

# Colonial Intrusion and Native Defense: Narrative Representation in Rudyard Kipling and R.K. Narayan

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## Abstract

The present paper seeks to examine colonial intrusion and its impact on the native Indians and the indigenous response in the works of Rudyard Kipling and R.K. Narayan. Colonial writer Rudyard Kipling's many works are based in Indian society but his works present Indians as primitive and in marginal spaces. He tries to justify colonialism by advocating colonial rule and he also aims to perpetuate his Eurocentric superiority. The European traders came to India, established their mercantile power and started ruling over India in all ways. Gradually, they demolished Indian knowledge system, replaced local languages with English, started exploitation of natural resources and abolished local enterprises for strengthening colonial rule. Britain became powerful and rich by snatching the power and freedom of colonies like India. On this trajectory, European represented natives as savage and inferior, so they could set up a discourse of their colonial mastery. In this respect, R.K.Narayan presents a clear picture of Indian society and narrates the actual circumstances in which local people were surviving without any exaggeration. It helps to present positive image of natives in literary world.

**Keywords:** Native, Eurocentric, Savage, Colonialism, Intrusion, Defense, Exploitation.

## Introduction

Ambitions, necessities and sometimes security reasons force someone to leave his/her native land for another settlement. In sixteenth or seventeenth century, such migration shows its another form to the world— colony. Ambition of ruling over the world and becoming the super power, to satisfy the European super-ego and justify their way of oppression, the Orientalists gave it an ideological meaning for the so-called betterment of the non-British world. Colonialism divided humanity. It divided humans, along the lines of colour, into two different races: Black and White. Black people were subject to colonization by the whites and the humanity of blacks was brought into question. Britain claimed to establish democracy in India, after two hundred years of colonial rule. The British had a planned agenda for bringing equality in native societies, and creating differences in the name of race. They also fuelled the caste-divide. In their own view, the British belonged to divinity and they were sent to civilize the natives of the East, for being the superior race. So they have right to change, disrupt or destroy anything that does not match their ideology and interests.

For the establishment of colonial rule it was quite imperative for the British to position themselves at a superior stance in terms of language, literature, culture, history and science, so that they could control the natives. It was not easy though. In India the British took control of administration, discourses and started manipulating, modifying or devastating local culture, tradition or belief systems, so they could anchor an animalistic image of Indians. Katherine Mayo in her book *Mother India* shows India as a country where animal sacrifices, child sexual assault and prostitution are normal. These types of works indirectly serve colonial purpose, as Jenni Ramone points out:

Such a book would have served a number of colonial purposes: by describing Indian society as primitive, superstitious and uncivilized, the assumption that colonization can provide enlightenment is upheld. At the same time, Indian

presented as an unruly, childlike society that requires the firm parental hand of the colonial administration. (*Postcolonial Theories* 43-44)

Rudyard Kipling, born in India and educated in UK, was a hardcore colonialist. In fact, he was an avowed discourse-maker for the British. In the story "Beyond the Pale" Kipling narrates: "Let the White go to the White and the Black to the Black" (Kipling 17). Kipling underpins the colonial way of racial discrimination. Inter-racial relationship between the Indian widow Bisesa and the English man Trejago suffer because, according to Kipling, they do not adhere to the rubrics of racism. Kipling's another story "The Man who would be King" is the finest example of British intrusion into the indigenous land. Two English men Daniel Dravot and Peachey Carnehan capture a land, named Kafiristan (symbolic of idol worshipping). In this story Kipling shows two different points of view towards violence. On one hand he condemns violence incurred by the native and on the other he justifies violence incurred by the colonizer. In Kafiristan, Dravot and Carnehan established their rule and began to mould the natives in colonial interest, so the natives can serve and obey them. They believe that they are trying to civilize the people of Kafiristan and on this line Kipling justifies colonial superiority not only in Kafiristan, but also all over the world. Dravot asserts that he wants to ". . . make Kafiristan a country where every man should eat in peace and drink in quiet, and specially obey us" (Kipling 241).

Colonial rule unsettled cultural roots of India by imposing English language and literature. Gauri Viswanathan writes: "British colonial administrators, provoked by missionaries on the one hand and fears of native insubordination on the other, discovered an ally in English literature to support them in maintaining control of the natives under the guise of a liberal education" (434). Language always remains an important factor in human development. This is the most effective way to destroy the civilization of any nation. Culture, tradition, literature, history all are irrevocably concerned with language. Language is not just a medium to communicate; this is the base of whole structure on which a civilization pivots on. Language and knowledge are inter-connected. Language cannot be isolated. With its foray into a foreign cultural space, a language brings its whole baggage culture, religion, narrative, life-style, ideology etc. with it. Ngugi wa Thiong O' writes in his *Decolonising the Mind* "Every language has its own social and cultural basis, and these are instrumental in the formation of mental process and value judgements" (99).

Colonial rule in India made Indians feel inferior, so some of them started migrating outside from India for their materialistic betterment. In his story "The Finest Story in the World", Kipling claims that Indians need to be civilized. Grish Chunder is a Bengali law student, "whose father had sent him to England to become civilised" (Kipling 278). This effects cultural domain of India and puts the question mark on a culturally rich civilization like India.

P.K.Nayar, in his book *Postcolonialism: A Guide for the Perplexed* writes:

Colonialism masked its exploitative structures under the guise of paternalistic benevolence, coding colonial domination as acts of generosity, reform, 'development', welfare and stability. Over a period of time, these 'codes' sedimented as beliefs among the natives who then began to see the colonial masters exactly as the masters wanted themselves to be seen: as gentle, firm, just and benevolent protectors. (35)

A handful of colonizers controlled the life of a million people and it is not a surprising fact is that in this cause they were supported by local people. The 'divide and rule' policy of the British worked in India. Though it was not new thing that the natives were divided into various groups, it had already been there for centuries, but before the British they were not in quite separate units. Natives have their own rituals, customs, traditions and their own belief-systems. It was not easy for a handful of the British to rule over all communities together. It became imperative for the British to divide natives into various groups. So natives indulged in their own issues and conflicts. By this the British became powerful and took advantage of differences. They knew that the unity of indigenous people was harmful for the British Empire. Colonialism not only affected culture, lives, economy, political situation and government structure but it also divided local people in the name of faith or caste. It resulted that India was divided into two different countries — India and Pakistan. Jenni Ramone writes: ". . . it must be conceded that Partition and Independence was part of a longer period of disharmony which included colonization" (69).

R.K.Narayan, being an Indian writer, shows his concern towards communal disharmony in his story "Another Community" by saying that "There is no such thing as your community or mine. We are all of this country" (Narayan 71). Narayan tries to bring Indian values and Indian sensibility into the literary canon. By this he tries to demolish the charade of native being primitive or savage. Sometimes knowledge kills innocence. Worldly knowledge, its way of living and struggle to fit in society and situations become worse when these cost natural behavior. Having desire of equality with the British under the illusion of white supremacy, natives keep struggling with their inner conflict and outer world. Frantz Fanon in his *Black Skin, White Mask* "I will quite simply try to make myself white: that is, I will compel the white man to acknowledge that I am human" (98). In colonial oppression, Indian felt uprooted from their fundamental values. R.K.Narayan tries to bring Indian values in light so people become familiar with their indigenous value-system and come out of the illusion of white supremacy. Narayan in his story "Like the Sun" narrates: "Truth, Sekhar reflected, is like the sun. I suppose no human being can ever look it straight in the face without blinking or being

dazed" (Narayan 73). He tries to portray the picture of Indian roots on his literary canvas. Truth is the essence of whole Indian value system. Narayan portrays truth as a luxury thing, that not everyone can afford it. In the story "Half a Rupee Worth", he advocates the concept of *aparigraha* (Bhagavad Gita. 6.10). From ancient times, for moral and sacred purposes the tradition of oral story-telling remained prominent. R.K.Narayan's "Under the Bunyan Tree" is the story of an enchanter Nambi, the story teller. Nambi has no material possession. He lives in village temple. In the story bunyan tree symbolizes Indian tradition. Under the aegis of this precedent, people of India live with mutual affection and harmony. Before beginning his story, Nambi meditates and asks 'Shakti' (the goddess) for support and blessings. It shows spiritual rooting of Indians. Though Nambi is illiterate but he has a great power of cultural imagination that reflects his penchant for story-telling. Narayan not only portrays Indian values and traditions in this story, but he also tries to portray an artist's stance when he has to face a writer's block. In the end of the story when Nambi is unable to construct a story, he humbly accepts it and says: "It is the Mother who gives the gifts; and it is she who takes away the gifts" (Narayan 191). Through this story, Narayan gives a glimpse of togetherness of the rural people of India as how villagers sit under tree and share their emotions. In this story Narayan describes not only tradition but, along with this, he also tries to show harmony between the villagers.

Kipling, as a champion of the British, always tries to justify colonialism. Ashis Nandy in his book *The Intimate Enemy* writes: "Kipling probably was the most creative builder of the political myths which a colonial power needs to sustain its self-esteem" (37). And Narayan reflects his rooting in the Indian ethos in his writings. He does not make a declaration what is wrong or right, he just presents situations that reflect dharma. Dharma here signifies not as a particular kind of religion, but it is a pattern of life for the whole humanity. Sudhir Kakar observes in *The Inner World*: "Dharma is not only the principle of individual action and social relations but also the ground plan of an ideal life cycle in the sense that it defines the tasks of different stage of life and the way each stage should be lived" (47).

#### **Aim of the Study**

This study seeks to analyze Rudyard Kipling and R.K.Narayan on the basis of their narrative representation. This study will also try to explore the issues of native exploitation, white supremacy, colonialism and racism.

#### **Conclusion**

The myth which is established by Kipling collapses as soon as it faces the strong sacred embodied in the writings of R.K. Narayan. The power of colonial discourse seems to be vitiated in the light

of Narayan's fiction. Narayan also presents the same problematic but he does not exaggerate the pains, nor does he criticize west. He writes from a nativist perspective. Nativism is "A term for the desire to return to indigenous practices and cultural forms as they existed in pre-colonial society" (Ashcroft 143). In Narayan's stories we find narrators who describe the native society realistically, but not like a judge or a political spokesperson.

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