

Indian Perspectives in the Novel of Rudyard Kipling's "KIM"

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Abstract - Rudyard Kipling, being a versatile genius and man of literary talent, wrote on poetry, stories, novels, criticism and essays with all fluency and artistic pictures to be valued in life. His novel –Kim – presents him as a perfect artist and novelist who visions in it the life of India and Indian scenes that present the vivid and varied pictures of India in terms of the search of the soul in the light of religion and in search of the progress of life in the light of the mundane word: the search of the soul leads to the search of identity and the knowledge of spirituality; and, the search of progress or development leads to the search and findings of communications – roads, etc, and of joy which can be provided in life with worldly pleasures with the worldly gains and actions and adventures mingled with love that comes of spiritual life. This novel deals with the Indian perspectives linked with the philosophy of living life on a mid way & Nirwan based on Buddhistic ideas and on 'Action' and 'Love' of the teachings of the Gita which teaches devotion, humanity and complete surrender to Guru to have knowledge are essential.

Keywords - Genius, mundane, Nirwan, action, perspectives, communications, devotion, knowledge.

I. INTRODUCTION

Rudyard Kipling is a versatile genius. He is a man of brilliant talent. He is a great poet and fiction writer. He has been a traveler of the world also. In his writings, his pen has poured down the painful as well as the delightful experience of the peoples and persons of the world like a great artist. Being born in India, he went to England for education and experiences the manners and cultures of the people and other things of that land and came back to India. He has written about the place and people of that land also about the people and place of India in his writings like a traveller, Journalist or adventure. Besides poetry, he has written four novels - *The Light That Failed*, *The Naulahka*, *Captains Courageous* and *Kim*. *Kim* is his perfect novel and

Rudyard Kipling is at his best as an artist in it depicting the Indian perspectives by bringing astonishing realities located in the Indian rural culture and Indian religion pervaded in the Indian society of the different places with its marking values in religion, society, people and individual. In this way, *Kim* is a diasporic novel by the Indian diaspora – Rudyard Kipling.

Kim is a classic masterpiece by Rudyard Kipling. It is about many Indian perspectives present in India – in the places of India and among the people of India. It is about love and joy. It is about inhuman and human life. It is a story of a boy, Kim – who is the son of Kimball O' Hara an Irish man and officer in the Indian army. Kimball dies and leaves his son behind and he becomes an orphan. So Kim is an orphan boy. The presentation of these orphan boy is very realistic and vivid. As Kim is orphan, he is found moving in the bazaar of Lahore here and there having the blessings of the people of that place.

Neil Philip says about the theme of *Kim* that joy in life is one of the great distinguishing marks of Kipling's undoubted masterpiece, *Kim*. He also says that India in itself is the chief character in the book which is observed and sensed and touched by Kipling's precise streams of images of the rural side – "Swiftly the light gathered itself together, pained for an instant the faces and the cart – wheels and the bullocks horns as red as blood. Then the night fell, changing the touch of the air, drawing a low, even haze, like a gossamer veil of blue, across the face of the country and bringing out, keen and distinct, the smell of wood smoke and cattle and the good scent of wheaten cake cooked on ashes" [1].

II. Critics on *Kim*

In the words of Mrs. Manju Sen, *Kim* is Kipling's novel on adult life. It displays an all-embracing understanding of Indian's numerous races and a tolerance for the opposing creeds written without rancour or bitterness, but with love and good will.[2]

Nirad C. Chaudhuri says that *Kim* presents the biggest reality in India which is made up of the people and religions in the twin setting of the mountains and plains.

J.I.M. Stewart is also of the view that *Kim* is about love built on the picaresque narrative to a central figure – Kim. He also says that it presents the potentially tragic conflicts of races and faith that was British India. He further says that *Kim* presents an orphan, white boy gone native, and using his native cloak of invisibility to become a peerless Secret Service agent. [3]

Shanks has rightly observed that *Kim* is about the infinite and joyous variety of India for him who has eyes to see it and the heart to rejoice in it. Perhaps the key to it all is in the passage in which the old soldier conducts the Lama and Kim to the edge of the Grand Trunk Road:

“See, Holy one – the Great Road which is the backbone of all Hindustan. Far the most part it is shaded, as here, with four lines of trees; the middle road – all hard – takes the quick traffic. In the days before rail carriages the Sahibs travelled up and down here in hundreds. Now there are only country – carts and such like. Left and right is the rougher road for the heavy carts – grain and cotton and timber, bhoosa, lime and hides. A man goes in safety here – for at every few kos is a police station. This police are thieves and extortioners (I myself would patrol it with cavalry young recruits under a strong caption), but at least they do not suffer any rivals. All castes and kinds of men move here. Look! Brahmins and chamars, bankers and thinkers, barbers and bunnias, pilgrims and potters – all the world coming and going. It is to me as a river from which I am withdrawn like a long jump after a flood.

And truly the Grand Trunk Road is a wonderful spectacle. It runs straight, bearing without crowding India's traffic for fifteen hundred miles – such a river

of life as nowhere else exists in the world. They looked at the green arched, shade – flecked length of it, the white breadth speckled with slow – pacing folk; and the two – roomed police station opposite [4].”

M. Green says in the preface of *Kim* – “*Kim* (1901) is the most successful picture ever written on Indian life in the days when India formed part of the British Empire [5].”

Philip Mason in his book – Kipling: *The Glass, The Shadow and The Fire* – says, “*Kim* is not a fable. It can first be read for itself, as a series of clearly sketched figures moving against brilliant scenes from the India that Kipling remembered.”⁶ Mason also says that though *Kim* is about India in the broadest sense, it is also about identity. ‘Kim questions, ‘who is Kim-Kim-Kim?’ He asks this question to himself thrice and himself answer within is – “Now am I alone, all alone,” he thought, “In all India is no one so alone as I! If I die today, who shall bring the news – and to whom? If I live and God is good, there will be a price upon my head for I am Son of the Charm – I, Kim.”

“I am Kim. I am Kim. And what is Kim?” His soul repeated it again and again.

III. KIM: A METAPHOR OF COMMON INDIAN

Kim's self – questioning is not set against lakes and mountains but against the crowded millions of India, and there is a piquancy in this one tiny scrap of life asking such questions amidst the pullulating myriads – and scrap that enjoys the immediate impact of life with such vigour. And again, the Buddhist background adds something, the Lama looks for a means to rid him of that very identity that Kim wants to find as an anchorage of dwelling place. With Kipling, the mysterious nature of identity was to become more important as he grew older until in his last years; the point at which the personality disintegrates under strain becomes his main pre – occupation.”

India is a land of castes, creeds, races, religions and colors. In this novel, Kipling presents characters who do not believe in castes, creeds, races and colors. Such characters in this novel are Kim and his Guru Teshoo Lama.

Kim is a character who does not believe in castes. His mind runs between duty and devotion. He

thinks duty is essential but devotion is far Greater than duty. Devotion leads to love that binds each – other or one – another: When the Great Game is over, he thinks. “I owe to the Lama here. Also, to Mahbub Ali – also to Creighton Sahib, but chiefly to the Holy one. He is right – a Great and a wonderful world – and I am Kim-Kim-Kim-alone- one person – in the middle of it all. But I will see these strangers with their levels and chains...”

Kim demands eight annas from Mahbub. He tells Kim to have that from ‘Some Hindus in my tail? Upon this, Kim asks Mahbub: “Oh, Mahbub Ali, but am I a Hindu?”

And, when Mahbub asks Kim to remain like a Sahib among Sahibs and like a folk of Hind among Hindustanis, Kim asks to know his identity:

“What am I? Mussalman, Hindu, Jain or Buddhist. That is a hard knot.”

Kim and the Lama do not believe in caste, creed and colour. Kim tells the Jat in Jullundar: “We are beyond all castes.”

Lama considers Kim like that of Ananda, the brother disciple of the Lord Buddha. He considers him a faithful chela – disciple. He says, “Never was such a chela. I doubt at times whether Ananda more faithfully nursed our Lord...”

Lama gives a certificate to Kim when he has his talk with Mahbub Ali – “And never was such a Chela. Temperate, kindly, wise, of ungrudging disposition, a merry heart upon the road, never forget him, learned, truthful, courteous. Great is his reward!” Kim has all these virtues and qualities.

IV. KIM: A LIBERATED CHARACTER

Kim is a character who has been created by Kipling to show his development from a vagabond boy to a young man of duty and devotion and to a liberated man by the Lama.

The novel presents also the scenes of adventure done by the two-man characters-Kim and Teshoo Lama. Kim is a boy found in Lahore by Teshoo Lama who comes from Tibet to search the River Arrow in India. He is a Buddhist. He comes to India in search of the river which broke out of the Lord Buddha’s arrow which touched that place. This Abbot is out in search

of salvation, as he believes that whosoever washes in those waters of that pious river washes away or seen. He is one of the followers of the Middle Way. He is an Abbot of the Lung – chos Monastery. He meets the curator of the Wonder House in Lahore and sees their many relics and things connected with Lord Buddha and are impressed to see them. He decides to visit the four important places connected with life, death, salvation and knowledge. He talks with the Curator about the books of the lamasery and about Buddha’s arrow whose falling to a place gave birth to the river of knowledge and purification.

Lama believes that this world is a maya or an illusion. All the worldly things and matters are illusions and all desires lead to greed and fall in life.

Kim, a gully boy and orphan, becomes Lama’s friend there. He becomes Lama’s friend and provides him shelter, food and service to his old and weak body like a chela. He is also in search of the Red – Bull in the green field to have his recognition Lama, an old man, is unworldly and he does not believe in caste system, in high or low class. Both Lama and Kim make an adventurous from Ambala to Benares in the train and on the Grand – Trunk Road, where they have talks: with different persons of different cultures and places. Lama makes them understand his Middle Way and his search of the River of Arrow.

Kim who is in travel with the Lama comes one day near a regiment whose emblem is Red – Bull on a green field. Tempted with this sight, Kim crouches in the dark into the regiment and is caught by Bennet, the Chaplain of the regiment. Both of them struggle together and Kim’s amulet breaks open. Bennet reads the papers which fall out from the amulet and discover that Kim is Kimball O’ Hara’s son. Kim learns that the Red – Bull on the green field is the crest of his father’s regiment. Chaplain / Bennet wants to have Kim educated and later trained in his father’s profession. Kim avers the idea because he wants to live with his Guru only. But the Guru persuades him to except the arrangement, donates the necessary fees for his education at the best institution and returns to his forlorn quest. Kim agrees and takes help of Mahbub Ali who convinces the Colonel to take Kim for his British Secret Service. Kim is perfectly trained in this

service and test of the Great Game in which Kim comes out successful and is engaged in the department of Secret Service.

The travel of Kim and the Lama present their pictures of adventurers, knowing the cultures and customers of the people and places. Their adventure also gives an account of their search in which is seen the vary search of Kim who has found his Red – Bull on a green field.

This adventure has given an opportunity to learn in a school of Benares and the necessary provisions of Kim's education are met out by the kind Lama. At the same time Kim's finding of the regiment of the Red-Bull on a green field also helps him in his carrier so becoming a Secret Service Agent. The presentation of such incidents and pictures by the novelist provides the Indian attitudes and virtues of kindness and help, which are seen made for Kim.

The most heart touching and vivid Indian perspective has been drawn by Kipling in regard with Kim's living in Lahore and this presentation of his forms the very background of the novel. The picture is thus:

Kim, without parents, moved in the busy city of Lahore learning the things of the day there with self – reliance and friendly behaviors towards one and all, remaining always cautious of the attitudes of the people there. 'He lived in a life wild as that of the Arabian Nights, but missionaries and secretaries of charitable societies could not see the beauty of it. His nickname through the words was "Little Friend of all the World", [6] and very often, being lithe and in conspicuous, he executed commissions by night on the crowded housetops for sleek and shiny young men of fashion. It was intrigue, of course he knew that much.....

The sights and sounds of the women's world on the flat roofs, and the headlong flight from housetop to housetop under cover of the hot dark. Then there were holy men, ash smeared fakirs by their brick shrines under the trees at the river side, with whom he was quite familiar greeting them as they returned from begging-tours, and, when no one was by, eating from the same dish. The woman who looked after him insisted with tears that he should wear European

clothes – trousers, a shirt and a battered hat. Kim found it easier to slip into Hindu or Mohammedan garb when engaged on (181).

Besides the above the other Indian perspectives concerning the Secret Service and Regiment officers Creighton, Bennet, the Chaplain, Mr. Lugran and Father Victor, though officer – like, have been presented sympathetic to Kim.

Some ladies of high and low class have been presented also in *Kim*: the lady in Lahore who is kind to Kim for every help there, Sahiba who accompanied with Kim and Lama in travel from Lahore to Benares is a religious, hospitable and kind woman, a hill lady of Shamlegh with five husbands is also kind and helpful to Kim and Lama and a Kunjari who is also kind, religious and humorous helps Kim.

Mahbub Ali, a British Regiment agent and is found everywhere in the story. He helps and loves Kim. His shining role has been presented. Huree Babu is a spy. He is always humorous, polite, polished and tricky and he helps Kim and Lama.

V. CONCLUSION

Beside the pictures above the most Indian perspective has been presented by the realization of his soul by Lama who becomes free from the wheel of things by mingling with The Great Soul when he plunges into the river of the arrow at his feet in the hill. He is free from the birth and death and merges into the river of arrow which he has cherish to find. He does not keep himself to himself but comes to himself again to free the soul of his disciple-Kim. He does not live alone. He takes him with him in deliverance and salvation or Nirvan. The bond of Greater love between them makes the Middle Way surer and more perfect.

The vivid and realistic presentation of the Indian perspectives of the place and people and their cultures and habits along with the realization of the spirit or soul Great Soul made Kipling able in winning the Nobel Prize in 1907.

VI. REFERENCES

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