



TREATMENT OF INDIA IN RUDYARD KIPLING'S KIM AND IN E.M. FORSTER'S A PASSAGE TO INDIA : A COMPARATIVE STUDY

Indra Pal Singh

Former Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of English, University of Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, (Indian)
Email: indrapal1219@gmail.com

Abstract: In the foregoing paper an attempt has been made to examine the treatment of India by both Kipling and Forster. Which helps to establish similarities in attitude, and it also focuses on post-colonial trends. There is only one important aspect that seems to be common between Kim and A Passage to India which can be dubbed as the theme of social identity. In Kim, Kipling achieves his purpose through the promise that the only way to bridge the divide between nations and races is through the intermingling of social and culture values while Forster seems to highlight the social and cultural difference that prevented the Formation of friendship between the British officers and the Indian. The study has been limited only to one novel by each of the two i.e. Kim and A Passage to India. It has been attempted to see that both of them have tried to explore India – its people, geography, politics, society and its religions specially Buddhism and Hinduism in these novels.

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INTRODUCTION

Let it be pointed out here that a kind of nightmarish experience was a characteristic aspect of European life in the Colonies, and its presence has been examined in these two novels. It has been seen how racial fear was only a part of their experience; the cultural fear of the alien and the invader's fear of their subjects was more important causes.

It is natural that this aspect of colonial life should have occupied the mind of both Kipling and Forster. For example, in A Passage to India, Forster deals with a subject of colonial neurosis. The visit to the Marabar caves by Adela Quested and Mrs. Moore and their nightmarish experience during and after it are an important part of the novel's significance. Adela imagines that Aziz had tried to rape her in a cave. Forster suggests that Aziz didn't do so but he leaves vague what actually happened to Adela.

Kim is found to be unique among all the writings of Kipling in the sense that at least here Kipling has shown his genuine love for India by the side of his almost instinctive faith in the benevolent British Empire and his philosophic vision by the side of his open-mouthed advocacy for action. Thus Kim does not only present a realistic picture of contemporary India but also illustrates, to a considerable extent the deep-seated and the free mysticism of the East.

When he wrote A Passage to India, Forster had Kipling behind him. The novel is rooted in the colonial context, though its significance is not limited to it. The racial and social connections of characters, whether British or India, matter in his or her affairs within or outside his or her group, these connections matter in the conversation, actions, thoughts and feelings of everyone. The theme of race-relations looks more than the philosophical consideration and the latter forms an integral part of it. Forster doesn't rate philosophical matters as intrinsically more important than racial matters. In an imperial situation the importance of the 'ruling race' greatly exceeds their number. Thus Forster is right to present it as such.

The titles Kim and A Passage to India suggest that the latter should present a wide range of experience representative of the subcontinent and at the same time the view is that of birds of passage.

Kipling is not blind to Indian ways, but he does not go deep into them: even the Lama in Kim is a rather idealized priest. To render the speech of an alien people is not an easy problem. But the selected writers solve it, though Kipling is even at best a little crude. It is a most difficult when the focus is on the westernized section among those people and the westernized are portrayed in situation in which they speak varied form of English. Then the standard technique is for the writer to apprehend these varieties:

for example, Indian English in the case of Forster's Aziz.

Kipling and Forster were themselves members of the race which ruled India they present. Thus they wrote from privileged position. Their position must have affected their art. Kipling is said to suffer most from weaknesses to which writers in his kind of position are prone partly, because he is the least talented; he is at times imperial-minded and, at best, a liberal imperialist. No wonder, then that he has been dubbed as the most political'. But it may be pointed out here that when one forgets his other works and compares only Kim with A Passage to India, it is Forster rather than Kipling who becomes political. One must, however, also not close eyes to the openness with which Forster describes the Hindu festivities in the last part of A Passage to India.

Kipling, though a confirmed Imperialist, had seen India very closely and above all during the most impressionable period of his life. This gave him an insight into the Indian way of existence and he tries to grasp the moorings of Indian life through Lama. He approaches his subject with a conditioned mind but before soon his entire gamut of prejudices vanishes and he stands literally unmoored. Lama enters here to help him understand the real India and him with a perspective so diametrically opposed to his earlier writings. This perspective enabled Kipling to present external India elaborately but not without the descriptions of internal spirit attending on it. Kipling succeed because he takes India in entirely. Forster, though less inclined to the vice of imperialism than Kipling, approaches Indian way of life with characteristic Western attitude which of course is softened by his humanistic roots. He describes India, the Indian style of living and thinking, the racial conflicts between rulers and ruled, but when it comes to delving deep into the inner realities, or to understanding intrinsic meaning behind the external trapping, no body like Lama is there to make him grasp, the fact that 'mountains' are more 'illusion' and the ultimate reality constitutes in deeper vision. The Marabar caves give a sense of horror to the involved characters because no justifiable interpretation of the episode is possible in the absence of an interpreter like Lama. Both, Kipling and Forster have tried to capture India but with varying degree of success which depends upon such diverse attributes like mental approach so uniquely one's own and social instruments, though the creation of human mind get with an identity of their own. Kipling has not. But what matters in the ultimate analysis is that India fascinated them and this fascination has given the world two master pieces of all times.

Thus both these writers, travelled extensively in India. They were primarily interested in India socio-

cultural tradition, different religions and politics. And no doubt, Kim is one of the best works belonging to Pre-independent India which has touched the soul of India. On the other hand Forster's A Passage to India is a masterpiece of modern British fiction. And one can logically capsule that both these writers reflect the varied aspects, like the socio-economic problems, political issues, different religions and above all Indian culture in its totality.

TENDER IS THE NIGHT

Dick falls like Jay Gatsby partly because his innocent and moral ideals no longer apply to contemporary experience. Increasingly throughout the novel, Dick's public moralism is inappropriate in a new, more private world that he cannot understand. Although he is much less the smugly dense American than Mexico is, he never appreciates Tommy Barban's private justifications for wondering service as a mercenary soldier. Dick never understands the world of Mary North's Levantine second husband, or the cosmopolitan skepticism of the newer rebels like Lady Caroline Sibly-Biers, or, finally, the female nature of his wife, the new and revitalized Nicole, who successfully poses her, "unscrupulousness against his moralities. Despite all his external charm, Dick is too committed to the past, to an old American morality, ever to recognize fully the private separate particles of contemporary European life. At the point, Dick sees a party of middle aged American women who impress him as forming a cohesive unit, and he discovers that they are a group of goldstar mothers who have come to Europe to visit their son's graves:

Over his wine Dick at them again; in their happy faces, the dignity that surrounded and pervaded the party, he perceived all the maturity of an older America. For a while the sobered women who had come to mourn for their dead, for something they could not repair, made the room beautiful. Momentarily, he sat again on his father's knee, riding with Moseby while the old loyalties and devotions fought on around him. Almost with an effort he turned back to his two women at the table and faced the whole new world in which he believed. (TITN 58)

It is in this novel that the interlocking of money with vitality is most explicit. It is especially evident in Dick's growing subjection to Nicole: he is "inundated with a constant trickle of goods and money," and is led to reflect that despite himself he had been "swallowed up like a gigolo and somehow permitted his arsenal to be locked up in the warren safety deposit vaults" (TITN 65). Money here would appear in some obscure way to be the agent of feminine sexuality; by its means Dick, robbed of his male potency - the historical will to vocation, work, culture - has fallen into subjection to the natural female will to idleness and pleasure fitzgerald fails to stress

the fact, but it is Dick's Culpable folly in agreeing to marry his own patient which is the initial fault that sets in motion the entire process of involvement and degeneration, and it is interesting to note that, although he is made to hold out for some time, he is shown in the outcome as powerless to resist not the inducements of Nicole's bank balance but the sheer overwhelming vital force of her sexual attraction. The passage in which the virtual seduction of Dick by Nicole is described would be conclusive even were it not underlined by the character of his subsequent liaison with the ingenuous Rosemary transparently a recapitulation of the earlier experience in which again the woman is sexually the aggressor, employing an appealing childishness to captivate the male to whom she stands, in a relationship which is ambiguously filial and maternal. The principal defect of the novel, its one-sidedness which obstructs a truthful, total presentation of the situation, is the result of that of his hero which leads him to expose the flaw in Nicole to the full while passing silently over the flaw in Dick which leaves him so unaccountably open to victimization at her hands. In spite of this grave defect, a sharp eye may discern- clearly enough Dick's actual sub-terrene complicity with Nicole. It is hinted in a passage describing his emotions during one of her psychotic relapses: "some how Dick and Nicole had become one and equal not opposite and complementary. He could not watch her disintegrations without participating in them" (TITN 98). Since Nicole's condition is the consequence of physical reduction that Dick is unconsciously implicated in the incestuous regression which is at the root of her psychopathic condition. It is precisely the same incestuous regression which, in fact, determines the unconscious symbolism of *The Great Gatsby* a symbolism, however, which lacks space in present interpretation.

PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL LANDSCAPE

A fairly large number of short-stories written by Kipling are on the background of Indian sub-continent. He also wrote many poems on this background. But among all of his writings, his masterpiece novel *Kim*, published in the year 1901, is the most widely loved book. This novel has retained its popularity ever since its publication. Writing in the year 1901, Andrew Lang wrote about this novel:

Mr. Kipling in *Kim* in Cassell's magazine is once the Kipling who won our hearts. His theme is India, where he is always at his best; and we learn more of populace, the sects, the races, the Lamas, the sounds, sects and smell from a few pages than from libraries of learned authors.¹

About sixty years later, J.I.M. Stewart writes in almost similar vein:

Kim is not merely a picturesque book and not merely a dazzling exercise in the erotic picaresque either. It is a book filled with the poetry of being young in a world rejoicing in the divine abundance. If it is a novel that is a little less than a novel, so too is it a book for young reader that is much more than that.²

At first sight, *Kim* may appear as the story of an orphan white boy gone native cloak, he is indistinguishable from the natives of the soil. He uses his native cloak of invisibility and becomes a peerless secret service Agent. J.I.M. Stewart finds him, "sheerly and superbly a boy's dream boy and he is really that".³ It is his proud privilege even in his proud privilege even in his infant years to be thrilled by the words as "warn the Pindi and Peshawar brigades". His playthings are not dummy and insensate dolls but "a mother of pearl; nickel-plated, self extracting, 450 revolver" (*Kim* Pg.229). He is equally adept at driving cows from the mountain hut and Russian emissaries from the forbidden valleys of China and Busahar. These things are significant, but more significant are the fact that he never thinks that he belongs to the ruling class. He is too much a part and parcel of India to think in that light.

Incidentally, the Lama's great attachment to *Kim* is also to be considered. He pays for the education of *Kim*, forces him to bear with dignity the pangs of separation from him, "glorifies the values of education in glowing terms". At the time of parting, standing before the gates of learning, the Lama says,

Do not weep; for, look you all Desire is illusion. Go up to the Gate of learning. Let me see thee go.... Dost you love me? Then go, oh my heart cracks....(*Kim*. Pg.165)

The novel portrays the potentially tragic Conflict of sneer and faiths in the erstwhile British India. It can perhaps scarcely be denied that this conflict has been harmoniously resolved in this novel. The contemporary critic, Mark Kincaid Weeks, pays a glowing tribute to this novel in these words:

Kim is a triumph of exploratory vision. It is the answer to the nine-tenths of the charges labelled against Kipling and the refutation of most of the generalization about him.⁴

Lionel Trilling is, however, not satisfied with Kipling's portrait of India. He observes that:

Even here where his devotion to the Indian life is most fully expressed, he falsely represents the Indian.⁵

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