Chapter VII

Conclusion

The present study has taken into consideration about one hundred and fifty short stories of Kipling. Kipling as a short story writer displays a very wide range of subject matter and extra ordinary sweep of imagination. The first quality that strikes the reader in Kipling’s wide and intimate knowledge of the people, places, the flora and the fauna and culture of India. Here is India alive and throbbing with its wide and varied commerce of life. This must be credited to his journalistic investigative habits along with his long and live encounters with India. His descriptions of the Indian countryside during different seasons remain unrivalled to this day in English literature.

Although in his Indian stories, there are pages which are sincerely inspired, we discover that their inspiration has very little to do with India and a great deal to do with Kipling’s impulse to celebrate the work of the world, and even more to do with his impulse to escape into a region where life is simple and intense. Kipling simply gets out of India the maximum of literary effect as a teller of tales. India, for example, is mysterious. Kipling exploits her mystery competently and coolly, making his points with the precision, clarity and force of one to whom the enterprise begins and ends as an affair of technical adequacy. For example, Kipling’s Simla tales are not plain stories, but narratives very artfully coloured and selective in content controlled by considerations of convenience rather than a real human involvement.

In the Simla Tales Kipling presents the Anglo-Indian women in two categories ‘the pleasure seekers’ who met with his scorn and ‘the workers’ who won his admiration. Most Anglo-Indian women in Simla belong to the first group. They are all presented as devouring females, social climbers, eternally plotting either to capture suitable young men or to cause their downfall. The stories of Simla are mainly the stories of Mrs.Hauksbee,a socialite.In Simla, Kipling not only saw high society but also observed the workings of the government at close quarters. In the day-to-day administration, he
found much to condemn. He saw favouratism, red tape and nepotism. These were the three most glaring defects. He saw inferior men getting along well, rising to positions of eminence, while more deserving ones remained in the lower ranks.

Kipling’s Anglo-Indian tales are the tales talking about the encounters between the Indians and the English. Here two Indias seem to emerge out of Kipling’s writings. The first India is the personal one which he liked as it provided him with the material comforts and literary fame. The other India is the colonial one which provided him with the tales. His English loyalty tales cannot be lost sight of as he stresses the divine necessity to maintain the British Empire. He highlights the heroism and self-sacrifice of Englishmen working in India for the empire against all odds. Therefore he creates a background which makes the British achievement look even more impressive. He thinks it is idle to talk of humanity in India. It is a land where science is mocked and synthetic philosophies perish. If the administration is to be saved from chaos and caprices of the corrupt men, there must be one supreme authority to which all are finally responsible.

Kipling often writes as if he was compiling a guidebook on India for his compatriate rulers. The Anglo-Indian men that he likes most are those who combine practical wisdom with simplicity of approach, who do not pretend to know much, who are firm without being obstinate. Kipling stresses the point that theoretical knowledge is of no use in India. The British have to know something of the ways of the natives. A British administrator must know the social, religious and geographical characteristics of the subcontinent. Indian heat and the epidemics and the loneliness are the factors contributing to Anglo-Indian melancholy.

When Kipling turns to children, he opens a different world. The children are fantastically romantic and entirely false to life. In every Anglo-Indian child he sees a future administrator who is rehearsing the part he is likely to play in India of his generation. On the other hand, Kipling devoted some of his stories to Indian children too. Childhood in the lap of poverty is very heart rendering. The tragedy is heightened by the background of famine and epidemic against which the drama of human life is enacted.
These are the Indians of whom Kipling writes in his short stories. They do not make all India.

Kipling in his stories of English in India shows the man of action is omnipresent in his work. He is building bridges, fighting famines; a subaltern or an employee of the forest department. He despises the men who only talk. Kipling hates the mere theorists, the dreamers who want to improve the world by mere talk. Kipling’s Anglo-India is an image of the perfect Anglo-Saxon: efficient, resourceful and of superior intellect and physique. He accepts pain and exile and neglect as a price for belonging to the chosen race. All who do not fit into this pattern fall by the way and are replaced by others who have faith in the work they are doing by the empire. This is the picture of Kipling’s Anglo-Indian.

The stories dealing with the native Indian life are those of the Rajahs who have to be reminded again and again of their duty. He portrays the poor peasants and the bourgeoisie, the middle class India. Kipling treats them with contempt as they mostly include the western educated Indians in the roles of clerks, lawyers, judges and members of civil services. He hates these Indians as they have lost their primeval touch. He admires Indians for their primitiveness.

The concept of law appears to be central in nearly everything that Kipling wrote. The principle of law dominated his life. The projection of law in his Mowgli stories expresses some of Kipling’s intimate convictions about life. He believes that in the hierarchy of law, certain codes of action are expected and many of them are manifestations of certain virtues. His law includes the maintenance of honour and qualities such as magnanimity. The law is anthropomorphized in his animal tales. It is Kipling’s honest attempt to explain the importance of law and necessity obeying it. He believed that obeying law makes way for order and harmony. He loves the law abiding people because they know the importance of law and are reverent towards it.

Kipling’s treatment of the Indian soldier is an interesting one. Although he admires the British soldier, he does like the Indian soldier for his courage and fortitude
and admires him even more for his loyalty and his determination to be true to his salt. What is undeniable is that Kipling was the first writer in English to create great literature out of the lives of common soldiers. In most serious criticism of Kipling’s work the soldier stories have been either ignored as of minor importance or praised superficially for their authenticity and vivid reportage, while their literary worth as closely integrated and fully achieved works of art has gone largely unrecognized.

Writing about women, Kipling doesn’t get fascinated by the oriental begums and gorgeously decked Maharanis. His women belong to the classes for which Indian society has little tolerance and less respect. He portrays the courtesans or the dancing girls and gives a graphic and realistic description of luxurious salons and their frail and fair occupants and ordinary bazaar girls. His Indian women fall into two groups. One of these is the woman who is disloyal to her husband and elopes or has illicit relations with another man. The other group of women is of those who live outside wed-lock with Anglo-Indians.

The study of Kipling’s stories will be incomplete without the study of his Eurasian characters. The union between the English and the Indians brought about a hybrid race known as Euracians. Kipling approaches this race with greater understanding. He presents this race as unalterably separate and inferior to the Anglo-Indians but believes that their degradation was discreditable to the British rule that it is neither their fault nor remediable that their blood was mixed.

Kipling chose not to hear one voice - that of Educated India. This educated class was rival class. While writing about the Indians and India, Kipling got familiar with the Hindustani. He has used more Hindustani words in his Indian works than any other Anglo-Indian writer. But this is no proof of the fact that he really knew Hindustani or was familiar with its usage and idiom. It can, however be claimed for him that he knew more Hindustani than the average Englishman of his day. Anglo-Indians generally picked up Hindustani words and phrases from their Indian servants. In the case of Kipling, however, there were other helpful factors also. He was a member of Lodge Hope and Perseverance at Lahore, where the company of high class and educated Indians must have made an
important contribution towards his stock of Hindustani words. Then, his father Lockwood Kipling with his memory for remembering things, and his talent for mastering everything, could always be of immense help to him, when he was in doubt. No doubt, many words are wrongly used but nevertheless they can be seen in the early writings of Kipling. The turn of sentences, the idiom and the colour is Indian even when the words are English.

Kipling’s three soldiers--Mulvaney, Ortheris and Learoyd--are a literary tradition. Actually, Kipling’s soldier stories and the barrack room verse narratives are the best pieces of observation which went directly into fiction. The army is not easy to get to know, but Kipling managed it well. Apart from private visits, there was much reporting to be done for the paper-regiments coming in and moving out, manoeuvres, special parades, Army functions, Court Martials etc. Either as a correspondent or as a friend, Kipling was there in the barracks, on the parade ground, at manoeuvres, with soldier shooting parties - wherever there was anything to learn or know of the common soldier.

Kipling’s picture of the contemporary soldier, with his lack of education, his insatiable thirst, his diversions and hobbies, his habit of swearing, his lapses and crimes, his conditions of living, as also his courage and devotion to duty is comprehensive and close to reality.

With smaller and even more coherent society, that of a private soldier, Kipling makes intricate use of the environment that he treats. He does not suggest any answer to the problems raised by the conflict of this society and the individual. Instead, his acceptance of the military situation as an insoluble pervades the soldier stories with sadness and a sense of strain. They are focused in the personal commitments of the narrator and his three friends, and intensified by the larger insolubles of aging, sickness, and death which form a permanent background to the action. He perceives corruption at the bottom military society but it is told from a distance. The growing violance, hatreds and harshnesses, the underlying sadness find their finest expression in these stories. Through this sequence of stories Kipling has approached the military condition first lightly, then with pity and horror and that the analysis is complete, scrupulous and intense.
Kipling had very close contacts with the Royal Navy, and has several stories and pieces of verse about the Navy of the late Victorian era, and World War I and into the 1930s. His eleven stories feature naval personnel, of which six are about Petty Officer Pyecroft. Though virtuosity of these stories is immense, the stories lack vigour and, while they have their admirers, they are not among his best. They gave their author great pleasure but this enthusiasm is rarely conveyed to readers who are not already familiar with naval jargon. The remarkable feature of the Pyecroft series is the absolute verisimilitude of the conversation; whose tiniest details are quite impeccable. Pyecroft stories have a kind of jocosity that sets them far, far below the adventures of Mulvaney, Ortheris and Learoyd, who even at their most comic picaresque have that ambiguous, amoral quality and also the dark despair that gives a depth to their positive performance of duty. The truth is that Kipling was not aware of the life of the man he was describing and so he cast him in careful arranged farces, often on shore. They are full of jargon. A sailor’s peacetime life on the lower deck had much of the sadness and the tension. The reduction of humanity which he captures so wonderfully in the Mulvaney, can not be seen in the naval stories.

Kipling is often drawn to certain favourite themes. In the British imagination India has appeared as a land of mysteries and strange things. The themes of the marvelous, of ghosts, the supernatural and psychic experiences always crop up here. They have to be accounted for as a special facet of Kipling's created world. Almost all of these tales of the supernatural are narrated within the framework of a created realistic world, that is, a world which is closer to the every-day world and the actual life. The supernatural and the magical tales of Kipling are very powerful with pretended sorcery as their theme. The supernatural tales of also highlight the mistakes that an outsider can make when he is unfamiliar with the customs and beliefs of the local people.

The commitment of Kipling is to the telling of the story, to the delight of a good tale, than to the actual truth. The stories begin and end with a tone of detachment. Once he launches into the actual telling of it, and the question of whether it be true or a ghost story makes little difference. The actual tale, once we are well into it, has a totally different quality; the author is caught up in the rapture of the narrator's art; and in the
build-up of the suspense, the reader comes to feel that there is only a fine, thin line to be
drawn between the real and the unreal, or the true and the untrue. In the final analysis it
hardly seems to matter whether the ghost is empirically disproved or not. Something of
the supernatural has been conjured up in the very telling of the tale, enough to convince
one that the existence of a ghost is a possibility not to be lightly denied. The ambiguity is
present in both- the irony and in the techniques.

As it happens with all good stories of children, Kipling’s children’s tales are
fascinating for children but they have a lot to offer to the adult readers also. In these
books, we are always haunted by a sense of further meaning. The readers feel that there is
symbolism or allegory involved in the two well known Jungle Books. The Jungle Books
could be considered as books in the line of Aesop’s Fables, Jataka and Panchatantra
Tales. The concept of law appears in the form of fable in the Jungle Books. It consists of
rules of conduct like keeping the promises, loyalty to friends, bravery, generosity and
respect for the elders. It exemplifies a code of honour based on hard facts, with tooth and
claw for its practical sanctions and necessity of courage, endurance, observation, good
faith, dexterity, physical and mental fitness. The concept of Law appears to be central in
nearly everything that Kipling wrote. Kipling’s Law includes the maintenance of honour
and qualities such as magnanimity. It is anthropomorphized in the Jungle Books. The
agreement among the animals to observe something like a code is well authenticated in
the Jungle Books. The law binds the Jungle world into an integrated whole. It also allows
and enjoins ruthless individual action within admitted bounds. The concept of Law
appears to be central in nearly everything that Kipling wrote and it dominated his
philosophy of life. The projection of Law in the Jungle Books expresses some of
Kipling’s intimate convictions about life.

Kipling advocates a harmonious relationship between men and animals. There is
magic as well as terror in the Jungle Books. A delicate stream of humour and pathos runs
through the last Mowgli tales. The children are provided with a world which is quite
similar to theirs. The seals have mothers and moreover, they too sing lullabies to their
babies. They too, care for their children.
Just So Stories are fables about how things came to be as we see them. They are tales of genesis for children. The Just So Stories are like Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass. Carroll shares with Kipling the faculty of appealing to children and adults alike. With each there is a certain hit-or-miss element to be observed, since there are some children and adults upon whom the magic of one, or both, fails to work. Each inhabits what must be called a real world, although it is certainly not an actual world. If Carroll's is the world of dream and Kipling's is the world of myth. The Just So Stories are little myths solving little riddles: how the camel got anything so strange as a hump and the elephant anything as strange as a trunk.

Reading Kipling’s stories for children makes one say that the writer was trying to regress to an earlier world where there are less complications and more interesting diversions. They show a desire for the simple, the good and the just in life. Self-respect, a proud reserve, a decent degree of loyalty, keeping one's mouth shut when necessary is counted in this world. The values are described by words like honor, truthfulness, loyalty, manliness, pride, straightforwardness, courage, self-sacrifice, and heroism in Kipling’s school stories. His pin-hole view of the world from his school stories opens out on to an immense panorama of life and experience beyond school, equally interesting to all the readers-children and adults.

Kipling’s love of English history is also demonstrated through his children’s stories. The stories are woven into the continuing texture of English history. These are books for children in so far as nothing is admitted to them that is unfit for the knowledge and attention of children. They are books for mature readers because Kipling has written into them convictions to which his own mature faith is given. It is a faith that a nation and a civilization, once painfully forged, will survive only through as many generations as are prepared to meet new conditions and new challenges armed with all the strength and wisdom that tradition and custom provide. His historical tales classic children's books which speak powerfully to adult readers. It should be remembered that Kipling’s use of past in Puck books is that he is writing fantasy, not history. He was simply trying to give children a taste of the past. There lies under the fairy-tale a subtle historical vision of one of the greatest breaches and discontinuities in the island story.
Kipling cannot conceive an incident without its seasonal and climatic conditions. The continuous flow of physical existence through these pages, the intake of sight and sound and smell and touch, the weight and texture of solid objects, the changing horizon and the movements of men and animals—these owe their natural air to the completeness with which they have been imagined. This imagination attends him beyond his own district. Kipling draws from both the past and the present, from uninhabited landscape, from books and from experience.

There had been no such strong, conscious theme binding together the tales of the book. The spontaneity of Puck stories streams out in various directions. The children have their own moral standards. Some of the values are left to reveal themselves. The children see friendship and enmity, ambition and generosity faith and treachery, and see them in action and character. They are not laid out diagrammatically. Kipling skillfully develops more complex indications within an easily apprehensible outline. The children are quick to relate and the adults see the wider implication.

Kipling changed with the changing times, adapting himself to the modern science and technology. He wrote about the new phenomenon that the world mused about and the new scientific inventions. He exerted a lasting influence on modern science fiction. Kipling’s appeal to modern readers lies instead in his approach and his technique.

His interest in world’s work and the men and women and machines who do it. Whether that work be manual or intellectual, creative or administrative, the performance of his work is the most important thing in a person’s life. Kipling’s writing embodies an attitude toward that work that places its satisfactory completion above convenience, desire, and comfort in the scheme of things.

His science fiction stories talk about implications of bringing a science discovery when the public is unprepared to deal with it. His stories have characters like steam locomotives, entire great machines rather than mere components. He shows a fascination for the work of the world and his respect for men, women and machines who perform it. He also captures the excitement of the infant science of radio, and the single-mindedness
of the young experimenters and science. He explores the social as well as the technical side of a world economy based on air traffic. Technological change touches human lives, individually as well as collectively, and in these stories we see that ordinary people as well as heroes will be affected by aerial technology and the social structures set up to govern it. Some stories explore the frontiers of psychology. They also deal with the introduction of advanced technology into a mediaeval society that may not be ready for it. These tales talk highly of scientifically inclined people who devote their leisure time and financial resources to undertake research to understand the mysteries of this universe.

A word about the narrative techniques used by Kipling in his short stories will be appropriate. In his time, Kipling was criticized as a young, audacious writer without art or craft. It is only in recent years that Kipling has become the subject of serious study as an artist whose methods merit careful analysis. His early short stories reveal that even in his early phase; Kipling had already reached a considerable degree of technical sophistication in his best tales. Kipling used such methods as the frame-story, the "limited" narrator and the suppressed narrative. These are methods which have contributed a great deal towards the success of some of Kipling's early short stories.

The frame-story is an age-old narrative device with commonly-accepted functions like the creation of atmosphere and mood, the portrayal of the dramatised narrator and the establishment of major themes. Kipling, in cultivating this narrative technique, does not go far beyond these traditional usages. What he does is to rely more heavily on the frame than most of his predecessors had done and, what is more important, to weld the frame and the main narrative closer together to form an integral whole. In his best tales, the two are so intrinsically related that the central story could not exist alone without suffering much loss in effect.

Another narrative device exploited by Kipling in his early period is that of the "limited narrator". In this narrative mode the reader experiences the story through the senses and thoughts of just one character. This is almost always the main character. Sometimes, owing to insufficient intelligence, a narrator fails to comprehend fully what he sees and consequently misinterprets a situation; this "limited" narrator may have the
positive function of causing details to be seen afresh or felt in a special, new way. Kipling’s "limited" narrator is a device for governing the flow of information so as to achieve accumulative and crescendo effect at the climax.

Kipling is most concerned with the human virtues like courage, duty, honour, decency, commitment and grit. He is quick to recognize these virtues in men and women from all classes and races. The themes of revenge, compassion and healing are also apparent in his short stories. The recurring themes in Kipling are the themes relating to the British superiority over the Indians.

Verisimilitude is one of the outstanding qualities of Kipling’s short stories. He was the first short story writer to create faithfully the scenes and atmosphere of barrack room and to make his soldiers seem real. His keen observation, his unflinching fidelity to the facts of life, and his innate power to create living breathing, real people account for the deep impression of verisimilitude that he produces on the sensibility of his reader. Kipling was the professional of professionals, as is shown in his continuous search for finding the ways and methods of professionals. Kipling was known to have talked at length with builders, masons, carpenters, and craftsmen to know their skills, their lingo, their selective phraseology, their attitudes, and his comprehensive grasp of the day-to day life of workmen are reflected.

The range of his subject matter is shown in many themes of cruelty, violence, and suffering, joys of masculine companionship, camaraderie, and feeling for a cause. The centre of Kipling’s work nonetheless is permanent human nature, the motives, reactions and relationships of men within a defined territory, notably though not exclusively that of work they do. Kipling is primarily concerned with the real world, the world here and now with all its beauty and beastliness, but he is also concerned with the romantic and fabulous world, the world of hereafter. His stories revolving around ghost or the idea of reincarnation conjure up a fantastic universe which can not be described as real.

The sweep of his imagination is so wide that it extends over not only varieties of men but also lands as far apart as England, Europe, Asia, and Africa, which become the
living organisms of his art. The sweep is not only wide but, it is also deep, and balanced by exploration in detail. The stories reflect his insight into various layers of the unconscious and the dimensions of the psyche which rise in the structures of his tales. He has a genuine eye for exploring wide variety of life in the form of his short stories. It is of course true that the creative genius of Kipling has to be considered a single, indivisible whole, and that his roles as a poet, novelist and a short story writer are only facets of that one imaginative mind. Yet it must be said that it is in the area of the short story that the best aspects of his creative talent are vividly reflected.

India with its land and people occupies a central position in Kipling’s writing. After a careful analysis of the short stories, it can be concluded that these stories have an uncanny knack of representing human minds, hearts, behaviours, weaknesses, strengths, understanding and sympathy on both sides of the divide between the east and the west. It is an apparent divide and it can be meaningfully bridged. Kipling shows in numerous ways how and under what circumstances this can be done. Though Kipling believed that British were superior, many of his stories create a different picture. In these stories he looks at Anglo-Indian characters with a combination of ruthless criticism and sympathy that is rare in literature. He criticizes the foibles of the British and presents to us many types of involvement and encounters between Anglo-Indians and India. If we read his stories without pre-judgement, Kipling’s Indian stories clearly reveal his love for India. Kipling belonged to the community that colonized India. But he is not an “outsider” He appears to be an ‘Insider-outsider’ He is an Indian in many senses. He never hesitates to reveal where Anglo-Indians go wrong, particularly where they fail as human beings by being insensitive. The stories present an extra-ordinary variety of character and circumstance.

However, the researcher feels that there are some areas in Kipling studies which can be taken up for an extended study. Most of Kipling’s short stories are preceded by an epigraph. They appear between the title and the beginning of the story. These epigraphs range from the Sanskrit Hymns to Biblical quotations and have a very wide range of subjects. They have a great significance in the overall meaning and impact of the story. This can become an area of further studies. Kipling’s generation of Anglo-Indians were
familiar with "Hindustani", a term now out of favour, having been superceded to some extent by "Hindi" and "Urdu" Kipling used lot of these words in his short stories. A study of these can be taken up for additional analysis. A study of characterization of Anglo-Indian women as against the characters of natives Indian women in Kipling’s stories can be taken up for extensive studies. Kipling wrote substantial number of Animal narratives. An extensive study of Animal tales can also be taken up for further analysis.

Kipling’s stories are particularly important to us to read for the priceless knowledge they provide of both our India and the colonial British India of a bygone era that is not really available to us elsewhere in the immediate and human terms in which these stories are written. These stories give us a chance to critically examine our own aspirations and our behaviour towards each other even today. In these stories Indian society is mirrored with the same degree of honesty of observation and opinion as in British colonial society. These stories light up both the Indian and colonial sides of an important period of our history. The present analysis reveals that these short stories not only give us pleasure but instruct us about a significant era in the history of India and Anglo-Indian writings.

To read Kipling is to revisit an India that belongs to the past and still holds a mirror to the present in some significant ways. His relevance today stands on this pedestal of a wide, varied and realistic world of our own in this country.