



VIDHYAYANA

An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

**The Impact of Imperialism in Rudyard Kipling's Kim and E.M. Forster's A Passage to
India: A Comparative Analysis**

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VIDHYAYANA

ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

The researcher aims to analyse the impact of Imperialism by comparing two novels: Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901) and E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924) In these two novels, the impact of Imperialism is mainly concerned with cultural aspects, economics, society and racism. It can be deduced from the relationship between literature and imperialism that literature is used as a means of promoting and spreading imperialism because it is an effective instrument for mind control. To this end, colonial discourses and imperialist ideas were integrated into literature by imperialist writers to make readers (colonised people) believe in the need for colonialism and imperialism to enlighten and civilise the country. This study presents fundamental concepts that have great significance and clarifies a great deal about how the imperialist system works and affects in the selected novels of Kipling and Forster.

Key Words: Imperialism, Post-colonialism, Colonisers, Colonised

Introduction

Colonialism's timescale was not universal, and it ranged from continent to continent. World history is full of examples of the expansion of one society and its occupation of the territory newly conquered. Like the Romans, the Moors, and the Ottomans, to name just a few of the most famous examples, the ancient Greeks set up colonies. From the fifteenth century to the twentieth, when countries such as France, Spain, Portugal and England colonised large parts of Africa, America and Asia, European colonial expansion dominated. So, colonialism is not limited to a particular time or place.

The definition of 'imperialism' often intersects with that of 'colonialism'. While these concepts are used interchangeably, a great deal has been said about the distinction between the two. Scholars have differentiated the ways of analysing colonialism and imperialism in postcolonial criticism. Edward Said, in his seminal essay *Culture and Imperialism* identifies imperialism as

the practise, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre



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ISSN 2454-8596

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ruling a distant territory and describes colonialism as “the implanting of settlements and distant territory” Colonialism is “almost always” a consequence of imperialism. (1)

Said stresses that while colonialism has largely ended in our time, “imperialism lingers where it has always been, in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic and social practises” (1). So, imperialism is a more general term in terms of ideology than practical colonialism.

Similarly, Robert Young argues, in his widely acclaimed study *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, that imperialism was typically driven from the metropolitan centre by ideology and that its main focus was on the assertion of state power. On the other hand, Young describes colonialism as a peripheral activity that was mainly economically driven. Colonialism, according to Young, was not an equal undertaking as imperialism was, but rather a pragmatic structure developed for settlement or trade. Consequently, Young concludes that “imperialism is susceptible to analysis as a concept and colonialism needs to be analysed primarily as a practise.” (3)

Young distinguishes between colonialism and imperialism, however the practise of colonialism is always necessarily a configuration of the empire's ideology, while the material practises of colonialism fuel the imperial ideology itself. So, the two terms, imperialism and colonialism will be used interchangeably for the purpose of this thesis.

As a nineteenth and twentieth century European mind-set, imperialism nurtured the belief in an unlimited expansion of territory, authority and power. The perception that the coloniser was superior and the colonised inferior justified the fact that this expansion was executed without the consent of an indigenous population. The idea of expansion was actually labelled as an act that would lead to the improvement of backward nations. A high-sounding liberal wording of civilization, development, and aid was the façade of



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ISSN 2454-8596

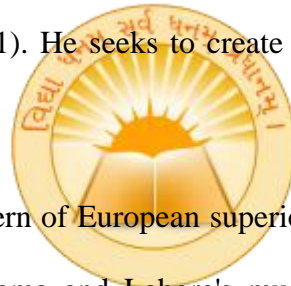
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the empire, but behind this white façade were imperialism-related violence, cruelty, and injustice.

Imperialism in Kim

Kim, a novel by Rudyard Kipling, contains a clear imperialist message. Kipling distorts the cultural situation of India throughout the novel to support the British presence in it. In order to demonstrate the supremacy of the British administrators, he presents a stereotypical description of the Indian people and presents them as inferior, passive, stupid, barbarous and weak, who need Western enlightenment. In this way, Kipling gives a portrayal of European superiority and native dependence through these contradictions and demonstrates British dominance over the natives. In *Kim*, Kipling gives the natives a derogatory stereotypical view to promote the British Empire's imperialist effort to control the Indians and reject the native authority, as he says "the English held the Punjab (Kim 1). He seeks to create a cultural distinction between the superior white males and the inferior Indians.



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Kipling attempts to provide a pattern of European superiority and native dependence throughout the novel. The confrontation between the Lama and Lahore's museum curator illustrates this. "The curator believes that his authority in the church is to teach the Lama, who is a wise Buddhist, as mentioned in *Kim*: "the work of European scholars who have identified the Holy Places of Buddhism with the help of these and a hundred other documents (8). Since the curator has knowledge of Indian rituals, by describing the Lama as helpless and needing help "as a child," he represents the role of superiority (8). The burden of an old man, the burden of the heavy food bag with the locked books " This is confirmed by Kipling in his statement that "Kim's shoulders bore all the weight of it" (276). He is also attempting to demonstrate how Indians need British support through:

Here is a new book of white English paper: here be sharpened pencils two and three—thick and thin, all good for a scribe. Now lend me thy spectacles. The



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ISSN 2454-8596

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Curator looked through them. They were heavily scratched, but the power was almost exactly that of his own pair, which he slid into the lama's hand, saying:
Try these (Kim 11).

The curator of the museum gives his spectacles and his English books to the Lama in the above excerpt. In this way, Kipling seeks to demonstrate the supremacy of British knowledge and power and how it is needed by natives. In order to impose British imperialist control over them, Kipling describes Indians as silent and helpless people and calls them the 'other'. He also believes that the British are rational and capable of true values, whereas, because of their beliefs, Indians are unable to rule themselves. As he mentions in Kim, "The Muslim Archbishop was over-arrogant and emphatic" (178).

Furthermore, by presenting a yogi as a poor man who needs compassion, Kipling embodies another impairment of natives. But in India, Yogis are honourable and holy persons. On the other hand, to impose their supremacy and dominance over them, the British people attribute deficiencies to the natives. In addition, Kipling states: "There is no such great sin as ignorance" (123). He focuses, therefore, on the need for knowledge to demonstrate the importance of British imperial authority. Similarly, to demonstrate that indigenous officials are tyrants, he says, "the police are thieves and extortioners" (59). He insists, therefore, on the need for British power to rule over the Indians.

In India, Western administrators exercised imperial hegemony, justifying their position by claiming that they provided the benefits of civilization on the basis of their cultural, ethnic and material superiority (Hossain & Rahman, 2013). Therefore, with the conviction that Indians are inferior races, the British came to India and that a strong European influence would illuminate the dark country. They have dealt with Indian culture as something of curiosity. It was viewed as backward and strange. Indian studies were also seen only as an aid to the British administration, as a source of the necessary knowledge to contribute to land control



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(11). Superiority and inferiority are two terms that are opposite. The East represents inferiority if the West represents superiority. It is clear that, as they viewed themselves as superior, the colonial writers wrote. They therefore defined the colonised, especially the Indians, as a barbaric and inferior person in their writings.

During the period of British rule on the Indian subcontinent, Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* can be interpreted as a work illustrating the absolute distinction between white and non-white. The book asserts the dominance of the white people over the natives. The various images and symbols in the novel therefore demonstrate European dominance and how the Western attitude towards colonial India is translated.

At the beginning of the novel, Kipling gives a symbol of British hegemony when he presents the boy Kim, who sits "in defiance of municipal orders, astride the gun Zam Zammah" (1). "In addition, as curator of the Museum of Anthropology in Lahore, there was an Englishman who was "given up to Indian arts and crafts, and anyone who sought wisdom could ask the curator to explain (3- 4). By presenting Kim as an example of British power over the Indians- the gun- and the English curator who controls the place of Knowledge, the inequality between the British and the Indians is illustrated.

In addition, Kipling presents the Lama, who believes in British knowledge, as an example of the East. To obtain information about the Holy River, the Lama turns to an English expert, who is an example of the West. Through this, it seems that the ignorant East is under the British wing to gain knowledge. This is more evident when the curator of the museum presents the Lama with his performances and a white notebook as a symbol of "consolidating the fairness and legitimacy of the benevolent sway of Britain" (Said 139).

"The flag of the Irish regiment" and "The Red Bull on a Green Field" (34), which symbolises the energy of the British and the passiveness of the Indians, is another symbol of British superiority and Indian



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weakness, and means "conquest and war against passive failures (211). Kipling presents the lama as a superstitious and ignorant holy man on a train trip to Umbala in the novel, who cannot even buy the ticket himself (Klass, 2011). He also gives an image of the positive British influence on the growth of India when the Sikh craftsman tells the Lama that the train "is the government's job" (Kipling, 1901, p. 27). Thus, Indians are inferior and uncivilised individuals, as stated in the novel, and any cultural or technological development in India is the gift of Britain.

Within the politics of Kipling, race, and racial superiority in particular, have a crucial role to play in explaining the 'hegemonic' relationship between Britain and its colonial subject. Through his protagonist Kim and the struggles, he encounters in finding or creating an identity for himself, Kipling attempts to represent this colonial relationship. In a number of places, due to its significance in the context of India being a colony run by men who were essentially white, Kim's 'white blood' is referred to. The main purpose of this chapter was to analyse in Kim's novel the way Rudyard Kipling portrayed Imperialism. "It concentrated in his book "Culture and Imperialism" on the analysis of the different attitudes of Imperialism in the novel through some extracts from Kim, the Western attitude towards India and the perspective of Edward Said, in order to highlight the imperialist discourse and how it was included in the novel to subject the "other. It can be concluded by the end of this chapter that the novel produced specific techniques that helped imperialists to control weak nations.

Imperialism in A Passage to India

E. M. Forster mainly criticises in *A Passage to India* how imperialism prohibits the creation of personal relations between the local indigenous people and the Anglo-Indians. When Mahmoud Ali and Hamidullah wonder "whether or not it is possible to be friends with an Englishman," the narrator introduces this notion right at the beginning (Forster 33). On the closing page, Forster responds to this speculation by saying, "No,



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ISSN 2454-8596

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not yet...." No, there isn't (316). This indicates that for political, hegemonic and prejudicial reasons, all attempts to create friendships under the British occupation are rendered impossible. By presenting a number of disadvantages when people attempt to interact in colonial India, Forster's argument against imperialism is made quite clear and convincing.

The novel projects the British colonisers as a community of prejudice and maliciousness whose slogan is to abuse and harm the indigenous people. With Mrs. Callendar, this attitude is clearly factual, as she argues, "The kindest thing one can do to a native is let him die" (48). The British, inflamed by racial bias, prejudice other races based on poignant presumptions rather than logical data evaluation. Consequently, by using irony, they make unreasonable judgments that the writer introduces. For example, when the British meet at the Club to discuss the arrest of Aziz for his allegedly attempted rape of Adela Quested, a British subject defends him by referring to him the month before as an unknown native with whom he plays polo: "Any native playing polo is okay." Such educated classes are what you have to stamp on (192). The reader, however, is aware that the anonymous person in this quote is Aziz himself.

Forster goes on to illustrate more ironic instances of the collar stud of Aziz. In a hasty sign of friendship, when Fielding is unable to find the one, he loses some time before the party, Aziz offers the former his own collar stud, pretending that it is an extra one. When Ronny Heaslop arrives to take Adela and Mrs. Moore back, he sees Aziz's collar hanging from his neck. "Aziz was beautifully dressed, from tie-pin to spats, but he had forgotten his back-collar stud, and there you have the Indian all over: lack of attention to detail; the basic slackness that the race reveals" (97). "But to attack all the Indians this time, Ronny continues his criticism: "Incredible, aren't they, even the best of them? Sooner or later, they all forget their back-collar studs" (110-11). Forster uses this satirical example to clearly indicate that without using logic to evaluate the facts, Ronny's prejudgment of Aziz as well as the entire Indian race stems from his narrow-minded and poignant presumptions. Thus, he ends up despising the Indians, and friendship becomes



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impossible as a result. "In his article written in 1922, Forster argues in defence of the Indians that it is unfair to loathe an Indian for forgetting a simple thing, such as a collar stud:

In the social sense, he was never introduced to the West, as to a possible friend. We threw grammar and neckties at him, and smiled when he wrongly put them on, that's all. (614).

Here, Forster criticises the racial arrogance of the British colonisers so that, while dealing with Indian indigenous people, he can urge them to show broadmindedness and understanding.

A number of critics say that Forster's criticism of prejudicial actions does not necessarily mean that he himself criticises imperialism. The novel assumes that the British colonisers are essentially unable to rectify their prejudicial outlook or rationally judge the facts. This type of attitude is authorised by Forster. Fielding, for example, makes this point quite obvious by arguing that, "Indians know whether they are liked or not-they cannot be fooled here...That is why, on sand, the British Empire rests. (258). Mrs. Moore, also shares her son's view as he allows the British colonisers to behave unpleasantly with the local Indians because it maintains justice. "She believes, "One touch of regret would have made him a different man, and the British Empire a different institution-not the canny substitute, but the true regret from the heart." (70). These points of view make Lionel Trilling conclude: "A Passage to India is not a radical novel..." It is not of concern to demonstrate that English should not at all be in India... The novel proceeds on an imperialistic premise." (150)

Kipling and Forster's Views on Imperialism: A Comparative Analysis

In his novel Kim, Rudyard Kipling treats the Oriental as a lower being. The Oriental tells lies, is accustomed to disorder, takes commission, and has no sense of time. There is little sympathy for Indian characters; the most is directed towards Teshoo Lama, whose mystical experience is at best reflected as exotic and esoteric.



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There is no sense of completeness to Kipling's picture of the Lama and his Buddhism, but it oscillates between fascination and indulgence. In the novel, the presence of the Sahibs is clear. As an affiliate of this class, Kim takes a course to be a scribe for the government of British India. In spite of his wanting him to become a spiritual seeker, the lama consents to this. India in Kim is picturesque, mystical and exotic, and British supervision is badly needed. The presence of the British is like a halo where natives stare and are defined according to their distance from their peripheral position to the centre.

In A Passage to India, the common theme of East-West relations is more sensibly reflected. His contempt for the Anglo-Indians is expressly contemplated by the author of this novel. Forster undermines the West's fundamental values. As an inefficient religion, he questions Christianity and Western civilization as an insufficient measure of evolution. In Kim, Father Victor and Bennett are indifferent to Christianity, but there is no alternative they can find. On the other hand, Forster is more straightforward regarding Christianity. He depicts it as a weak force.



Whilst the British Empire was well established, Kipling wrote his novel, Kim. So, he could express imperial themes and freely and openly relate to the imperial structure. Although in the air there was a voice of resistance, it was not well-heard. By giving a local colour to the imperial themes, the writer has managed to make it so. He has proved to be a master of the Indian scene and Indian character portrayals. His artistic talent made it possible for him to impose on the reader the Empire and take it for granted.

On the other hand, Forster felt the native resistance and, in his work, took it more seriously. He had no other choice but to be more sympathetic to the native, writing his novel at a later time. In the form of characterization, the nature of dialogue between Anglo-Indians and Indians, and in the narration as a whole, sympathy appeared. The native was given a voice, but that was an unequal voice; it was a step forward, nonetheless. The ingenuity of the condescending Anglo-Indians was exposed and criticised by Forster. He



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has not, however, exposed the Empire's underlying absurdity. His statement on the issue is limited to the natives' sympathetic treatment, not their liberation from British rule.

Conclusion

It can be deduced from the relationship between literature and imperialism that literature is used as a means of promoting and spreading imperialism because it is an effective instrument for mind control. To this end, colonial discourses and imperialist ideas were integrated into literature by imperialist writers to make readers (colonised people) believe in the need for colonialism and imperialism to enlighten and civilise the country. This study presents fundamental concepts that have great significance and clarifies a great deal about how the imperialist system works and affects in the selected novels of Kipling and Forster.



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