

Post-colonial Multicultural Identity in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*

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Abstract:

Identity differs from individual to individual in many ways. Each and every individual seeks for a particular identity to live their own life in this society. Being a multicultural adolescent orphan, Kim was described with socio-cultural experiences in with the post-colonial touch. The novelist Rudyard Kipling has painted the colours of multiculturalism through the life of an adolescent boy Kim who seeks his identity. In this paper, the idea justifies imperial domination and expansion complex identity due to the fact that there are so many different cultural identities and areas of study included, such as e.g. identity, ethnicity, race and gender.

Key words: Multiculturalism, identity, adolescent, gender, etc.,

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Multiculturalism is a part of postcolonial writing. It teaches the readers a world of reality. Post-colonial writings and young adult readers have a very close connection to each other. A young reader uses books to overcome his struggle with identity in the multicultural world. They try to find solace through books. Postcolonial writings help them to create a close relationship with the characters in the book because they represent the present day reality. Rudyard Kipling's work *Kim* is one such young adult fiction that tells the readers about the postcolonial impact on the life of a young boy.

Kipling is a writer who saw imperialism as a movement which reformed the colonized country in terms of education, administration, immigration, transportation and irrigation. Colonization according to him is not only a political subject but also something which has moral and social issues within it. *Kim*, by Rudyard Kipling, is set in British India under the Raj at the turn of the 20th century. The story is about coming-of-age, adventure, espionage, travel, and the diversity of India's ethnic groups and characters. The story of *Kim* is about a young European

boy in India, Kim, who travels with a Tibetan lama in his search for a river of purifying the soul. 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 the beginning itself, the author tries to show the colonial rule in the country is natural, beneficial, even ordained. He saw the imperialism as something that helped India develop economically and a socially. He favors the multiculturalism. Kim being an adolescent boy of British descent, he is left as an orphan boy in native India who doesn't know about his birth. When he finally knows his real identity as an Irish, he is trained to become a spy for the British government because he has a particular talent for getting people to talk to him and for hiding his identity as a British guy.

This shows how the life of a poor orphan boy changes into British spy by finding his identity.

Though [Kim] was burned black as any native; though he spoke the vernacular by preference and his mother-tongue in a clipped uncertain sing-song; though he consorted on terms of perfect equality with the small boys of the bazar; Kim was white—a poor white of the very poorest. (1)

Kim being a boy of white birth, he doesn't have the looks of a British boy. The way he roams in the Indian bazaars as an orphan, his Indian way of dressing, his vernacular language all this makes his a boy with native origin. He used to say the people "Little Friend of all the

World" (3). His whiteness is the most important part of the novel through which the novel moves. He is a character who shows the dual nature of being white men and also being a native colonized. It's this position of being both inside the elite world of British India and outside of it that makes it possible for Kim to cross so many social boundaries.

'Never speak to a white man till he is fed,' said Kim, quoting a well-known proverb. 'They will eat now, and—and I do not think they are good to beg from. Let us go back to the resting-place. After we have eaten we will come again. It certainly was a Red Bull—my Red Bull.'(83)

This is an important part in the novel where we see Kim's equal sense of distance from all races, which allows him to observe the habits and ideas of many different people who comes partly from his childhood background. Even though Kipling talks about race as something that gives a person status, he also seems to think of whiteness as something Kim needs to learn, rather than as something that attaches to him by birth. Kipling's understanding that each person's manners and customs are culturally determined and learned from other people seems kind of at odds but still he brings out his thoughts of understanding a race by looking it as an outside.

One of the most important thing in the novel is that one can find that the character Kim repeats over and over again the question "who is Kim?" "What is Kim?" This shows his search for his identity in this multicultural world. Being born in different race and brought up in a different race he is stuck in a place to find his own identity as a young boy. This shows the life of present day young boys. The gain knowledge and ides about everything but they always have a

question of their identity. Kim who learns different cultures by travelling with the lama still searches for his own place in the world. He is yet not sure with his multicultural identity. He keeps on questioning himself. This shows the situation of present day young generation who are trying to find their own identity in the multicultural world.

On the whole, the novel *Kim* shows the benefits of imperialism in India through the eyes of a young adolescent boy who is a colonizer because of his birth and who is a colonized because of his growth in native India and a quest for identity. The depiction of multiculturalism is a main effect and essence to the novel.

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