



Research Paper

Guilt and Fear in Anglo-Indian Tales: A Psychoanalytic Study of Rudyard Kipling's 'The Story of Din Muhammad' and Alice Perrin's 'Chunia, Ayah'

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ABSTRACT: *The relationship between the East and the West, between the colonizers and the colonized, between we and they dichotomy, is a complicated discussion in Post-colonial studies. While the colonizers encountered the colonized subjects, they became instantly aware of two important things: that they have the opportunities to enjoy satisfaction less liberally than their subjects, and the other, that they failed to understand much of the sentiments of the subjects. Both of the above facts are psychologically linked with two apparently disconnected feelings: the desire to be like the other and fear of the other. That is why, I think, any kind of discussion about the East-West relation requires psychoanalytic tools to avail new kind of interpretation. In this paper, I take two texts written in the colonial period in India by two Anglo-Indian writers, and try to point out particularly how the feeling of guilt and fear in the colonizers is reflected in these texts.*

KEYWORDS: *Psychoanalysis, post-colonialism, guilt and fear, Alice Perrin.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The question why I stated in the title of my paper 'guilt and fear', and not fear and anxiety, is vital one here and first let me clear it out. There is a subtle objective difference between fear and anxiety in psychoanalytic theory. According to Freud, "anxiety is related to a state with no direct allusion to an object, while in fear the person's attention is precisely focussed on the object" (Mijolla, 563). In the colonial context, fear of the colonized Other is prominent in the colonizers' psyche, though the long-lasting fear led many colonizers to anxiety disorders and, as a result the British administration in India had to build up mental asylums like "the central asylum at Bhowanipur in Calcutta," or "European Mental Hospital in Ranchi" (Bandyopadhyay, 58). However, one thing is clear that the British in India encountered many mysterious and traumatic experiences while ruling the masses, and their writings confirm that they had focuses in those fearful experiences.

In my paper, I shall take up two important texts of the two contemporary Anglo-Indian writers—one is known, and the other is almost forgotten. By a comparative study of these texts, I will show how the feeling of guilt and fear plays an important role within the psychodynamics of the colonizers in context of the British-Indian relationship. For a better understanding of how the colonizers had to face intimidating situations, I am referring to Sullivan's observation: "The metaphor of empire as "family" was part of a colonial construct of British imperialism in India that saw Queen Victoria as "ma/baap" (Mother/Father), the native as untrained child, and the empire as drawing room—a refined and civilized space where appropriate rules of conduct would ensure permanent occupancy" (Narratives of Empire, 3). So, the colonizing Self was always in fear of both the permanency of the Empire and the mysteriously unknowable qualities of the land. In addition to that there grew a sense of guilt because they had to dominate or control, and thereby, perpetrate violence upon the colonized Other. So when one is inflicting violence on the object of desire, the Self must have to suffer from a sense of guilt.

The feeling of guilt and remorse is overtly expressed in 'The Story of Muhammad Din'. Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) originally published the story as 'Mahommed Din' in Civil and Military Gazette on 8 September, 1886 and, also reprinted it in the United Services College Chronicle. The story centres the death of a little boy, who is the son of Khitmutgar or butler Imam Din. Imam Din works as a sort of a servant in the narrator's house. One day, while Imam Din was cleaning a room, he found an old unused polo-ball, which he apologetically begged the narrator for his little son. Next day, when the narrator returned from office, earlier

than usual, he first met the boy, who was loitering stealthily in the dining room. But the sudden appearance of the Sahib startled the boy, who slipped off instantly. The thought process of the two subjects—the boy and the Sahib—is very different here: the narrator does take the matter easily and does not mind anything except a little curiosity in the child's behaviour; on the other hand, the little one and also the father were frightened that the Sahib might have taken the matter seriously and was angry on them. This thought in the little one would affect him later in the story in a terrible manner.

Within ten seconds the father, the story says, started sobbing despairingly and admonished the crime: "This boy", said Imam Din judicially, 'is a budmash—a big budmash. He will, without doubt, go to the jail-khana for his behaviour'" (Plain Tales, 223). But the narrator's sympathetic attitude to the boy, which is again another site of exposure of Kipling's self-reflexivity, made him more acquainted and familiar with the boy than ever before. After that, the narrator and the boy exchanged greetings regularly: "...Talaam, Tahib' from his side, and 'Salaam Muhammad Din' from mine" (223). This is how there grew a close relationship between them. The boy used to play in the narrator's garden within a small space. The accident that happened within that enclosed space into the garden can be seen as a microcosmic version of the colonial enterprise. I can't help quoting the description of the entire incident here:

One day I stumbled upon some of his handiwork far down the grounds. He had half buried the polo-ball in dust, and stuck six shrivelled old marigold flowers in a circle round it. Outside that circle again was a rude squire, traced out in bits of red brick alternating with fragments of broken china; the whole bounded by a little bank of dust....

Heaven knows that I had no intention of touching the child's work then or later; but, that evening, a stroll through the garden brought me unawares full on it; so that I trampled, before I knew, marigold heads, dust-bank, and fragments of broken soap-dish into confusion past all hope of mending (Plain Tales, 224).

The narrator unconsciously breaks apart the entire set up of the child's enclosed playing-house and its materials. The question arises here that why at all narrator, consciously or unconsciously, steps out to enter into the place or space where he is never naturally expected to. He leisurely walks over, which is absolutely a non-normative act, into a child's terrain. The grown up narrator's entering into the formed or deformed, acceptable or unacceptable terrain of a boy and breaking the small bits of creations can metaphorically be seen as a disavowal or denial of—on the part of the colonizer, letting any attempt of building safe-house for the colonized subject. In other words, the child representing the builder of a small "handiwork" symbolically like a house—metaphor of nation—appears as a threat to the colonizer. And his fatal desire to dominate the colonized Other unconsciously makes him perform the political duty of a powerful colonizer. As if the colonized subject is building his own rightful place within the colonial space, which is politically unacceptable. And the colonizer's immediate action is to disrupt any kind of anti-Imperial activities by the colonized. Hence, merely this type of post-colonial interpretation may cut the main thread of the story which will lead us to the narrator's deep sense of remorse.

In the story, then, the boy is falsely informed that the narrator's trampling over his small beautiful creations is the expression of the latter's anger on him; and the narrator, while returning from the office, is greeted as "Tallam Sahib" by the boy with a "tearful and apologetic face"(224). For a few months, after that, the boy kept him busy in creating another "magnificent palaces from stale flowers thrown away by the bearer, smooth water worn-pebbles, bits of broken glass, and feathers pulled". The narrator always kept his eyes on the child's activities and waited to see the new creation, but that "palace was never completed". Inquired by the narrator, one day, Imam Din informed that the little one is "suffering slightly from fever and needed quinine" (225). Few days later, the narrator stood awestricken to see "the Mussulman burying-ground" and Imam Din "carrying in his arms, wrapped in a white cloth, all that was left of little Muhammad Din". Somehow the narrator's sense of guilt and remorse, which also qualifies with Kipling's own, is revolved around the unresolved understanding between him and the boy. That the narrator never disapproves the boy's presence and, his activities remained unacknowledged by and unknown to the latter. This accelerates much pain in the narrator's mind while the latter died. The affectation of the narrator for the boy caused him much displeasure and painful remorse. Inger K. Brøgger in his paper at the Kent Conference in 2007 explores a different meaning to the story:

'The Story of Muhammad Din'(1886) epitomises the colonial experiences of the British. The story opens with a question 'Who is the happy man?' And the answer is immediately provided: 'He that sees, in his own house at home, little children crowned with dust, leaping and falling and crying'. But the narrator in 'The Story of Muhammad Din' is not very happy, he not really 'in his own house at home', for he is an Anglo-Indian, literally a hybrid and an invader in a foreign land, and the little child crowned with dust that is leaping, falling and crying is not his own child, but that of his native servant. Throughout the story the opening question hovers in the background and sets a tone of unease (Brøgger).

About Kipling's sympathy for the child in the story, Thomas Pinney in Kipling's India (1986) interprets that the story bears Kipling's message to the colonizers in India that they should take care of the servants, their

families and children in particular. The unhappiness as stated by BrØgger or remorseful guilt, in my opinion, comes out from the psychological attachment or closeness with someone we lose, and to say more precisely, when that someone becomes a part of one's own Self.

The sense of fear and guilt is more aggravated having connected with a sense of disgust and detestation. The colonial mission in some way or other practically destroys the natural course of living for the colonizers also. Psychologically, the people positioned in India had to suffer not less than the people they had been ruling. Much of the suffering was caused by fear. This kind of fear and surprise is epitomised through the story 'Chunia, Ayah' by Alice Perrin. The name Alice Perrin is almost new even to an expert researcher. Alice Perrin was not only the contemporary of Kipling but had large biographical affinities with the latter. She was born in India in 1867 and like Kipling, she was sent to England for further education. Alice was the daughter of John Innes Robinson, the Major General of the Bengal Cavalry, and Bertha Beidermann Robinson. In 1886, at the age of nineteen, Alice returned to India with her recently married husband Mr. Charles Perrin, who was by profession an engineer working in the India Public Works Department. Now, she had the similar opportunity to know India from the perspective of a young writer as it had been to Kipling. Alice published her first collection of stories *East of Suez* in 1901, and then on, she got to publish over seventeen complete novels like *The Spell of the Jungle* (1902), *The Anglo Indians* (1912), *The Happy Hunting Ground* (1914), *The Woman in the Bazaar* (1914), *Star of India* (1919), and *Other Sheep* (1932) was her last published novel. Still, in the academic as well among public space her writing remain little read and less discussed. Alice and her narratives are neglected not by her race only but also by many others.

Here, I shall show how closely Alice Perrin experiences the British-Indian encounter and how fear was a recurrent theme in her writing. 'Chunia, Ayah', published in her first short stories collection *East of Suez*, revolves around the experience of an unnamed speaker who unfolds the horrible incidents of her life to the narrator. The speaker, while visiting to a friend named Mary to look after the twenty months daughter Dot, met an ayah, whose name was Chunia. Her first encounter with the Indian ayah was awkwardly intimidating, "I remarked that the ayah looked bad-tempered" (Perrin, 165). Later in the story she said, "I am sure the ayah is a brute....I never saw anything so dreadful as the look she gave you just now" (166). One day, she had received a letter from her friend's husband that Dot was dead and the body could not be found anywhere, and she was requested to keep the ayah in her house as a faithful servant. The strange things started to happen since the day Chunia ayah came to the speaker's house. Everything seemed to be horribly dreadful and unbelievably mysterious to the speaker who saw and heard the most fearful thing in her life, "...Chunia kneeling in front of the outer door imploring somebody to 'go away' at the top of her voice" (169). With an utter bewilderment she found that in her dressing room she had sheltered an insane, who ruthlessly killed and had thrown away the little girl, because, she confessed, the girl's mother struck her with shoe, and "a devil entered into my heart" (170).

The speaker stated at the beginning of the story that she does not believe in ghostly matters. Then how could the speaker, apart from the insane Chunia, hear the shrilling cry of a child in her house? A kind of fearfulness had been registered in her psyche as soon as she encountered the ayah, and that resultantly led her to form in her mind a devilish attribution to the character of Chunia. When she was going to decide whether to keep Chunia in her house, she stated, "I forgot my old antipathy to her" (168), but from psychoanalytic point of view, her intimidation remained repressed in her unconscious mind, and would later be incited and aggravated as she came close to the ayah. The fear that the speaker already had is reinstalled when she had to live with the fearful Other. She had already framed her mind about the Indian ayah as the cruel subject—a dreadful Other and, thereby, having the opposite qualities of the Self. Alice Perrin had to victimize the ayah as the murderer of the lost child. Otherwise, the less responsive parents failing to look after their little daughter would be an insult on the part of the colonizers.

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