

Hegemony of Empire over Orient: Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*

Fatemeh Ghiasvand¹ and Bahman Zarrinjooee^{2*}

- 1- MA Student, Postgraduate Department of English Language and Literature, College of Humanities, Boroujerd Branch, Islamic Azad University, Boroujerd, Iran
- 2- Assistant Professor of Postgraduate Department of English Language and Literature, College of Humanities, Boroujerd Branch, Islamic Azad University, Boroujerd, Iran

Corresponding author: Bahman Zarrinjooee

ABSTRACT: This paper examines Rudyard Kipling's (1865-1936) last novel, *Kim* (1901) based on Edward Said (1935-2003) and Homi K. Bhabha's (1949-) postcolonial theories regarding hegemony of British Empire over Orient. The focus is on Kipling's imperialistic view toward India, which causes humiliation of other nations in order to represent the superiority of Occident and inferiority of Orient. Because Kipling is familiar with the Indians' culture, his novel clarifies the difference between these two cultures based on British hegemony over India. He shows how some British administrators consider Orient as others, savage, uncivilized, inferior and backward. Kipling puts emphasis on the hegemony of English people toward the Indians and determines the dominant values for the British administrators as well. Moreover, this paper shows how the discourse of Orientalism provides a fixed description of the Orient as the Other to solidify its hegemony. Consequently, this paper clarifies how British hegemony imposes the superiority of its culture on the native people through misrepresenting the Oriental backwardness and inferiority. It misrepresents the Oriental culture as uncivilized in need of Western hegemony.

Keywords: Hegemony; Orient; Occident; Culture; Backwardness.

INTRODUCTION

Joseph Rudyard Kipling's (1865-1936) *Kim* (1901) demonstrates how he misrepresents the cultural condition of late nineteenth century India in order to maintain and exert the strength and validity of British imperialism. Kipling's vivid descriptions of the hegemonic relationship between the natives and British settlers is important. By considering Kipling's life and his craftsmanship as a journalist, it is evident that how he is enthusiastic about authority of colonial discourse and imperialism. *Kim* is a stereotypical description of the Indian people. The British imperial power demonstrates the Asiatic people as lazy, foolish, uncivilized, childlike and superstitious who need the help of Europeans.

In addition, Kipling attempts to repeat such stereotypical view throughout *Kim* in order to demonstrate the supremacy of the British administrators and to exercise British power in India. Kipling's interest in imperialism, hegemony and colonial dominance makes *Kim* a male-oriented novel because it presents a picture of male domination in the colonial discourse of orientalism, while the women play the role of prostitutes in the novel. In this way, Kipling presents a picture of European superiority and native dependency; in other words, it shows the British hegemony over the Orient in India.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Hegemonic Discourse of Orientalism

According to Nicholas Bunnin and Jiyuan Yu, hegemony is a political philosophy taken from Greek "*hegoma*" (299) which means to conduct and rule. It is a kind of domination by force; in other words, it is the domination of one country over another. Bunnin and Yu draw on Plekhanov and some western Marxist writers' idea about hegemony

and clarify that hegemony is a form of “social and political control” which is on the basis of “intellectual, moral, and cultural persuasion or consent than on physical coercion” (ibid). All sections of the lowest social class joined together into a greater whole with the common aim. According to Bill Ashcroft and others, initially hegemony refers to the control of one country “within a confederation”; i.e., it is the control by consent (106). This kind of hegemony is coined and developed by the Italian Marxist philosopher, Antonio Gramsci. Bunnin and Yu deal with what Gramsci believes that hegemony or the Italian “*diregere*” is the “moral and intellectual leadership” that lets a leading group to compromise with different allies in a group (299). Hegemony is the power of the ruling class to affect other classes and persuade them that their interests are the interest of all.

In addition, Ashcroft and others state that domination happens not by force or “active persuasion”, but by the extensive power of economy and some other methods such as education and media; thus, using these methods makes the interest of the ruling class as the “common interest” (106-7). Similarly, the word hegemony describes the triumph of imperial power over the colonized people who may be more in number than the colonizers, but the colonizers’ desire for “self-determination” is suppressed by a hegemonic idea of the greater good “social order, stability, and advancement” (ibid). Thus all proper arrangement within a society are defined by the colonizers’ power. Hegemony is important because it has influential impacts on the “thought of the colonized” in the colonized places (ibid). In fact, an empire is not a collection of countries ruled by the force of a central power or “by virtue of the effectiveness of its cultural hegemony” (ibid). Consent is obtained by the “interpellation of the colonized subject, by imperial discourse [...] Eurocentric values, assumptions, beliefs and attitudes” which are accepted as a natural and valuable matter of course (ibid). The certain result of such interpellation is that the colonized people consider themselves as the “peripheral to Eurocentric values” and accept the colonizers’ centrality (ibid).

Gauri Viswanathan shows the hegemonic process and believes that “humanistic functions” are related to the study of literature. For example, the form of character or the “development of the aesthetic sense or the disciplines of ethical thinking” are necessary “in the process of sociopolitical control” (qtd. in Ashcroft 107). Ashcroft and others add that such a control was supported by the British government when it was in charge of educating the Indians after “the Charter Act of 1813” (107). Through the process of banning the Indians from their “Hindu sensibilities” (ibid) and educating the Indians by means of the values of western civilization, the British Empire uses the power of English literature as an instrument for imperial authority. Not only the British Empire uses the policy of imposing the colonizers’ authority in literature, but also removes the history of “colonialist expropriation, material exploitation” as well as the unfair European world domination over the specific race or class (ibid). Such English literary text acts as a complete English man with the highest and most perfect position; in addition, this Englishman was the manifestation of all “universal human values” (ibid).

Similarly, Viswanathan states that the “progressive refraction of the rapacious exploitative and ruthless actor of history” of colonialism is clearly reflected in the literature which demonstrates one part of the hegemonic control because the discourse of English literature includes the “spiritual values, cultural assumptions, social discriminations, racial prejudices and humanistic values” (qtd. in Ashcroft 107). Edward Said, in *Orientalism* (1978), argues that the European misrepresents the Orient as “a place of romance, exotic beings” (1), unforgettable memories and landscapes, extraordinary experiences, but now it is the end of all prosperities. He believes that the Orient is the place of Europe’s richest and oldest colonies, as well as the source of Europe’s “civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant” (ibid). The Orient is considered as the opposite “image, idea, personality [and] experience” (ibid 2) in order to define Europe or the West.

In this way, the Westerners consider the Orient as an important part, for “European material civilization and culture”, which is represented “culturally and ideologically” as a mode of Oriental discourse with the support of colonial organizations, language, scholarship, descriptions, policies and methods (ibid). Considering the concept of hegemony, Orientalism is defined a “style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the Orient and the Occident” (ibid). Thus, Said states that many scholars like “poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators” accept the essential difference between East and West in order to start elaborating their theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts about the Orient, its people, customs, mind, destiny, and so on (ibid).

Additionally, Orientalism is described as “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (ibid 3). Said believes that the Western culture catches its power and identity by representing the Orient as a “surrogate and underground self” (ibid). Regarding hegemony, Said explains that the relationship between Occident and Orient is the “relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony” (ibid 5). Therefore Orientalism is not European superficial fantasy about the Orient, but it is a “created body of theory and practice” that has been considered for many years as an investment that makes Orientalism as a system of knowledge about the Orient (ibid 6). Said explains that Gramsci makes distinction between civil and political society. The first one is the society of “families, and unions”, the latter is the society of “the army, the police, [and] the central

bureaucracy” whose form of rule is direct domination (ibid 7). Culture can be found in the “civil society” where the opinions of people or some institutions work through what Gramsci calls “consent” (ibid 7). Thus, in “any society not totalitarian”, some cultural forms are more superior to others and this kind of cultural management is called “hegemony” by Gramsci (ibid). Moreover, David Huddart clarifies that the concept of hegemony is the matter of “domination” and “consent” and he asserts that this consent is created through “many different cultural means” (97). Indeed, Said believes it is the hegemony or “the result of cultural hegemony” that gives permanence and power to Orientalism which is the European idea and identifies the Europeans as “us” against all “those” non-Europeans (7). The idea that the Europeans’ culture is superior to non-European culture and people makes the European culture hegemonic in and outside the Europe, as well it causes the “European superiority over Oriental backwardness” (ibid). Similarly, Huddart clarifies the “colonial discourse wants only domination of the colonized” and this domination is based on the “difference: the colonized as “inferior” to the colonizers (3). Bart Moore Gilbert explains that Gramsci believes the “consent of the subordinate group of society” is obtained in “civil society” through education and culture rather than through the suppressive system of power (37).

Regarding hegemony, Gramsci states that power should not use force to exert authority. Gilbert quotes from Said who says it is “hegemony” or the consequence of “cultural hegemony” which gives Orientalism the permanence and power (ibid 37). According to Said, Orientalism is at the “service of the West’s hegemony over the East through misrepresenting the East as the Other and inferior to the West” (ibid 38). Homi K. Bhabha states that hegemony is the “process of iteration and differentiation” and it needs “iteration and alterity to be effective [and] to be productive” (29). Bhabha says “[c]ultural diversity is an epistemological object” and explains “culture as an object of empirical knowledge-whereas cultural difference is the process of the enunciation of culture as knowledgeable, authoritative, adequate to the construction of systems of cultural identification” (34). It is the “maneuver of theoretical knowledge” that causes the cultural difference which is a “mediator or metaphor of otherness” (31). In this way, Bhabha states that “difference and otherness [...] become the fantasy of a certain cultural space” (ibid).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

British Hegemony: Occident Supremacy versus Orient Impotency in Kim

This paper explains how Kipling assumes the superiority of British civilization and its moral responsibility to bring law and enlightenment to impotent people in *Kim*. Furthermore, it demonstrates how through the colonial discourse of Orientalism, the British administrators try to impose their hegemony on the life of the natives. They assume the natives as inferiors, fools, impotent persons who are in the need of western normalized knowledge. Through the process of making contrasts and generalizations in *Kim*, Kipling supports and justifies the superiority of British to rule over the Indians. Kipling as an imperialist misrepresents the natives’ cultural, political, ideological, economic, and social practices. *Kim* is full of concepts like inferior, subordinate peoples, dependent, and fool to represent the supremacy of the British administrators.

In this way, Kipling is encouraged by the “authorized monuments of nineteenth century European culture, and the inferiority of non-white races” (Said 1994: 150). He assumes that it is the duty of superiors to rule over the natives and their “absolute unchanging essence was a more or less unquestioned axiom of modern life” (ibid 151). Moreover, these axioms put emphasis on “the necessity of Empire to England’s strategic, moral and economic well-being” and simultaneously depict “the dark or inferior races as thoroughly unregenerate, in need of suppression, severe rule, and indefinite subjugation” (ibid). Zohreh T. Sullivan, in *The Fiction Of Rudyard Kipling* (1993), states that the colonial construct of British imperialism in India was the metaphor of empire as “family” and Queen Victoria was considered as “ma-baap” (mother/father), “the native as untrained child and the empire as drawing room – a refined and civilized space where appropriate rules of conduct would ensure permanent occupancy” (3). In fact, imperialists and separatists employed this kind of metaphor to rule over India (ibid).

In this regard, Kipling limits the Indians as ‘the other’ by calling them natives in *Kim*: “He sat, [...] on her brick platform opposite the old Ajaib-Gher or the Wonder House, as the natives call the Lahore Museum” (*Kim* 1). By calling them natives in every part of the novel, he considers the natives as impotent persons. Kipling makes the distinction between the white men as superior and Indians as inferior and impotent natives. Kipling’s *Kim* illustrates how British imperial power denies native authority in order to support its own governance over India. By portraying several characters, Indian life and native people in a stereotypical way, Kipling supports the imperialistic effort of the British Empire for rejecting the native authority: “the English held the Punjab” (*Kim* 1). In the same way, Kipling endeavors to create a cultural difference through making what Edward Said calls “the division between whites and natives” (1994: 270, emphasis mine). As it is clear, Kipling says: “By Jove, they are not black people. I can do all sorts of things with black people, of course” (*Kim* 356). Said believes that the distinction between “white and non-white” in India and elsewhere is definite and is mentioned in *Kim* (1994: 135). In this novel, Kipling believes that “a

Sahib is always a Sahib” (Kim 140) and no friendly relationship can change the “rudiments of racial difference”; in fact, Said describes the unquestionable right of British people to rule in India (1994: 135).

The encounter between the Lama and the museum curator at Lahore illustrates the supremacy of British administrators. The curator presumes that it is his natural canonical authority to educate the Lama who is supposed as an esteemed Tibetan sage through “the labors of European scholars, who by the help of these and a hundred other documents have identified the Holy Places of Buddhism” (Kim 13). By acquiring and practicing a body of knowledge regarding Indian ritual, the curator takes the attitude of superiority by patronizing and calling Lama helpless “as a child” (Kim 14). Edward Said argues that Kipling insists on the British rule in India “its insistence on the belief that the Indian reality required, indeed beseeched British tutelage more or less indefinitely” (1994: xxi). Kipling says that Kim’s “shoulders bore all the weight of it — the burden of an old man, the burden of the heavy food-bag with the looked books” (Kim 432). Kipling wants to state what Edward Said says, “the burden of knowledge make such questions as inferiority and superiority” (1978: 32). In this way, Kipling refers to what Homi K. Bhabha states “the colonizer’s avowed ambition to civilize or modernize the native” (1994: 43 emphasis mine).

Indeed, Kipling portrays the Indians as inferior who are the subordinate to the British Empire. Not only Kipling is able to represent the old man without selling him or in any way decreasing the sincerity or honesty of his search, but also he firmly protects him through considering the old man as a child who needs the support of British rule in India:

Here is a new book of white English paper: here be sharpened pencils two and three — thick and thin, all good for a scribe. Now lend me thy spectacle. The curator looked through them. They were heavily scratched, but the power was almost exactly that of his own pair, which he slid into the lama’s hand, saying: Try these. (Kim 18)

Accordingly, the British museum curator gives his spectacles and English book to Lama who depends on Kim to be supported and guided. Kipling tries to add to the Lama’s spirituality and authority by resorting to British knowledge in order to show the supremacy of British knowledge and power: “Consolidating the justness and legitimacy of Britain’s benevolent sway” for imposing power over the natives (Said 1994: 164). Through giving the book and spectacles to Lama, Kipling represents the supremacy of British knowledge and how the natives are in need of British knowledge. Even later at the time of confrontation with the Russian agents moving against Britain Kim helps the Lama. Lama acknowledges: “Child- I have lived on thy strength as an old tree lives on the lime of a new wall” (Kim 435).

Considering the confrontation between Kim and a native policeman named Dunnoo, either the denial of native authority or the exercise of British hegemony is obviously illustrated in the novel:

Do not sit under that gun/ said the policeman loftily. ‘Huh! Was Kim’s retort on the lama’s behalf. ‘Sit under that gun if it please thee. Why didst thou steal the milk-woman’s slipper’s, Dunnoo? That was an utterly unfounded charge sprung on the spur of the moment, but it silenced Dunnoo. (Kim 22)

Throughout the novel, Kipling characterizes the natives as silent people in order to impose the British imperial power and hegemony on Indians. As Said states, this “relation between western writing (and its consequences) and Oriental silence” is the sign of the West “cultural strength and its will to power over the Orient” (1978: 94). Therefore Western knowledge is used to deny autonomy and agency of Indians in order to dominate and have its authority over them through constructing Indians as ‘the other’. Kipling’s notion of “happy Asiatic disorder” on the Grand Trunk Road is used to show another example of colonial power (Kim 102). On the one hand, Kipling considers the British imperial sahibs as rational and logical people who are capable of real values, on the other hand, the Orientals are incapable of ruling themselves because of their cultural, religious, and political complexities. Kipling states: “The Moslem Archbishop had been emphatic and over-arrogant” (Kim 275).

Further, Kipling emphasizes the benefits of the British imperial hegemony by exemplifying some development in the structure of the country in order to exercise more British imperial power:

This country is full of good folk .Besides he sunk his voice beneath a whisper ‘we have money.’ The crowd thickened as they neared the resting place which marked the end of their day’s journey. A line of stalls selling very simple food and tobacco a stack of firewood, a police-station, a well, horse-trough, a few trees, and, under them, some trampled ground dotted with the black ashes of old fires are all that mark a parao on the Grand Trunk if you except the beggars and the crows both hungry. (Kim 101)

Therefore British imperial officers present their authority dramatically by subjugating the native agents to help them in imposing their power. Kipling, in the same way, thinks the British people as superior acquiring knowledge of the Indian natives who are supposed to be the weak, inferior and in need of British sahibs. He states that the “wandering Lama with a low-caste boy-servant might attract a moment’s interest as they wandered about India, the land of pilgrims; but no one would suspect, or what was more to the point, rob them” (Kim 86). Kipling exemplifies another deficiency or weakness of Indians by considering yogi as the poor man who is in need of mercy:

He drove away the bull said the woman in an undertone. 'It is good to give to the poor.' She took the bowl and returned it full of hot rice. But my yogi is not a cow said Kim, gravely making hole with his fingers in the top of the mound. A little curry is good, and a fried cake, and a morsel of conserve would please him, I think. (Kim 22)

On the one hand, in India yogis are honorable people that native Indians conceive them as holy persons being capable of much respect. On the other hand the white British people exercise their power by disempowering the natives through deficiencies which they attribute to Indians to impose their supremacy and hegemony over the natives.

Equally, Kipling insists on the importance of British imperial power by emphasizing the necessity of having knowledge: "There is no sin so great as ignorance" (Kim 189). Said believes that "to have such knowledge of such a thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it. And authority here means for us to deny autonomy to it-the Oriental country-since we know it and it exists, in a sense, as we know it" (1978: 32). Similarly, Kipling illustrates a group of native policemen led by an Englishman because of natives' despotism. He also adds the "police are thieves and extortioners" (Kim 90). Said remarks that Kipling's Kim presents "the Indian as a creature clearly needing British tutelage, [...] since without Britain, India would disappear into its own corruption and underdevelopment" (1994: 167). Kipling states because of native administrators' tendency towards despotism and extortion, the existence of British power is necessary to govern them. In other words, it is the responsibility of the white administrators to assist the natives against their despotic rulers. Said quotes from Arthur James Balfour as he insists on "Oriental despotism" (1978: 32) and emphasizes the importance of British hegemony.

In this regard, Kim decides to be a sahib and this sounds the supremacy of the British Empire over the natives as it is clear in Lama's conversation: "I remember that thou art a Sahib. It is strange" (Kim 432). Colonel Creighton also reminds him of being a "Sahib and the son of a Sahib" (Kim 189). Further, when Kim asks the Hindu boy "is this the way to lie to a Sahib?" he wants to insist on his supremacy (Kim 237). These exemplifications show that Kim assumes his superiority over the natives. Although there is a close relationship between Kim and Mahbub Ali as his teacher, Kim assumes that he is superior to Mahbub Ali. Kim says "no Sahib must tell a black man that he has made a fault" (Kim 214). Consequently, Kipling tries to show the superiority of the British administrators and hegemony over the Indians and he clarifies the tendency of the British Empire to dominate India and its culture.

CONCLUSION

This paper deals with the hegemonic relations between the Occident and the Orient when India was under the control of British Empire. Kipling shows a distorted picture of India and believes it is the India's destiny to be controlled by the British Empire. He represents the superiority of the white man to the dark and inferior Orient in India. He believes it is the responsibility of the British administrators to educate the Indians in order to impose the British hegemony on the Orient. Kim is capable of talking various Indian dialects and understanding the Indians' culture ability shows Kim's superiority; in other words, it indicates the hegemony of the superior Occident over the inferior Orient. In the same way, Kipling attempts to clarify how the British or Occidental culture is superior in comparison to the Orient's.

Thus, Kipling attributes some negative descriptions like inferior, fool, black, savage and impotent to the natives in order to declare that they are in need of western knowledge. Through the process of negative contrasts and generalizations in Kim, Kipling supports and justifies the superiority of British to rule over the Indians. Kipling represents the natives dishonorably based on cultural, political, ideological, economic, and social purpose. Therefore Kim is full of concepts like inferior, subordinate, savage, dependent, fool, foolish, and native in order to represent the British supremacy and hegemony over the Orient. In this way, stereotyping is one of the imperialistic policy which Kipling employs in order to depict the impotency of the natives in Kim. By considering the events of the Great Mutiny, Kipling undermines it as madness. He considers the mutiny not as a legitimate attempt for independency, and he assumes the mutiny as an irrational and brutal act. The analysis of Kipling's Kim shows the role of British imperial power in subjugating the natives and keeping them under its own dominance through making standardizations and stereotypical portrayal the natives.

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