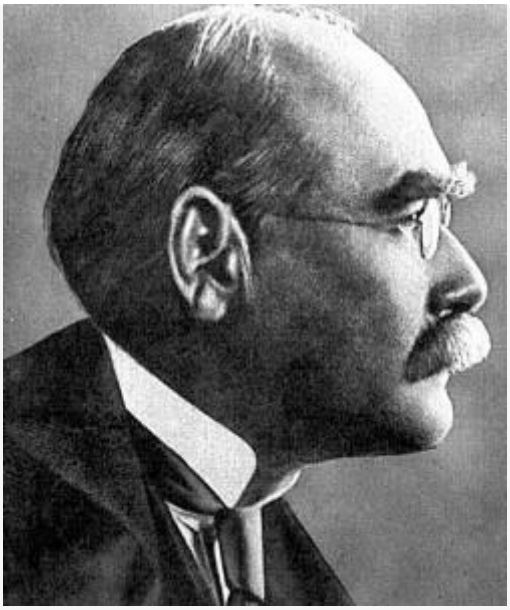
Kipling, Rudyard

Take up the White Man's burden–
Send forth the best ye breed–
Go, bind your sons to exile
To serve your captives' need;
On fluttered folk and wild–
Your new-caught sullen peoples,
Half devil and half child.
– Kipling, "The White Man's Burden"

Biography



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This famous writer was born Joseph Rudyard Kipling in Bombay on December 30th, 1865, after his mother Alice Macdonald, a methodist minister's daughter, and his father John Lockwood Kipling, an artist, moved there so John could work as the director of an art school. Kipling lived happily in India until he was six, when his father sent him back to England to study. At sixteen Kipling returned to his parents in India and worked on the *Civil and Military Gazette*, also writing and publishing a number of poems and stories. Kipling returned again to England in 1889 where he gained fame and credibility with his publication of *Barrack-Room Ballads*. In 1892, he married an American, Carrie Balestier, sister of his dear friend and sometimes partner, Wolcott Balestier, and settled with her in Vermont. There he wrote *Captains Courageous* and *The Jungle Books*, and Carrie gave birth to their first two children, Josephine and Elsie. The family moved to England in 1896 and settling in Rottingdean, Sussex the next

year. Here their third child John was born. Unfortunately their daughter, Josephine, died during a family visit to the U.S. in 1899. Around this time Kipling was deemed the "Poet of Empire" and produced some his most memorable works, including *Kim, Stalky & Co.,* and *Just So Stories*. In 1907, Kipling accepted the Nobel Prize for literature. In 1915, his son John died in the battle of Loos, during World War I. Kipling continued to write and became involved in the Imperial War Graves Commission. In January 1936, Kipling died, but not before the completion of his autobiography *Something of Myself*.

British Imperialisms in Kipling's Life

As Britain entered a high expansionist phase at the end of the nineteenth century, Kipling became the great imperial poet and propagandist. The empire covered over a quarter of the world's land surface, and included more than a quarter of the world's population. Kipling would see the beginning of the imperial downfall after the World Wars, as nations would eventually acquire some degree of political autonomy and, eventually, independence, although Kipling would never see the complete end of the empire after the end of the Second World War.

Kipling on Imperialism

Kipling saw the Empire as a way to maintain stability, order, and peace amongst the people he considered to be "heathens"(see Myths of the Native). In his view, the British presence in under-developed countries helped to relieve famine, provide medical assistance, abolish slavery, and construct the physical and the psychological groundwork for "civilization" (See Anglophilia, Cricket). Kipling's ideas were backed by political, racial, moral, and religious beliefs, which held the British as a culture of superiority with a moral responsibility to the "uncivilized" world. In a speech to the Royal Society of St. George in April 1920, Kipling spoke of the men who created the Empire: "… they did establish and maintain reasonable security and peace among simple folk in very many parts of the world, and that, too, without overmuch murder, robbery, oppression or torture." Kipling's view of the British rule is now seen as naïve and idealistic. Kipling believed that ideally the colonized should recognize their inferiority and accept their governed position (see Orientalism).

Although Kipling lived in India and was exposed to its cultures, he made himself the interpreter, propagandist, and chief apologist of the imperialist elite. Kipling was suspicious of democracy and of the members of the British Liberal Intelligentsia who opposed imperialism as a philosophy. He saw World War I as a threat not only to Britain itself but also to her civilizing mission.

Kipling believed that in Imperialism there were five "points of fellowship" necessary to develop and settle colonized areas. These five points were education, immigration, transportation, irrigation, and administration. By conquering these elements of civilization, the mother country had created a better and more civilized nation from the colony. Imperialism was not so much a narrow political subject as it was a way of moral and social life.

Kipling's ideal of imperialism in India was that of a paternalistic, quasi-feudal imperial one. As "legitimate" and benevolent rulers, the British took a privileged position at the top of the social chain with a systematic mode of government. Kiplings could have easily been influenced by the spreading ideal of social Darwinism, a societal spin on Darwin's order of the natural world. For Kipling, hierarchy was natural and was determined by survival of the fittest. Imperialism could not be corrupt to Kipling, because social order is fated, therefore moral.

Imperialism in *Kim*

Kipling's *Kim* is a novel about a young European boy in India, Kim, who travels with a Tibetan lama on his search for a river of purifying water. Kim also works as a spy for the British Secret Service, using his tanned skin and manipulation of language to move in and out of the role of a native. In his introduction to the novel, Edward Said points out Kipling's use of "the dominating viewpoint," regarding English rule as natural, beneficial, even ordained. From this perspective, Kipling could not see the enormous changes in India produced by Imperialism. In *Kim*, Kipling depicts India still full of ancient customs and tradition. However, by the time *Kim* was written in 1901, India had already been radically altered by the English "reformations" and the Indian Mutiny of 1857 had occurred. These "reformations" dispossessed or altered nearly every class: the new system of higher education based on the English model crushed the old religious elite; the democracy of the judicial system offended the honor of the highest castes; free trade transformed urban artisans into beggars; and the unrestricted sale of estates ended traditions of rural life.

In *Kim,* it is obvious that Kipling did not see imperialism as any type of disruption, exploitation, or subjugation, but as economic development and moral enlightenment for India. In the novel, working as a spy for the British Empire and looking for spiritual harmony work side-by-side. British rule is never challenged; instead Kipling uses several minor characters strictly for the purpose of advocating British rule. Although Kipling shows a knowledge of a number of Indian languages and the capability of using many voices, there is no variety of viewpoint. All voices hold one style and one dominant point of view in favor of British imperialism. Kipling's use of Indian words and phrases lacks any attempt to represent their cultural specificity.

The White Man's Burden

Kipling's poem, "The White Man's Burden," was published in *McClure's Magazine* in 1899. The poem considered white imperialism necessary to civilize the "backward savages" of the colonies. This poem disregarded the economic motivations of imperialism in favor of moral obligations, a comfortable guilt-free explanation. The phrase "the white man's burden," was widely used by imperialists all over, especially by the once-colonized United States in their 1899 takeover of Cuba during its war with the Philippines. In 1901, at the end of the war, Mark Twain remarked: "The White Man's Burden has been sung. Who will sing the Brown Man's?"

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