked Kipling's achievements and tended to regard him as outside the main stream of the British literary tradition. In 1891, Henry James was the first to contribute a critical introduction to a column of Kipling's short stories in New York. James's attitude combined controlled enthusiasm with watchful waiting. He suggested that to a public largely ignorant or ill-informed about its eastern Empire, "India is a portentous' image". ⁽¹²⁾ Meanwhile, Edmund Gosse felt that Kipling's art represented "a new kind of terrible and enchanting pee show, and we crowd round him, begging for just one more look". ⁽¹³⁾

If Kipling's examination of the lot of the British soldier in India was his most startling innovation, other aspects of his world were hardly less surprising. Charles Whibley assured that Kipling knew "the native of India as he was never known before". ⁽¹⁴⁾ Mrs Oliphant hoped that a consequence of his writing would be to "roll away from us the veil which covers that vast and teeming world". ⁽¹⁵⁾

By the passage of time literary critics over-looked Kipling's achievements and tended to regard him as outside the main stream of British literary tradition. They assumed an air of mute, almost studied, indifference toward him and he rarely received the critical attention that is due to a first class short story writer. They regarded him as a poet of barracks-rooms and a composer of ballads and comic pieces, mainly a writer of amusing satirical verse which lacked philosophical or intellectual depth. Such critics would not be actually interested in a writer who presented to them the ugly side of British colonial policy. As Kipling in fact presented this dark side which after all the British elite and critics refused to acknowledge.

On the other hand there was an angry exchange of views between Robert Buchanan and Sir Walter Besant which is a clear example of the contradictory views on Kipling's political and social ideas. Robert Buchanan was against Kipling all through, whereas Walter Besant defended Kipling whole heartedly. Buchanan's attack on Kipling's colonialist views is portrayed in the former's essay "The Voice of the Hooligan". In this essay, as the title insinuates, Kipling represents the voice of the Hooligan" ⁽¹⁶⁾ namely the cult of cruelty and violence. In this essay Kipling is pictured as one riding the crest of a great back lash which is irresistibly sweeping civilization into barbarism. The British people, whom Kipling is siding with, are represented as barbaric occupying India and maltreating Indians. They even destroy Indian culture and civilization. What is worse, according to Buchanan is the attitude of Kipling who not only approves of this aggressive and inhuman attitude of the British but also propagates for it by celebrating it in his verse and prose. Kipling is hence contributing and enhancing British barbarism and uncivilized occupation of India.

On the other hand Walter Besant defends Kipling's views. Besant mainly centres in

his defence on Kipling's colonial ideology. He favours Kipling's political standards of judgments. These judgements include British superiority over Indian people and hence their hereditary right of ruling and governing the Indians. The British or White Men are the chosen superior race who are ordained by providence to fulfil their job or burden. This standard of judgement also includes the assumption that the British are in India for the welfare of the land and the people. Both, Buchanan and Besant judge Kipling's political colonial point of view without judging him as a short story writer.

In the years following the death of Kipling the same situation of the literary critics continued more or less unchanged. There is rarely a sustained piece of criticism written on Kipling during this period. Yet during that time T.S. Eliot was nearly the only one to revive an interest in Kipling. Eliot's well known introduction to his *Choice of Kipling verse* (1943) is an exception to the general denunciation of the writer. Eliot drew attention to the need of a candid revaluation of the achievement of Kipling whom he described as "the most inscrutable of authors"⁽¹⁷⁾.

Yet the unfavourable opinion of Kipling existing in the previous years prevailed. In the *Modern Short Story* (1943) Bates categorically declared Kipling to be an "execrable" poet who represents "a dying hierarchy, cruelty, violence and stupid complacency and reaction".⁽¹⁸⁾ Similarly, Rupert Croft Cooke in his *Rudyard Kipling* (1948) examines his achievements in terms of the all too familiar theme of British Imperialism. Critics were still centering on his political views and failed to take into account the artist and short story writer. Hence, one can rarely find complete and exclusive examinations of Kipling the writer and his literary achievements as a short story writer.

The purpose of my thesis is to examine the theme of colonialism in Rudyard Kipling's short stories. The aim is to explore Kipling the political figure, the cultural phenomenon besides Kipling the Victorian writer. A close study of the author's literary output shows that Kipling's art springs from his well established colonial ideas and attitudes all through his career.

The thesis is divided into an introduction, two parts and a conclusion. The introduction traces Kipling's beginnings as a newspaper editor and writer. Then it discusses the different reviews, newspapers and publishing houses in India. Attention is drawn to Anglo-Indian literature produced at the time and Kipling as different from other writers and how he was received by critical circles.

Part One is divided into 3 chapters.

Chapter One *Colonialism in India* explores the British Colonial presence in India and the basic motives for expansion namely economic, political and social. The first part of the chapter is a historical survey of British colonialism in India. It also discusses the important role played by the East India Company in opening the door for British Colonization in India. The Company's mission was facilitated by the long existing rivalries between the Muslims and Hindus who form the main social structure of the Indian Society. Missionaries helped in establishing a British rule although Indians refused to change their customs and habits. This refusal was clearly manifested in the Indian Mutiny of 1857. The British government used this Mutiny to consolidate their control over India. Progress in transportation helped also to shorten the distance between England and India and made the idea of the British Raj more concrete and highly appreciated. The British were convinced of their mission to civilize and control Indians. A brief account of Kipling's life, education and career as journalist and writer is given thus justifying his interest in India and preoccupation with the British rule. The Colonial concept figures high in Kipling's verse and prose. His life and upbringing triggered the sahib-consciousness in him which is always reflected in his works.

Chapter two *British Domination* presents Kipling's experience in India and how this influenced his career as a writer. Some short stories by Kipling reflecting the politically and historical sides of the Indian problems are examined. These stories show Kipling's view of the early British adventurers and missionaries, those who built up and established British Rule. The chapter also discusses the important role played by the soldiers who contributed to the building of the Empire. India is always presented by Kipling, as a hostile and different place of the British people. Hence, Kipling imposes a certain code of behaviour on his British characters and

their relations to Indians whether male or female. The chapter winds up with a comparison between Kipling's views of British-Indian relations and E.M. Forster's.

Chapter Three *Family and Social Relation* examines Kipling's views of the ruler-ruled relation with reference to some successful and unsuccessful attempts of reaching towards each other as reflected in the short stories. The chapter also explains the artificial British social life full of scandals and intrigues as portrayed in the Simla hill station stories. Also discussed is the important social role played by the club in the life of the British Civil Servants and the Soldiers. The roles played by British women in India in general and summer resorts in particular are examined. His female characters are divided mainly into two categories: The pleasure-seekers and the workers who side by side with men helped to establish British rule. Difficulties facing British families in India concerning the education and upbringing of their children are also examined. Except for servants and faithful tribesmen Indians are presented by Kipling as vengeful and ugly. The Bengali is satirized as an example of the educated Indian who dares to understand and hence asks for Indians right for independence.

Part two is mainly concerned with *Kipling the Artist*. It brings to focus Kipling's techniques in short story writing. Kipling's writings were governed at the beginning of his career in India by the newspaper "turnovers". It was mainly a criticism of the Victorian frivolous life that he saw implanted in India by the British community.

This chapter deals with Kipling mainly as a short story creative writer. His tales adopt various techniques: different types of narrators, significant names and titles, personification, symbolism are thoroughly examined with reference to his short stories.