Rudyard Kipling was a great empire writer. He was an imperialist as Kingsley Amis says. Amis, his biographer and a writer himself writes, Kipling was an authoritarian in the sense that he was not a democrat. To him, a parliament was a place where people with no knowledge of things as they were could dictate to the men who did real work, and could change their dictates at whim. His ideal was a feudalism that had never existed, a loyal governed class freely obeying incorrupt, conscientious governors. He was vague about how you became a governor: you probably (as in the Empire) just found you were one. Nevertheless, birth, influence, money, educational status and the like must not count as qualifications for leadership. Merit, competence I. and a sense of responsibility were what did count: ‘the job belongs to the man who can do it’. As George Orwell pointed out, Kipling was further from being a fascist than can easily be imagined in a period when totalitarianism - a very different thing from authoritarianism - is accepted as a possibly valid or even desirable system.¹

Kipling was an imperialist. He accepted the Empire as it stood and he approved the annexation of Upper Burma. His position has been explained semi-mystically the Empire was justified because it fostered virtue in its administrators and psychologically the Empire was attractive because it was an island of security in a turbulent, hostile universe.

Kipling was a racialist, or racist. The White Man’s Burden is indeed a burden, an arduous duty, not the inheritance of a natural privilege, and the white men must carry it not because they are white but because they are
qualified; for instance, the Americans in the Philippines must govern their
‘new-caught, sullen peoples, half devil and half child’ who cannot govern
themselves. This is a limited racialism: white men, in practice those whose
native tongue is English, are good at exercising authority in beneficent ways
and have the wherewithal- medicine, transport systems, law-enforcement –
to do it. Kipling believed in the separation, or rather the continued
separateness of races.

The following is a critical analysis of Kipling’s empire writing. As we
know Kipling has written a lot of fiction. Yet his novels that deal with this
theme are a few. In fact, Kim (1901) is the novel that deals with Kipling’s
domestic theme. The same is analysed below.

KIM (1901):

T. S. Eliot called Kipling’s verse as great and called him ‘The First
Citizen of India.’ Kipling’s Kim is a great work. His writings justify the
domestic. He spoke on racism. He admired authority, discipline, fortitude and
self-sacrifice. He was an imperialist, propagating the myth ‘the white man’s
burden.’ George Orwell says Kipling was insensitive of India. Yet Nirad
Chaudhuri calls his Kim as the finest novel on Indian theme. Kim speaks
about orients’ lack of sense of time and his disregard for discipline. Kim, the
indianized westerner recreates his own consciousness of Indian life. Kipling
says with reference to Indians use of language that ‘every word should tell,
carry, weigh, taste and if need smell.’

It is said,

Kipling’s knowledge of India is indeed amazing. His understanding
of minute cultural details should caution one against rudely branding
him as Imperialist throughout his writing career.²

Rudyard Kipling is known as ‘the story teller of India.’ In his time, he
was an inescapable phenomenon as that of the Boar War. Though his
contribution to the growth of novel is not great, his writings are of international importance. His *Kim* is truly a story. It is picaresque and plotless. His short stories are of immense interest. His fiction is about the 'other world' which cannot meet his own. Kipling was a great artist in his own way.

In Nirad Chaudhary's words

*Kim* is one of the finest novels in English literature with an Indian theme....’ and (Kipling) ‘stands supreme among western writers for his treatment of the biggest reality in India which is made up of the people and religions in the twin setting of the mountains and plains. These are the main real characters in *Kim*.\(^\text{13}\)

Kipling was one of the finest children's writers of the time. His imagination was most colourful when directed at the children whom he loved and never forgot to entertain. For them he peopled the forests with unforgettable characters, Col. Hathi, Shere Khan etc.—unique ideas which even the adult world marvelling at, accepted with loving appreciation and applauded most unreservedly.

Manju Sen says,

Among Kipling's many gifts, the most noteworthy was his uncanny ability to coin catchy slogans or pour forth an unbroken string of never-before imagined word combinations in a masterpiece of descriptive prose. Kipling's endearing flair for dramatized narration of even the trivialest of details or most insignificant incidents, and the arresting nature of his glowing and many-hued descriptive writing's found expression especially while addressing his young audiences.\(^\text{4}\)

Martin Cohan observes,

Kim is Rudyard Kipling's most important single work: it is, by any standard, this poet's finest prose achievement. But it is even more than that because, while an important work of art, it emerges as an
invaluable historical document. Published for the first time in 1901, the work of an Englishman who understood India as well as any western artist ever has, it stands both between two centuries and between two cultures, East and West. It poses problems of empire building that confronted the world in the nineteenth century, and it poses problems of racial identity and justice that have preoccupied our own age. Written by the laureate of the British Empire, it is also a harbinger of the Empire's dissolution. These intrinsic values, and others, make Kim as significant for history as it is for art.5

Kipling usually wrote shorter works than Kim. His strength lay in brevity, in striking with an iron that stayed hot but a little while. His forte was the poem and the short story.

As a young newspaperman working in India, Kipling began to write a novel, his "masterpiece," as he sardonically referred to it. He gave it the title “Mother Maturin,” and on July 30, 1885, five months before his twentieth birthday, recorded in a letter that he had 237 pages already written. Almost all we know about the story is what a friend wrote about it: “... It is the story of an old Irishwoman who kept an opium den in Lahore but sent her daughter to be educated in England. She married a Civilian and came to live in Lahore—hence a story how Government secrets came to be known in the Bazaar and vice versa.”

Kipling worked away at his novel, in India, then later in London, and, after he married and moved with his bride to the U.S.A., in Vermont. Kim is the tale of a young man, an orphan son of an Irish sergeant who served and died in India. Left a waif to fend for himself, he has many adventures. Those adventures would supply the narrative thread and enable Kipling to reveal the India he sought to capture. In fact, Kim would epitomize the East, until his true identity is discovered. It clearly had the makings of a good yarn.
Both father and son did indeed know every nook and cranny mentioned or described in *Kim*: the huge tapestry, the brilliant colors, the clash of cultures, the lavish mixed with the sordid, the crowds of the bazaars and the Grand Trunk Road—they knew it all, in the way only Britons of Victoria's time knew the outposts of Empire. In truth, the Kiplings acquired their knowledge and understanding of the East in an exquisitely romantic manner.

There is no more wonderful tale of adventure in the language than *Kim*, which represents the genius of Rudyard Kipling at its culmination. It is not only the story of a boy with quite unique gift for the subtle intelligence work—espionage would be a gross and unjust name for it—which anticipates and arrests the intrigues that might break the peace of India, but also a romance of spirituality, of mankind's unending quest for the divinely ordained road, the strait pathway, leading out of the vast of bewildering illusion of mortal life.

Kim and the old Lama from Tibet, who becomes his traveling companion, are the heroes of the twofold drama of action and the soul's high enterprise. But India, like Egdon Health in Hardy's *Return of the Native*, is really the chief character, making or unmaking men and dominating either side of the story. Also R. K. Narayana's Malgudi may be remembered.

There is depicted before us with all the author's skill, the visible India with its wonder of scenery and of human types busy with world affairs. But there is also the invisible India, the most ancient of man's spiritual homes, with its old religions and cosmogonies, towering heavenward like the Himalayas and white with the snows of eternal thought. The dust and turmoil of the populous and picturesque scene move the reader—but he is
profoundly stirred by entering into the secret Orient where a man of affairs may give up all worldly honour and glory to meditate and make his soul,

To learn and discern of his brother the clod,

His brother the brute, and his brother the god⁶ (p. 45).

And so round off his life into a perfect whole.

Kim’s father was a colour-sergeant of the Mavericks, and Irish regiment, and his mother had been a nursemaid in a colonel’s family. Kimball O’Hara had in the end “gone native altogether, as the saying is, had learnt to love opium, and had died as poor whites die in India. His whole estate at death consisted of three papers: one he called his ne varietur, because those words were written under his signature thereon; his “clearance-certificate”; and Kim’s birth certificate. In his glorious opium hours he warned Kim not to part with them on any account, for they would some day make a man of him. The half-caste woman with whom he lived sewed these papers after his death into a leather amulet-case, which she strung round Kim’s neck. “And some day,” she told the little boy, confusedly remembering O’Hara’s prophecies, “there will come for you a great Red Bull on a green field, and the Colonel riding on his tall horse, and” – dropping into English – “nine hundred devils.”

If, indeed, any authoritative person had seen those papers, Kim would have been caught and brought up normally, perhaps at the Masonic Orphanage in the hills. But he escaped and lived in Lahore like a native child, and what he did not know about the customs, stories and proverbs of his associates was really not worth-knowing.

All castes and conditions were familiar to him, but he was puzzled at his first sight of the Lama. Kipling writes, “He was nearly six feet high, dressed in fold of dingy stuff like horse-blanketing. At his belt hung a long open-work iron pencase and a wooden rosary such as holy men wear. On his head was a gigantic sort of tam – o’-shanter. His face was yellow and
wrinkled, like that of Fook Sing, the Chinese boot maker in the bazaar. His eyes turned up at the corners and looked like little slits on onyx” (p. 49).

A scholar of parts, once a ruler in his Tibetan lamasery, he had come down into Hind to visit the Holy places of Buddhism and to find the “River of the Arrow” -- The mystic stream which gushed forth where fell the shaft shot by the young Buddha from a bow none could bend, and which washes away all taint and speckle of sin.

Kim, who is known as the ‘Little Friend of all the World,’’ being kind and tolerant to all people and a born lover of human nature, sees that the good old pilgrim is helpless in a strange environment, four months’ journey from his lamasery, and appoints himself as his guide and disciple. It is surprising how he wheedles good living for him out of the people they meet.

Mahbub Ali, an Afghan horse-dealer who dyes his beard scarlet to hide the signs of coming age, is one of the intimate friends Kim falls in with on the way. Kim does not know that he is a sort of super-spy, who gives the Government from time to time invaluable information concerning out-of-the-way mountain principalities, which his caravans visit, explorers of nationalities other than English, and the progress of the gun trade. Just then five confederated kings, who had no right to confederate, were meditating trouble, serious trouble. Mahbub Ali had hurried south, avoiding a halt at the insalubrious city of Peshawar, in order to deliver the report of R.17, another wary watcher, on the peril that threatened. Dynamite was milky and innocuous in comparison with this report which most scandalously betrayed the five kings, a sympathetic Northern Power, a Hindu banker in Peshwar, and a semi-independent Mahomedan ruler in the south.

It falls to Kim’s lot to deliver this report into the hands of the Head of the Secret Service, and he assists unseen, out of childish curiosity, at the immediate interview between the latter and the Commander-in-chief. It is there and then arranged that a punitive expedition of eight thousand men,
with the guns required; shall at once be mobilized to deal with the crisis. Not knowing—then—what he had been doing, Kim’s act had set in motion a great military demonstration. But he talks about it and prophesies war to those he meets, including an old Ressaldar who had been faithful to his salt and fought in the Mutiny; a fine old veteran with three sons who were Ressaldar majors in their regiments, and he had come out to show the pilgrims a short lane leading into the chief thoroughfare in Hindustan.

Now onwards we see Kim meeting a lama and the feet of the Lama and his chela Kim (disciple and servitor) are set upon the Grand Trunk Road, which runs straight, bearing without crowding the traffic of Hindustan, for fifteen hundred miles—a river of life that has not its like for colour and picturesque variety and ceaseless flowing anywhere else in the whole wide world. “For the most part it is shaded, as here,” says the old retired Ressaldar, “with four lines of trees; the middle road—all hard-takes the quick traffic. In the days before rail-carriages the Sahibs traveled up and down here in hundreds. Now there are only country carts and such like. Left and right is the rougher road for the heavy carts—grain and cotton and timber, bhoosa, lime and hides. A man goes in safety here—for at every few kos is a police-station.” When “Kim” was written, the motor-car had not yet arrived to bring the Sahibs (who are still in a hurry!) back again to the famous thoroughfare.

It was a moving museum of races and castes, traders and professions. The Lama, his soul busied elsewhere, kept his eyes fixed steadily on the ground, but Kim watched the passing pageant with huge delight. Kipling writes,

Here and there they met or were overtaken by the gaily dressed crowds of whole villages turning out to some local fair; the women with their babes on their hips, walking behind the men, the older boys prancing
on sticks of sugar-cane, dragging rude brass models of loco-motives such as they sell for a halfpenny, or flashing the sun into the eyes of their betters from cheap toy mirrors.

A solid line of blue, rising and falling like the back of caterpillar in haste, would swing up through the quivering dust and trot past to a chorus of quick cackling. That was a gang of changers – the women who have taken all the embankments of all the Northern railways under their charge – a flat-footed, big-bosomed, strong-limbed, blue-petticoated clan of earth-carries, hurrying north on news of a job....They belong to the caste whose men do not count.

A little later a marriage procession would strike into the Grand Trunk with music and shoutings, and a smell of marigold and jasmine stronger even than the reek of the dust.

One could see the bride’s litter, a blur of red and tinsel, staggering through the haze, while the bridegroom’s bewreathed pony turned aside to snatch a mouthful from a passing fodder-cart....

Still more interesting and more to be shouted over it was when a strolling juggler with some half-trained monkeys, or a panting, feeble bear, or a woman who tied goat’s horn to her feet and with these danced on a slack-rope, set the horses to shying and the women to shrill, long-drawn quavers of amazement” (p. 129).

Kim makes friends for himself and the innocent old Lama in this happy Asiatic confusion in which, if only you have a little patience, all that a simple man needs is forthcoming. One very good friend he finds is an old lady of substance going on a visit to a son-in-law in a gaily ornamented family bullock-cart with a retinue that includes hillmen from the North. Kim’s skill in abusive chaff and his treasure of stories and songs picked up in Lahore city amuse the old dame; moreover, being from the Hills herself,
she reveres the Lama whose blessing, she hopes, will bring her many grandsons. So they all travel together comfortably, master and disciple subsisting on the pious old hill-woman’s bounty. And then - he is found by his father’s regiment, and sign of the Red Bull on a green field, which is the crest of the Mavericks, is seen by him on a camp marking-flag. The column crawls in sight, the band plays it to camp, for the men are route-marching with all their baggage, and with wondrous speed a white city of tents, all twinkling with fires, comes silently into being. Never before had Kim watched the routine miracle of a seasoned regiment pitching camp in thirty minutes. He crawls to the mess-tent door, and sees the red-gold bull, fashioned from old time loot from the Summer Palace at Pekin, which is the sole ornament of the officers’ table on the line of march, ramping on a field of Irish green. And he is caught by the Church of England chaplain, who finds the amulet-case containing the documents that identify the boy. So Kim enters into his racial heritage and his feeling about it is that of the Prodigal Son, as set forth in the lines invented for a chapter heading:

The fatted calf is dressed for me,
But the husks have greater zest for me,
I think my pigs will be best for me,
So I’m off to the styes afresh (p. 70)

And the reader, too, resents the fact that the story, like Kim of the Rishti (Ey-Rishti = Irish) now become young Kimball O’Hara must leave the Road for a while. The sorrow of the old Lama at the loss of his chela is contagious.

The Church of England padre, a stupid man with very little Hindustani and still less knowledge of the innumerable types of native character, has the sense to ask the Roman Catholic chaplain’s advice about his captive. Father Victor is learned in human nature, and he feels, if he cannot understand, the beauty of holiness that shines about the Lama and
pain in every sentence of his lamentation over the loss of the child disciple, of whom he says: “My heart went out to thee for thy charity and thy courtesy and the wisdom of thy little years.” He bears it patiently, however, thinking he has sinned in allowing himself to be beguiled by yet another phase of the great illusion. But he thinks it right that Kim should learn to be a sahib, and decides to give three hundred rupees a year that the boy may get the best schooling to be had in India.

Meanwhile, before he goes to St. Xavier’s in Partibus, the school recommended by Father Victor, Kim becomes an object of wonder to the regiment. He tells them all that they will not go to Sanawar, but to “thee war” (talking in “the tinny-saw-cut English of the native-bred”). As he sits silent as a trapped wild thing, newly washed all over and dressed in a horrible stuff suit which rasps his limbs, the official opinion of him is declared. “A most amazing young bird,” says the sergeant. “He turns up in charge of a yellow-headed buck-Brahman priest, with his father’s lodge-certificates round his neck, talking God know what all of a red bull. The buck-Brahman evaporates without explanations, and the boy sets cross-legged on the chaplain’s bed prophesying bloody war to the men at large.

Next morning, as the Mavericks take a side road to Umballa, the order to go the front comes along, and a horse and joyful clamour rolls down on him through the thick dust, and someone smites Kim on the back, crying. ‘Tell how ye knew, ye little limb of Satan.’

He is in the custody of a fat, freckled drummer boy, however, and loathes his new life. So he gets a native letter-writer to write him a letter to Mahbub Ali, asking for help or money, and the scarlet-bearded Afghan horse-dealer carries him off to Umballa race-course, after laying into the detested drummer-boy with a peculiarly adhesive quirt. But he gives the “Little Friend of all the World” clearly to understand that he cannot honourably connive at his escape – “Once a sahib, always a sahib,” sagely
observes Mahbub Ali. But they meet Creighton (of the Ethnological Survey) at the psychological moment, and it is decided not to waste the boy’s peculiar gifts. Kim thinks his friend has played him false and says bitterly, quoting a proverb: “Trust a Brahman before a snake, and a snake before a harlot, and a harlot before an Afghan, Mahubub Ali.”

But it is all settled for the best. The Lama has sent the first three hundred rupees (in one of Gobind Sahai’s notes of hand which are “good from her to China,” says Colonel Creighton to Father Victor), and due attention has been paid to the scarlet-bearded Afghan’s metaphorical advice: “As regards that young horse I say that when a horse is born to be a polo-pony, closely following the ball without teaching—when such a colt knows the game by divination—then I say it is a great wrong to break that colt to a Heavy cart, sahib.”

On the way to St. Xavier’s at Lucknow, whither he travels by train in a second-class compartment next to the colonel’s first, his future is unfolded: he is diligent at school, and it is explained to him what that will mean. “Thou are a sahib and the son of a sahib,” the colonel warns him, “therefore do not ay any time be led to condemn the black men. I have known boys newly entered into the service of the government who feigned not to understand the talk or the customs of black men. Their pay was cut for ignorance. There is no sin so great as ignorance. Remember this.” He has a farewell meeting with the old Lama, who is living in the Temple of the Tirthankers at Benares—and the gates close on him with a clang.

Kim was diligent at St. Xavier’s, and he passed an examination in elementary surveying with great credit, his age being fifteen years and eight months. His name does not appear in the year’s batch of those who entered for the subordinate Survey of India, but against it stand the words “removed on appointment.” During those three years the old Lama made many journeys, following the traces of the Blessed Feet through all India, but
always casting up at the Temple of the Tirthankers and then visiting Lucknow, to see his beloved chela. It became Kim's sanctioned custom to work faithfully during term-time at St. Xavier's, but to spend his holidays among his own people, so that the other side of his special intelligence might be developed. As his feeling is expressed in one of the two stanzas used as a chapter heading:

I would go without shirts or shoes
    Friends, tobacco or bread,
    Sooner than for an instant lose
    Either side of my head (p. 117).

When his first August to October holidays began, it was arranged that he should be kept out of mischief at a barrack school in the hills behind Umballa. But he had himself stained and disguised in a house of light women, and joyously vanished in the guise of a low-cast Hindu boy, sending a letter of explanation to Mahubub Ali, hoping that "the Hand of Friendship would turn aside the Whip of calamity." Mahabub convinced the colonel that such conduct was as inevitable, as that of a horse which needs salt, and if it is not in the mangers, must lick it up from the earth.

After some glorious adventures on his own (with a capital of two rupees and three annas, for the disguising cost him four annas) Kim falls in with Mahabub, whose life he has the good luck to save. Camping with the horse-dealer's retainers beside the railway, he overhears two would-be assassins whispering behind his horse-truck, and is able to warn him in safety, though the night is full of eyes. They go up from Umballa to Simla together, and Kim finds the journey all pure delight, as the road climbs deviously and the vista of the Plains rolls out far below. He then receives orders from the colonel to lodge in Lurgan Sahib's house until it is time to go back to school.
Lurgan, who keeps a shop full of the most amazing curios, is also a member of the secret services, and he tests Kim's capacity in various unlikely ways. A gramophone, which abuses him at night, does not frighten the stout-hearted boy, and he breaks it by stuffing his coat into the trumpet-like mouth. Other and more perilous magic is tried on him. A water jar is smashed and its contents spilt, and Lurgan tries to hypnotize him into seeing it magically mended and restored to its original shape—it is the same method whereby the great hallucination of the Indian Rope Trick may have been accomplished. The boy sees the shadowy shape of the pot growing like a flower from the ground, but his mind and will are too strong to be convinced by suggestion that the phantasm is real. Afterwards he and the passionate, jealous child who guards Lurgan's jewels, play at the game, excellent for training eye and memory to work together, of looking at a number of unfamiliar objects for a minute, and then making an accurate catalogue of them.

Kim is deeply interested in Lurgan's many and very curious visitors, of whom an obsese, fat-legged Babu Hurree Chunder Mookerjee helps on his special education by showing him how to record distances measured in his own foot-paces by means of a rosary and by presenting him with a brass betel-box filled with little bottles of tabloids, quinine and other good departmental drugs. Later holidays are used, under Mahabub's supervision, to put a fine finish on his special gifts; for example, he makes a secret survey and description of the mysterious capital of an independent native state, which would be useful to the Jung-i-Lat Sahib (Commander-in-Chief) if he went there with an army.

At sixteen Mahbub and Lurgan assured the colonel that Kim was ready for work and ought to be released from school. He is put on the pay-list, has his colour changed, and is protected against devils by the witch-like Huneefa (here we get a glimpse into the India of other-worldly spirits and
dark magic, the oldest India of all) and left to follow the Lama for six months with the yellow complexion of a Tibetan chela and the other paraphernalia, such as the sand-coloured robe, begging-gourd, rosary and ghost-dagger.

He goes to the Temple at Benares to meet his Master. On the way he falls in with a Jat, bearing his poor little sick son in his arms, who complains that all the priests are most holy and-most greedy. “I have walked the pillars and trodden the temples till my feet are flayed, and the child is no whit better.” Quinine and dark brown meat-lozenges out of Kim’s quaint medicine-chest cure the child, and the pilgrims have not only acquired merit, but also made a new good friend.

It was as well they did, else Kim could never have saved the life of E.23, who has been bringing a most important letter from the “King’s country” in the South and tumbles into the Delhi train wounded and half-starving and well aware that he will be arrested at Delhi on a charge of murder, for which both the corpse and the witnesses had been provided in a southern city. When arrested he would be sent back to an independent state where he would be made to die slowly, as a warning to other spies. With the oddments in the Jat’s bundle Kim changes the despairing fugitive from a Maharatta trader into an all-but naked ash-smeared, ochre-barred, dusty-haired Saddhu, his legs crossed under him, Kim’s brown rosary about his neck, and a scant yard of worn flowered chintz on his shoulders. So E.23 escapes the net and is able to tell one of his chiefs where the letter has been hidden.

No wonder that this feat is described as “an extraordinary efficient performance” by the ubiquitous Mookerjee, who turns up at the house in Sharunpore of the son-in-law of the garrulous, lively, pious, good-hearted old dame met on the road during Kim’s first journey. He is disguised a hakim, and so cleverly that Kim does not at first recognize him.
The Babu has orders to investigate the doings of two Russian envoys in the Far North, who are posing as sportsmen in quest of wild goats, but are actually engaged in making a military survey of the territory of two of the five confederated kings already mentioned. He asks Kim to help him, being an "awfully fearful" man ("God made the Hare and the Bengali," comments Kim, quoting the proverb), and so all three journey toward the Himalayas.

"Who goes to the Hills goes to his mother," runs the proverb and the strength of the old Lama mightily increases as he strides up and on towards the snow-peaks afar. He is a power, moreover, in his own step countryside. The Plains had treated him as a holy man among holy men. But the Hills worshipped him as one in the confidence of all the devils."

This part of the story is full of wonderful pictures of the mountain vastnesses and fastnesses, which are among the finest of Kipling's masterpiece of description. Reading them, we are as dizzy and daunted as any plainsman suddenly thrown among snowy steeps and dark abysms-our wonder at the great artist's power becomes a kind of vertigo. Presently the travelers fall in with the Russian envoys, to whom Mookerjee has attached himself as guide and counselor. They do not know how to treat the natives, and when one of them strikes the old man full on the face, the horror of the observers is beyond all bounds. "He struck the Holy One-we saw it!" cries a hillsman. "Our cattle will be barren-our wives will cease to bear! The snows will slide on us as we go home." Only the Lama forbids any killing are their lives spared. But their papers are taken away by Mookerjee, their other belongings being cast down thousands of feet deep into "Shamlegh midden." So the object of the secret service is achieved.

But the spirit of the Lama is sad and broken within him, because he has been betrayed into anger-so that he put his hand upon his iron pen-case, the weapon of Tibetan monks quarrelling among one another. The traces of human feelings left in the saintly old man may please the Western reader.
We are no more shocked at his momentary wrath with Ignorance and Lust than we were when, in an early chapter, he trailed his rosary on the grass to please a baby and sang a little song to it:

This is a handful of cardamoms,
This is a lump of ghi:
This is millet and chillies and rice,
A supper for thee and me (p. 50).

Such trifling weaknesses, though for the faithful Buddhist they hinder the way to the peace that passes mortal understanding, endear him to us a they endeared him to Kim, his loving disciple and servitor. His quest is accomplished, for his spirit is miraculously disembodied for a time-they think him dead-and plunged into the cleansing flood of his life-long vision, but it returns to the body in order that he may promise the certainty of salvation to his beloved Kim. “Son of my soul,” he says at the long last, “I have wrenched my soul back from the Threshold of Freedom to free thee from all sin-as I am free and sinless. Just is the wheel! Certain is our deliverance. Come!”

So ends this twofold romance of mortal journeyings and of the Mystic Way.

Kipling’s characterization is exuberant in the novel. Kim’s character emerges as if the finest. Kim, the only child of an Irish couple is unfortunately left to grow up in the Lahore bazaar. The apathy of the busy bazaar crowd compels Kim to rely on his own resources and this nurtures in him a strong and abiding self reliance and a friendly yet ‘cautious attitude towards one and all. This is evident in the sympathetic manner with which he approaches the lama, an utter stranger, ministers to his smallest need, and guides and protects the vulnerable soul. Kim’s virtues are all of a practical nature.
Kim's accomplishments are many and varied. He has a sharp intellect and an alert nature. When he is forced to attend school, much against his will, he excels at his studies as well as in sport activities and earns the praise of Lurgan Sahib. Questions of his own identity worry him, but momentarily, as they do most living beings. Those long years with no kindred spirit to commune with in the bazaar crowd, have left Kim lonesome and unattached. Even the Great Game, for which Kim is specially groomed, might play itself for all Kim cares, so long as he is left in peace with the one person he loves, his lama.

The next character Teshoo Lama engages our attention again and again. In the belief that where Lord Buddha's arrow touched the earth, there broke out a stream, Teshoo Lama, Abbot of Such-Zen crosses over into India in search of salvation—for he believes that whoso washes in those waters washes away all sin. Uppermost in the lama's heart is the desire to attain freedom from the Wheel of life through non-involvement in worldly matters—which are all *maya* or illusion. In the city of Lahore, the impetuous kindness of the street urchin, Kim, touches his heart. Kim understands the yearnings of the forlorn old soul, tends him with a loving kindness, befriends the stranger and follows him in his Search of the River. The lama is most unworldly.

The third important character in the novel the Pathan Ali. Mahbub Ali, the horse-dealer from Peshawar travels frequently through the high mountain passes of north India, on the apparently very legitimate business of transporting horses. He strives to create the impression, that his many meetings with Colonel Creighton are of a purely professional nature as the army is the biggest buyer of his horses. But, in reality, the burly Afghan is an active spy.

His arguments with Creighton Sahib carry the day and Mahbub Ali accepts the happy task of initiating Kim into the intricacies of the Great Spy
Game. Through close association, he draws Kim towards a resourceful and courageous manhood, dangerous and worldly, in direct contrast to the lama's teachings of non-involvement and maya.

Huree Babu, a whale-like hulking man, full-fleshed, heavy-haunched, bull-necked, and deep voiced, is this brazen drug-vendor and hakim from Dacca. An ‘efficient stalker’, a man of extreme contrasts, this smiling Bengali mixes English prose with Indian idiom, Latin interjections and professional sounding serious statements. He never forgets to include references to Shakespeare and Wordsworth while talking the ‘best of English with the vilest of phrases’. The Babu is boastfully proud of his perfectly conceived and flawlessly executed disguises.

This admirable ‘beast of wonder,’ his intentions and actions camouflaged, picks up his patent leather shoes of ceremony and accompanies angry, wronged and unscrupulous foreigners. He robs them, lies to them, yet-gets them to write him a testimonial praising his courtesy. This astute spy plays his role with relish.

Although on the face of it, Kim is a simple string of adventures, and the whole adds up to a novel of sorts, it has given readers and critics considerable trouble. They ask what the story is really about. Is it about Kim or about something else? Is it about a boy’s betrayal of his friends? Is the story a prelude to the Great Game, the treacherous business of tracking down spies in the mountains? And where does the lama fit into the tale, why does he befriend Kim, and why does he search so ardently for the River of the Arrow? Do the Great Game, the Grand Trunk Road, the River of the Arrow mean just what they seem to mean or have they larger, symbolic meanings, for Westerners as well as for Easterners? Why, in such a short book, does Kipling carve out such an enormous landscape, why does he pack it so tightly with so many characters?
Morton Cohan comments,
Kim came upon the literary scene unexpectedly and defied not only the conventional prose styles of the time but all previous definitions of storytelling. Literature is history’s handmaiden, and turn-of-the-century readers and critics had come to terms with old-fashioned vehicles and a good many newfangled ones as well—they had absorbed the English efforts at naturalism, the factory novel, the novel of society, the novel of provincial life, the novel with innovative language, the pre-Freudian novel, the art-for-art’s-sake novel, the decadent novel, and the religious novel.\(^7\)

Morton Cohan thinks but Kim did not fit any of these molds: it was different in many ways. It was, to begin with, a novel of Empire, and that was a relatively new phenomenon. It was not surprising that English literature would follow the Union Jack to the far corners of the British Empire, but Kipling stands in the forefront of the ranks of writers who went to the distant outposts and came away so deeply affected by their experiences that they set out to conquer new realms in literary expression.

Rider Haggard had already begun to do it for Africa with his swashbuckling tales of the jungle and the veldt. Haggard did it well, but Kipling, in *Kim*, did it better, both in capturing the scene and in depicting character.

All these books by Haggard, Kipling, other writers like Joseph Conrad, are, in one sense, travel books. They provide an early picture of a part of Great Britain that Londoners and other fog-bound British could comprehend with ease, even excitement. Indeed they opened the eyes of the people at home to a part of their world that very few knew anything about, and they quickened pulses at comfortable English hearths with a desire to share in the imperial adventure.
In *Kim* we have, for the first time, India's complexity, its mystery, its redolent squalor, its delicate spirituality, all side by side. This is India in the third-class railway carriage, India of the bazaars and the brothels, India of the Grand Trunk Road, India of the plains, the hills, the mountains, the sahib's India, the Indian's India, quiet Indian villages and teeming city streets. Here is the caste system, the multiplicity of races, religions, dialects. Here is the overpowering heat of the cities, the brutal cold of the hills. Here are veiled women, harems. Here are international crooks, jugglers, beggars, moneylenders. Here is natural beauty concealing disease. Here are brilliant sunshine, choking dust, fierce and endless rain. Here are foreign manners and customs. Here are rich and poor, spies, soldiers, horse dealers, people of every description and belief. Here are a variety of creeds, a multiplicity of tongues, various ways of dressing. Here is everything that went to make up the India that Kipling and his family knew and that no longer exists. The landscape is as foreign as anything a Westerner can imagine. Yet Kipling's genius makes it as real and familiar as Kensington Gardens to a Londoner.

And Kipling peoples this crowded landscape with characters who live and breathe as convincingly as they did in the more familiar sitting rooms and slums, even more so, and he gives us a tale of a young man's growth and accomplishments that transcends nationality and geography. Kim and the people around him speak believable sentences, dream believable dreams, feel believable emotions.

Some critics say that *Kim* is shapeless, that it has no object at all really, that it is merely a catalog of impressions. Others admit that it is a great book, but they cannot satisfactorily explain why this relatively simple tale, told largely in a conventional picaresque style, grips us so.

Certainly *Kim* is mystical in that it captures the suggestive elements of the exotic East, not only the strange, striking 'landscape, but the soul of the East as well, first in the deep religion of the lama and in the way that
faith shapes his character, and second, in the nature of the Eastern persona, the character and personality of the Easterner as opposed to the Westerner.

It is said,

But the mystical element lives here on another level too, as it does in most of Kipling’s other works. For Kipling himself was something of a mystic. He believed that his creative powers, his inspiration came to him mysteriously and miraculously through some awesome, unknowable process. Very likely he associated the elements of the inscrutable, mysterious East with the mystical qualities of his own creative imagination. He believed in both strongly: ‘You didn’t write She, and I didn’t write ‘Recessional,’ “ Kipling once said to Rider Haggard. “Something wrote them through us.” In his brief biographical essay, Something of Myself, Kipling tells us that Kim “grew like the Djinn released from the brass bottle, and the more we explored its possibilities the more opulence of detail did we discover.” And, he adds, we recall, “Kim took care of himself.” This mystical aspect of Kipling recalls us Harriet Beecher Stowe when she wrote her best-seller Uncle Tom’s Cabin.

Some have argued that Kim is an imperialist tract, depicting the clash between white and black, the struggle between the rulers and the ruled. Some even think it is a sinister book, an enchanting tale to illustrate that “whiteness will out,” that white is better than yellow, brown, or black, and that British white is best of all. Kipling is often accused of having been the Cecil Rhodes of English literature. Those who do not read beyond the first line of “The Ballad of East and West” see Kipling as a jingoist. But that view is simply false; he deserves a more nearly accurate characterization.

Kipling’s philosophy grew out of a private morality. He believed that he knew how both individuals and nations, especially the British and Britain, must behave, and he expressed his belief in some of his most

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controversial work, especially in poems like "Recessional" (1897) and "The White Man's Burden" (1899). The doctrine of hard work was a cornerstone of Kipling's faith, as was his firm belief in "the Law," both the law of nature and the law of the state. He found democracy uncongenial because he did not believe that ignorant or poorly informed voters should be allowed to elect ill-equipped representatives to run a government by trial and error. He admired highly schooled specialists, and he believed that running governments, like waging wars or manning ocean liners, required specialists. He was predictably horrified by what he regarded as twentieth-century socialist trends. But he was a sensitive man, and a kind one and, above all, valued the sanctity of the human heart and believed deeply in human goodness.

But while ordinary critics sneered, the great and the gifted valued Kipling. For T. S. Eliot, Kipling was "the greatest Englishman of letters of his generation," and for W. Somerset Maugham, "the best short-story writer that our country can boast of."

Posterity is the sternest judge of all, and the fact that Kipling's works, and most particularly, *Kim*, are still read by young and old the world over is evidence enough that the little, bespectacled man who wrote speeches for King George IV and Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, but who refused a title when it was offered him, has made his mark in his own way, by the sweat of his artistic brow.

**THE LIGHT THAT FAILED (1891):**

*The Light That Failed* is a *fin-de-siècle* decadent tale with death as its outcome but this would hardly matter but that the mode was not Kipling's. Much has been written about its debt to Scarron and to the Abbé Prévost's fine novel, *Manon Lescaut*. One of its defects - a brutality, evidenced both
in the scene with the cardiac publisher and in the treatment of the women characters.

Angus Wilson thinks the idea of the lasting destructive romantic attachment, which Kipling may owe either to Uncle Ned Burne-Jones, in his life and art, or to the family history of his failed uncle, Harry Macdonald, who had experienced such a passion in youth, must surely have been in his mind all through the pains and pleasures of his love affair with Flo. Yet in *Plain Tales from the Hills*, it is only once, the story of young Deckie Hatt’s ruin through love for a shallow girl, that he lays blame on the woman. In ‘The Other Man’ and in ‘The Phantom ‘Rickshaw’ he turns the idea to artistic success by treating it as a setting for Gothic horrors. And in ‘On the Strength of a Likeness’ he lays blame fair and square on the man. Indeed, contrary to the critical opinion of the nineties which still lingers, Kipling’s early work is largely marked by his extraordinary understanding of the unfairness of women’s lives, with his sympathy and liking for them. The blind, self-flattering misogyny of *The Light That Failed* comes, then, as a peculiar surprise and disappointment.

*The Light That Failed* was published first in America and England in *Lippincott’s Monthly Magazine*, January 1891, a magazine that the previous year had published another inferior autobiographical fantasy by a major author – Wilde’s *Dorian Gray*. Kipling’s novel in these versions had a novelettish conventional ending in which Maisie repents of her rejection of Dick and they are married. In March 1891 what the author called the original conception appeared in book form published by Macmillan - in November 1890 it had been used by Lovell in America in the copy they deposited in Washington for copyright. Here, as we have seen, Maisie is peremptorily dismissed from Dick’s life and he goes blind to die amid the glorious sands of the Sudan battlefields. A most interesting article Margaret Newsom in the *Kipling Journal*, drawing upon an earlier artic
Charles Carrington, suggests that the first more conventional and surely less objectionable version was urged upon Kipling by his mother. This was what an old friend of the Kipling family had told Professor Carrington. Mrs Newsom goes on to suggest that when Kipling then published the more objectionable version of the novel, he appended as an attempt to appease his mother, the famous poem, 'Mother O' Mine':

The usual explanation of the two versions of *The Light That Failed*, namely that Wolcott with a knowledge of the magazine market (and why not a fear for his friend's grotesque self-revelation in the bitter version?) persuaded Kipling into publishing first in a conventional happy form, is very likely.

It is a London in its hateful aspect largely of streets and of literary or smart salons - the claustrophobia of the outsides of buildings and their insides. One senses him like an animal unsure of its own strength and of its new territory, venturing forth with all guards up, retiring to its den to hide and lick its wounds, driving all intruders angrily out of that den. This jungle aspect, indeed, is the one overall impression of life as portrayed in *The Light That Failed* which reveals that that unhappy novel is the mistaken work of a young man of genius.

**THE NAULAHKA (1892):**

Kipling's Naulahka is sub-titled as 'A Story of West and East.' Naulahka is the name of the house Kipling built and lived in America for four years. Both Kipling and Wolcott Balestier have collaborated in the production of the novel. The novel is a depiction of the theme of the West's hegemony over the East. It is written in 21 chapters and a critical analysis is as follows.

The novel begins with an introduction of Nicholas Tarvin and Kate Sheriff, daughter of a railway engineer, both of the rising town of Topaz,
Colorado, in the United States of America. Tarvin loves her, but she feels that she has a mission to the women of India. Tarvin, an up-and-coming young man with interests in politics, real estate, and anything that will promote the progress of his beloved town, tries to persuade Kate to marry him instead of going to India. She makes him promise not to follow her. Tarvin meets the President of the Three C's, the railroad that is considering running through Topaz – or the rival town of Rustler. The young wife of the president seems a good subject for Tarvin to work on, and he accordingly does so; in due course he learns that her weak point, for which he was searching, is jewels. He promises to bring her a magnificent necklace from India.

Mutrie, the railroad president, stays at Topaz with his wife while he inspects the town and studies its resources with the assistance of Tarvin. After another refusal from Kate he makes a bargain with Mrs. Mutrie that if he gets her the necklace, she will persuade her husband to bring his railway to Topaz. Tarvin, at Rawut Junction, is horrified to find that there is no train for Rhatore; after some argument he is provided with a bullock-cart and a driver. Some four days later the cart crawls up to the rest-house at Rhatore – Tarvin has gone to India ‘the other way round’ in obedience to his promise to Kate – and he now finds a weary crowd of commercial men hopelessly trying to obtain payment for goods already supplied to the King. He hears how the head Queen, Sitabhai – a gipsy – rules the King. He also hears of the necklace he has come to steal, the Naulahka, and gathers information about conditions. He manages to send a telegram home, and receives one informing him that he has been elected to his State’s Legislature.

Tarvin dreams in the uncomfortable rest-house and decides to call on Estes at the American Mission, where he is made welcome by the missionary and his wife who are expecting Kate to join them shortly. He
enjoys an American breakfast and hears of the difficulties in Rhatore. He explains his presence in the town by saying that he is a prospector and learns that he must seek the permission of Colonel Nolan, the Resident, before he can even stay thee, let alone do any prospecting. Tarvin learns his way about, meets the Maharajah, and initiates him into the art of shooting at coins tossed up into the air. Colonel Nolan is also glad to meet his visitor and tells him another version of the complicated affairs of the State. Tarvin later meets the nine-year-old Maharaj Kunwar, the King’s son, and during a drive with him in his carriage is able to meet Kate. Kate is glad of his kindness but wishes he had not come. They go sightseeing and she later settle down to her work in the half-light of the women’s quarters, where she sees and hears things that upset her. Tarvin goes with the Maharaj Kunwar to give her a present from the boy’s mother – the real Queen – with a plea that Kate should try to save him from the gipsy Queen Sitabhai. Kate writes to Tarvin, telling him not to see her for a while; he visits the Maharajah while Mrs. Estes takes Kate to inspect the hospital, which is badly run and filthy. A woman of the desert drags Kate off to see her sick husband.

Tarvin and the Maharajah talk; the latter asks why he has come to Rhatore. Tarvin explains that there is gold in the river and he proposes to divert it. The Maharaj Kunwar appears; he is not very well, so Tarvin suggests that he should see Kate. Women in the palace listen to this conversation, and when the Foxhall colt is brought out for Tarvin to ride a shutter bangs three times in signal. As he mounts the girth slips but he is able to free his foot as the animal rears. This attempt at murder does not shake his nerve, and he determines to master the colt, while he later does. The Maharajah admires his horsemanship, and suggests another shot at a coin. Tarvin’s shot – which is successful – alarms the escort, who charges him with lances, only to be called off at the last moment. His courage further excites the Maharajah’s admiration. They resume their conversation
about the diversion of the river and decide to state work the next day. Tarvin is promised whatever he would like, but settles for a sight of the Naulahka; the Maharajah maintains that he does not know where it is kept, as it is so holy, but suggests that it might be at the Gye-Mukh – the Cow’s Mouth.

Ester provides information on the Cow’s Mouth. Tarvin sets out on his horse Fibby Wibby Winks and after a night ride arrives at the dead city of Gunnaur; the dawn reveals in to him. He finds the Cow’s Mouth by nearly falling into it. It is a dreadful place.

He returns to the rest-house and regrets that he is unable to express his thoughts on his wild-goose chase to the Maharajah, as he naturally wishes to retain his goodwill. Work starts with convict labour on the dam that is to divert the river. The Naulahka seems as remote as ever, but the Maharaj Kunwar’s health, thanks to Kate, seems to improve, but his visits to Sitabhai’s wing of the palace do him no good. Tarvin is delighted to see the Topaz newspaper with news of the Three C’s; Kate is a little homesick, but her hospital improves. She meets Sitabhai and the tragic forsaken Queen, Mother of the Maharaj Kunwar, who sends her a badly knitted scarf and prays her to take care of her son. There are other attempts on Tarvin’s life and he sees in a later paper that the Three C’s might not go to Topaz after all. He sends a telegram of encouragement.

Preparations for the wedding are in hand; multitudes of princes and their followers assemble. After some days of celebration the Maharaj Kunwar appears, looking ill and tired; he is wearing the Naulahka. Tarvin attends the banquet and wonders if he has really seen the jewels he has come to steal; it later strikes him that they might be in the temple, so he goes to look and just manages to step off a revolving flagstone that would have dropped him into unknown depths. Kate sends for him and asks about hemp-poisoning, as she believes that the Maharaj Kunwar – who is ill – has
been poisoned by Sitabhai. They visit him and learn that he took some almond curd from the hands of a girl in the palace.

Tarvin demands to see the Maharajah and waits in the sunshine of the courtyard until he appears, somewhat the worse for opium, and tells him of his suspicions concerning Sitabhai and the hemp. The Maharajah is overcome with opium, rage, and King's Peg, so Tarvin departs, to be attacked by fighting ape which has got loose. He shoots it dead.

Tarvin relaxes in the rest-house where he is now alone; just after sunset Juggut Singh comes with horses and a message from Sitabhai, who desires to meet him. They ride towards the hills and meet her beside a tank. She unveils and they talk in English. She loves him, but the attempts at murder are all on her orders, as she fears his influence on the Maharajah. Tarvin is amazed at her wickedness; she knows what is in his mind concerning the Naulahka, which she wears under her sari, and suggests that he might remain as her Prime Minister when her son is Maharajah. He refuses, threatening to expose her if she does not stop her attempts on the Maharaj Kunwar and give him the Naulahka. In despair at the approaching dawn — it is death for her to be found outside the palace — she tries unsuccessfully to stab him as he mounts his horse. He kisses her, lashes her horse, and watches as she and her eunuch gallop off. He has the Naulahka, and now thinks of Kate.

Someone takes a shot at Tarvin — missing him — and then jams his rifle. Tarvin closes and covers Juggut Singh with his revolver, relieves him of the weapon, and escorts him to the palace. He then telegraphs Mrs. Mutrie and calls on Mrs. Estes to thank her for her hospitality and sees Kate. She will not marry him, but he cannot leave her as both their lives are now in danger. He returns to the rest-house, and she goes in to the Maharaj Kunwar, who is recovering from his illness. The Maharajah calls to see his son, who desires to go way to school. They decide to discuss this later and
the father departs. A messenger arrives with a basket of fruit for the boy—a present from the Queen—but his pet monkey, Moti, eats a banana and dies. Kate begins to yearn for the protection of Tarvin.

Kate feels that her work is, after all, with the women, but finds trouble at the hospital, where a priest is whipping up religious feeling against her treatment. The woman of the desert protects her, but her hospital is empty. The woman of the desert takes her to Estes’ house where a message from the Queen Mother desires her at the palace with the Maharaj Kunwar: they find the woman of the desert at the entrance, and she carries the boy in to his mother’s apartments.

Tarvin waits, his horse saddled; he will not go without Kate, but his house is surrounded by Sitabhai’s people. Fibby Winks is hamstrung and has to be shot. The Maharaj Kunwar arrives with his escort and his half-brother, Umr Singh—Sitabhai’s son—who rides before Tarvin on a borrowed horse; they go to the Missionary’s house and he prepares to return the Naulahka after a conversation with Kate. A note from Sitabhai is handed to him; he is requested to return her son and keep ‘the other thing’. They all go to her wing of the palace, Kate takes it in, and when she returns Tarvin drops the boy into the arms of the eunuch. He then sees the Maharajah, invites him to his wedding, and arranges to use up the remainder of the powder by blowing up the dam and returning the river to its old course. He sends another telegram home himself—the text is not given—marries Kate, and they leave Rhatore in a bullock cart.
References:


6. All the textual references are from Kipling’s *Kim*, ed by Morton Cohan, Bantam Classics, New York, (1983.
