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Racial Inferiority Complex, Hybridity, & Colonial Anxiety in Kipling's *Kim*

Prof. Ahmad M.S. Abu Baker

Dean of the Faculty of Arts & Humanities, Department of English Language & Literature, Al al-Bayt University, Mafraq, Jordan

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Abstract: This paper highlights the inferiority complex that is instilled in the colonised races and the problem of hybridity by examining the character of Mohendro Lal Dutt (Hurree) in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*. It examines the process of rethinking Hurree's identity and the concomitant desire for erasing it to escape ethnic identity, skin-color, tradition and cultural identity. It also draws attention to Kipling's promotion of British colonisation as the best to rule India.

Keywords: Kinpling`s *Kim*, Colonizes, Skin-color, Identity, British..

The main objective of this article is to draw the reader's attention to the inferiority complex that is instilled in the colonised races and to the problem of hybridity by examining the character of Mohendro Lal Dutt (Hurree). The article also draws attention to the British colonial propaganda that promotes them as the best to rule India. According to Calvin Hall, "Race prejudice is often due to predicate thinking" (Hall, 1954). In Kipling's *Kim*, it seems that "predicate thinking" governs race relations especially between the English and the Indians. Huree assumes a certain (genetic) superiority in the British who share his negative ethnic conception of himself.

Hurree is an M.A. holder from Calcutta University (P.248) who believes he is a "Herbert Spencerian" (P.319) and "dreams of Bengali Gods, University text-books of education, and the Royal Society, London, England" (P.383). Hurree attempts to 'immerse' himself in the English culture to the extent of dreaming about it. However, "Bengali Gods" invade his dream thus indicating his inability to escape his culture. Similarly, he thinks of Huneefa's work from an English perspective as "ventriloquy", though he remains careful not to step in her shadow because "[w]itches … can lay hold of the heels of a man's soul if he does that" (P.259). Hence, he remains caught between his Indian culture and that of the English and desires the English culture but cannot totally 'erase' his Indian one.

Hurree suffers from an inferiority complex and is aware that people "mock at his race" (P.383) – a matter that is evident when he complains that he is "unfortunately Asiatic, which is a serious detriment in some respects" (P.319). Such a statement reveals his wish to be of another race (the white race). Kim considers him "a beast of wonder" (Pp.401-02), and though Hurree teaches Kim, he is not allowed to feel superior to him. Shanks maintains that the relation between the two characters "*is because it must be*, because that is the way in which things can best be made to work, the same as that of Baloo the bear and Bagheera the panther towards Mowgli" (Shanks, 1970). In Kipling's India, Indian characters cannot have supremacy over white ones, and white characters that are not colony-born cannot have supremacy over those that are.

Kim juxtaposes the cultural differences between the 'white' 'Christian' and 'civilised' British colonisers and the 'black' 'heathen' and 'savage' native Indians. Said notes the presence of a complete "division between white and non-white, in India and elsewhere". He claims that "Kipling could no more have questioned that difference, and the right of the white European to rule, than he would have argued with the Himalayas" (Said, 1989). Kipling could not "rid himself of that obsession, *driven* into the minds of all Englishmen who went East before the War, that a *denial* of racial superiority was the one *deadly sin*" (Rubin, 1986). Garrat also notes that "Kipling allowed himself the most astounding generalizations about Indian duplicity and mendacity, or the physical cowardice of certain races" (Rubin, 1986). Indeed, Kipling calls for a realisation of the 'genetic' differences between white Sahibs and Indians. This racist colonial discourse

***Corresponding Author:** Prof. Ahmad M.S. Abu Baker

renders the natives a genetically 'inferior' race incapable of living without the presence of the colonisers.

Peter Childs maintains that the colonised people who learn English and adopt the British model function "as a buffer between the colonisers and the Indian people" (Childs, 1999). Babington Macaulay defines these "mimic men" as "a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect" (Anderson, 1991). Further, Memmi explains that the colonised attempts to imitate the coloniser to "the point of disappearing in him" (Memmi, 1991). Hall also claims that "[w]hen a person has lost or cannot possess a cathected object, he may attempt to recover or secure it by making himself like the object" (Hall, 1954). Hurree strives to imitate the superior model of the colonisers' culture but fails. Kipling mocks such Indians who try to "copy English customs" (P.21) and who speak "bad" English (P.92) – which is but another way for Kipling to emphasise the native's inability to escape his nativity.

All colonisers legitimise colonisation and think they can "deal with the Orientals" (P.341) better than other colonisers. Singh maintains that the Englishmen and their women in India "thought highly of themselves and of the natives with contempt" (Singh, 1974). He explains that "[t]hey made money in India, enjoyed themselves mightily, and abused India heartily." The Anglo-Indians simultaneously consider "themselves as exiles who had made enormous sacrifices for the good of the natives" (*ibid*, P.83). Sunderland admits that Kipling "believed *unswervingly in the abyss* which separated men through border, breed and birth, and of which East and West was only one respect" (Sunderland, P.41, my italics). She also claims that Kipling "believed in the possibility of achieving momentary common ground through mutually recognized values", a belief that formed "the basis of his concept of hierarchy" (*ibid.*, P.41). A hierarchy serves to legitimise the colonisers' presence in India and serves as a moral mask under which their 'uncivilised' and 'inhuman' practices towards the colonised race are done.

Kipling dreams of an ideal India, a "Kim's India, where everyone would coexist so peacefully were it not for the trouble-making of foreigners jealous of Britain's achievements" (Williams & Chrisman, 1994). He believes that the English are the best who can rule India. Said remarks that "for him [Kipling] it was India's best destiny to be ruled by England" (Said, 1989). Said also suggests that Kipling was not only writing "from the dominating view point of a white man describing a colonial possession, but also from the perspective of a massive colonial system" that "had acquired the status almost of a fact of nature" (Said, 1989).

Kipling is worried that the British colonial presence in India that has lasted for over three-centuries will be replaced by another colonial presence – the Russians' in this case. Historically speaking, Russia and Britain maintained either strong warm alliances or bitter cold relations. The competition between these two imperialistic powers escalated when Catherine of Russia "sent 20,000 men via Persia and Thibet to fight" the British in India. Edward Crankshaw claims that Catherine's action caused "the hardening of the uneasy relations between Britain and Russia which were inaugurated by George I and Peter the Great, and which have persisted down to the present day." He also refers to a "latent Russophobia" which eventually "found support in the sphere of politics" (Crankshaw, 1944).

The Russian threat to the British colonial regime is of great significance here. The dominant hierarchy or regime, the British colonial regime in this case, challenges itself by presenting a certain threat to its stability such as the Russian threat. After crushing it, the colonial regime reasserts its dominance more than before. Subsequently, the anti-British pro-Russian Indians would fear the wrath of the undefeatable British regime. The challenge also has a cathartic effect for anti-British Indians since it allows them to defy the regime. However, defying the regime means exposing themselves to it only to end up being crushed by its wheels. Ngügï explains that in a colonial context the "[p]ossibilities of triumph or victory are seen as remote, ridiculous dreams. The intended results are despair, despondency and a collective death-wish" (Wa Thiong'o, 1986). Kipling expects the Indians to stop dreaming of independence and be content with the British colonisers who know how to deal with Indians better than other colonisers such as the Russians whom Hurree helps though he is serving the British Secret Service.

The strength of the British colonial regime is emphasised in the Ressaldar's words on the days of the 'Mutiny' (Pp.73-78). He, an old Indian soldier, mentions the massacres that followed the 'mutiny', which made him see the British as Gods that should not be disturbed. He describes the "madness that took place" (P.80). Said claims that Kipling tries to undermine the Indian Mutiny. To him, the "reduction" of "Indian resentment to 'madness'", the depiction of "Indian resistance … to British insensitivity as 'madness'", and the "representation" of "Indian actions as mainly the decision to kill British women and children" are "not merely *innocent reductions* of the nationalist Indian case against the British, but *tendentious* ones" (Said, 1989). The British revenge to the Mutiny was so massive that "[a]ll earth knew, and trembled!" (P.81). Through their "thunder and lightning" (Conrad, 2002), the colonisers make the natives see them as gods. The historian C. C. Eldridge remarks that during the mutiny "[t]he British public was fed on stories of gruesome sepoy and atrocities … But

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the British vengeance was also terrible." He claims that "[f]ates worse than death were devised. Frantic Muslims were sewn into pigskins before execution. Indians … were shot from the mouths of cannons" (Sunderland, 1989).

Indeed, colonisation instills fear into the colonised by giving them a bloody punishment which makes them think twice before they dare defy the colonial regime again. Eyre also notes that "it was not thought necessary … to appoint a commission of enquiry to rake up and parade before the world every allegation of injury" the Indians made. These allegations are not "necessary" because they are made by "an *ignorant and excitable population*, in many respects *little removed from savages*, whose *habit* is untruthfulness, and vindictive at having been foiled in recent rebellion" (*ibid.*, P.3, my italics). Here, too, the Indians, as any other colonised race, are stereotyped as savages, ignorant, liars, and liable to 'eruption'.

The lama asks the Ressaldar to "[e]nter now upon the Middle Way which is path to freedom. Hear the Most Excellent Law, and do not follow dreams" (P.78). He believes that if people were followers of the Middle Way, there would not be any such bloody conflict. Kipling uses the discourse of the "Middle Way" and Buddhism to serve his colonial interests. The Indians are asked to detach themselves from the mundane world, illusions, desires, ignorance, anger, lust and evil because "all Desire is red and evil" (P.131). The lama's Middle Way is an escape from the "great and terrible world" (P.95). Hence, the colonised are asked to stop participating in history and to leave things rolling in the colonial "Wheel of Things". Kipling implies that the colonisers are 'genetically' capable of running the "Wheel", unlike the 'genetically' incompetent and lazy colonised who should be deprived of "*all the chances of human life*" (P.274, my italics).

To Kipling, other colonisers (whether French, Russian or even the 'imported' British) are incapable of running the "Wheel of Things". The "*strange* Sahibs [Russians] have threatened them [native servants] with rifles" (P.337 my italics). Russians are ignorant of the natives' ways of life. They are probably 'genetically' different from their British counterparts:

> The Englishman is not, as a rule, familiar with the Asiatic, but he would not strike across the wrist a kindly Babu who had accidentally upset a *Kilta* with a red oilskin top. On the other hand, he would not press drink upon a Babu were he never so friendly, nor would he invite him to meat. The strangers did all these things, and asked many questions, — *about women mostly*, — to which Hurree returned gay and unstudied answers. (P.338, third italics mine)

The Russians are "strangers" since they do not belong in India whereas the British do. They do not know how to deal with the Indians like the English. Further, they hit the lama on the face after tearing his drawing of the Wheel of Things, an incident that made the natives fear the gods' punishment and desire revenge for him.

The Russians, like the natives, have nothing on their minds except 'women', but the Russians retain a higher status than the natives in the colonial hierarchy. Hurree, too, knows that he is inferior to all Europeans. Therefore, "the Babu led the way down the slopes— walking ahead of the coolies in pride; walking behind the foreigners in humility" (P.340). However, the Russians' main interest in women removes the slash in the binary opposite of Russians/Natives. As a result, the structure that separated these two opposites collapses thus making the Russians as incompetent as the natives when it comes to running the Wheel of Things. Their flawed character puts them in sharp contrast with Kim who is taught that women are a hindrance to the Great Game.

Another flaw in the Russian characters is that "no Sahib in his senses would follow a Bengal's advice" (P.340). They follow Hurree's advice. Hence, he made the hill-people believe that "Russians are all beggars" (P.400), a matter that will affect their receptiveness among the colonised as 'desirable' future colonisers. Further, they are not confident of their imperial power. Hence, "they will walk away as far to the East as possible— just to show that they were never among the Western States" (P.333). Their inconfidence becomes another bad 'propaganda' that suggests their inability to defend India from foreign invasion. More to the point, the Russians know the risk that awaits them in dealing with an imperial power like Britain. They boast, "[y]es! to fight a fellow-Continental in our game is something. There is a risk attached, but these people [Indians]—bah! It is too easy" (P.339). They too think of the Indians with contempt.

Kipling promotes the idea that the colony-born British are the ones who should rule India, because they are familiar with the natives' way of life. To Said, this is "Kipling's way of demonstrating that natives accept colonial rule, so long as it is the *right kind* of rule". He states that "European imperialism made itself more palatable to itself". Having Indian characters "express assent to the outsider's knowledge and power, while implicitly accepting European judgement on the undeveloped, backward or degenerate nature of native society" serves European imperialism's "self-image" (Said, 1989). Hence, Indian characters are made to emphasise how understanding the colony-born British are of their customs.

The Kulu widow's remarks on the English soldier are a case in point. The soldier, an embodiment of colonisation, was suckled by a "pahareen". To the widow, he is the right "sort" of coloniser. She claims that such English soldiers are "the *sort* to oversee

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justice. They know the land and the customs of the land", whereas "others, all new from Europe, suckled by white women and learning our tongues from books, are *worse* than *pestilence*. They do harm to kings" (P.107, my italics). Clearly her words promote the British colony-born colonisers over the imported ones. Another example is Lurgan's tolerance of the Hindu boy who tried to poison him, whereas "a genuine imported Sahib from England would have a great to do over this tale" (P.215). An "imported" Sahib would probably beat, torture, prison or even kill the boy for trying to poison him. Lurgan, however, does nothing about it because he knows the land and its customs.

In addition, Kim tells to an extortionist policeman. He tells him a story of another policeman who took money from people and told them it was the Sirakar's order. "Then came an Englishman and broke his head" (P.85). Said explains that even Mahbub Ali "is represented as happy with British rule, and even a collaborator with it" (Said, 1989). The English are depicted as the ones to "oversee" justice. How can they not be the ones, if even their prisoners are described as having a "*full* stomach and *shiny* skin to prove that the Government fed its prisoners *better* than most honest men could feed themselves" (P.86, my italics)? Further, the lama feels the need for him in his search since "no white man knows the land and the customs of the land" as he does (P.128). In addition, he is amazed by Kim's vast knowledge and asks him, "What dost thou not know of this world?" (P.116-117). These qualities make him a perfect spy and a perfect British collaborator.

Ethnology is mobilised by colonisation to guarantee the stability of the colonial regime. Williams remarks that "regardless of the way in which they operated in conjunction with colonialism, the new nineteenth-century sciences of ethnology and anthropology might aspire to a 'pure', impartial form will not stand scrutiny" (Williams & Chrisman, 1994). Further, Said notes that "since the mid-nineteenth century anthropologists and ethnologists were also advisors to colonial rulers on the manners and mores of the native people to be ruled" (Said, 1989). To him, "knowledge of subject races or Orientals is what makes their management easy and profitable; knowledge gives power" (Hubel, 1996). More to the point, Christine Bolt states that "both racist bias and the desire for knowledge as socio-political control were built into them [ethnology and anthropology] from the very first" (Williams & Chrisman, 1994). The novel demonstrates the role of Ethnology in managing the natives by gathering information about them.

Colonel Creighton is the head of Ethnological Survey. Under his patronage, all spies are trained. He uses the knowledge of ethnic groups, castes, and religions to create excellent spies. These spies can mingle in any ethnic group or caste, get the desired information, and leave without being suspected. For instance, Lurgan "made Kim learn whole chapters of the Koran by heart, till he could deliver them with the very roll and cadence of a mullah". He also teaches him to write "charms on parchment" (P.241). Further, he "would explain … how such and such a caste talked, or walked, or coughed, or spat, or sneezed, and … the 'why of everything'" (P.226). These skills are necessary to make the spy's disguise complete in appearance and in content. Otherwise, if Kim "spits, or sneezes, or sits other than as the people do whom he watches, he may be slain" (P.183). The use of Ethnology by the Secret Service demonstrates that having a 'pure' Ethnological science free from the grip of colonisation is impossible.

More to the point, E.23 manages to steal a letter which a Moslem Archbishop sent to a young prince (P.246). E.23 would not have succeeded were he not trained to disguise as a Muslim or as a Hindu or as a beggar, etc. This letter will probably be used later to twist the arm of the prince, to blackmail him, and to exert a political pressure on him to guarantee his total subordination. Further, Hurree Babu is an embodiment of "Colonial Ethnology". He published a few articles in the *Asiatic Quarterly Review* (P.258). He wishes to quit the Secret Service to be "on the Ethnological side" (P.248). The word "side" suggests that colonisation and Ethnology are, so to speak, two sides for one coin.

The aforementioned discussions on the *genetic* superiority of British colonisers over other types of colonisers reveal Kipling's promotion of British colonisers as the best ones to rule India, not the Russians. Under the effect of alcohol, Hurree becomes "thickly treasonous" (P.338) and expresses his repressed feelings about the British "Government which had *forced* upon him a white man's education and neglected to supply him with a white man's salary" and weeps for "the miseries of his land" as he "babbled tales of oppression and wrong" (Pp.338-39) thus protesting against racial discrimination. Repression "forces a dangerous memory, idea, or perception out of consciousness and sets up a barrier against any form of motor discharge" (Hall, 1954).

Alcohol functions as a truth serum that makes Hurree discharge his true opinion of the British colonisation which is the dangerous idea that he has repressed deep within his unconscious which is set free now because he is completely drunk. It is true that Hurree could be saying such things to fool the Russians into believing that he is against the British government but, nevertheless, I believe that the alcohol reveals his innermost opinion of the British government. The Russians describe Hurree as "a *product* of English rule in India" (Pp.338-39, my italics). Aimé Césaire asserts that "*colonization = thingification*" (Williams & Chrisman, 1994) thus Hurree is thingified as a "product". To the Russians, he also "represents *in petto* India in transition—the monstrous hybridism of East and West" (P.341) and asserts that Hurree "has lost his

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own country and has not acquired any other" (P.341). Hurree's attempt to 'erase' his culture and join the British one (though he fails to do it) is clearly emphasised.

Like any colonial institution, the British government aimed at alienating the natives by the effects of "cultural bomb" (Wa Thiong'o, 1986). It aimed at creating a "race of angels" detached from their past and from their culture. Fanon claims that colonisation eventually produces "individuals without an anchor, without horizon, colourless, stateless, rootless – a race of angels" (Williams & Chrisman, 1994). Hubel remarks that "Kipling depicts Indian nationalism as a movement that attracts *lazy* and *confused* Indians, who are the *unhappy products* of a western education" (Hubel, 1996). These 'unhappy products' are the race of angels whom colonisation aims at creating and then rejecting. Hence, colonisation causes the colonised to 'shed off' their native cultural skin and lose touch with their history. The Russians' words become a plea for stopping the *monstrous* hybridism, maintaining cultural and colonial hierarchies, and acknowledging the 'genetic' differences that separate races.

To explain the *monstrous* hybridism, let us further examine Hurree's identity crisis. He protests to Kim that "[i]t is all *your* [British] beastly pride. You think no one dare conspire!" (Pp.318-19) and complains that the Russians are "allowed special faceelities by the Government. It is *our* British pride" (P.319, my italics). He simultaneously feels he is a coloniser/colonised and refers to the natives using the exclusive 'they' such as when he claims that "foolish natives" tend to "stop to think before *they* kill a man" (P.261, my italics) and boasts that he "*can* do all sorts of *things* with black people, *of course*" (P.319 my italics). However, he cannot apply the same discourse upon the Russians because "they are not black people" (P.319).

Like the colonisers, Hurree feels free to do whatever he likes with natives. Hall explains that "predicate thinking" causes people to regard the black people in negative way. He claims that "Because negroes are dark-skinned and because darkness is associated with wickedness and dirt, Negroes are thought of as being bad and dirty" (Hall, 1954). Such thinking justifies killing the bad black people just as it justified the massacres of the Red Indians in America during the colonial expansion and the murder of the Aboriginals in Australia, or the many massacres and acts of genocide that took place in several parts of Africa during the colonial mandate.

Hurree can be Kipling's version of Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus since he is just as arrogant and is "robed to the shoulders like a Roman emperor, jowled like Titus" (P.397). He asks the Russians for a certificate "praising his courtesy, helpfulness, and unerring skill as a guide" (P.383) which "might be useful to him later, if others, their [Russian] friends, came over the passes" (Pp.382-83). Like Titus, Hurree is liable to change sides with the enemy if need be. Kipling has Hurree protest against colonisation to appear sympathetic to the natives' plight, yet he cleverly undermines Hurree's protest by making it appear as part of the plan to trick the Russians and because it is inspired by alcohol.

Further, Hurree loses his reliability when he requests a recommendation letter from the Russians. He is an opportunist who changes loyalties easily, and therefore, his statements are de-valued. His inferiority complex adds to his flawed character. The words he "babbles" against the British colonisation stem, as Kipling implies, not from the nature of British colonisation but from Hurree's "complete hatred of his conquerors" (P.341). Hall explains that an "ego defence against neurotic and moral anxiety is called *projection*" which makes a person say "He hates me" instead of "I hate him" (Hall, 1954) which is exactly what Kipling is doing here. He is projecting his hatred for Hurree's types by making Hurree's comments stem from his hatred of British people. Indeed, Kipling was "a fierce British race patriot" (Gross, 1972) and "the epitome of all the superior and reactionary Anglo-Saxon attitudes" (Lycett 2000).

To conclude, the aforementioned discussions reveal Kipling's racist attitude towards the natives who appear 'genetically' inferior to their colonisers. Kipling makes a plea for stopping the process of hybridism which creates "monstrous" "products" suffering from an inferiority complex and incapable of achieving a white man's status or escaping their nativity. By using hybridity, Kipling blurs the lines between races only to reassert and emphasise them more than before. Finally, Kipling promotes the colony-born British as the best to rule India.

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