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Rudyard Kipling is one of the most dynamic and skilful masters of the art of short-story writing, who raised this literary form to a higher status in English literature than it had known before. He has also written a famous novel Kim which ranks among the best novels of English literature. As a poet, he will be always remembered for a patriotic hymn "Recessional" which had become a part of every British Ceremony during his life time. Last but not the least, he will be admired as a great singer of English beauties and traditions. In fact he is the only man of letters who is equally esteemed as a singer of ballads in rhyme and as a teller of tales in prose. He is the only writer who is loved by both the young and the old. A child reads his stories with a grown up's ease, and the grown up enjoys them with a child's wonder. Thus there are at least half a dozen aspects of Kipling, which one would like to dilate: the journalist, the poet, the novelist, the short-story writer, the prophet of the empire and the painter of landscapes.

The present study, however, deals with only one aspect - Rudyard Kipling as a short story writer. That Kipling is one of the supreme masters of the short story is
admitted by all who have dealt with the theory and practice of that form of fiction. His short-stories are masterpieces of this genre and their place in English and European literature is very high. They have the strangeness, the colour, the variety of the East. The best of them show a common technique of a hard clear form, a strong and occasionally garish descriptive brushwork and an all pervading economy. Through these stories Kipling introduced new subjects, new sensations, new images into English literature that needed such refreshing change. Kipling was undoubtedly a born story-teller with amazingly resourceful talent for handling a great variety of themes in this field.

Kipling, whatever his rank among short-story writers like Hawthorne, Poe, Maupassant, Stevenson and so on offers a more variegated fare than any one of them. He has more masterpieces to his credit than any of these writers, and these masterpieces are of different kinds. For instance, "Without Benefit of Clergy" is a beautiful story with pathos as unforced as it is poignant whereas "An Habitation Enforced" is a lovely idyll of married life, exquisite in its unparaded sentiment. "The Brushwood Boy" is a perfect love story, most original in its invention and in its imagination whereas "They" is remarkable for its sheer poetry and its mystic penumbra. "The Children of the Zodiac" is a cosmic fantasy which is intensely and eternally human, although it seems to transcend time and space, whereas "The
"Centurion of the Thirtieth" is a martial tale which marches straight forward keeping with the blare of trumpets. "Krishna Mulvaney" is marked for the kaleidoscopic colour whereas Soldiers Three is remarkable for rapid fire action. In fact, the list is endless; no writer has worked over such a wide range as Kipling has done.

Most of the artists tend to employ one or at the most two literary modes such as the realistic, the satiric, the comic, the tragic, the fantastic and so on. For example, Swift excelled in the satiric mode, Dreiser in realistic and Hardy in tragic mode. But Kipling, like Shakespeare and Dickens, has used a mixture and variety of modes. It is, of course, true that the creative genius of Kipling has to be regarded as a single, indivisible whole. His roles as a writer of the tragic, the comic, the satiric, the macabre and the fantastic tales are only different facets of his great imaginative mind. It must, however, be conceded that it is in the field of fantasy that the best aspects of his creative talent get vividly revealed. This is the reason why I am concentrating on his fantasies only. His stories which reflect the elements of fantasy can be divided into four groups - (i) Animal stories (ii) Ghost stories (iii) Historical stories (iv) Scientific stories. Most of his animal stories appear in Just So Stories and The Jungle Books, while the ghost stories are contained in Life's
Handicap and Wee Willie Winkie. His historical fantasies occur in Puck of Pook's Hill and Rewards and Fairies, while the mechanical stories appear in The Day's Work and Many Inventions. Now the question arises: why does Kipling choose "fantasy" as a mode of writing? To put it differently, what role does "fantasy" play in his short stories?

The answer to the above question can be traced in Kipling's whole bent of mind, his predisposition to be a teacher, a prophet and a writer. His whole work is undoubtedly meant to convey some lesson or the other for the education and edification of his readers. While going through his stories, one is reminded of some words written by one of Kipling's contemporaries, Conrad - between whom and Kipling himself it is at several points tempting to make comparisons. "Those who read me", said Conrad, "know my conviction that the world, the temporal world, rests on a few very simple ideas; so simple that they must be as old as the hills. It rests notably, among others, on the idea of fidelity." Kipling was not much given to explaining so explicitly the motive at the back of his creative work, but if he were questioned, he might have spoken in the vein of Conrad. In that sense, and in the completeness of that sense, he was always a didactic writer, a preacher, a moralist. Like all great artists, he worked continuously at the establishment of a certain attitude towards life and in an artist like Kipling the aesthetic and ethical considerations become indistinguishable.
"Fantasy" thus arms Kipling with a means to express some of his inmost ideas about life and art. What he does not wish to say "directly", he conveys through the mouths of animals, ghosts, ships and engines. His stories, in fact, strike us as allegories with many layers of meanings. Kipling's selection of animals, insects and machines as his spokesmen can be explained by his desire to get hold of characters which will yield themselves unresistingly to being presented as parts of a system. Surely, the animals, machines and other inanimate objects serve as symbols of something beyond and above themselves in his stories. We know that an allegory becomes tolerable only when it tells a story so interesting that we tacitly forgive it for being an allegory. Similarly a symbol has some value only when it translates into the concrete something less intelligible in the abstract. Seen in this light, we may aver that Kipling's animal or machine tales in general are admirable allegories because they contain a very little allegory in them; we are haunted by a sense of further meaning, not knocked over the head with a moral.

In the chapters that follow, I have ventured to analyse some of Kipling's animal, ghost, historical and scientific stories keeping in mind the definition of "fantasy" and have expounded at length their allegorical and symbolical significance. I have endeavoured to show that each fantasy by Kipling is like a Chinese box: each time it
is read, some entirely new theme emerges - and this process is inexhaustible. His machines and animals, ghosts and historical personages are only symbols chosen by him to convey his intuitions. Although the characters in his fantasies are from the inanimate world, yet they deal with the permanent moral nature of man. He handles mostly the enduring problems of humanity, the problems out of which all religion, all real poetry, must arise. Moreover, he provides a solution, which those of his own cast of mind-and they are many, though most may be unaware of it - will greet with satisfaction, and even with that sense of glamour, of invigoration, which it is partly the function of literature to give.

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