

**Colonial Aspects in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim***  
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**المظاهر الكولونيالية في رواية "كيم" للكاتب البريطاني رديارد كبلنك**

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**الملخص**

رديارد كبلنك وهو كاتب مناصر للاستعمار يعتقد المذهب الذي ينص على أن مهمة تثقيف وتنوير البشرية يمكن أدراكها من خلال اعتماد استراتيجية صارمة ضد أولئك الذين يقعون تحت نير الاستعباد. كما أنه يؤمن بقوة وبضرورة قيام المحتل البريطاني المتحضر بمهمة أطعام والأعتناء بالسكان المحليين القابعين تحت الأحتلال والذين هم همج ومتخلفين من وجهة نظر الكاتب. والشيء الذي يجعل هذه الحقيقة أكثر فظاعة هي أن العلاقة بين المحتل والسكان المحليين قائمة بشكل رئيسي على سوء المعاملة والاستغلال. وهذه هي الصورة الحقيقية التي يحاول رديارد كبلنك اخفائها في رواياته المكرسة للتناء على رجال الأمبراطورية البريطانية. أن الحقيقة الأهم في روايات الكاتب كبلنك هي ان عملاء الامبراطورية يأتيون بالمقام الأول كونهم يساعدون المملكة على فهم السكان وبناء علاقة أفضل معهم ولذلك يمكن أعتبار الرواية (كيم) خير مثال يوضح هذه التصور.

**Abstract**

Rudyard Kipling, the pro- colonial writer, embraces the doctrine that the task of enlightening and civilizing the humankind could be attained only by using a tough strategy against those under the subjugation. He strongly believes that the civilized British colonizers should look after and supply food for the colonized indigenes who are uncivilized and savage in his viewpoint. What makes this fact more terrible is that the relationship between the subjugators and the natives is primarily dependent on maltreatment and utilization. And, this is the real image that Kipling tries to conceal through his novels which are mostly dedicated to praise the men of Empire. The most important fact in his narratives is that the spy of Empire comes first because he assists the Kingdom to understand the locals and to constitute a better link with them, and therefore, *Kim* can be regarded as a good example to illustrate this conception.

**Introduction**

**Kipling: A Pro- colonial Writer**

Rudyard Kipling is an imperial writer who produced literary works like *Kim*, as well as huge collections of stories like *The Jungle Book*, *Myriad* poems and letters. In reading him, one explores the philosophy and nature of Empire. Critics consider Kipling a keen supporter of the British Raj and superiority. They assume that Kipling bears an ambivalent attitude towards India and hence reassess his approach, nostalgia and love for India which is the place of his childhood. In this duality, Kipling is paradoxical since he is an advocate of *The White Man's Burden* to civilize the natives, and in this way, he justifies the superiority of the British over the indigenes. This imperial tendency is plainly demonstrated in his long narrative *Kim* (1901) which is one of the best prose works that justifies the awful deeds of British Empire. The novel speaks about the Orient's lack of sense of time and discipline in which the Indianized Westerner, Kim, recreates his own consciousness of Indian life. As one goes through the novel in question, he finds that Kipling, consciously or unconsciously acts as an imperialist supporter. Imperialism was not just the practice of the British Empire's acts of colonization of other lands and people; imperialism was a philosophy that assumed the superiority of British civilization and therefore the moral responsibility to bring their enlightened ways to the uncivilized people of the world.

In Kipling's works and life, the British Empire presupposes a top responsibility which he passes on to his readers. It is a positive force in the sense that it ordered and unified his creativity, and a negative one to the extent that it limits his perspective. In life, he seems to think of his imperialism as analogous to the earlier Roman Empire on the basis that its purpose was to maintain stability, order, and peace amongst the heathen, to relieve famine, provide medical assistance, to eliminate slavery, to construct the physical and the psychological groundwork for 'civilization', and to protect the mother country. For him, his imperialism is very much like a safe house in a chaotic world. And when the Empire eventually dissolved, many awful events occurred as those massacres which marked the partition of India, for instance. Kipling's doctrine is that his imperialism is based on political, racial, moral, and religious beliefs attempted to instill a feeling of British superiority as being primarily a moral responsibility that had to be maintained, defended, and protected from rival world powers and rebels.

Kipling regards the British culture as superior to the cultures of the subjugated nations with a moral duty to enlighten and civilize the savage world. This view is due to a number of political, racial, moral, and religious beliefs Kipling adheres to. Nevertheless, Kipling's conception the British hegemony is now regarded as illogical and imperfect. Kipling thinks that the ruled should be familiar with their low race and admit to be governed. Also, he thinks that colonialism cannot damage the ruled society because the social order; hence it is a moral task to rule the orient from in his canon. Kipling's dogma is that his type of imperialism is based on political, racial, moral, and religious belief which attempts to implant a sense that the British civilization is by no means superior to that one of the ruled for it has a moral burden to preserve, defended and protect the Empire from the competing world powers and revolutionaries. In his introduction to the novel, Said says that Kipling desires to instill his "dominating viewpoint" (Said, 1941: 10) by conceiving English domination as normal, useful, and even fated. From this standpoint, it is impossible for Kipling to observe that colonialism is the main cause for originating all the massive transformations in India.

### **Colonial Aspects in Rudyard Kipling's Kim**

The mixed culture Kipling experienced in his early childhood in India, and the years he spent in England led to his character which is divided by the Anglo-Indian community on one side and the Indian community on the other. For A. R. Sarath- Roy in his article 'Rudyard Kipling Seen through Hindu Eyes', Kipling is a basically a representative of the Occident and hence he is a supporter of colonial hegemony. He argues that, "The man as a man is an ingrate; the man as one of the conquering race is without chivalry and manliness when he ridicules a conquered nation" (1914: 271). But Kipling in his writings has no authority on India or the Indians simply because he is not biologically Indian or written in Hindi. The mere fact is that, "Kipling writes of the lives of his countrymen toiling under the parching sun, chafing under the discomforts of un-Europeanized and longing for the fogs of London and to be on the Greenhow Hill" (Sarath- Roy, 19014: 275).

Kipling always represents the Indian as an inferior person to an Englishman, whether that Englishman is a civilian of the Indian Civil Service, or a member of a low class. The reader cannot find conversations between natives in Hindi so he uses them as sources of data to compare; Kipling tends to make his indigenous and colonial characters alike use English language only. This fact can easily be traced in the ways a colonial author writes only to exaggerate the hardships and responsibilities of his fellow-countrymen working hard to build an empire. Writing to praise the colonial system through overstressing the ways wherein the colonizers face the dangers of climate, disease and intrigues to erect their empire is the top priority of the colonialist writer. Sarath- Roy continues to argue, "That Kipling has enhanced these dangers and hardships so abnormally is easy to understand... to be expected from so enthusiastic an imperialist" (Sarath- Roy, 1914: 278).

The colonial boy, who is both black and white, is aware of his nativity and colonial sense at the same time simply because he descends from an imperial origin. He is a Sahib, but participates in the

English cultural practices as well. This trait grants him the power to move between the two identities, cultures and communities but belong to neither.

As a colonialist and symbolic writer, Rudyard Kipling realizes that it is highly significant to utilize the Orient manifest the European desires. He, in fact, tends to study cultural distinctions between the colonizers and the colonized, and to show that the morals of the Occidentals are extremely effective on the part of the culture of the indigenes. Ashcroft et al, argues that *Kim*, “attempts to find syncretic solutions to the Manichean opposition of the colonizer and the colonized” (1995: 19). He goes on to argue that, “The symbolic text’s openness toward the Other is based on a greater awareness of potential identity and a heightened sense of the concrete socio-politico-cultural differences between self and Other”. (Ashcroft et al., 1995: 19) This signifies that Kipling allows his emotions and values as he develops socially in the foreign Indian society to express his assessment. In this sense, the novel can be read as a courageous attempt to overcome the barriers in socially dissimilar societies.

Colonial literature is the literary genre that studies all kinds of political injustice, cultural and racial hierarchies on which imperial hegemony is based. Accordingly, Kipling’s *Kim* is a colonial novel that perfectly illustrates this concept wherein the author shows his craft in varying degrees as he narrates the adventures of Kim to illustrate the British colonial supremacy.

Rudyard Kipling succeeds in introducing Kim as an oriental character who tries to overcome the barriers of racial differences. Ashcroft et al., argue that Kipling is able to achieve when he lets, “the emotions and values instilled in him during his social formation in an alien culture to inform his appraisals of the Other” (Ashcroft, et al., 1995: 22). In shedding some light on Kim’s religious views, the reader can see that they depend on oriental religions. A reader can also notice that he is a disciple of Lama who knows very little about Christianity. This clearly indicates that Kim, the protagonist of the novel, has a religiously- oriented bias. The author indirectly inspects Kim’s religious views by giving him the opportunity to ponder over his religious faith; he seems that he is totally distracted as he stops to wonder, “Who am I? Mussulman, Hindu, Jain, or Buddhist? That is hard knot.” (Kipling, 1901: 29). This indicates that he and most of the Orientals suffer because they do not carry a fixed identity due to the strong political and cultural effect of British hegemony.

As a colonial narrative, Kipling’s *Kim* has always proved to be a problem for the readers especially when they come to resolve the issue of Kim’s loyalty with the English authorities because they are unable to figure out whether Kipling regrets Kim’s involvement with the British or he sees it as an action that the hero likes to do. Edmund Wilson answers this question by claiming that, “the ending [of the novel] is a moral, artistic, and political failure, in which Kipling could not face the possibility of Kim proving disloyal to the British” (Ashcroft, et al., 2002: 175). Ashcroft, et al., continue the argument about the issue of Kim’s double loyalties saying, “According to Wilson, the crisis of loyalties invoked by Kim’s association with the Lama and his collaboration with the English is inadequately represented by Kipling. [He claims that] the conflict ‘comes to nothing’ and that ‘the two forces never really engage’” (2002: 29).

Kim introduces an example of a person who is characterized by a changeable nature because of imperial ideology and rule. He is a gifted spy who is skilled in disguising as a Muslim by wearing a Muslim dress and as a Hindu by putting on a Hindu one to explore Indian religions and cultures. Kim ability to change costumes that match every situation gives the chance to enter various social fields of Indian society. Kim is born and brought up in a local Indian community s enables him to make friends with the indigenes and this explains why, “he lived in a life wild as that of the Arabian Nights” (Kipling, 1901: 3). As a result, he is ready to accomplish his responsibilities as a colonial agent on the ground that he is aware of Indian culture and whereabouts as well as he can deal with local traditions, sayings, and dialects. He takes full advantage of his close relationships with both races to uncover a profound, alien world that does not seem enough clear to the colonizers and the readers of colonial literature.

Kipling, through the presentation of Kim's character as the prominent figure in the narrative, desires to show that there are mixed elements of British ruler with those of ruled Indians in terms of symbols. Kipling, here, believes in the necessity of the ruler - ruled relationship between the Indians and the British through illustrating that the question of Kim's different aspects of identity is very complicated, and this is why a paradoxical situation arises in the novel on the grounds that Kim is brought up in the native environment; yet he is very unhappy as a captive within a British military unit due to the strangeness of the surroundings as well as the reason of the European's treatment. This very well explains why Kim is proud of European decency for if he does not have European parents, he will not suffer from the exclusion of the European treatment.

Now, this becomes quite evident that the Occident colonizing origin has a clear prominent impact on Kipling's writings in the sense that the East is multicultural and cosmopolitan whereas the West is bicultural. This viewpoint resulted from Kipling's Western decency can be very much applied to his novel *Kim* to an extent that he embarks on describing his characters from a western point of view and from a western society though they are indigenes. Some scholars find out that this is an imperial-biased outlook in Kipling's *Kim* pointing to the fact that Indians do not find the identity of Kipling's characters as truly Indian. Kim and Hurree try to solve the problem of their double identity in the same way as the Europeans because both of them hold the author's ideas. Achis Nandy tries to clarify the intellectual world of Kipling in these words, "This other Orient was... beyond the dreary middle-class horizons of Kipling and his English contemporaries. They forced themselves and every bicultural Westerner to make his choice" (Nandy, 1999: 72).

Due to the fact that he biologically descends from British origin, Kipling is unquestionably a spokesman of the colonial system in India at that particular era. Therefore, he provides his readers with a picture of the prevailing opinions and prejudices that the Europeans had, and, as a result, prevented them from being interested in the Oriental views. Patrick Williams points to the frequent occurrence of stereotypes in the colonial literature and underlines them as "the principal mechanism in ideologies of discrimination and domination at work in colonialism" (Patrick, 481). This is pretty much factual, but it is more than that. It reveals the gap between the intellectual worlds of the Europeans and the natives and it was very improbable for an individual to escape completely from the attitudes and prejudices of the society he or she had grown up in. To sum up, Kim, for modern readers, is not a source of knowledge of the Indians but of the European thinking and a search for identity in a foreign country. This indicates that there are two components merged in Kim's character: Kipling's praise of Indian culture and his contentment that the British are the rightful rulers of the natives.

Another oriental figure that Kipling uses to express his colonial bias is the Lama. Kipling has the tendency to introduce the Lama as the most positive and enjoyable figure in the entire book simply because of his knowledge of the oriental religion, his respect for all living creatures as well as his love for children. These traits give him a feature of humanity that reduces the distance between the Lama as an oriental scholar and the European reader, especially the reader of the nineteenth century. It is also the character that embodies contemporary European views of a native still unspoiled by the European influences. Here, the character of the Lama is unique in the novel because he is the only protagonist among the other natives who is not exploited or used by the European colonizers. For Kipling, ethnicity is very important, therefore the Lama as an oriental fits into his world as somebody who should be ruled by the British, and his character is shaped according to this conception. The Lama accepts the progress brought by the British as this is observed in the scene when he travels on the train. Kipling indirectly explains to the reader that the Lama is an excellent scholar. He is a naive native who is not used to the advantages of civilization which would make his life easier. He has little knowledge of the railway, and has to be assisted by Kim because he knows how to buy a ticket. Kipling's scenes sometimes look simplified but there is racism hidden in the instances of harmony between the British and the Indians.

Though the Lama is portrayed as a positive native character; yet, he still may be seen as a stereotype, exactly like all the other indigent characters in the novel. Kipling portrays the Lama as a helpless character in a foreign part of India that he almost starves. The Author of *Kim* divides his characters according to the ethnicity, the natives are predisposed to belong to the culture inherited from the people of their ethnic nation and in this social environment, their positive features appear. Kipling concentrates on the Lama's dignity because he is related to the native culture and religion. He is most respected in the villages that he and Kim visit, but whenever he finds himself in the European surroundings or in relation to the British, he turns to be a dependent character comparable to a child. Kipling also presented the Lama as somebody extremely impractical, living outside the real world and not being able to understand the political events that happen around him. In his meeting with a native British soldier, it is the soldier who is dominant, the Lama shows all his ignorance of the different culture and politics and their dialogue is ridiculous because the necessary common knowledge to produce a dialogue is almost missing, so their communication is poor. It is exactly this type of dialogue that resembles a speech of a parent talking to a child. Another feature that Kipling identifies about the Lama is that he depicts him as an expert on religion, but in the more practical situations he behaves like a child that needs the European parent to help him. This indicates that The Lama is a native and the natives have, according to Kipling, the right to be ruled by the British, who are predisposed to this task. Hilton Brown expresses the same opinion. He argues that, according to Kipling, "the Real Indians, for all their excellence of heart, were in many ways backward and inefficient; if the Sahibs did not control their interests and spur them to higher achievement, who would?" (Brown, 1945: 59).

In *Kim*, Kipling shows his fondness for the native culture to its highest degree. But it is also a novel that enables the readers to see the boundaries between Kipling's pure admiration of the natives and his position as a representation of a British ruler. And, this is why he is very often criticized by adversaries of colonialism. The character of the Lama is definitely among the most amusing ones which displays Kipling's respect. Yet, he is a native and therefore ceases to be nothing but a subject to the British rule. For this reason the Lama, in Kipling's ethnic code system, is not an example of perfect racial equality. He is, then, no match the British hegemony.

On the whole, Kipling believes in the existence of a special law concerning the relationship between the British and the natives because, for him, the British should be the rulers and the natives have the right only to be ruled by the British. This law is available in Kipling's characters and it is not applied accidentally for it helps to create a world where each character assumes his or her place according to the ethnicity and other given characteristics. Therefore, it becomes apparent that Kipling's characters cannot choose their path. The other influence on the presentation of the characters is the author's genuine love for the Indian culture, as Nandy puts it, "the other voice of Kipling" (Nandy, 199: 70).

Various critics of colonialism highlight the negative influence of colonial thinking on Kipling's works and stereotypic characters appearing in his narratives. Yet, it would be misleading to see his literature only from this point of view. Kipling manipulates Kim as a tool to introduce the native culture of India and this is quite evident when he sums up this attitude in his statement that his home is "this great and beautiful land" [crowded with Indians] his people" (Kipling, 1901:182).

Kipling uses his talent very skillfully to make his novel without a centre plot with the aim at propagating for India and its people. Of course emphasis is laid on Kim more than the other characters for one simple reason: to celebrate India. This should not be taken to mean that the remaining other characters do not have their own importance, but all of this happens within the frame of the Indian country. Kipling, via introducing Kim while in search of his identity, is connected with the reader. He is in the process of a mission to discover the natives' characteristics as he understands them. Here, the author wants to convey a message that the beauty of India does not exclusively consist of extraordinary events or personalities, but it is embodied in the lives of common people, too. Kipling is such a gifted writer that he is capable of sympathizing and appreciating the natives' way of life. He believes that

everyday tasks no matter how ordinary they are as activities worth to be noticed with curiosity. Also, he can understand how the Indian locals feel when they accomplish their duties.

Childs, in his book *Modernism and the Post-Colonial Literature and Empire*, argues that “Kim is not a novel about merging British and Indian identities, but about fixing colonial ones through supporting one identity over the other” (50). This fact is verified in Kim’s utterance as he concludes that, “One must never forget that one is a Sahib, and that some day, when examinations are passed, one will command natives” (Kipling, 1901: 168). As the story proceeds, the readers can see that the minor characters contribute to a great deal to provide a clear overall picture of India. These characters are necessary for the elaboration of the domestic picture of India, even though they are not constructed well from the psychological point of view. They display aspects of life different from the search for identity; Kipling introduced them to focus on the magnificence and beauty of everyday experience of the Indian people. As C. S. Lewis claims,

with a few exceptions, imaginative literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had quietly omitted, or at least thrust into the background, the sort of thing which, in fact, occupies most of the waking hours of most men. [...] It was Kipling who first reclaimed for literature this enormous territory. (Lewis, 1947: 772)

Kipling thus successfully catches this everyday ordinary activity. The seemingly unimportant usual activities and dialogues of individuals can show the picture of India and the Indian life. When Kim speaks about himself, he at the same time characterizes the whole country. He declares that his home is the great and beautiful land of India. It was his home, but it was also the home of many more people represented by the minor characters. Kim makes this concept unquestionably obvious in his statement as he argues that his home is “this great and beautiful land [crowded with Indians] his people” (Kipling, *Kim* 182).

Kipling describes the world of the native India, but he also formulates its relations to the world of colonizers at the same time. He gives an image of an Indian city which supports the idea of distance between the civil servants and the native community. In *Kim*, the reader can notice a gap between the natives and the European officials. As a colonialist, Kipling admires the work of civil servants who bring European inventions and progress to the local indigenes, but he also points to the mistakes they make. Carrington, in *Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Work*, argues that, “the Native-Born is an appeal from the colonial born overseas for a little understanding on the part of his English brother” (1955: 259). This attitude can be found in *Kim* as well, especially when Kipling presents a scene in which Sahibs, the British colonizers, who are ignorant of Hindi, unintentionally offend the native Kim. It is a well-known presupposition that knowledge of a language consists of two parts: the first part is the knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary whereas the second one is that of the culture of the natives in connection with the appropriate usage of the language. The second part of this knowledge is challenging for a number of Europeans to acquire because they learn the language of the natives from books only. The Whites are uninterested in forming any social interaction with the indigenes for they believe that they are superior to the Indian natives. In the character of Kim, Kipling describes India as a mixture of old customs and traditional lifestyles of the native castes with the modern inventions and progress that are brought to the country by the British. Nevertheless, these two parts of everyday life of the natives are unmixed, or remain divided in an outstanding way. To illustrate this, Kipling mentions a contemporary and often repeated event when the natives are irritated by the conductor on a train, who wants to punch what they believe to be magic tickets. Kipling continues to prove that he is a true colonial agent by defending the British colonizers and justifying their ways of enlightening the ignorant Indians. This is done in the novel by attempting to show the character of Colonel Creighton, who embodies this contemporary belief in the British task to civilize the other nations and declares that there is no bigger sin than ignorance. He is portrayed as an ethnographer with respect to the native culture and knowledge of it and who believes that Sahibs should not look on the natives with contempt.

Kipling introduces India in two principle ways, firstly as a country of fascination, wonder and pleasure to please his colonial readers who want to know some facts about this strange place. And secondly, he wants to confirm to the same type of readers via projecting India as 'dark', 'wicked' and 'crooked', "of the validity of the British civilizing mission in the subcontinent" (Acheraïou, 2008: 74). In this case, Kipling indicates India's backwardness, and implicitly refers to the legitimacy of the colonialists' mission to civilize the savage Indians. In addition he points out the cultural and ethnic distinctions between the Orientals and Occidents. From the very outset, Kipling shows that there is some sort of close relationship between Kim and the local indigenes though he sometimes stresses the fact that they both have separate origins. He does this by means of repeating the fact that Kim white for the sake of assuring the reader that the hero of the narrative did not belong to the low race of the Indian natives.

*Kim* simply propagates imperialism by referring to the fact that the colonizers are incapable of telling the natives' stories or even have the desire to consider the everyday social issues and problems of the indigenes. They are only good at ridiculing directly or indirectly the local people's barbarism, darkness and backwardness. This image that the colonialists bear against the colonized prevents any attempt of attaining any form of sociable contact and finally leads to marginalize the natives. The colonialists exercise the authoritative power to govern the indigenous lives through a variety of ways, and language is one them. They authorize only the colonial English in everyday discourse by use of which Kim has to imitate the colonizers' language as he conveys his information of the Indian life. Acheraïou comments on this fact by saying that, "This mimetism renders the colonial agents' identities tautological and condemns their narratives of Otherness to repetition and stereotype" (2008: 76)

Generally, the novel examines the issue of colonialism through a number of characters, such as Kim, to give the concept of Britishness a new form. For one reason, the author wants to demonstrate that a British citizen is tied to cultural values which are different from the traditional ones that he or she celebrated in the British Isles. Kim tries to define his bond to the world of the British colonizers and the native population. This is where Kipling's opinions of the relationship between the native population and the British are most noticeable. The reason for that is that he believes that the British were the rightful rulers of India and the Indians should receive the benefits of civilization from them. In Kim's image of the Whites, there are strong elements of a ruler and a soldier. Kim is also a victim of the ruler's arrogance to the natives whose double identity is depicted from the standpoint of Kipling who is an educated British colonialist.

The novel, therefore, does not offer a study of the native population of India living in the period under the British colonial rule, but rather a picture of them created by the colonizers. This picture corresponds to Kipling's ideas that are formed in the environment of colonial power of the nineteenth century. To assert this fact, Hilton Brown argues that "he painted not the thing as he saw it, but the thing as he thought it should have been" (Brown, 1945: 66).

### **Conclusion**

In the end, comes to conclude that Kipling remains a spokesman for colonialism; he propagates the colonization of other indigenes' lands justifying that it is the white man's burden to civilize and enlighten the savage inhabitants who are, in his colonial perception, inferior to his English people. In *Kim*, it is obvious that Kipling does not regard colonialism as any type of disorder, exploitation, or even suppression of the Orientals, but as a way to economically develop and socially civilize India. Kipling further justifies this presupposition by using a number of characters for the sake of recommending and supporting the British hegemony. the study deduces that Kipling has a British colonial bias on the basis that he knows a number of Indian languages and is able to use many accents.

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