Chapter 4

Retreat of the Myth of the Empire: Kipling's Short Stories 2

"The Dream of Duncan Parrenness"

"The Dream of Duncan Parrenness" was first published in *The Civil and Military Gazette* on 25 December, 1884 and was later anthologized in *Life's Handicap* (1891). The eponymous hero, Duncan Parrenness, gets inebriated at the Governor-General's yearly dance in Calcutta. On bed his thoughts hover round his former loves and future ambition which runs wild. Here the reader notices that whereas Duncan can remember categorically his failed adventures with women his plan for future course of action stems solely from Dutch courage. At this point of time he is visited by his older self whose "face was [his] very own, but marked and lined and scarred with the furrows of disease and much evil living…" (*LH* 66). This doppelgänger, who is but a mild version of the one the reader confronts in "At the End of the Passage" (1890), assures Duncan of material success. In return, the apparition strikes a Faustian deal with him, i.e. Duncan will have to forsake his faith in humankind forever. A careerist in the East India Company, Duncan promptly accepts the offer and asks for his return. Then the apparition tucks something in his hand which, when comes to light, turns out to be "a little piece of dry bread" (68).

In many shorter works of fiction Kipling has used quite exhaustively the allegory of Empire for achieving different ends. Usually these objectives vary within the limits of questioning the righteousness of imperial rule and a future when racial barrier will gradually fade away thereby placing the Whites and non-Whites as equals. Even when condemning the White man for failing to uphold the spirit of Empire Kipling chose to retain some sympathy for his protagonist despite all his misadventures. But in this narrative the author's cynicism regarding the nobility of the imperial ideal reaches its apogee. The withered morsel of bread in exchange of innocence and purity presents in a nutshell the average lifecycle of any colonizer who cracks whip only for personal benefit. In the present story while the personal benefit, which in the author's eye is no benefit at all, is yet to be achieved, the price it seeks will divest the humankind of spirituality. Sukeshi Kamra explores the nature of spiritual barrenness thus:

> ... Duncan is divested of three qualities associated with the powers of good and life-giving forces. The first quality "Myself" demands is his "trust in man". But since it soon becomes apparent that he has already lost his trust in mankind, Myself's demand merely seals the loss. The next quality the shadow takes from him is his "faith in women", once again, something he has already lost. Finally, he is divested of "as much as remained to me of my boy's soul and conscience". This last loss leaves behind a "deadly coldness at the heart". …Instead of getting the desired unlimited freedom from fear of death, he is doomed to a death-in-life existence, devoid of the human qualities of love, faith, and goodness, that come of possessing a conscience…In his desire to gain a "lease on life" he forgets that it is a piece of "dry bread" without the positive qualities of faith, love and trust (70-71).

But what is more striking than this grim outcome of life is the feelings of disenchantment with the imperial enterprise which clouds the author's mind at the post-adolescent age of nineteen. Kipling himself could refer to no particular incident as the inspiration for this narrative other than a sudden impulse. In a letter to his aunt Edith Macdonald he writes:

> …I've been writing a story in my leisure. It has only taken me three months and is only six pages long but I've never fallen in love with any tale of my own fashioning so much — not that it has any merit (Pinney 1:80)[1].

But the shocking disillusionment which permeates this literary output of pastime retains the potential for making us doubt its authorship. The point becomes obvious when a shocked C. S. Lewis questions "Where now is the Kipling we thought we knew — the prophet of work, the activist, the writer of If?" (*KJN*, December 1958, 8).

However if disillusionment is to become the prevailing mood of the narrative then question may arise as to whether the colonial administration is responsible for this or the newcomers from English soil are not altogether sound in body and mind. From the first person account of Duncan Parrenness it is clear that he had to suffer

betrayal at the hands of Kitty Somerset and Mrs. Vansuythen who were but social climbers. Termination of romantic associations of this kind in twenty-first century India or her former colonizer country falls into the category of normal course of life. But seen in the context of nineteenth century colonial and patriarchal social system such broken affairs forebode a greater loss of the self. Zohreh T. Sullivan probes into the nature of loss thus:

> … [The Dream of Duncan Parrenness]…is a tale of loss, of the terror of loss, of how the colonialist mediates his anxiety over losing his place in the Imperial machinery; his fear of self-loss displaced and "named" as a series of lost women — his mother, his fiancée, Mrs. Vansuythen,…these losses provoke his compensatory knowledge that though he can't have mothers, he can occupy the place of his Father/Governor-General in the colonial system of authority. *For the young Kipling protagonist growing up is the sudden knowledge of the real, administrative, masculine social system to which he belongs, which must therefore come between himself and his boyish desire* (inevitably gendered as female) (60, italics mine).

It will not be presumptuous to infer that the 'boyish desire', destined to become that of a man's in course of time, will beget repression if it remains unfulfilled. This repression, which substitutes the fear of self-loss, will make the protagonist either thoroughly unscrupulous or take suicidal step to prove himself larger than life. In the novel *The Light That Failed* (1891) the protagonist Dick Heldar tried to prove himself worldly-wise by exploiting the ignorance of the visitors of his art exhibition. But this cynicism could not get beneath the skin as when separation from Maisie became inevitable Dick was sapped of his vitality. In the present story the protagonist Duncan chose to retain his vitality by embracing everything gross and menial. This is not to forget that although the story was published in 1884, the author mentions the days of Warren Hastings's viceroyalty as the time of the narrative. History bears witness to the fact that the notable historical personae was once opposed to the unfair trading practice of the members of Calcutta Council but could not make much headway against them. Later as Viceroy he did not hesitate either to arrange for the judicial hanging of Nandakumar[2] or to loot the treasury of

the Begums of Oudh. Similarly a cog in the wheel of Empire, Duncan Parrenness, will become hardened and unscrupulous with the years to come.

"Lispeth"

"Lispeth" was first published in *The Civil and Military Gazette* on November 29, 1886. Afterwards it was anthologized in the first Indian edition of *Plain Tales from the Hills* (1888). The setting of the story is Kotgarh region of northern India and it revolves around the life of its titular heroine Lispeth. Born to a mountainous tribe she was handed over to the Chaplain of the Kotgarh Mission due to poverty and famine. It is here where the baby was baptised as 'Elizabeth' which in course of time was distorted as 'Lispeth'. Later when her parents died of cholera she became, in the words of her creator, "half servant, half companion, to the wife of the then Chaplain of Kotgarh" (*PTH* 1). She had had her Western education and manners under the tutelage of the Mission. When she attained maturity her stately physique and Greek face used to bear the identity of anyone but a domestic help. She turned a deaf ear to her mistress's plea for accepting some 'genteel' profession such as nursing at Shimla. Instead she developed, like many of her White companions, taking hikes amidst the natural landscape. Here, the narrative ironically puts forward the inborn vitality of the hill daughter which all her Western education failed to suppress: "She did not walk in the manner of English ladies — a mile and a half out, with a carriage-ride back again. She covered between twenty and thirty miles in her little constitutionals …between Kotgarh and Narkanda" (2). It is this odd combination of physical beauty and stamina guided by simplicity and naivety which makes the heroine a 'noble savage' in the eyes of the author. Kipling's partiality to this 'noble savage' stems from the attributes so brilliantly explained by Professor Alan Johnson:

> …Kipling betrays two prejudices common to Victorian treatments of India's northern hill people and to non-Europeans in general. On the one hand, the mention of classical traces in Lispeth — her Hellenic beauty — places her firmly within the romanticized representation of Himalayan tribal peoples who were thought by some Europeans to be either the lost tribe of Israel or the still-refined remnants of

> Alexander's conquest. Martial "races" like the Pathans and the Rajputs were now and again identified as members of these supposedly European settler groups. At root, the noble savage idealism of the eighteenth century…had given way, in the nineteenth century, to a belief in racial typology that justified Britain's expansionism. For if the martial prowess of "noble" northern Indians (as opposed to the presumed effeminacy of most other Indians) could be explained by their European-ness, then all was well in the racialized universe (93).

The subsequent activities of Lispeth, however, uplift the nobility of her character and make the author as well as the reader view her uncivility with a forgiving eye. In one of her trips she accidentally came across a young English naturalist lying unconscious upon the road with a deep gash in the head. It was obvious that the man suffered a fall from the cliff and was in need of urgent medical attention. With no visible help nearby Lispeth single-handedly brings the man to the Mission. She blatantly announced her decision to marry the stranger after the latter's convalescence and even after being repudiated by the Chaplain and his wife refused to drop her fantasy. The Englishman recovered after a fortnight but was slow to gain back strength to travel. Finding Lispeth steadfast in her romantic world her mistress took the Englishman in confidence and advised him to behave discreetly — all in order to avoid an uproar at home and a scandal outside. The Englishman, being engaged at home with a White girl, behaved accordingly by fanning Lispeth's sentiment. He felt no qualm in doing this because "It meant nothing at all to him, and everything in the world to Lispeth" (*PTH* 4). When the naturalist recovers considerably he departed with the assurance to come back and marry Lispeth. She waited for three months with anxiety and patience. But when Lispeth's forbearance reaches at the end of her tether the mistress finally brought the truth to light. The heartless admission is preceded by the racial snub by which she intended to keep Lispeth absolutely quiet: "…it was wrong and improper of Lispeth to think of marriage with an Englishman, who was of a *superior clay*, besides being promised in marriage to a girl of his own people" (5, italics mine). Lispeth became so shocked that at first she could not take it seriously because to her 'superior clay' could only

produce morally superior man — one whose colour of skin resembled the purity of heart like hers. When ultimately her long cherished illusion was driven away by the rude reality she retorted: "Then you have lied to me,…you and he?" (5). It was time for her to dissociate herself from the company of snobs and liars. She took little time to forsake her faith and shelter, and return to her own people. Like all other hill girls she embraced the same fate — found herself in wedlock with a woodcutter who used to have her physically abused after the tribal manner. After all the bitter trials and tribulations of life she died as an aged woman but with a perfect command upon English until last. The tragic aftermath of the jilted girl stung the conscience of the author so much that he, observes Harold Bloom, made her reappear in the novel *Kim* (1901) as the 'Woman of Shamlegh' (*Rudyard Kipling*:2004,72)[3]. In this new incarnation after fifteen years Kipling bestowed happiness, nobility and leadership upon her but all these did little to ameliorate the wretched condition she suffered in the present narrative.

Appearing almost as a snapshot taken from real life the story itself is not devoid of reality. Sir George Macmunn in his *Kipling's Women* (1933) traces out the origin of the story from a familiar Shimla narrative. Apart from Elizabeth/Lispeth the other prominent figure is "*Lachman Halwai*, or Lachman the sweetseller, who for so many years had a sweet stall on the mall, near to a house that from him is known to the older race of Jhampanies as '*Lachman Halwai Ki Kothi'*, the house of Lachman the sweetseller" (99, italics author's). Charles Carrington corroborates this supposition by stating that the original happenings took place at a house in Shimla called 'Alice's Bower' (67). Kipling's dislike of missionaries and travellers alike are manifest in his alteration of the original tale. Whereas in the original narrative the girl is blessed with a conjugal life here she received only betrayal and censure[4]. In response to Macmunn's work which records mostly fate of native women betrayed or suppressed by their White paramours on racial ground, Kipling wrote to him "As to your work, I read it of course when it came along and it rather shocked me as representing me in the light of a 'giddy Lothario' which, Allah knows, I ain't" (Pinney 6:138). It is obvious that the women characters could not be moulded in any single, unitary pattern but act differently as the situation demands. If Lispeth or Bisesa's earthly course is sealed by betrayal or lust, characters like Lalun in "On the

City Wall" (1889) retain the potentiality to play the game back to the sahibs. In the present story the heroine can evoke sympathy only on moral ground. Even a casual perusal of the text informs readers on whose side the authorial approval rests. In her Mission days Lispeth did exactly what was expected of her: performing her duties towards the Chapel along with continuing studies. Kipling's pen never falls short of sketching her inborn virtue:

> Lispeth took to Christianity readily, and did not abandon it when she reached womanhood, as do some Hill-girls. Her own people hated her because she had, they said, become a white woman and washed herself daily; and *the Chaplain's wife did not know what to do with her. One cannot ask a stately goddess,… to clean plates and dishes*. She played with the Chaplain's children and took classes in the Sunday School, and read all the books in the house,…The Chaplain's wife said that the girl ought to take service in Simla…But Lispeth did not want to take service. She was very happy where she was (*PTH* 2, italics mine).

It is quite obvious that Lispeth's accomplishments in Mission make her, to quote, Bart Moore-Gilbert, "an exemplary convert" (121). Ironically it is this very characteristic which induces in her mistress's heart an irrepressible desire to chastise and censure Lispeth. That opportunity came to the mistress due to Lispeth's free will also characteristic of Englishman and hill-girl alike. The latter part of the above citation suggests that Lispeth was very much attached to her taken for granted 'home' and would not risk deserting it for any otherwise lucrative offer of job or status. Underlying this statement is the presupposition that she would be safe as long as she could afford to avoid the allurement of the White world. Professor Angus Wilson voices this concern by referring to the author's visit to the Himalayas:

> …it is notable that, in [Kipling's] work and in his life, the peoples of the foothills of the Himalayas seem to share something of the great mountains' grace. In 1885, he made a recuperative journey there as far as 9,000 feet and was enchanted by the hill people and the beauty of their women. Here, one feels, are people who need nothing save

> protection from the white world…harmful are the dreams of Christians who would seek to impose their beliefs upon the natives. In Kipling's eyes, this was never other than foolish throughout India, but here in these idyllic hill villages it is seen as actively cruel (91).

Apart from her 'free will' it is this cruelty of the civilized world which played a leading role in her later undoing. Having natural (and therefore 'savage' in colonial code of conduct) urge to give vent to feelings she did not feel ashamed to express her love at first sight. Neither was she prepared to revoke her proclamation after the admonition of the clergy couple. The only person who could make her see through the matter was her fiancé himself. This anonymous traveller, presumably a Christian, being enthused by the clergy played all along the role of a womanizer. The falsity and deceit by which Lispeth has been phased out from the life of the Englishman implanted doubt and then disbelief in her adopted creed, i.e. Christianity itself. The unchristian practice of the people, supposed to hold the great tradition of the religion, made Lispeth once again give ear to her instincts. Her desertion from the fold of Christianity drew the tantrum from her mistress: "There is no law whereby you can account for the vagaries of the heathen,…and I believe that Lispeth was always at heart an infidel" (*PTH* 6). Kipling's irony reaches at its height when he passes judgement upon the mistress:

> Seeing [Lispeth] had been taken into the Church of England *at the mature age of five weeks*, this statement does not do credit to the Chaplain's wife (6, italics mine).

The bare fact of Lispeth's life proves that the Church of England and not the tribal tradition was solely responsible for her upbringing. She identifies honesty and integrity with Christianity without which the whole creed holds little value for her. The moment she recognizes the deviation from these founding principles she relapses into the custom of her ancestors. The act of deserting the White fold also emanates from true self-respect which the author may find impossible to delineate had he not viewed her race and religion either equal or even superior to prevalent practices of Christianity.

"Yoked With an Unbeliever"

Published in *The Civil and Military Gazette* on December 7 1886, "Yoked With an Unbeliever" depicts the career of a young Phil Garron. The enthusiastic Englishman, like many other characters in Kipling, heads for India to get job on a tea-plantation, leaving behind a weeping Agnes Laiter. The latter will, if she can, surely prevent him from going into a land which "is divided equally between jungle, tigers, cobras, cholera, and sepoys" (*PTH* 34). In course of time when chance of Phil's return seems quite an impossibility Agnes, under pressure from her parents, accepts the proposal of another man. Although in his workplace, Phil cares little for her memory, the news of Agnes's marriage makes him feel a loser. In his turn he sends her back a reply castigating the womenfolk in general and ascribing to himself the role of a faithful lover who could wait for his lost beloved for eternity. The hackneyed note and the selfish motive underneath the letter is chastised by the author thus:

> From an artistic point of view it was very neat work, *but an ordinary Philistine* who knew the state of Phil's real feelings — not the ones he rose to as he went on writing — *would have called it the thoroughly mean and selfish work of a thoroughly mean and selfish weak man* (36, italics mine).

As if to stress the philistinism of the lover, who promises to be eternally faithful to the memory of his lost love, Kipling had Phil engaged and married to Dunmaya, the daughter of a retired native armyman. As providence would have it Agnes's husband, suffering from rheumatism of the heart, breathed his last three years after their marriage in Bombay. Now a widow with all her husband's income, Agnes takes not more than two months to join her old love near Kangra, in present day a district of the same name in Himachal Pradesh. Set in the backdrop of late nineteenth century colonial India the planter Garron finds his newfound situation immaculate to ingratiate his chauvinism. The reconciliation of the formerly estranged couple does not suffer the least due to Dunmaya, who as it appears, is more than happy to be the part of a triangular relationship: "...Phil, who really is not worth thinking of twice, was and is loved by Dunmaya, and more than loved by Agnes, the whole of whose life he seems to have spoilt" (38). Written in the context

of lax moral code prevalent in the Shimla[5] society the observation of Dennis Kincaid is equally relevant to *Plain Tales From the Hills* (1888), the volume to which the present story belongs: "*Plain Tales from the Hills* caused the utmost irritation by its hints…of loose living among the highest circles in Simla" (228).

It is evident that Agnes's act of offering herself to Phil and their subsequent relationship, based on natural affection or veiled sexuality, which Kipling leaves open for the reader to surmise, acts as a healing balm to the protagonist's wounded pride. However readers familiar with "Lispeth" or "Georgie Porgie" may place the character of Dunmaya along with Lispeth or Georgina. Such comparisons arise from the fact of White man's total dominance upon native woman just as Dick has upon the anonymous Coloured woman in *The Light That Failed*. But a closer reading of this four and a half page narrative not only refutes the chance of "double colonization" of Dunmaya by Phil both as a White planter and a husband but also puts a question mark in the place of the colonizer itself. The reader is left to see that it is not India with her jungle, tigers, cobras, rebel sepoys or the oppressive heat that accidentally endangers Phil's existence. On the contrary it is her subtle and yet very powerful potential to assimilate the foreign elements that tends to threaten Phil's White identity itself:

> It is to be remembered that Phil was living very comfortably, denying himself no small luxury, never putting by a penny, very satisfied with himself and his good intentions, was dropping all his English correspondents one by one, and beginning more and more to look upon India as his home. *Some men fall this way, and they are of no use afterwards. The climate where he was stationed was good, and it really did not seem to him that there was any reason to return to England* (*PTH* 37, italics mine).

It is this slow but inevitable process of getting indigenized that not only diminishes Phil's earlier plan to return to England after acquiring handsome fortune but also sows the seed of otherness underneath his white complexion. Citing the example of Somerset Maugham's short story "The Force of Circumstance" (1924) where an

Englishman finds his Malayan wife closer to heart than the English one, Kaori Nagai writes:

> The man in the story is English by blood, but is described as having less powerful ties with England,… Although England is supposedly the home ground of Englishness, and he desires to have an Englishwoman as his wife, he does not feel any urge to go back to England in order to form a true tie with the land of his racial identity. Thus he lets himself become less and less English, becoming more and more rooted in a foreign land. This was the risk which the English had to take by extending their territory: the Englishness of the English, deprived of its own ground, was to be attenuated, exposed and subject to change in the colonies (32).

In "Without Benefit of Clergy", Holden too indulges in interracial relationship by having a loving native wife who bore him a son. But despite his deep affection for Ameera and Tota, Holden fails to overcome racial pride completely and keeps his marital status a secret from his White colleagues. This, as it appears, is a serious flaw in Kipling's eye for true attachment must not bow before age-old beliefs and customs. Failed to display the courage of being recognized the relationship of Holden and Ameera is punished with a tragic end. But having the spirit of overcoming social and racial stigma the relationship in the present story is approved by the author who chooses to forgo the vanity and selfishness of Phil Garron.

"On the City Wall"

"On the City Wall" was first published in *In Black and White* in January 1889 edition and was later incorporated in the volume *Soldiers Three* in 1892. The cynosure of the story is Lalun, a beautiful and gifted courtesan in the city of Lahore. She entertains many people in her salon but it is Wali Dad, who spends most of his time with her. The narrator, an anonymous Englishman and a mouthpiece of Kipling himself, also likes Wali Dad despite the latter's adopted Western views of life. Both Lalun and Wali Dad are attracted by the sight of Khem Sing, an old Sikh mutineer of

1850s who is barred in the cell of Fort Amara. For many years he remained detained in Burma and was allowed to return to India only at a fairly ripe age. His movements, upon which no restriction was imposed within a reasonable limit, in the fort can be easily seen from Lalun's salon. As the senior commanding officer of the fort is away Khem Sing stays under the supervision of a young subaltern. This young officer-in-command treats the old gentleman with dignity and extracts a never to flee oath in return. But this ideal state of affairs gets ruffled when the senior of the subaltern takes over the charge of Amara. A downright racist, he begins to treat all natives with utter contempt which goes virulent in the case of Khem Sing who used to attract attention and admiration from sahibs and natives alike. On the eve of Muharram amidst a street fight all over the city between Hindus and Muslims, Lalun coaxed the narrator into escorting an old man, whom she introduces as a friend, across the city. Unwittingly the narrator does so and the next day the news of the escapade of Khem Sing with his two guards spreads like wildfire. Later the bitter reality of his decayed influence upon his former associates coupled with his fragile health makes Khem Sing voluntarily give himself up to the British.

The genius of the story lies in the fact that it refuses to stick to any single layer. On the surface the whole city is divided between the residential areas of British and that of the natives. Kipling's emphasis upon the dedication and efficiency of the British administrative officials after two and half pages is likely to strengthen the popular notion of his emotional involvement with the Raj:

> Year by year England sends out fresh drafts for the first fighting-line, which is officially called the Indian Civil Service. These die, or kill themselves by overwork, or are worried to death or broken in health and hope in order that the land may be protected from death and sickness, famine and war, and may eventually become capable of standing alone. It will never stand alone, but the idea is a pretty one, and men are willing to die for it,…If an advance be made all credit is given to the native, while the Englishmen stand back and wipe their foreheads. If a failure occurs the Englishmen step forward and take the blame. Overmuch tenderness of this kind has bred a strong belief among many natives that the native is capable of administering the

> country, and many devout Englishmen believe this also, because the theory is stated in beautiful English with all the latest political colour (*ST* 248-249).

Of course this seemingly prevailing tenderness entails the risk of turning into violent repression as the subaltern, after hearing Khem Sing's impotent rage, casts a glance "along the line of guns that could pound the City to powder in half an hour" (256-257). But whereas this threat, apart from checking the rioting mobs, has only decorative purpose the above passage may exemplify how readers across the globe understand Kipling per se — loyalty towards authority and contempt for natives especially educated and westernized natives. But this easiest way of approaching Kipling gets troubled when the reader focuses on the nature of authority which is summed up thus:

> …all the world knows how the Supreme Government conducts itself. But no one, not even the Supreme Government, knows everything about the administration of the Empire (248).

From the narrator's own account it is clear that the bureaucracy of the vast stretches of land, occasionally interspersed with native kingdoms, is bound to have many loopholes and loose ends. It is but natural that the native subversive elements having ingenuity of thought and action will make good use of such opportunities. But the administration is really troubled when it is a White man who is left to be seen as an accomplice of the grudging subjects and at the audacity of the conspirators. The logic behind accepting the narrator in the plot and the success is categorically analyzed by Bart Moore-Gilbert thus[6]:

> The intimacy with native life which the narrator enjoys in fact makes him as much of a 'hybrid' as Wali Dad and, in crucial senses, his double or 'secret sharer'…the narrator's complex, if finally limited, understanding of native life is precisely what makes him such an apposite instrument for the conspirators' use. This suggests that *the very forms of knowledge which imperialism generates and on which it relies depend on a dialogue with native culture, which allows the*

> *native subject to turn those discourses back against the dominant power* (*Writing India* 117, italics mine).

However like his 'double' or 'secret sharer', Wali Dad too, is an instrument of the plot whose strings are entirely manipulated by Lalun the courtesan.

Indeed it is Lalun, bereft of Western education and accomplishments, who can mastermind the plot of using the narrator as a shield to protect the old rebel, thereby making the native subject, i.e. Wali Dad, to turn imperial discourses back against the White rule. In her character the author combines all qualities popularly termed as oriental — beauty, lasciviousness, wealth and a thorough knowledge of native art and culture. Along with these she has also acquired knowledge about the minute details of the contemporary political affairs. Kipling himself informs the reader that she knows "more of the secrets of the Government Offices than are good to be set down in this place" (*ST* 252). In her parlour she entertains people who hail from different castes and faiths — Shiah, Sufi, Hindu Priest, Sikh and the M. A. s of the university. Naturally her house becomes the centre of cross-cultural interchange which in turn develops into a den of political conspiracy. Although the plot to release Khem Sing comes to nought Lalun's talent is still visible in making herself out of the bounds of law by using the White identity of the narrator as a shield. In the end she emerges much as she was in the beginning of the narrative — tempting and yet carefully avoiding any long standing attachment. In her little world Lalun serves as the epitome of outlandish charm and sensuality, forbidden yet irresistible pleasure — in short someone determined to pay the cunning of the British in their own coin. In exploring the nature of this cunning which foreshadows the native resistance Indrani Sen writes:

> …the notion of 'native' female sensuality is enriched and complicated by diverse, contesting strands…in Lalun the courtesan, the elements of abundant talent, shrewdness and virtuosity in political intrigue not only epitomise common colonial myths about Indian women, but also invest her sensuous charm with a power that is *dangerous* for the white man…With Lalun the figure of the courtesan then reaches a culmination not only in terms of female empowerment

> and agency but also in terms of the colonised subject's oppositional resistance. Moreover, while the gendered colonised in Kipling's other narratives is generally inscribed as passive and vulnerable, playing out the drama of colonial subjugation and female suffering, the representation of Lalun serves to reinscribe and reconstitutes this figure of the 'native' woman into one of empowerment (183-184, italics author's).

Given the lack of larger politico-economical framework Lalun's achievements fall short of the historical and mythical 'visha kanyas'. In the post-Mutiny years India, still bearing the brunt of the heavy losses of her brave children, was not prepared to pit a viable political or military leadership against the British. On the other hand the forces of regression were very much active in the social sphere. The supposedly agnostic Wali Dad's conversion into a fanatic at the end of the riot casts light upon the bitter reality that freethinking and secularism still remain a matter of head rather than heart even for the educated Indians. Such social and political retreats only consolidate the necessity and inevitability of British rule for the time being. But the 'M.A. s of the university', against whom Kipling bears much grudge and coins new phrases to banter them throughout his literary career, are slowly getting politically conscious and enlisting their names in the Indian National Congress. Thus the next generation of progressive and nationalist Indians will work for the social, political and economical emancipation and with the help of saboteurs like Lalun and Wali Dad can work out wonder.

"Georgie Porgie"

"Georgie Porgie" was first published in *The Week's News* on 3 November, 1888 and was later anthologized in *Life's Handicap* (1891). The eponymous hero, Georgie Porgie, a shrewd and unscrupulous young administrator holds a post in Upper Burma. A thousand miles away from home, he wishes to have a woman to fulfil his physical and emotional requirements. So following the native custom he purchases a girl from her father, a village headman, and marries her. He renames her as Georgina[7] who manages the household deftly and economises the unnecessary

expenses. Georgie Porgie spends a happy time with her for around three months after which he decides to return home. He sends a weeping Georgina back home on the pretext of leaving for Rangoon for a month. Thus getting rid of this trouble he sails for England and marries an Englishwoman there. He manages a transfer in a hill station in India and settles at the new post with his new bride. Meanwhile Georgina, tired of expecting her husband's promised comeback, sets out alone to find him. After a lengthy and wearisome search for a couple of weeks she meets Gillis, Georgie Porgie's assistant whom she knew in Burma. Realising that it would be an awkward situation to explain everything to Georgina, Gillis simply makes the former cast her glance upon the newly-wed couple. Shattered in health and spirit but still determined not to disturb her love by betraying her presence, Georgina flees from the scene. The distant sound of Georgina's wailing makes the English bride curious. Georgie Porgie answers: "I suppose some brute of a hillman has been beating his wife" (*LH* 58).

Various Kipling scholars draw the readers' attention to the unintentional irony of Georgie Porgie's comment and how it reflects the brutality of the speaker himself. In unravelling the irony of the situation Muhammed Enamul Karim compares Georgie Porgie with the hero of *Lispeth* (1886) and finds that the former is more immoral:

> Kipling implies that how infinitely more agonising and brutal is the deceit of a civilized Englishman than the physical beating of the primitive hill-people. As in Lispeth Kipling's main emphasis is on the contrasting image of an Englishman with his deceitful and treacherous nature and an Easterner with her simplicity and innocence. The author condemns not so much the rejection of his Burmese wife as the way he deceived her with utter moral and emotional insensitivity, and without the slightest human considerations for one with whom he had lived for three months…In one sense, Georgie Porgie is a worse character than the Englishman in Lispeth. The former had lived with her for three months in comfort, and so, his treachery is more condemnable than that of the latter (103).

But it is not simply the debauchery of the White man or the innocence of the Asiatic maid, which forms the crux of the story. Rather it is the indelible presence of the Raj through Georgie Porgie which refuses the narrative to remain within the domain of personal tragedy. In introducing Georgie Porgie to the readers his creator identifies him, albeit patronizingly, with "some men whose desire was to be ever a little in advance of the rush of Respectability…" (*LH* 50). This desire to above the rush of respectability finds justification in the following words:

> ...civilised people who eat out of china and own card-cases have no right to apply their standard of right and wrong to an unsettled land. When the place is made fit for their reception, by those men who are told off to the work, they can come up, bringing in their trunks their own society and the Decalogue…Where the Queen's Law does not carry, it is irrational to expect an observance of other and weaker rules. The men who run ahead of the cars of Decency and Propriety, and make the jungle ways straight, cannot be judged in the same manner as the stay-at-home folk… (50).

The above passage quite convincingly clarifies why Kipling fails to render a poetic justice to Georgie Porgie for his immorality. This failure, although lets the Empire builder go unscathed, troubles the author's conscience to the extent of tempting adverse criticism. The observation of Zohreh T. Sullivan in the context of "The Brushwood Boy" (1895) is relevant to the understanding of this inherent dilemma:

> …almost all his stories involve night journeys into alien realms. But what makes these journeys so idiosyncratic, so typical of Kipling (rather than Conrad or Lawrence), is their timid and guarded nature, their sense of forced continuity and cohesion that constantly represses and conceals elements of disturbance in the text…Always in Kipling, tranquility and order will be restored if necessary through a hysterical insistence on forced closure (66)[8].

The conclusion makes the reader visualize the two selves of the author — the native and the White. The former is at pains to delineate Georgina's *continuity and cohesion* to retain her marital status while the latter makes an abrupt ending of

everything. But in this *forced closure* the elements of disturbance lends an overwhelming effect to the ending: "But it was Georgina crying, all by herself, down the hillside, among the stones of the water-course where the washermen wash the clothes" (*LH* 58). The heroes of *The Man Who Would Be King* (1888) were not more immoral than Georgie Porgie but the fact that they did endeavour to build up a personal Empire, made them perpetually damned in Kipling's eyes. In both works the readers have no difficulty to understand the inherent degeneracy active within the forerunners of the British Empire. The tragedy of Georgina will serve as a reminder of the physical and psychological calamity which a lover/colonizer does to his beloved/colonized.

"Without Benefit of Clergy"

Among Kipling's shorter fictions in which he attempts to advocate a racial compromise between the Whites and non-White counterparts, "Without Benefit of Clergy" comes foremost. The essential humanism which far surpasses the racial and cultural prejudice reveals yet another side of Kipling's literary genius not very frequently explored. The very idea of humanism, explains Paul Gilroy, "is as unfriendly towards the idea of "race" as it is ambivalent about claims to identify progress that do not take the de-civilizing effects of continuing racial division into account" (qtd. in During 269)[9]. Throughout this story the author deftly sketches a tender account of a couple that belong to different racial lineage and at the same time lashes at the social pattern which does not recognize this liaison. The modest object of this paper is to analyze the narrative from this perspective.

The story was first published in *Macmillan's Magazine* (June 1890) followed by reappearance in *Harper's Weekly* in the same month. After a few subsequent publications it was anthologized in *Life's Handicap* (1891). John Holden, an ordinary English civil servant lives in India with his concubine turned wife Ameera. Before the outside world Holden feigns as a bachelor and pays little attention to his job. But away from his bachelor's bungalow in his secret paradise with Ameera he is all happy. The happiness increases manifold when Ameera gives birth to a boy christened as Tota, i.e. 'talking parrot'. But this idyllic happiness in an otherwise

hostile surrounding was too perfect to endure. Therefore after a few months of the baby's birth Tota succumbed to the autumn fever leaving distraught parents behind. Enduring himself the shock of the death of two children at their very early age, Kipling depicts the protagonist's agony in a true to life manner:

> The first shock of a bullet is no more than a brisk pinch. The wrecked body does not send in its protest to the soul till ten or fifteen seconds later. Holden realised his pain slowly, exactly as he had realised his happiness, *and with the same imperious necessity for hiding all trace of it.* In the beginning he only felt that there had been a loss,… Later all his world and the daily life of it rose up to hurt him. *It was an outrage that any one of the children…should be alive and clamorous, when his own child lay dead.It was more than mere pain when one of them touched him, and stories told by over-fond fathers of their children's latest performances cut him to the quick. He could not declare his pain. He had neither help, comfort, nor sympathy*… (*LH* 190, italics mine).

It is the pressing necessity of keeping his garden of Eden all to himself while maintaining composure before the outside world which greatly torments the soul of this hapless father. Bearing no such obligation to public sphere Ameera could freely give vent to her grief but the author makes Holden bear his burden silently and gradually unravels a crueller fate awaiting him. When they were slowly striving to come to grip with their newfound situation cholera broke out. Holden, now fearing to lose the last remnant of his love pressed Ameera hard to go away to the hills.But the latter, always suspicious of her husband's fidelity, and in a bid to prove herself more loyal than her White peers, preferred to stay back. The Powers above granted her that wish but snatched her fragile existence away with black cholera. After the completion of every ritual Holden deserts the house, assured by his landlord that every trace of it will be wiped away soon.

The title of the narrative may beguile the reader to assume it as an example of Kipling's sympathy with the biracial offspring tending to make him a prominent personality in future. Alan Sandison notes that the phrase 'benefit of clergy' refers to

"the exemption of ecclesiastics from secular jurisdiction" (82). Whereas Kipling recognizes the purity of emotion his pen sketches no exemption for the out of wedlock newborn presumably to make the acute psychological distress of the White man. The acuteness is embedded in the fact that the author idealized their mutual romance, love and devotion. Apart from the institution of marriage both of them had to overcome the barriers of race and colour to unite. In the early section of the story Kipling sets up the elements of discordance:

> By every rule and law [Ameera] should have been otherwise, for [Holden] was an Englishman, and she a Mussulman's daughter bought two years before from her mother, who, being left without money, would have sold Ameera shrieking to the Prince of Darkness if the price had been sufficient (*LH* 177).

In addition to these obstacles, Holden had to keep his 'Sahibhood' in his workplace. Thus it is not for nothing that Walter Morris Hart regards this relationship as an attempt "to show the superiority of this irregular union over many regular marriages — a phase of his celebration of the non-respectable as compared with the respectable" (79). But while making realistic assumption of their relationship Hart is misled to think Ameera as ethereal being by Kipling's literal translation of vernacular idioms and speeches. That fact that Ameera's speeches to Holden reflect an exaggerated amount of self-abasement and reverence to her White spouse may lead a reader to conclude, reflects Azfar Husain, Ameera as "a simple-minded sentimentalist, and that her story is removed from reality…" (4). But all the while it establishes her as real life heroine with deep rooted attachment to indigenous culture. It is this affiliation with her native root that makes Ameera perform all the rituals for her first-born who is born out of rituals. Thus Ameera placed a naked dagger upon the threshold of the birth chamber of the baby and when Holden unknowingly broke its hilt by stepping over it Ameera cries in sheer delight: "Thou hast taken his misfortunes on thy head" (*LH* 179). She even made Holden sacrifice two goats to ward off any evil influence that might shroud her little world. Even after the sad demise of Tota Ameera wants to cling to her little world and out of desperation hangs up a black jar before the window to ward off evil influence and swears not to make a parade of delight.

While maintaining the rituals the real life heroine had had some bitter argument with her spouse but their mutual affection soon got them over. Unable to restrain her emotion Ameera blurts out:

> The white men have hearts of stone and souls of iron. Oh, that I had married a man of mine own people…*and had never eaten the bread of an alien!* (*LH* 191, italics mine).

And when Holden is hurt at Ameera's unwise selection of address, she breaks down again: "Oh, forgive me — forgive! The death has driven me mad. Thou art the life of my heart,…" (191). The same fretfulness can be seen during the baptism of Tota. Ameera insists that the child must bear the identity from his mother's side: "Why put me so far off? Said Ameera fretfully…he is mine" (185). It might be a misreading to judge the rituals in terms of their success or failure. The visible effect they have achieved is to bring the lovers closer, know each other's culture and even respect them. Apart from this the rituals hold little power to bring order in a chaotic universe. Ironically the desire to bring order, explains Elliot L. Gilbert, is the chief motive for observing rituals:

> …comparatively primitive people turn to ritual as a means of ordering the physical universe. They long to control the forces of life, and in their elaborate ceremonies they often seem to be presenting to the universe models of behavior in the hope that the universe will comply and shape itself a little closer to their desires. More sophisticated men, on the other hand, who have surer if less dramatic methods of dealing with nature, nevertheless persist in their own adherence to ritual, not so much because they think it will help them to organize the universe as because they hope that it will help them to establish a little order in themselves. In either case, however, the passion for order is a key to the understanding of ritual (30).

Inclined to judge by the yardstick of understanding the way of the world one may place Ameera in the first category and Holden in the second. The failure of their rather piteous effort to bring order in their lives is suggested through the failure of the rituals. Thus Holden's blood-stained boots after the birth-sacrifice of the goats

suggest the tussle between his public and private world leading to the annihilation of the second (Meyers 16-17). The failure of the attempt to save the baby's life is succeeded by the failure to save mother. On her deathbed when her passion for ordering her little universe is subsided Ameera confesses to Holden:

> …Remember only that I was thine and bore thee a son. Though thou wed a white woman to-morrow, the pleasure of receiving in thy arms thy first son is taken from thee for ever. Remember me when thy son is born — the one that shall carry thy name before all men. His misfortunes be on my head. I bear witness — I bear witness — the lips were forming the words on his ear — '*that there is no God but — thee, beloved!*' (*LH* 197, italics mine).

The utter inefficacy of the rituals made Ameera abandon not only the customs but also her creed. She recognizes the true god in her husband, the one who had made her life meaningful. Immediately after Ameera's death Holden, in spite of himself, makes the line dividing sanity and insanity slightly blurred. The last three days of Holden in the house bear an affinity to the last hours of Heathcliff:

> … [Heathcliff's] face and throat were washed with rain; the bedclothes dripped, and he was perfectly still. The lattice, flapping to and fro, had grazed one hand that rested on the sill; no blood trickled from the broken skin, and when I put my fingers to it, I could doubt no more — he was dead and stark! (Bronte 343).

Kipling could go so far as to match the inner turmoil of his protagonist with the violence in nature but his imperial self reserves a different destiny for Holden:

> Holden could neither eat nor sleep. The heavens sent down eight inches of rain in that night and washed the earth clean. The waters tore down walls, broke roads, and scoured open the shallow graves on the Mahomedan burying-ground. All next day it rained, and Holden sat still in his house considering his sorrow. On the morning of the third day he received a telegram… (*LH* 199).

While it is customary to label Holden's response to his call as becoming of a Kiplingesque hero the existence of his bleeding other self, the 'native self' the one which he tried to retain until the last is equally true. Critics like Peter Havholm who stressed White man's duty in the political arena of colonial India interpret this action thus: "India's protectors must understand fully the distance their status and responsibility require and that the Indian people's weakness makes them dangerous to love. They have no stamina" (82-83).

Professor Havholm's judgemental verdict holds some credence if we look at the native characters of the story who, including Ameera are victims of colonial stereotyping. For all her love and affection sixteen year old Ameera in terms of worldliness appears as child bride, Pir Khan, the aged watchman, who cares for the family when Holden is away, is a caricature, Ahmed Khan, the butler follows suit, and Ameera's mother 'the withered hag' in Kipling's pen with all her rapacity is far away from arousing our sympathy. But at the same time the reader must not be oblivious of the fact that written in the last decade of nineteenth century when racial discrimination was at its paramount it was hardly possible for the author to adopt a radical outlook on racial ground. The White and their non-White associates slowly started to exchange their cultural, religious, social and to some extent emotional views. After another five decades this would enable the natives establish themselves as equal to their White counterparts and the latter remain in no need of hiding their 'other' selves.

"The Bridge Builders"

The story first made its debut in the *The Illustrated London News Christmas Numbe*r, 1893 and was subsequently anthologized in *The Day's Work* (1898). The first part of the story presents a detailed description of the construction of Kashi Bridge[10] across the Ganges— the kind of work with which Kipling was quite familiar and used to appreciate. His personal connection with the whole project is unmistakable as the bridge which so fired his imagination, informs Thomas Pinney, is the Sutlej Bridge (known as Kaisarin-i-Hind, i.e. Empress of India) between Firozpur and Kasur in modern day Pakistan (*Kipling's India: Uncollected Sketches*

1884-88 206). The protagonist Findlayson is moulded in the cult of frontierman persona and can be compared with other Kiplingesque heroes such as Morrowbie Jukes, Hummil, Dravot and Carnehan. Citing Kipling's familiarity with bridge building John Radcliffe tells the reader that the inspiration behind the creation of Findlayson is the real-life James Richard Bell, the chief engineer under whose supervision the Sutlej Bridge was built. When the bridge is on the verge of completion a flood struck the site and swept away Findlayson and his foreman Peroo to a small isle. Marooned and with no means to get rescued at night, Peroo offers him opium pills to ward off cold and under the impulse of the drug both he and his master had a vision of the convocation of Hindu deities in the form of beasts— both terrestrial and aquatic. The gods debate as to whether the Ganges should be endowed with the power to collapse the bridge as it poses a challenge to the majesty of them and their ways to extort homage from the natives. But Indra, the highest god in the Hindu pantheon, persuaded them not to meddle with the affairs of human beings for in the long run of human history the bridge will have little potential to disrupt preordained course of things and that everything, the animate and the inanimate world work under the influence of 'maya':

> Ye know the Riddle of the Gods. When Brahm ceases to dream the Heavens and the Hells and Earth disappear. Be content. Brahm dreams still. The dreams come and go, and the nature of the dreams changes, but still Brahm dreams…and till He wakes the Gods die not (*DW* 32).

Implicit in this assurance is the fact that as long as the people will remain in a trancelike state there will be no dearth of homage to the gods. Thus both the bridge and its builders are permitted to live upon the earth and in the morning they are rescued by a local landlord.

A reader familiar with the Bengali literature of pre-Independence period and especially with the works of Kazi Nazrul Islam would obviously be tempted to make a comparative study of Nazrul's play *Setubandho*[11] (1930) while reading the present story. For Nazrul, as for Kipling, the bridge stands for the Occidental notion of technical advancement which imperialism seeks to usher in conquered land. But

while Nazrul chose to destroy the bridge with the help of natural catastrophe and Indian gods Kipling chose to retain it for the future citizens of a decolonized world. After the destruction of the bridge in Nazrul's play, Padma, the river goddess and the protagonist exclaims in unbounded joy: "…Glory to the gods!... From today Kingdom of Beasts is wiped away from the face of the earth" (712, Trans. mine). Ironically, the 'Kingdom of Beasts', a euphemism for the colonial regime, serves as a tool to pay homage to the deities in Kipling's. The setubandho, the annihilation of which is sought unanimously by the gods in Nazrul's work, turns out to be a bone of contention among them here. When Mother Gunga, the sacred river in the form of a crocodile calls for vengeance for checking her flood she finds a few of her pals to stand by her. Ganesh, the elephant god, sees the bridge as propitious to his worshippers because:

> …fat money-lenders that worship me at each new year, when they draw my image at the head of the account-books. I,…see that the names in the books are those of men in far places— for all the towns are drawn together by the fire-carriage, and the money comes and goes swiftly, and the account books grow as fat as— myself (*DW* 24).

Apart from this financial concern, Ganesh voices Kipling's cynicism as this project of bridge-building, is, "the shifting of a little dirt. Let the dirt dig in the dirt if it pleases the dirt,…" (25). Implicit in this opinion is the assumption that, notes Philip Mason, "the ways of India would not be quickly changed" (140). Western education and feats of technological achievement may change the surface of the country but it would take thousands of years to change the psyche which refused to see anything other than God's design everywhere under the sun. Hanuman, the famous ape-god too, feels himself at heart with the builders of the bridge: "…it pleases me well to watch these men, remembering that I also builded no small bridge in the world's youth" (*DW* 24). Hanuman's boast which reminds the reader of his acting as the envoy of Ram in Lanka and later his role as one of the builders of the bridge across which Ram led his army, is not without its present relevance. In the past the building of the bridge resulting in the conquest of Lanka put the people of non-Aryan creed, the Rakshasas, under Aryan control. In the present when Hanuman says, "I am the builder of bridges indeed — bridges between this and that, and each bridge leads

surely to Us in the end" (26) — he is "claiming responsibility for bringing the people of other faiths to the gods, and he numbers amongst his conquests the British themselves, the men who believe their God is toil" (Bhabha, *Delusions and Discoveries* 232). This logic of Bhabha's hints at Hinduism which can deviate from its pristine form and exist by absorbing foreign influences. By doing so the creed reflects the multifarious nature of its followers who play allegiance both to Aryan and non-Aryan deities. Thus Kipling's pen presents two gods of lower pantheon, having no place in *Vedas* but immensely popular in social life — Kali the Tigress and Sitala the Ass, harbingers of death and smallpox respectively. They have their share of thwarting the project of bridge-building by inflicting smallpox and death upon the hapless labourers. If these two gods represent those sections of the Indian population wanting to bring down the imperial establishment at any cost the labourers who sacrificed their lives in the service of the Empire are manifestations of colonial administrative personnel— both civilian and military. They became victims of suspicion and hatred both from the White rulers and their compatriots. The gods of the upper echelon having no problem with the incursion of the foreign rule in India speak for the prosperous rich and middle classes emerging slowly since the Great Mutiny is over. The crucial questions which arise are — why it is necessary for this symbol of British authority, viz. the bridge, to exist amidst hostile circumstances and how will it serve the Empire in the long run.

In answering the first question the reader may take recourse to Kipling's traumatic concern with the 'breakdown of authority' in colonies which colours his stories of the last two decades of nineteenth century. In his introduction to *The Portable Kipling* (1982) Irving Howe analyses the nature of this breakdown of authority thus:

> A specter haunted Kipling's imagination, the specter of a breakdown of authority: at first the authority of public life, but in his later work that of private life as well. His fear showed itself in, or hid behind, a persistent brooding over the *problem* of authority,…This brooding,…was frequently inseparable from a readiness to prostrate himself before authority or to crouch beside it — a desire to be "in" with the powers of this world. The problem of authority is of course

> another name for the problem of civilization: what we make of the structure of relationships and institutions, values and traditions, by which we live. Kipling's idea of civilization was largely a Roman one: discipline, command, and upon need, sacrifice (xiv; Cited also in Sullivan 114, italics author's).

It requires but little effort to realise that to let the bridge become a victim of the fury of supernatural agencies would mean a total annihilation of the authority and a retreat to the medieval period from which state India is slowly moving forward. Along with this devastation in colonizer's public life the collapse of bridge also indicates disastrous consequence in the private life of Findlayson who so admirably fulfils Kipling's idea of White man upon whom the burden of civilizing the non-Whites is assigned to. To vindicate the credibility of this statement Kipling provides the example of one of Findlayson's predecessors— a fated Lockhart whose wearied body let his soul out as his big water works smashed into brick heaps and sludge. True, Kipling's protagonist is not doomed as the bridge survives the flood. But the successive incidents and their outcomes do not present all the heroic attempts of Findlayson in an admirable light. Instead they project him, his peers and subordinates as puppets invested with limited power and being subject to higher wills and decisions. An analysis of them leads the reader to find answer to the second question namely how the colonial administration will be served by the bridge in distant future.

The first condition of putting this extraordinary feat of engineering (judged by the standards of contemporary period) in the service of the Empire is to have authority over its very existence. This authority which was so prominent in daytime begins to tumble at night engulfed by the fury of the Ganges. The difference between the activities of day and that of night alludes to the title of the story. In explaining the significance of the title Elliot L. Gilbert refers to Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* and John 9.4 which runs as "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (*The Holy Bible* 108). Gilbert's explanation also enriches us with the information that this singlemost motto was carved by Kipling's father, John Lockwood Kipling, over the young author's fireplace in Brattleboro, Vermont (126; Cited also in Sullivan 120). A

substitution of religious connotations of the scripture with secular and imperial ideals reveals the sincerity of Kipling's attitude to the latter ideal. Almost integral to this sincerity is *a desire to be "in" with the powers of this world*, with the powers of civilization. The discussion held forth only a while ago entails the assumption that the perpetuation of civilization requires discipline, command and sacrifice. While Findlayson could make sure that there were no dearth of first of these two qualities when the need of sacrifice came, apart from his foreman Peroo, he felt virtually alone. Moreover this need arises at an hour when any work of him, i.e. the agent of Empire, is doomed to meet failure according to his/Kipling's code of conduct. Thus before the wild spouts of foam and strong current of the Ganges both Findlayson and Peroo had to let themselves be drifted away. This surrender to the untamed forces of nature on behalf of the pre-colonial India is an apt situation to invite C.S. Lewis's searching question "How if this doctrine of work and discipline, which is so clear and earnest and dogmatic at the periphery, hides at the centre a terrible vagueness, a frivolity or scepticism?" (qtd. in Montefiore, *Rudyard Kipling* 59).

The seed of this scepticism is woven in the unconscious brooding of Findlayson about the bridge: "There stood his bridge before him in the sunlight,…raw and ugly as original sin, but pukka — permanent — to endure when all memory of the builder, yea, even of the splendid Findlayson truss, had perished. Practically, the thing was done" (*DW* 2-3). In Biblical narrative the punishment for scepticism which precedes the original sin is Fall from Grace, and get afflicted with mortality. Here, both the raw and ugly creation and its creator are doomed to decay and oblivion. But on the other hand the original sin brought the human being from the realm of innocence to that of experience by opening the vista of knowledge before him. The bridge, too, is destined to be a mark of the beginning of a new era— a journey towards industrialization. It is in this context that Ann Parry writes "the bridge becomes an ineradicable part of the nature of India, determining her fate" (*KJN*, March 1986, 17). A ponder over the near future of India easily detects the emergence of an economy based on industry and trade. In the essay "The Future Results of British Rule in India" (1853) Karl Marx predicted the inevitability of this situation:

> ...when [the British] have once introduced machinery into the locomotion of a country, which possesses iron and coals, [they] are unable to withhold it from its fabrication…The railway system will therefore become, in India, truly the forerunner of modern industry…Modern industry, resulting from the railway system, will dissolve the hereditary divisions of labour, upon which rest the Indian castes, those decisive impediments to Indian progress and Indian power (87-88).

A sign of the loosening grip of society by unshackling a few men from the hereditary division of labour is manifest in Peroo, the foreman or laskar from Bulsar. As he spends most of his time on sea and in the constructive works under Findlayson he finds little time at his disposal to spend on custom and caste. To the local priest before whom any other man would bow down and seek blessing Peroo adopted an authoritative tone and bids the priest to stop the ensuing deluge. When the priest expressed his inability to do so Peroo only spared him a good thrashing. This irreverence and open challenge to the age old custom and its followers shows that a small section of the society is slowly waking from the trancelike state threatening the existence of gods. Significantly the diminishing effect of the gods upon the Indians is also affirmed by Krishna. In answering Ganesh's question about the end of the reign of gods upon human allegiance, Krishna prophesies:

> The end shall be as it was in the beginning,…The flame shall die upon the altars and the prayer upon the tongue till ye become little Gods again — Gods of the jungle — names that the hunters of rats and noosers of dogs whisper in the thicket and among the caves — rag-Gods, pot Godlings of the tree, and the village mark, as ye were at the beginning. That is the end,… (*DW* 30-31).

With the fading away of the dependence upon gods the Indians will be empowered to settle the affairs of their country themselves. A symbolic suggestion of the growing competence of the Indians is uttered by Findlayson, albeit patronizingly, to Peroo: "Another year thou wilt be able to build a bridge in thine own fashion" (7).

But the process of empowering the Indians or a transfer of power from the British to the natives is far from smooth. Their present condition is aptly epitomized by Bhairon, a god for the common people, who remains perpetually drunk speaking nonsense. His lack of control over himself and his future mirrors the colonized natives who are also unable to exert control over their destiny. The bridge may serve as a landmark in the history of the technological advancement in India. But more than its immediate purpose of meeting the need of the colonizers it is destined to serve the free nation when the period of colonization is over. Thus on the surface postcolonial India is gifted with the initiation of modern science and technology from her colonial past and a link between these two phases is obvious. But for Kipling, who proved in his prose and poems alike that he could think beyond racial prejudice, this trickling down of knowledge and skill from the Whites to the non-Whites was neither humane nor desired. Indeed none of his protagonists is permitted to dwell upon ivory towers and condescend to the wretched natives with mercy and allowance. The introduction and gradual development of Occidental knowledge on Indian soil is a historical necessity but the perpetrators of this job must realise the ground realities of the country, in other words they need to nurture empathy for the people whose burden they are to take up. By making a split between Findlayson's body and soul during the flood Kipling prepares his protagonist to realize the Indians' reaction to the initiation of Western civilization simultaneously from native and British points of view. Significantly in this state Findlayson finds himself no better than the workers who laid down their lives in making the bridge and whom the officers often treat as beasts:

> [Findlayson's] body—he was really sorry for its gross helplessness—lay in the stern, the water rushing about its knees…that—is Findlayson—chief of the Kashi Bridge. The poor beast is going to be drowned,… (*DW* 19).

True, after a while on reaching the shore he finds his consciousness back in his body again. But this reunion is not convincing as he remains under the influence of opium and has to watch the conclave of the gods without any power to influence their decision. "The survival of the bridge", notes Sullivan, "is not the result of Findlayson's personal success, but the decision of the Indian gods who occupy the

river. The underlying political fantasy is that the structures of empire are supported by all the rulers and the ruled, the human and the divine" (123). The logic that follows is that empathy exists on both sides leading to a sustenance of the Empire supported by the natives. By making the natives stand by their rulers the rulers realise how indispensable the natives are. This realisation, Kipling underscores, is the first move towards the liquidation of racial barrier. The strategy of Kipling requires the colonizer/Findlayson win the faith and confidence of the natives for the smooth accomplishment of day to day affairs of the Raj. Perhaps the best way to do so is to posit the colonizer, again to resort to Sullivan, as "a double agent" (126). He should keep a humanitarian relation with the colonized and attain their obligation by making an apparent distance from the intricate bureaucracy and officialism prone to frighten and repulse the natives.

Such an act, the act of an ideal colonialist, is bound to be rewarded both for setting the author's mind at rest with the existing power structure and perpetuating the myth of the Empire. Visibly the first reward is to regain the soul from the terrible abyss where it was hitherto merged. The return of consciousness enacts the return of the 'Atman', the individual self that is finite from the 'Param-Atman' or 'Brahmo', the infinite consciousness permeated in every animate and inanimate object. To let the soul unite with the 'Brahmo' would be a total loss of the objective reality leading to an existential crisis for the mission of the Empire. For a soul united with the 'Supreme Being', (i.e. attaining salvation) the whole tide of worldwide human activity bears no significance. It is not necessary for a person to die to achieve salvation but for him the real world is an illusion, a transitory phase before the beginning of eternal life. On shedding light upon the ignorance of man of this truth J.M.S. Tompkins writes:

> It is necessary to man's health in this world that he should be short-sighted. If he watches the great tides of the universe, he will lie,…unable to speak. This is seeing unto madness, exposure to conceptions too vast for him, and it unfits him for his work in the world. Work is the great educator and consoler of man (193).

Soren Kierkegaard sums up this existentialist position in his oft-quoted aphorism thus: “To shorten one’s hours of sleep and buy up the hours of the day and not to spare oneself, *and then to understand that the whole is a jest; aye, that is earnestness*” (cited in Gilbert 146, italics author’s). The only way to ward off the dread of this meaninglessness of life is to immerse oneself in the material world, i.e. letting the colonial administration carry out its daily affairs with the wholehearted effort of the natives and their British supervisors. But this state of making one’s consciousness perpetually alive to the material reality and a stark indifference for belief and custom entails both immediate and far-reaching consequences. It has already been pointed out that the Indian gods drew their sustenance from the ignorance and superstition of the native folk whose ‘Atman’, i.e. ‘Brahmo’ in its confined form, is asleep. Once their soul is illumined they will refrain from obeying the gods. But in the long run this act of awakening to the realities of life problematizes the relation of the natives to their masters who enjoy no less privileges than gods. For the natives like Peroo who today question and challenge the long-standing authority of the religious institution will not hesitate to confront, with sufficient knowledge and skill of administration, their present superiors tomorrow. Elliot L. Gilbert hints at Kipling’s partial awareness of this distant possibility thus:

> …Kipling knew…that the bridges and railroads being built in India were being built to make money for men who were not Indians…what interested him far more than its questionable motives was the fact that under the noses of the investors, of the tycoons, indeed of the British Government itself, the construction work was producing something very different from the intended results. This, indeed, is the insight which is at the heart of “The Bridge-Builders” : that regardless of the grossly selfish ends which a particular bridge may originally have been designed to serve, the job it actually performs is to raise the people who build it — through the very difficulty of the labor, the difficulty of transforming an idea into material reality — from the condition of ignorance in which they can be exploited to a position of strength and self-confidence from which

> they can launch an attack on their exploiters. *The irony of colonialism is that it produces the conditions for its own defeat, and it is this aspect of colonialism which Kipling is in part dealing with in this story* (152-153, italics mine).

Of course Gilbert's near anatomical observation of the self-destructive mechanism of colonialism which none the less bears the seed of truth, leaves little room for a racial compromise. In order to understand this latter perspective it is necessary to have a look upon Kipling's attitude to the imperial enterprise which refuses to be confined within the sphere of binary opposition.

Unlike the White man newly arrived in India Kipling's idyllic childhood and later his career as a journalist for *The Civil and Military Gazette* (1872-1963) and *The Pioneer* (1865-) prepares a mind that knows India from within. That is why his attitude towards India and her people instead of being always authoritative was sympathetic especially when they resist tyranny and oppression. The resistance often resorting to counter-violence, was recognized and well rewarded in stories like "The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes" (1885), "The Man Who Would Be King" (1888), "The Mark of the Beast" (1890) where the return of the repressed fury either overthrew the White domination or left the whole enterprise with deep introspection. Ashis Nandy in his reflective analysis on Kipling's responses to the Empire identified such agents of resistance as 'ideal victim[s]' (69). Such nomenclature unravels Kipling's hitherto unexpressed reverence for the heroic past of the country for only the successors of a great educational, cultural and martial heritage can absorb the bliss of modern science and stand face to face with their oppressors. Admittedly the final outcome is the rise of an unfettered nation, which state India was to achieve more than five decades after the publication of this story. On the eve of planting the seed of Western education on Indian soil the bridge between colonial Britain and colonized India was one of obligation and loyalty. With the growth of the tree to its maturity these two races were bridged by repression and defiance. When the tree reaches its full bloom, i.e. after Independence, both of them can shed their hegemony and defiance and look at each other as equals. This is the state when the British cease to be natural masters and the Indians are relieved of their imposed

burden of being essentially anti-British and a bridge of mutual understanding and harmony may bind them for the betterment of humanity.

Jungle Books

The *Jungle Books* comprise a total of fifteen stories all of which appeared previously in different journals and magazines before being incorporated in the two volumes — *The Jungle Book* (1894) and *The Second Jungle Book* (1895). The famous 'Mowgli' cycle of stories which traces the eponymous hero from his infancy to adulthood appears in both books and would be discussed at length as a whole. The remaining stories in the text would be highlighted so far as they prove to be pertinent to the theme of my thesis. In addition to this, I also intend to focus on the story "In the Rukh" (1893), which in spite of being outside the periphery of the text under discussion, sums up the 'Mowgli' cycle.

Patterned in almost the Blakean compartmentalization of innocence and experience the *Jungle Books* open with "Mowgli's Brothers" (first appeared in *St. Nicholas Magazine*, January 1894) which prepared the ground for Mowgli's acculturation in the jungle community. Yet a close reading can identify the elements of discord and disharmony in the process of the boy's coming, seeing and conquering the other world. On his first entrance to the wolves' lair, naked and hungry with Shere Khan hot on the heels, Mother Wolf came to his rescue. The wonder child loses no time to intuit the foster-mother and begins to draw sustenance from her nourishing teats. A thoroughly wondered 'Mother Wolf' exclaims:

> How little! How naked, and — how bold!... He is taking his meal with the others. And so this is a man's cub. Now, was there ever a wolf that could boast of a man's cub among her children? (*JB I* 14).

Mother Wolf, who goes by the name 'Raksha', (literally to 'protect' although Kipling views it otherwise) is all enthusiastic to have a man cub in her lair. Viewed in the colonial context this has something in common with the prevailing practice of keeping ayah or wet nurse in the Anglo-Indian household. In tracing the White

children's intimacy with such foster-mothers and hence the White's introduction to the non-White order of world, Sara Suleri writes:

> The *zenana*, after all, was possessed of one advantage denied to British women: it could include children within its space…In their infancy…these children had been symbolically closer to the *zenana* than to their actual mothers: nurtured by wet nurses and *ayahs*, they were, Kipling records, the true intimates of the colonial world…While the women maintained their strictly defined cultural positions of mistress and menial, a metaphoric fluidity as disturbing as that of milk had entered their dynamic: they were bound in identical postures of erotic tenderness toward an infant whom they temporarily shared, and whose absence signified emotional and economic loss to both (80-81, italics author's).

Mother Wolf's emotional attachment to Mowgli vividly becomes manifest in her assertion: "Come soon,…little naked son of mine, I loved thee more than ever I loved my cubs" (*JB I* 29). If we substitute the 'economic loss' with 'existential loss' in the very literal sense we see how the boy returns his debt tenfold to the Pack in the story "Red Dog" (first published in *The Pall Mall Gazette*, July 29, 1895).

But before probing into Mowgli's later heroic feats it is necessary to have a look upon his jungle education which accelerates the process of acquiring command over nearly all the jungle people. In the story "Kaa's Hunting" (first appeared in *Today*, March 31, 1894) under the tutelage of Baloo, the bear, he learns the tongues of all the animals except the Bandar-log, the monkeys who defy any norm or regulation and pretend themselves to be above these. In the course of his education once Mowgli gets caught unaware by them and carried away to the 'Cold Lair'[12], a ruined and deserted human habitat now covered with jungle. Mowgli's mastery of other animals' tongue did not only help to send message about his whereabouts to well-wishers such as Baloo, Bagheera the black panther and Kaa the rock python and also make him protect his life from venomous snakes in the ruins. After being ill-treated by the monkeys a thoroughly disgruntled Mowgli expostulates:

> All that Baloo has said about the *Bandar-log* is true,… They have no Law, no Hunting-Call, and no leaders — nothing but foolish words and little picking thievish hands. So if I am starved or killed here, it will be all my own fault (*JB I* 46, italics author's).

He gives vent to the same contemptuous attitude in a later story called "Letting in the Jungle" (first published in *The Pall Mall Gazette* on 12 and 13 December, 1894) where his butt of attack is Buldeo, the village bully when the latter spins stories about Mowgli's witchcraft: "Chatter — chatter! Talk, talk! Men are blood-brothers of the *Bandar-log*" (*JB II* 198, italics author's). Kipling's denunciation of the Bandar-log reflects his veiled attack towards the liberal politicians at Home and the decadent London literary society. Dr. Lohman draws our attention to this aspect:

> … [The Bandar-log] enjoy tormenting stronger animals from the safety of the tree tops, secure in the knowledge that their victims cannot strike back. (The Literati, of course, held similar attitudes toward the "uncivilized" overseas men and a similar advantage in their attacks on those men) (253).

But here questions may arise as to what purpose has been served by the author in letting Mowgli a victim in the hands of unruly monkeys albeit for the span of a few hours. The answer lies in Mowgli's recognizing the nature of each and every member of the flora and fauna of the jungle of which he will be a lord later as well as to harness his curiosity. The contribution imparted by the monkeys to the course of the story is summed up by Dr. Karlin thus:

> Living in this pure element of play, the Bandar-log represent something which we recognize in ourselves, and yet this something is not ourselves, it both exceeds (in its intensity) and falls short (in its scope); and it is proper that it should be so,… (n.pag.).

It is by enlarging his scope and making passion his slave instead the vice versa, that Mowgli hopes to become the giant slayer in his final encounter with the Shere Khan.

In the story "Tiger Tiger" (first published in *St. Nicholas Magazine*, February 1894) Mowgli got Shere Khan killed with the aid of his wolves — lone

wolf Akela who is the leader of the Pack and Grey Brother, the cub of Raksha. The battle with Shere Khan is highly pitched not so much for its being Mowgli's personal vendetta but for the new order of living which he intended to usher in the jungle community. John Thieme's argument lends credence to my inference: "The one animal which, it seems, resists socialization into the order that Kipling's hero Mowgli represents is the tiger, Shere Khan" (152). Evidently it is the jungle people's unison and to some extent hegemonic subservience to Mowgli's authority which initiates the realm of a non-animal in an animal world. Beyond doubt this befittingly meted out justice to the tiger confirms Mowgli's place as a conqueror from the imperial point of view. As Don Randall explains:

> Mowgli, by overcoming Shere Khan, stands in the place of the British imperial adventurer and restages the British consolidation of empire in India. This jungle-child (youthful and energetic, yet duly schooled in the codes of the Law) is the alien liberator whose final victory signals the establishment of just rule in the place of an ostensibly corrupt and decrepit Mogul dynasty. As the rebel Sepoys of 1857 looked to Bahadur Shah for leadership, so, during a troubled period of interregnum within the Seeonee pack, restless young wolves rally around Shere Khan and turn against Mowgli. Just as the British, in 1858, put an end to the symbolic kingship of Bahadur Shah, so Mowgli puts an end to the lame tiger's pretensions to power (78).

Mowgli's identification with a superior race and its power structure more crudely surfaces when in a later story "Red Dog" he allures the eponymous miscreants, the red dholes[13] of the Dekkan, to death. By parading his bare toes to the red dogs he insinuates the existence of hair between their toes considered as a sign of racial inferiority. Adhering to Kipling's imperial line of thought the sign of baser origin arouses the dhole to a stupid but impotent rage only to be tricked into the folly of coming close to a beehive at the brink of a pool. The agile foster child of jungle stones the honeycomb and jumps into the water leaving the dogs to be stung to death. Those who survive the death sting were also slain in the succeeding battle with the wolves. The total annihilation of the barbaric horde mirrors the fantasized

annihilation of the pioneers of radical socialist activists about whom Kipling and his American literary confrères like Henry and Brooks Adams used to share the same concern. As Andrew Hagiioannu writes, "Recognising that communist propaganda aims to enlist the support of the Little People, Kipling meets the challenge with his own Tory line on the working classes, dramatising, in Mowgli's friendship with the rock bees, the recruiting of workers to an imperial, anti-communist venture" (113). If the killing of Shere Khan is viewed as laying the foundation stone of Mowgli's empire then the act of protecting the jungle community, especially the wolves, from the menace of the invaders endows moral and ethical support upon the cause of this empire. His moral authority reaches its culmination with the dying words of Akela, the lone wolf at the end of the story: "Thou art all a man, or else the pack had fled before the dhole. My life I owe to thee, and to-day thou hast saved the pack…" (*JB II* 303).

The discussion so far establishes the imperial role of a man child in a bestial world. But in analyzing this one must not forget the implication of the name of 'Mowgli', as his foster mother, once explained: "…Mowgli the Frog I will call thee" (*JB I* 16). Implication in this endearing name is the recognition of the amphibious nature and role of the protagonist. The other side of Mowgli, the side which he cannot share with his lupine fraternity and which is still dormant, comes to consciousness when he first meets his biological mother: "Well, if I am a man, a man I must be" (*JB I* 57). This unwary, ejaculation of his double existence elicits this response from John McBratney:

> On the one hand, he is essentially a man. On the other, he has no essential selfhood; otherwise, why would he have to become something he already is? Mowgli is caught on the horns of a categorical dilemma. Like Strickland and Kim, however, Mowgli is a quick study in cross-cultural situations and immediately begins "learning the ways and customs of men"…Caught within a typological mind-set, neither the jungle nor the human community can understand, much less embrace, the idea of a creature who splits the difference between lupine and human (94-95).

But Mowgli's return to the jungle folk with the hide of Shere Khan and parading it before Mother Wolf cannot make his mind rest at peace. In the poem succeeding the story "Tiger Tiger" he bewails his amphibious nature: "As Mang (the Bat) flies between the beasts and birds so fly I between the village and the jungle…/…These two things fight together in me as the snakes fight in the spring/ The water comes out of my eyes, yet I laugh while it falls…/I am two Mowglis…" (*JB I* 74). The situation is not very different from the child Kipling who was sent to Britain at the age of five to be reared under the stern supervision of Mrs. Holloway. For the creator of Mowgli, the residence at Lorne Lodge became the House of Desolation as I have shown in the previous chapter dealing with novels. Apart from Mesua, Mowgli did not receive any affectionate treatment from anyone in the village. Thus Kipling's 'essential selfhood' i.e. being a White man and Mowgli's 'essential selfhood', i.e. being a human being remain largely unrecognized.

The crisis of 'selfhood' furrows further the pre-adolescent psyche of Mowgli in a later story entitled "Letting in the Jungle". By now all Mowgli's hope to get foothold in the human society is wiped away. He overhears a conversation between Buldeo and some of the villagers and comes to know their wicked design of killing Mesua and her husband. Although their list of would be victims renders first priority to his name for the time being Mowgli rushes towards Mesua's hut and discovers a beaten, bruised and bound Mesua with her husband. Seeing blood on her wound Mowgli utters darkly: "There is a price to pay" (*JB II* 197). With the help of his trusted companions Mowgli begins to wreak havoc in the village. Sparing only the lives of the villagers the animals destroy their harvest and habitats by and by. However, Mowgli's chief concern was to work out a safe passage for Mesua and her husband to Khanhiwara which he did successfully. Commenting on Mowgli's revenge upon the villagers for shedding the blood of Mesua Don Randall foregrounds the instances of collective vengeance perpetrated by the British shortly after the quelling of 1857s uprising in India:

> The crime to be punished is the action not of specific individuals but of an entire community…the uprisings are taken as a manifestation of the 'truth' of Indian 'character', of deep-seated traits of Indian culture. The ascription of responsibility and guilt is generalized: to be

> Indian is to be guilty. Reprisals therefore enjoy the very broadest scope: not only rebel sepoys but chance-encountered peasants can be given over to summary execution;…whole villages can be razed; estates and temples can be vandalized and looted… (82).

But while this ghastly retribution manifestly destroys every possibility of Mowgli's returning to the village through Mesua he stills keeps alive a viable thread with his own kind. In the story "The Spring Running" (first published in *Pall Mall Gazette* on September 25, 1895) a seventeen year old Mowgli finds it increasingly difficult to cope with his so familiar jungle and its dwellers. Awakened to the physical and psychological developments at a subconscious level and yet unable to comprehend the nature of such developments Mowgli feels embittered with everything. While all the other animals by indulging in lovemaking fail to respond to his call, Mowgli after a forty mile run reaches to the hut of Mesua. However after a while he is traced by one of the faithful wolves, Gray Brother and together they return to jungle. But Mowgli cannot get rid of the memory of Mesua's warm welcome and his chance encounter with a girl on his way back to the jungle; the latter being an eye-opener to the root of his spleen:

> …a girl in a white cloth came down some path that led from the outskirts of the village…[Mowgli] could almost have touched her with his hand when the warm green stalks closed before his face and he disappeared like a ghost. The girl screamed, for she thought she had seen a spirit,… (*JB II* 321).

The narrative and hence Mowgli's life is further problematized by his decision to turn to man folk for the rest of his life. True, the final narrative of *Jungle Books* witnesses a tearful departure of the man cub and thereby fulfilling the dying words of Akela after the fight with the red dogs: "Mowgli will drive Mowgli" (303). Although he decides to change habitat his is not going to be an exodus from the feral community. The four wolf cubs, now fully grown animals, faithfully follow him and are ready to lay down their lives at his service. Like Kim he retains the power of crossing cultural lines and barriers to meet his ends — whether it is personal or colonial. It is precisely this capability which in turn endows Mowgli with an insight

of both worlds — human and feral — enabling him to overcome any danger belonging to either of the worlds. Dr. S. P. Mohanty in analyzing the dual nature of Mowgli's self writes:

> … [Mowgli] is the only character in the jungle who possesses this capacity to belong completely and yet remain above it all. A strange allegory of colonial rule as possession without implication, penetration without involvement (35).

In the early phase of his colonization of the jungle Mowgli repels the danger of Shere Khan and Bandar-log. In a later phase, in the story "The King's Ankus" (1895), he gets over the danger of being tempted which is essentially a vice belonging to human world. Invulnerable to any natural or artificial calamity and with the feral world at his command, Mowgli later resurfaces in a story "In the Rukh"[14]. Here he comes into contact with the forest officer Gisborne and his superior Muller. Mowgli's dexterity in performing everything that requires controlling or driving beasts so impressed Muller that he pronounces in his Germanized English:

> Dis man haf lived, and he is an anachronism, for he is before der Iron Age, and der Stone Age…he is at der beginnings of der history of man — Adam in der Garden, und now we want only an Eva! (*MI* 178-179).

Earlier Mesua had identified Mowgli with the "godling of the woods!" (*JB II* 318). Now the recognition comes from one of the ruling races and following the imperial code of conduct will remain unassailable. Thus assured of his worth in and outside jungle Mowgli now can settle in life by marrying the daughter of his employer's butler. But the bright sunny days of his life, stretching from infancy to adulthood and interspersed with heroic deeds with occasional tinges of loss and sadness, lie in contrast with the childhood days of the author. In the tyrannical domesticity of Mrs. Holloway at Lorne Lodge Kipling had no choice but to remain perpetually humble and let himself be guided at the whim of others, in short enacting the role of Mowgli surrounded by Bandar-log. It would not be a far-fetched conjecture to view Kipling's earnest endeavour to relive and reshape his past through one of his best

and widely known creations. It is this reshaping of the past which makes Kipling and hence his creation dwell in the 'unthought' space, defined by Bhabha thus:

> There is a crucial difference between ….*colonial* articulation of man and his doubles…as thinking the unthought which, for nineteenth-century Europe, is the ending of man's alienation by reconciling him with his essence… [The unthought] results in the *splitting* of colonial discourse so that two attitudes towards external reality persist; one takes reality into consideration while the other disavows it and replaces it by a product of desire that repeats, rearticulates 'reality' as mimicry (*The Location of Culture* 91, italics author's).

Viewing thus, one is not so much bemused by the fact that Kipling felt an urge to reconcile with his 'essence' as by the medium he chose to accomplish this. Despite being born and brought up in an Anglo-Indian family and completing education at the heart of the Empire, he could not find a single White character to live the life of his fantasy. As if this was not enough, he endowed this brown child with every virtue of an Empire builder. On a metaphorical plane this virtue can be attributed to the 'double nursing' — by human and animal — of Mowgli which I have mentioned in the early part of the discussion of the *Jungle Books*. Ambreen Hai is quick to remind her readers that this 'double nursing' of Mowgli infuses in him 'double wisdom' to rule over human (colonizer) and animal (colonized) (35). Being armed thus Mowgli could partake in the process of nation building when the burden of White men would be worth shifting to non-Whites. For Kipling this process of shifting needs not be a violent one but voluntary and natural like Kim's acculturation with the natives and later Anglo-Indian community. In a broader perspective such cultural interactions will help the Whites to view the non-White world with more tolerance and understanding. The non-Whites in turn would achieve statesmanship to bring their country at the threshold of modernity.

"The White Seal"

Of the few stories outside the Mowgli cycle that I intend to deal with "The White Seal" comes foremost. First published in the *National Review* (August 1893) the story traces the determination of Kotick, a white seal, who sets out to find a safe haven for his family and peers and thereby saving themselves from being clubbed to death at the hands of Aleutian islanders. After many fallen attempts and wandering across thousands of miles at last he returned victorious to Navastoshnah, his native place. The next two pages show a Kotick who like Messiah assures his people of the promised land, wins over his opponent and makes an exodus with his faithful followers. Year after year more seals follow suit and make their new found island a veritable paradise where they spend days lavishly forever.

In this seemingly pleasant narrative of quest for safe haven the first note of discord can be noticed in Kipling's choice of locale. The mention of Bering sea with some of its islands like Navastoshnah (i.e. north-eastern part of St. Pauls island) and Aleutian reminds the reader of the Bering Sea Arbitration of 1893. Originally emerging as a fishery dispute between Great Britain and United States the arbitration was finally settled largely in favour of Britain. The U.S. was left with little choice but to accept and adhere to the terms and conditions of settlement. Well aware of these developments taking place on the eve of publishing *Jungle Books* in 1894 Kipling portrayed the Aleutian fisherman in a poor light:

> Kerick Booterin turned nearly white under his oil and smoke, for he was an Aleut, and *Aleuts are not clean people* (*JB I* 81, italics mine).

One may compare this description with the words which he showered in praising Kotick:

> *Kotick's fur was almost pure white now*, and though he felt very proud of it he only said: "Swim quickly!..." And so they all came to the beaches where they had been born and heard the old seals, their fathers, fighting in the rolling mist (81, italics mine).

The purity and cleanliness of Kotick and the absence of it in his pursuer point toward a veiled attack on the Americans in general. On the other hand Kotick's

bearings and activities exactly reflect any public school educated boy having the potential to lead his team in the unknown parts of the world. In tracing out the anti-American sentiment of the author, Jesper Gulddal writes:

> In Kipling's view, the Americans are naughty children who spit, swear, lie, steal, and brag endlessly, and lack all decency and manners. Their democracy is predicated on a misguided idea of freedom, which ultimately dissolves *political authority* and instead surrenders all power to *public opinion*;… (74, italics mine).

The fact that the seals at first refused to come with Kotick reflected the hated 'public opinion' which Kipling was eager to change. In the end of the story it is the 'political authority' of Kotick which prevails thereby rendering the high moral ground to the British characteristics of imperialism. The geographical proximity of St. Pauls island to Alaska and Canada in turn reflects Kipling's closeness with these regions rather than with America. To resort to Gulddal's observation again:

> If a suspicion remains that the author's negative reaction to America is mostly due to the primitive conditions in the West, his short incursion into Canada serves as a final confirmation: Kipling finds San Francisco and Portland to be ghastly places, but Vancouver is a charming and pleasantly peaceful town, where the inhabitants refrain from spitting and cheating, and "speak the English tongue correctly and with clearness,…" (74-75).

There are different layers of consciousness which together moulded Kipling's vision of the Empire. His attitude to America and her people, like his attitude to India, can at best be put in the nutshell of 'ambiguity' remembering his fondness for Mark Twain and his realization for the need of a greater Anglo-American unity. Yet it is his chief preoccupation with the fate of the Raj that prompts Kipling reprimand even Britain's natural allies.

"The Miracle of Purun Bhagat"

Appearing first in the *The Pall Mall Gazette* on 18 October 1894, the story chiefly traces the life of a highly distinguished westernized Indian character from the days of his crowning glory to the renunciation of world and ultimately working out a reconciliation of two paths. Born as Purun Dass, an alumnus of Bombay University, he rises to the stature of a Prime Minister in a semi-independent state of northern India. Shortly after being knighted by the Viceroy of India he chooses to retire from the way of the world forever and takes refuge in the high altitudes of the Himalayas. Subsisting on the food bestowed by the people of an adjacent village Purun Bhagat is happy in his newly found state and slowly develops a deep communion with the surrounding flora and fauna. After many years of uninterrupted peace his stars decide to examine his sainthood. Several weeks of heavy rain follow. Then in an unearthly hour of heavy rain-storm he becomes aware of an approaching landslide through the wild animals. All alone, he takes it upon himself to warn and remove the villagers to safe place. He does the job but the immense exertion takes its toll when Bhagat breathes his last by "sitting cross-legged, his back against a tree, his crutch under his armpit, and his face turned to the north-east" (*JB II* 185). In the following months a temple was erected in his commemoration and the hill was named after him as 'Bhagat's Hill'.

The first thing which is likely to be an issue is Kipling's almost heroic treatment of Purun Dass throughout his life. Indeed for an author like Kipling who takes it upon himself to deride time and again the 'university-trained mule[s]'[15] this is not a small prejudice to overcome. The reader is reminded of the abject portrayal of Mr. Girish Chunder De in his short story "The Head of the District" (1890) Being "more English than the English" the Babu flees in the face of a tribal uprising from a district bordering Afghanistan. Even otherwise sympathetically drawn Babu Hurree Chunder in the novel *Kim* (1901) could not escape Kipling's jingoistic diatribe when he blurts out the oft-quoted confession: "I am a fearful man" (*KM* 183). By contrast Kipling's protagonist in the present story accomplished his public and private affairs with grace and dignity. But the notable feature of it all is that even when he renounces the world he cannot part with its values. Thus the man who once used to hold company with the Viceroy never gives a second thought in adhering to the rude

diktats of a native policeman to clear way for traffic: "…Purun Bhagat salaamed reverently to the Law, because he knew the value of it, and was seeking for a Law of his own" (*JB II* 176).

But Bhagat's quest, which was ostensibly aimed at getting divinity, appears to be still enthralled by mundane reality. As a result all his attempts to get close to the spiritual truth is frustrated:

> He would repeat a Name softly to himself a hundred hundred times, till, at each repetition, he seemed to move more and more out of his body, sweeping up to the doors of some tremendous discovery. But, just as the door was opening, his body would drag him back, and, with grief, he felt he was locked up again in the flesh and bones of Purun Bhagat (178).

But when he decides to plunge into the course of action things begin to move the other way round. By helping the villagers to relocate themselves he exhausts himself to a point of no return. Characteristically it exemplifies the 'selfless love' or work without desire which prepares the ground for his salvation. The merging of two paths — of action and contemplation — elicits this reaction from Belliappa:

> This division of a man's life into two exclusive aspects, that of action and contemplation, is a typical western view of life. Kipling's knowledge of Hinduism was admirable but it was not deep enough for him to know that a life of renunciation did not preclude action in a crisis. In the Hindu view of life, action and contemplation are mutually inclusive…what is significant in a study of the image of India, is that Kipling, may be unknowingly, has given us in Purun Bhagat, a moving and *true* picture of an extraordinary Indian (89, italics author's).

In *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), Thomas Becket avoided temptation by remaining steadfast to the path of renunciation. In a bid to help the innocent people Purun Bhagat embraces the path of action and is deified by the people in the last. In both cases the protagonists consciously avoided any path leading to personal

salvation alone. Instead they let the moral and ethical causes prevail over personal spiritual fulfilment. Both became spiritually elevated in their own distinct ways. In the end it is the pen of the imperial bard which unfolds before his readers, especially Indian readers, their own nearly forgotten tradition of accepting, assimilating and synthesizing alien characteristics while retaining one's own.

In conclusion, the reader has to come to terms with the fact that Kipling's vision of Empire in relation to the imperial subject in the present text is a kind of prismatic dispersion of light. The adorable qualities of Empire builders are sometimes effectively mimicked by the subjects who, it appears, are preparing themselves to become the rulers of their communities in a decolonized world. However in stories like "Rikki-Tikki-Tavi" (1893) and "Servants of the Queen" (1894)[16] the native characters, beasts and humans alike, feel at home with the idea of the 'Home-Nation-Empire' and would not hesitate to cast their lives to perpetuate the system. It is precisely this ability to sow the seed of belongingness in the heart of the 'other' people which will make a perpetual bond between the colonizer and the colonized even after the end of colonial era.

"They"

The story was first published in *Scribner's Magazine* (August 1904) and was anthologized in *Traffics and Discoveries* in the same year. The first person narrator whom the reader easily recognizes as a portrait of the author himself, was motoring through Sussex countryside in a pleasant summer day. He loses his way and enters into the garden of an old, stately house with adjoining lawns, clipped yew trees, statues of horsemen and maids of honour and a fountain. Around the house he has glimpses of children playing but they would not come near him. The landlady, Miss Florence, is a kind-hearted, blind woman who greets the protagonist and has some moments of pleasant conversation with him. Interestingly the lion's share of their conversation was preoccupied with children. The hostess is happy because of the fondness the children bear to her. The narrator indirectly tells her that he is deprived of the vision of his dead child in dream: "I have never seen the faces of my dead in any dream" (*TD* 240). The rejoinder of the lady is equally poignant with meaning:

"Then it must be as bad as being blind" (240). She places herself and her guest in the same row on the ground that neither of them can chalk out the countenance of their dear ones. Madden, the polite and reverential butler, escorted the narrator towards a familiar landmark from which the latter can return home. But he refused to accept a tip. Nearly a month later the narrator once again took the route towards the House Beautiful. He again found the desirable companionship of the lady against the background of the curious peeping of the children. When the narrator was slowly advancing in the visionary world of the lady, a coarse, dishevelled woman barged in their recluse and sought help between tear and paroxysm for her dying grandson. The narrator along with Madden, undertook a series of hasty journey, fetching a doctor, medical aids and a nurse to tend the poor soul. However all these efforts yield a naught and the only visible progress of the story is the aggravation of the theme of children and death. The butler humbly reveals his identity as the father of a deceased daughter and the reader is spared of the death agony of the fated child. The narrator pays a final visit to the house in autumn. He was greeted with the same courtesy and taken to a hall due to the stormy weather. The hostess came forward and offered tea. While they were having tea by the fireside a tenant farmer approaches the landlady like a 'frightened child'. The apparently unworldly lady was severely bringing him to book for malpractices. The narrator, relaxing upon a chair and enjoying the warmth and cosiness of the room with shades of light and darkness intermingling, suddenly felt a soft touch upon his hand. Eager to get acquainted with the children he became overjoyed. Then came the ultimate reward — a soft kiss upon the palm which reminded him of the caress of his beloved daughter Josephine. The incident itself served as an eye-opener to the bereaved father and author to the fact that the children have no corporal body. Apart from the maternal affection such as the lady possesses, the only way to get their company is to have a blood-relation with a child, such as the narrator/Kipling had. He had unknowningly trespassed into the shady land through the medium of Miss Florence whose final words to him parted their ways forever: "…I called you lucky — once — at first. You who must never come here again!" (*TD* 260).

The distinguishing characteristic of the story, contrary to Kipling's nature, is his distancing himself from material reality. Even an avid follower of Kipling's

works will ascribe the authorship of the story to anyone but Kipling if the same is served to him anonymously. It requires a sea change in the mindset of a writer to ascend from stories like "The Bridge Builders" (1893) or ".007" (1897) to that of "They" or "The Gardener" (1925). It is this characteristic of transitional literary creation that lends the text a near canonical stature[17]. This aversion to materialism nowhere appears inconsistent or imposed upon but is subtle and all pervasive in nature. It is expressed through the impression the narrator bore to this idyllic surrounding and its inhabitants: "It was sacrilege to wake that dreaming house-front with the clatter of machinery,…" (239). and is also noticeable in the narrator's self-reproachful narration: "I rang my bell in an alluring manner, but the feet fled, and I repented, for to a child a sudden noise is very real terror (244). This attempt to shun the material world is accompanied by the severe censure of the insensitivity which the woman suffers for her selfless concern for the children. Because of her spinsterhood and attachment to people with whom she actually has no relation people around her never think twice to hurt her feelings. It is this irreverence towards beauty and innocence which makes the narrator question the superiority of White race:

> I was silent reviewing that inexhaustible matter — the more than inherited (since it is also carefully taught) brutality of the Christian peoples, beside which the mere heathendom of the West Coast nigger is clean and restrained (245).

There is no scope for any doubt about the sense which the word 'nigger' holds for Kipling. In a letter to Brander Matthews he explicates the term in the following manner:

> Negro applied to an individual is, in our mind, midway to "coloured gentlemen"; the word-picture evoked being that of the American semi-civilized type. I wanted the lowest and clearest contrast. Hence *"nigger"* (Pinney 3: 159, italics author's).

It would be a misreading to deduce Kipling's view of the non-White world as a whole from these few lines voicing popular sentiment of late Victorian aristocracy. But the crux of the comparison lies in Kipling's critique of the social system which

gradually diminishes the barrier between the White and non-White people. The reader may find the observation of Dr. Raleigh relevant in this regard:

> This brutality is more than inherited since it is also carefully taught. In other words, the whole end and aim of education, of the civilizing influence of society is to make brutes of people. *It does not refine, does not spiritualize consciousness, but renders one more and more brutal.* Now, compared to this carefully trained brutality of Christian peoples, who have no vein of sensibility, the natural heathendom of the West Coast nigger is clean and restrained, because that is only natural brutality the untrained, undeveloped animal, so to speak; but the civilized man, the Christian, has carefully developed a system of scientific brutality which has enabled him to become more and more coarse and animal; more so than nature made him in the first place (26, italics mine).

The world may expect little danger from 'child-like savage'[18], but the grave danger comes from spiritual barrenness. With the First Great War lying only a decade ahead the entire Western world was infested with soulless materialism and jingoism paving the path towards a great purge.

In this chaotic, self-serving universe spirituality may exist as an 'out of the world element' as the dwellers of the secluded house are. When the lady bids the narrator adieu at the end of his first visit she says: "We are so out of the world, I don't wonder you were lost!" (*TD* 241). It is but natural for the author to slough off his material self before entering the higher realm of existence. This realm is best summed up in the metaphor of 'Egg' which the lady draws to depict her psychical vision. In a letter to Louis Fabulet, one of the earliest French translators of his works, Kipling illustrates the metaphor thus: "The Egg is the Aura or halo around the soul of every human being and is seen only by the spiritual eye of those who follow a certain school of psychology" (Pinney 3: 185). As a spiritual being in essence the lady is endowed with that vision and that is why the subtlest change of attitudes, expressions is open to her perception. This power is nowhere more aptly manifest as when the narrator suppresses a casual smile, albeit silently and the lady

alleges him to do so. The narrator is struck dumb at the gesture of his hostess who can see the 'naked soul'. With this extra human characteristics at her disposal it is possible for her to evade many inevitable calamities as she had done with the unscrupulous farmer. Once again the reader might depend upon the explanation of Kipling to view the situation: "The farmer sweated with terror because he knew that, from his point of view, there was something wrong with this house full of ghosts — he had probably heard about the children's shades and did not like being there between lights" (Pinney 4: 566). The soul having a guilty conscience cannot simply bear the piercing gaze of the blind eye. But Kipling's intention was not merely to portray the bafflement of a man who is but a small fry in the world of greed and petty spite. He would not allow his readers to forget the fact that the farmer was the only person in the story having no connection with children. A gross material being, he is defeated on the material plane. But a person like the narrator, endowed with both material achievement and spiritual awakening, may yet remain in need of purgation, of acknowledging the truth that as a sacramental ideal Christianity itself fails to illumine the souls who bear Christian names. Their spiritual blindness, non-Christianity in essence, is caught by Miss Florence's tender concern of the children's being laughed at which precedes the narrator's reflection: "A man who laughs at a child — unless the child is laughing too — is a heathen!" (*TD* 247).

Charles Carrington notes that it was a typical Kiplingesque attitude to avoid publicity which led the author to mask his identity in voicing intense personal grief in stories like "They" or "Baa, Baa, Black Sheep" (1888) (372). This shock and bewilderment is addressed in Lockwood Kipling's letter to the family friend Sarah Norton:

> Rud and Carrie, I may confide to you and Mr. Norton who love them, found going back to the 'Elms' much harder and more painful than they had imagined. The house and garden are full of the lost child and poor Rud told his mother how he saw her when a door opened, when a space was vacant at table, coming out of every green dark corner of the garden, radiant — and heart breaking. They can talk of her, however, which is much, for Carrie has hitherto been stone-

> dumb…all I meant to say was that those poor souls have got thus far with their burden… (Carrington 372-373).

Quite obvious that Kipling's craving for Josephine surfaces in the lady's craving for phantom children. In the latter bond a supra-religious value is imposed by the prefatory verse ending with the Command of Christ to release the souls of the children: "Shall I that have suffered the children to come to me hold them against their will?" (*TD* 235). But while love prevails over orthodoxy irony operates yet on another level: the pre-War departure of the children makes Kipling bring them back in a peaceful and agreeable manner whereas the ravages of War compels Kipling to do the same in a ghastly way unravelling the utter inhumanity of the Christian world[19].

"The Gardener"

This little narrative, pregnant with insinuations and thoughtful suppression of minute details, made its first appearance in *McCall's Magazine*, in April, 1925 and subsequently in *Strand* in the next month. Later it was anthologized in *Debits and Credits* (1926) succeeded by the poem "The Burden". The inspiration of this story can be traced back to Kipling's visit to the Rouen Cemetery in 1925 when his son John was reported to be missing immediately after the First World War. In a letter to his close literary associate Henry Rider Haggard on 24 March, 1925 Kipling sums up the genesis of this story thus:

> Went off at once to Rouen Cemetery (11,000 graves) and collogued with the Head Gardener and the contractors. One never gets over the shock of this Dead Sea of arrested lives — from V.C's and Hospital Nurses to coolies of the Chinese Labour Corps. By one grave of a coolie some pious old Frenchwoman (bet she was an old maid) had deposited a yellow porcelain crucifix!! *Somehow that almost drew tears* (qtd. in Cohen 152, italics mine).

Taking cue from this Kipling's biographer Charles Carrington notes that this singlemost incident prompted Kipling to depict '"…the story of Helen Turrell and

her nephew and the gardener in the great 20,000 cemetery'. He worked at it every evening and finished it at Lourdes on 22nd March" (497). The incidents of the story, except for its tricky allusions and ambiguities, have an air of verity that could move any sensitive heart to tears. Helen Turrell, a young spinster of Hampshire went to southern France on the pretext of curing her lung trouble and returned with a baby, later christened as Michael. To the village she attributes his parentage to her deceased brother's liaison with the daughter of a retired non-commissioned officer. It was the baby's mother who, when paid a handsome amount, handed over the boy to Helen. When at the age of six Michael inquires why he cannot call her 'Mummy', a defenceless Helen permits him to do so only at bedtime. He bursts in rage when Helen disclosed this carefully hidden gem of a secret to her friends. Arriving at ten he becomes conscious of his not-very-graceful origin but contrary to his fear his bond with Helen grows deeper. At early youth he won a scholarship and was to head for Oxford in October. But the First World War broke out and the patriotic craze that swept all over the British isle drew Michael in its whirlpool. Nearly a month later when he was getting accustomed to his camp life a shell-splinter, apparently from nowhere, laid him flat upon the ground and took the breath away from the tender body at the breaking of daylight. "The next shell", Kipling writes as if he visualizes the death of Michael/John, "uprooted and laid down over the body what had been the foundation of a barn wall, so neatly that none but an expert would have guessed that anything unpleasant had happened" (*DC* 325). Perceivably it is not for nothing that Kipling denies the existence of all other differences in the world save for the human beings and the Germans in a speech at Southport on 21 June 1915, when the war was barely a year old: "…however the world pretends to divide itself, there are only two divisions in the world to-day — human beings and Germans" (*ASBW* 78). In the present story Kipling let Helen receive an official intimation after the Armistice to the effect that till believed to be missing "Lieutenant Michael Turrell had been found, identified, and re-interred in Hagenzeele Third Military Cemetery…" (327). En route to Hagenzeele, Helen confronts two women — a dishevelled and nearly at wit's end Lancashire maid who failed to provide necessary information regarding her dead son and plagued the local officer to help her out. The second woman, Mrs. Scarsworth informs Helen that she is visiting cemetery adjacent to Hagenzeele on behalf of her friends. However later she confides to Helen

that this is a ploy to visit the grave of her secret lover. But Helen's response, which is wanting in emotion and sympathy, offends her and the acquaintance comes to an unpleasant end. The next morning Helen reaches her destination and is virtually bewildered before the vast multitude of graves. To the query of a man tending saplings she answers that she is looking for her nephew. With infinite compassion in eyes he helps Helen to find the grave of Michael. After Helen's repressed agony finds an outlet over the dear grave, which of course the readers are left to chalk out, the narrative closes abruptly with "[Helen] went away, supposing him to be the gardener" (332).

Throughout the story Kipling's pen deftly exploits the technique of make-believe to present Helen and her tender affection for Michael as the real Simon Pure. But the undercurrent of disturbed memories occasionally comes to the surface with, notes J. M. S. Tompkins, "slant of the sentences and the slightly disproportionate emphasis" with which the parentage of the child is discussed. (117) The first instance of this more than usual emphasis occurs in the very first line: "Everyone in the village knew that Helen Turrell did her duty by all her world,…" (*DC* 321). Except for a few critics like William B. Dillingham who accept Helen's words to be absolutely true, the widely held critical opinion is that the villagers out of their respect and empathy allowed Helen to preserve this open secret. Thus, following the traditional line of thought it may be argued that the reader reading Helen's mind through the pen of the omniscient narrator, clearly sees through the inadequacy of a carefully carved out wording to maintain the façade. This sense of make-believe and the occasional betrayal of this belief by chances and circumstances is replete throughout the story. In this context Professor Bodelsen points out that the hotel where Helen stayed near the war cemetery, "a blue striped wooden structure, with 'a false front'", is a reminder of the false identity which Helen has to put up (113). But Helen's reserve and along with it her role as aunt which until now is unruffled, reaches on the verge of breaking after her encounter with Mrs. Scarsworth. This latter character acts almost as a mirror upon which Helen can see the reflection of her own life. But these two characters do not share the same socio-cultural background which bars them from exchanging each other's loss and suffering. Apart from the difference in taste and manner the relief which Mrs. Scarsworth urgently

needs is to make a clean breast of her illicit affair. A naturally graceful and seemingly sympathetic Helen could proceed no further than pet endearing terms. Mrs. Scarsworth could not hide her shock and bafflement:

> …I'm [Mrs. Scarsworth] *so* tired of lying. Tired of lying — always lying — year in and year out…*You* don't know what that means. He was everything to me that he oughtn't to have been — the one real thing — the only thing that ever happened to me in all my life; and I've had to pretend he wasn't …*I want to be honest with someone before I go… I can't keep it up any longer. Oh, I can't*!
>
> Helen reached forward, caught [Mrs. Scarsworth's hands], bowed her head over them, and murmured: 'Oh, my dear! My dear!' Mrs. Scarsworth stepped back, her face all mottled. 'My God!' said she. 'Is *that* how you take it?' *(DC* 330-331, italics mine).

The need to become honest even for once in life begins to torment Helen's soul keeping her awake late at night. The reader may well resort to the first stanza of the accompanying poem "The Burden":

> One grief on me is laid
> Each day of every year,
> Wherein no soul can aid,
> Whereof no soul can hear:
> Whereto no end is seen
> Except to grieve again —
> Ah, Mary Magdalene,
> Where is there greater pain? (333).

Far from making his protagonist proud about the heroic martyrdom of Michael in the service of the Crown, as he had done in his 1922 poem "The King's Pilgrimage" commemorating the visit of George V to the war cemeteries of France and Belgium, Kipling allows his Mary Magdalene, viz. Helen, to meet the Saviour to bathe in the fountain of mercy.

The final section of the story, brief as it is and with the implication of a natural closure, places the narrative beyond any stereotype. The reader finds no dramatic outcry for peace nor any journey of the awakened collective spirit surpassing the periphery of patriotism. Only a grief-stricken mother searches for the burial ground of her son and the sham about the identity of the boy is in turn buried:

> A man knelt behind a line of headstones — evidently a gardener, for he was firming a young plant in the soft earth. She went towards him,…He rose at her approach and without prelude or salutation asked: 'Who are you looking for?'
> 'Lieutenant Michael Turrell — my nephew', said Helen slowly and word for word,…
> 'Come with me', he said, 'and I will show you where your son lies' (332).

Evidently the allusion, informs Sandra Kemp, recalls the Biblical narrative of *John* 20.15: "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away (Kemp 122; *The Holy Bible* 122). It is but natural for a bereaved father and a mature Kipling to find consolation in drawing a parallel between Christ/Gardener-Michael/John. The device helps him to raise the stature of his son from a commonplace soldier of the Crown to its Saviour. Unlike Helen's son in the present story John Kipling remained perpetually missing in his father's lifetime[20]. In the poem "A Nativity" (1914-1918), Kipling commemorates his hapless son using allusions of the mysteries of Christ's birth and death:

> *My* child died in the dark.
> Is it well with the child, is it well?
> There was none to tend him or mark,
> And I know not how he fell (*CV* 217, italics author's).

Alluding to this irreparable loss in Kipling's personal life, B.S. Browne points out that the story "arose out of the fact that [Kipling] was appointed a member of the Imperial War Graves Commission and so was enabled to describe intimately the

conditions under which [British] war cemeteries were erected and then visited by the relatives of "the Fallen" after the war,…" (17). This is the fact which inspires Kipling to delineate Hagenzeele Third with almost photographic accuracy and at the same time retaining it brief and telling. In the later years of his life Kipling played a pivotal role in setting up the principles and objectives of the Commission. It was chiefly due to Kipling's staunch advocacy that the Commission did not lift its embargo on the erection of private sepulchral monuments. That is why Helen could not locate Michael's grave among the vast numbers of them all alike:

> She did not know that Hagenzeele Third counted twenty-one thousand dead already. All she saw was *a merciless sea of black crosses*, bearing little strips of stamped tin at all angles across their faces. *She could distinguish no order or arrangement in their mass*; *nothing but a waist-high wilderness as of weeds stricken dead, rushing at her. She went forward, moved to the left and the right hopelessly, wondering by what guidance she should ever come to her own*. A great distance away there was a line of whiteness. It proved to be a block of some two or three hundred graves whose headstones had already been set, whose flowers were planted out, and whose new-sown grass showed green. Here she could see clear-cut letters at the ends of the rows, and, referring to her slip, realized that it was not here she must look (*DC* 331-332, italics mine).

Along with the equal recognition of high ranking officials and their subordinates the other subtle objective achieved by the Commission, notes Steven Trout, is "to clear away the chaos left behind by war (the "waist-high wilderness as of weeds stricken dead") and to replace it with a consoling sense of order and neatness (the "clear cut letters at the ends of rows"),…" (116)[21]. It is this surrounding of apparent order and neatness, an attempt of transition from a position where there is nothing to lose, that the gardener did emerge to lift her burden.

When the reader concentrates upon the identity of the gardener he finds that, as has already been shown, the widely accepted notion identifies the gardener with Christ. Given the fact that the Christ motif and a renewed interest in spiritual

mysticism is more than a usual feature in the British literature and culture after the First World War, this conjecture does not seem outlandish. Along with this Kipling's familiarity with French literature lends credence to the thought that the story might have been influenced by Honoré de Balzac's "Christ in Flanders" (1831) where Christ's identity is not disclosed in his first appearance:

> Just at that moment a man appeared a few paces from the jetty, to the surprise of the skipper, who had heard no sound of footsteps. The traveler seemed to have sprung up from the earth, like a peasant who had laid himself down on the ground to wait till the boat should start, and had slept till the sound of the horn awakened him. Was he a thief? or someone belonging to the custom-house or the police? (qtd. in David 113).

But while Balzac dealt at length with the larger than life stature of the stranger leaving ultimately no doubt in the reader's mind as who really he is, Kipling hardly insinuates the gardener's identity save for the phrase "supposing him to be the gardener". Kipling attributes more importance to the gardener/Christ's role as a fellow sufferer and a pardoner of earthly sins for the sake of penance. Thus unlike Balzac's skipper/Christ with his dramatic summon to the travellers either to follow him with unquestioned allegiance and faith or perish and his almost unflinching observance of self-role assigned in the Scripture, Kipling's Christ is certainly more humane. It is precisely this humane characteristic, a prompt desire to embalm the aggrieved heart without testifying to its faith, which renders, observes Martin Seymour-Smith, the religious connotation of the story less significant:

> I don't think it matters if it is Christian or not. It makes use of myth which happens to be Christian…Helen can be left to assume that the gardener was mistaken,…there is no 'explicit assurance' that this was a 'religious experience'…But there is no doubt of the direction in which Kipling was going — and I certainly do not mean that it was one of Christian *dogma*. It is the writer of this narrative who has chosen to tell it like that, with its allusion to the gardener. The writer has pointed out that the gardener,…was just then a Christ (not

> necessarily *the* Christ), for Helen in her need of truthful maternal grief (372-373, italics author's).

Thus the tragic atmosphere that overlay the plot of the narrative is sufficient to assign the role of Christ to any layman and a compatriot of Helen. This becomes evident if the reader — undertakes to trace out the genealogy of them in the war cemeteries of post 1918 Europe. Citing Philip Longworth's *The Unending Vigil: A History of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 1917-1967* (1967) Stephen Trout writes:

> …the presence of British labor in continental war cemeteries stemmed largely from patriotic impulses: shortly after the war, the French and Belgian governments granted land, in perpetuity, for British (and colonial) graves and memorials, but with the understanding that Britain would assume permanent responsibility for their upkeep. British workers, especially veterans, the Commissioners ruled, were the logical choice for such a sensitive and emotional undertaking…the return of hundreds of former soldiers to the Western Front — by March 1921, 1,362 gardeners had been recruited — was perhaps symbolic in another, less explicitly nationalistic, way: *the dead,…would be watched over not by strangers, but by comrades, fellow soldiers already tied, through their own suffering and sacrifice, to the Flanders fields and to the crosses row on row* (117, italics mine).

It is in this fashion by which Kipling's gardener fulfils his dual role already mentioned — being a compatriot and a fellow sufferer and assuming the role of Christ for the time being. A deep insight into the affairs of the public life, especially the lives of the ground soldiers, enables Kipling to choose his Saviour from one of them rather than creating a haloed presence prevalent in Balzac's.

Now if Christ could be brought down to the level of ordinary mortals, questions are likely to emerge regarding the identity of Michael's father which in turn leads to a conjecture — whether Helen's account of Michael's birth is utterly an invention or it bears the stamp of truth. To resort to Carrington again, Michael might

have been an offspring of Helen's incestuous affair with her brother: "The only person Helen admits to a weakness for is her own ne'er-do-well brother and the boy resembled him. If Michael was the child of an incestuous love, Helen's secrecy, reserve, and sense of guilt are explained" (*KJN*, June 1973, 17). This interpretation, like many others trying to trace out Michael's lineage, could not go unscathed. On the other hand Helen might have fared a little better had she acknowledged that she gave birth to a child whose father was only interested in her physical charm. This latter version, although not as unspeakable as the former in early nineteenth century England, would nevertheless cast Helen into that type of female, patriarchy is prone to alienate and subjugate. Perhaps there is no better way left for the reader than to agree with renowned Kipling scholar Mrs. Lisa A. F. Lewis's assumption that "[Michael's father] has been omitted because he simply is not important in the story; if he were made a real person, we might expect him to share Helen's grief, but that is not going to happen" (qtd. in Orel 187)[22].

In the opening discussion I have already made it clear that the prevailing atmosphere of the story is one of interminable bereavement, a kind of looking back into past memories of the author torn asunder by the ravages of war. Longing for peace remains inarticulate throughout or perhaps the rows of white crosses indicate an exhaustion of manpower and ammunition. Religion, doubtless, plays some part in aggravating the already mournful situation. But to my opinion this role is certainly not one of determining. This too has been mentioned in the earlier pages of the discussion while trying to unearth the generally held opinion of Michael's birth, that critics like Professor Dillingham took a different stance from the popularly held interpretation of this story. Even if we try to analyze the narrative from the former's viewpoint probably no harm would be done so far as Helen's (and hence Kipling's) agony and pang of loss is concerned. The religious overtone gains strength not simply by Helen's utterance at the end ("supposing him to be the gardener") but, writes Dillingham, by "the first three stanzas of the poem "The Burden", which follows the story in *Debits and Credits*" (149). Quite obvious, Kipling's evoking the name of Mary Magdalene prompts critics to merge the identity of Helen with the Scriptural promiscuous and repentant woman. Here following Dillingham's logic it is possible to derive that comparing Mary Magdalene whose sin is to have slack

morality and not any attaching relationship with that of Helen pining for her dead nephew/son is perhaps not at all appropriate. Moreover unlike Mrs. Scarsworth Helen, if she wishes to, can share her grief with outside world even if under the sham identity of a bereaved aunt. But it is Mrs. Scarsworth whose burden is literally beyond human endurance as she could not under any pretension give vent to her grief for her deceased paramour. The only person before whom she ventures to unlock her heart is Helen and evidently drew a blank.

All these apparent and hidden nuances of meaning cannot alter a single truth — if the anonymous man and Michael had nothing to hide in their relationships with Mrs. Scarsworth and Helen they could be no more fondly remembered. Hence it would not be presumptuous to infer that it is for the sake of creating this very fondness which necessitates the death of both Michael and the never known youth. The loss of John in his full bloom manifests "Kipling's obsession with the war-dead [which] dwelt upon his understanding that the soldiers were initiates, admitted to a higher degree of the suffering which is the law of life, and so separated from their lovers at home" (qtd. in Carrington, *Rudyard Kipling* 470). But when the suffering and losses reach their culmination and fewer opportunities is available for ruminating the heroic exploits of the dead, the heart of the Empire starts to bleed. More than two decades afterwards with the commencement, long duration and aftermath of the Second World War this bleeding becomes so profuse that the British Lion was forced to let the Brown and Black people take up their own burden.

Puck of Pook's Hill

Containing a total number of ten stories, all of which appeared separately earlier, *Puck of Pook's Hill* was published in 1906. The book along with its sequel, *Rewards and Fairies* (1910), falls into the category of those few texts that betray Kipling's vision of Britain's past conquerors and explorers. One notices a curious similarity with the opening of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) where Marlow, the chief narrator, thinks not about Britain's glorious past but of its dark ages when it was invaded by the Romans.

Set in Sussex Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill* also traces the history of England from the time of the Roman invasion with particular stress upon the late colonial Romans and the late Anglo-Saxons, to the Norman Conquest and its aftermath and on to the Tudor period. However instead of giving a linear and coherent narrative the stories exemplify a peculiar blend of fantasy and fact. They are communicated by Puck, the ancient fairy, to Dan and Una, veiled portrayals of Kipling's children John and Elsie. The 'Pook's Hill' is unanimously suggested by critics as the 'Perch Hill', visible from Bateman's, the family home in Sussex. To perform the fairy scenes from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the two children choose a fairy ring at the foot of the Hill. Unknown to them this act breaks the Hill and summons Puck. This is the frame in which the succeeding stories are set. He endows the children with the privilege to meet some of the people who lived in this valley few centuries and sometimes few millennia ago. It is by narrating the stories that Puck gets the children acquainted with the past of their own country, its cultural, social and military tradition so that they become capable of carrying it forward. This value of historical sense is foregrounded by Kipling in a letter to Edward Bok : "…[The stories are] part of a scheme of mine for trying to give children *not* a notion of history but a notion of the time sense which is at the bottom of all knowledge of history and history rightly understanded means love of one's fellow men and the lands one lives in" (Pinney 3:189, italics author's). This is what T. S. Eliot in his *On Poetry and Poets* (1943) described as "the development of the imperial imagination into the historical imagination" (289).

In the first story "Weland's Sword" (first published in *The Strand Magazine* in January 1906) the imperial theme is introduced by the sword carved with runic prophecy. Designed by the Norse god Weland, who for a certain period of time was compelled to perform drudgery on earth, the sword is handed over to Hugh the Saxon. Hugh puts it in good use in slaying the dragon to get hold of the treasure in a later story "The Knights of the Joyous Venture" (first published in *The Strand Magazine* in March 1906). Although gold is necessary for building up a nation state, the Jew Kadmiel can see through the possible misuse of gold at the hands of King John in the final story "The Treasure and the Law" ((first published in *The Strand Magazine* in October 1906):

> …gold does more than the sword. Our good King signed because he could not borrow more money from us bad Jews…A King without gold is a snake with a broken back…it is a good deed to break a snake's back. That was my work (*PPH* 203).

True to his words the Jew casts all the gold into the deep sea. Here the reader can recognize Kipling the moralist who would not hesitate to drain the Empire of its sap had it become a threat to humanity. It is the foresight of the accumulation of wealth and the danger of falling wealth into wrong hands that, observes Shamsul Islam, compels people to feel the necessity of law (138). The nexus of military might, wealth and rule of law is summed up by Puck in the following manner: "Weland gave the Sword! The Sword gave the Treasure, and the Treasure gave the Law. It's as natural as an oak growing" (*PPH* 215). But the reader is also required to explore Kipling's notion of military strength on the basis of the people who yield it. Therein it is revealed to us that the upholders of peace and stability are of diverse racial lineage.

In the second story "Young Men at the Manor" (first published in *The Strand Magazine* in February 1906) the children see one Sir Richard Dalyngridge, a Norman knight who fought on the side of William the Conqueror in the Battle of Hastings. After the battle he has had a skirmish with Hugh the Saxon and spares the life of the latter. In return Hugh also saves Richard from a wandering group of his own tribe and takes him home. Thereafter De Aquila, lord of Richard, arrives at Hugh's manor and gives the possession of the manor to Richard, if he can retain it. Richard succeeds in doing it with the help of Hugh and in course of time marries lady Aelueva, Hugh's sister in a later story "Old Men at Pevensey" (first published in *The Strand Magazine* in April 1906). By and by Sir Richard gathers the support of local Saxons and together they form an alliance to defend the land from any fraction of marauding invaders. Ultimately the reconciliation between the two belligerent tribes — Saxons and Normans — attains a remarkable pageantry when Hugh swears allegiance to his new land in the following words:

I followed my Duke ere I was a lover,
To take from England fief and fee;

But now this game is the other way over —
But now England hath taken me! (*PPH* 49, italics mine).

The same prediction of the emergence of a new race is echoed by De Aquila during the union of Sir Richard and lady Aelueva: "In fifty years there will be neither Norman nor Saxon, but all English" (83). Kipling's endorsement of racial hybridity for the sake of future generation, who can protect the English soil better, is pointed out by John McBratney thus:

> [lady Aelueva] initiates the union when she invites Richard to assume ownership of the Manor formerly occupied by her family. When Richard enters the "Great Hall" (the legal ingress anticipating the sexual), he does so neither as a Saxon nor a Norman but as an Englishman…members of races "proximate" to each other intermarry to beneficial effect. In his 1907 speech to the Canadian Club …Kipling touted the idea of the Empire "as a community of men of *allied* race…" In *Puck of Pook's Hill*, the closely allied Saxon and Norman blend to produce a tough hybrid — the strong gun-barrel Englishman so central to Kipling's concept of national identity (150-151, italics author's).

The alliance of warlike races in making a nation is also evident in "The Knights of the Joyous Venture" where Witta, the Danish pirate, lends a firm hand to Sir Richard and Hugh to rescue the treasure[23].

However it will be far from truth to take such consolidated defence of the Empire as the earliest and most prominent formation of national/imperial coalition against any forthcoming invasion. It has its roots in the defence of the Roman Empire in England which Kipling chooses to deal with in the middle of the book in the story "A Centurion of the Thirtieth" (first published in *The Strand Magazine* in May 1906). The reader is introduced to Parnesius, a Centurion, serving in the later phase of the Roman Empire in Britain. Living in Britain for generations he is whole-heartedly devoted to the defence of this land and especially, 'Hadrian's Wall', which was built up in northern England, to keep the Painted People, the Picts at bay. Although generally favoured with Maximus, the great general of Roman legion in

Britain, Parnesius aroused the displeasure of the former by refusing to slay an insolent soldier. He is one of those Romans "who have never seen Rome except in a picture" (*PPH* 105). The physical distance between his place of racial origin and the place of birth also creates a psychological distance between the Roman-born and British-born Romans. When the question of the defence of the Empire arises, this psychological aloofness begets suspicion and hatred, as reflects Parnesius: "The Roman-born officers and magistrates looked down on us British-born as though we were barbarians" (110). His father casts this observation in a broader socio-political framework where he recognizes themselves as anglicized Romans whose first duty lies not to Rome but to Britain:

> There is no hope for Rome,…She has forsaken her Gods, but if the Gods forgive *us* here, we may save Britain. To do that, we must keep the Painted People back. Therefore, I tell you, Parnesius, as a Father, that if your heart is set on service, your place is among men on the Wall — and not with women among the cities (111, italics author's).

Parnesius, whom Kipling valorizes, thus is a man disillusioned with Rome to a great extent. Consequently the nature of service which he can render in the defence of Britain, and which is but an extension of the defence of Rome, will be far from simple and one-dimensional . Andrew Hagiioannu explores into the intricate nature of his service thus:

> …Parnesius' disloyalty to Rome rendered his defence of Britain an extremely ambivalent and discomfiting notion to the 'popular' imperialists…The first step in the defence of England is the disavowal of state power — the supremacy and the law of Rome. By his own admission, Parnesius is 'not too fond of anything Roman', nor does he know Roman history,…Rome teeters 'on the edge of destruction,'…because … it has become 'large-minded', too liberal (170).

It is this latent and subversive mindset of the defenders of the Roman Empire which invokes comparison with the 'frontier men' in parallel situations in Kipling's early Indian stories. For instance, Bart Moore-Gilbert draws our attention to Parnesius'

upbringing by a Numidian nurse with the childhood days of Anglo-Indian boys under the care of Indian ayahs and the rugged British frontier of the north with the wilderness of North-West Frontier Province bordering Afghanistan, always remaining an easy prey to the Russian aggression (*Kipling & Orientalism* 94-95). Judged from that point of view one can interpret that the defence of Hadrian's Wall', i.e. the northern Britain, mirrors the defence of Afghan border from insurrection by barbaric hordes in the days of the Raj.

Being an industrial and military superpower Edwardian Britain did not have to face its worst nightmare of being routed out by an enemy overwhelmingly superior in number. But the fear is well orchestrated in the story "The Winged Hats" (first published in *The Strand Magazine* in July 1906) against the background of a fourth century Roman-Britain frequently bled by the invasions of Picts, Scots and Saxons. The story shows how Parnesius and his associate Pertinax fight tooth and nail to defend 'Hadrian's Wall' against the 'Winged Hats', a euphemism for the Saxon sea-raiders. The two Romans did not budge an inch even while their lord, Maximus is away with a substantial number of troops to fulfil his ambition of becoming the Emperor of Rome. Without reinforcement the danger of being overrun by the enemy is expressed by Parnesius in the following lines:

> …I knew how weak we were. I knew that if even a false rumour of any defeat to Maximus broke loose among the Winged Hats, they might come down in earnest, and then — the Wall must go! For the Picts I never cared, but in those years I learned something of the strength of the Winged Hats. They increased their strength every day, but I could not increase my men. Maximus had emptied Britain behind us, and I felt myself to be a man with a rotten stick standing before a broken fence to turn bulls (*PPH* 150-151).

It is in this context that one has to appreciate T. S. Eliot's acknowledgement of Kipling's thematic consistency of safeguarding the Empire, even if the very 'Empire' acquires a different nationality:

> To think of Kipling as a writer who could turn his hand to any subject, who wrote of Sussex because he had exhausted his foreign

> and imperial material, or had satiated the public demand for it, or merely because he was a chameleon who took his colour from environment, would be to miss the mark completely: this later work is the continuation and consummation of the earlier (291).

That the present text is a continuation and consummation of the imperial concern dealt with in the earlier Indian stories is affirmed by Kipling himself: "…[the Puck stories] had to be a sort of balance to, as well as a seal upon, some aspects of my 'Imperialistic' output in the past,…" (*SOM* 145).

Throughout the Puck stories Kipling strives to present to his readers how the complex idea of English national identity is forged out of the amalgamation of people belonging to different racial and cultural origin. This exploration of the inherent multi-layered nature of an identity, which outwardly gives the impression of being monolithic, is akin to Foucauldian search for 'descent'. In illustrating the nature of descent, Foucault writes:

> An examination of descent…permits the discovery, under the unique aspect of a trait or a concept, of the myriad events through which…they were formed…The search for descent is not the erecting of foundations: on the contrary, it disturbs what was previously considered immobile; it fragments what was thought unified; it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself (*Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* 146-147).

It is in the light of the above observation that the reader has to understand Kipling's retrospection of the past events of his motherland after a long period spent abroad: "…*we discovered England which we had never done before.*..and went to live in it. England is a wonderful land. It is the most marvellous of all foreign countries that I have ever been in" (Pinney 3:113, italics mine). In his 'wonderful land' Kipling seeks to rejuvenate certain individual and social qualities of upliftment that would lend a moral high ground for the perpetuation of British Empire. The warrior skill of Parnesius and Pertinax in the face of extreme adversity, the temper of forbearance and co-existence prevailing between once belligerent Saxons and Normans and the

sacrifice of a family of small means for a greater cause — all are supposed to contribute in the formation of future England. The latest characteristic, exemplified in the penultimate story "Dymchurch Flit" (first published in *The Strand Magazine* in September 1906) and dealing with a widow's giving away of her two sons to help people fearing religious persecution, closely reminds the reader of Kipling's giving away of his son to help the Allied Forces in the First Great War. Thus Puck's initiation of the two children to England and her people by symbolically giving them a clod of Sussex soil turns a full circle when John laid down his life for that very soil nearly a decade after the publication of *Puck of Pook's Hill*.