

The Light That Failed

by
Rudyard Kipling

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Chapter - III

The Light That Failed

Love, Art and War Novel

The Light that Failed is Kipling's first novel. It was written when he was twenty six years old, and is highly autobiographical in tone. As Thomas Pinney says, "... [*The Light that Failed*] is evidently drawn from Kipling's experiences at South Sea and with Florence Garrard."¹

Though it is not critically acclaimed, it is a novel that is of massive significance in Kipling canon according to critics because of the autobiographical overtones. Florence Garrard was another child boarder at the house of Desolation. Florence Garrard is portrayed, as well as the young Kipling could manage, as Maisie in *The Light that Failed*. She was pretty enough to despise almost every one if she chose. She was a year older than Rudyard Kipling, and despised him as a mere boy, until one day, suddenly, he seemed so much more.

Vasant Shahane rightly comments, "... revealing aspect of *The Light that Failed* is its close and intimate connection with certain events in Kipling's own life."² There is nothing detached about the incidents that stud the wide expanse, and the curiosity of the detail is never merely decorative.

In *The Light that Failed* Kipling veered horribly between the sickly sentiments of an overgrown calf-love, and its concomitant romanticising of the erotic in fantastic Egyptian brothels, and 'a sort of Negroid-Jewess-Cuban; with morals to match', whatever that may be supposed to mean. Part of the problem was that Kipling actually did fall in love with he was at school, and

then seven years' absence in India prevented him from outgrowing the attachment in a normal healthy way.

The theme of *The Light that Failed* is basically life's fulfilment, though it touches, on a subsidiary level, several strands such as love, art, blindness, war, and an activist's creed. In a perspective essay, "*The Light that Failed* as a War Novel," Eric Solomon has analyzed and interpreted its controlling cosmos. "Although not the subject" of the novel, he writes, "war becomes the controlling theme of *The Light that Failed*."³

It is true because many events in the novel are directly or indirectly concerned with war and it also becomes a connecting link between the theme of action and the theme of art. According to Gilbert Moore, "In [*The Light that Failed*] ... Kipling explores, through the central character of Dick Heldar, his perception of a fundamental imbalance in the foster-mother's creed."⁴

The Light that Failed, however, is not particularly condensed in utterance. It is allowed, or encouraged, to flow. In it, moreover, he has tried to find a version of the man-and-maid theme that will suit his range of tones.

However this is not the only reason for the importance of the novel. As the noted biographer of Kipling, Jade Adams says, "... though the novel is not popular with critics and is not a bestseller, it has remained in print since its first publication."⁵

For the purpose of this thesis, this novel is important because it foreshadows most of Kipling's philosophies and his ideologies and his notions regarding the native and the Empire.

However, it is hard to gather an image of India in this novel, as it is set completely in Britain. But before looking at that aspect, a look at the publication history of the novel will give a better understanding of the study.

David Richards, the noted Kipling scholar, describes the publishing history of *The Light that Failed* as far from straightforward. Over two years, four versions of the story appeared respectively: in twelve chapters with a happy ending; in fifteen chapters with a sad ending; in fourteen chapters with a sad ending; and in eleven chapters with a happy ending. It first appeared as a novelette telling a sombre love story, portraying scenes of war, but with a rather contrived happy ending. A little later it reappeared in a larger volume with an equally contrived but tragic finale. He probably implied that his original vision was tragic and that was implicit in the title.

The novel was already charting a recognizably autobiographical course—and Kipling at once thrust Florence straight into it. It is difficult to think of any other notable English novel, unless it is D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, which is so substantially created out of acutely painful experience actually being suffered by Kipling within the period of its composition.

As C.E. Carrington points out that: "A study of Kipling's earlier work reveals *The Light that Failed* as a pastiche of extracts from his notebooks, strung together with an autobiographical motive which, here and there, is emphasized so strongly that the actual reminiscences intrude upon the feigned story."⁶ Kipling confessed, in a letter to Mrs. Humphrey Ward, that he was not satisfied with the composition of his book. The strangest feature of the book is a strain of ill-nature that runs through it; the cargo includes some very angry notions, especially in those places where the book is mostly plainly autobiographically.

Several critics have already noted the points of resemblance between Dick Helder's and Maisie's childhood experiences and Kipling's own as recorded in *Something of Myself*, especially in respect to the "House of Desolation."

The Light that Failed has its close and intimate connection with certain events in Kipling's own life. Carrington has perceptively commented upon the similarities between Dick Helder's experiences and those of Punch in *Baa, Baa Black Sheep*. Both these experiences could be related to Kipling's own experience as recorded in *Something of Myself*. He writes of the House of Desolation. As Thomas Pinney says, "It was an establishment run with the full vigour of the Evangelical as revealed to the Woman. I had never heard of Hell, so I was introduced to it in all its terrors."⁷

There has been considerable debate as to exactly how the different versions of *The Light That Failed* came to be published. *The Light that Failed* set the critics a stiff problem almost from the start—and for a very odd reason. Publication of two versions of this novel made the critics a puzzle. But Kipling gave an authorisation with his signature to the longer and tragic version, following single sentence in the preface: 'This is the story of *The Light that Failed* as it was originally conceived by the writer.'

Andrew Lycett, however, is unequivocal on the matter, "Balestier ... suggested Rudyard should put out two versions of *The Light That Failed* - his original 'sad' story, which would be published in volume form by the United States Book Company (the latest incarnation of the financially troubled John Lovell company) in the United States, and Macmillan in London, and a shorter alternative, bringing Dick and Maisie happily together, which would be easier for him to syndicate."⁸

Acting on the suggestion of his future brother-in-law, Kipling decided to go ahead with the publication of two versions of the novel and thus reach different and varied readers and critics. The version with the 'happy ending' was published in 'Lippincott's Magazine' in January 1891. 'Lippincott's Magazine' carried literary criticism, general articles and original creative writing, and had a high reputation. It had a large circulation in Britain, the USA, and Australia. The other version – the original and longer 'sad' version was published by Macmillan in March 1891. It had the full fifteen chapters. This (fifteen-chapter) sad version was seen as the standard text by critics and publishing houses, and was used for reference in this thesis and according to Edward Shanks, "This is the story of *The Light That Failed* as it was originally conceived by the writer – Rudyard Kipling."⁹

The basis of *The Light that Failed* is personal. A great deal that befalls Dick Helder in the earlier part of the book can be matched in *Something of Myself*. It does not match exactly, partly because Kipling, like Browning, has chosen to write in the terms of another art, not his own, and partly because, proceeding from his own experience, he has imagined alterations of important circumstances.

As Vasant Shahane says, "In my view, Kipling is endeavoring to express in *The Light that Failed* an inwardly realized experience and the facets of that experience – love between man and woman, love between man and man, love of art, love of action and war – are central to Kipling's creative Cosmos."¹⁰

The handling of some of scenes in *The Light that Failed* has a lack of emotional reserve that brings up the question of Kipling's sentimentality. This question will not be debated here, for it cannot be discussed profitably out of its

historical, social and linguistic context. The emotion in *The Light that Failed* is heady but it is not factitious; it is genuinely a part of the subject.

As Tompkins says, “*The Light that Failed* is an emphatic work. Image, assertion, eloquence and irony are all means, direct or indirect in action, of raising the content to its highest emotional and imaginative power.”¹¹

It sets out, in the first place, to tell the story of two human beings over a considerable period of time.

The story revolves around Dick Helder. Dick is an autobiographical character, in the way *David Copperfield* is an autobiographical portrait of Charles Dickens. The main theme of the novel is the unrequited love of Dick for his childhood friend Maisie. Maisie is also based on a real woman that Kipling was in love with at one time in his life – Florence Garrard.

Dick and Maisie become friends as children, when they are as boarders in a seaside town in England, under the care of the cruel Mrs. Jennett, since their parents are in India. Mrs. Jennett is a highly puritanical woman and extremely overbearing and unkind in attitude. Dick and Maisie often confront with this cruel woman and go to the beach to shoot with cheap revolver. For the girl is no longer a sister; for the purposes of romantic development later, she is just a girl. The cartridges are for a revolver which Dick—again rather improbably—has been allowed to buy for seven shillings and six pence. The revolver is there so that Maisie, firing it inexpertly, can nearly blind Dick. It is all that really happens in this brief glimpse of Dick Helder’s childhood.

The revolver thus becomes a symbol of their challenge, their growing age, and approaching adulthood. It foreshadows the theme of violence and cruelty connected with the future war. The girl Maisie asks Dick to become an artist. Dick answers Maisie, “I’ll be an artist and I’ll do things.” (P.13) Their

confrontation with Mrs. Jennett is effectively portrayed since she became furious and prophesied an immediate judgement of Providence.

At one point of time, the childhood friendship of Dick and Maisie leads to love. They vow love for each other. For Dick this is the ultimate love of his life. Maisie, who is quite younger than Dick, does not put too much importance to this love, though she too vows unflinching allegiance to him. However they are soon separated due to circumstances. Dick begins to draw sketches of war on his canvases. Then he becomes a war correspondent and at the same time he becomes a successful artist through his war time illustrations. He paints pictures of the Sudan campaign for London newspapers.

In Sudan, Dick follows his co-worker Gilbert Torpenhow and befriends him. Torpenhow is the correspondent of the Central Southern Syndicate. Torpenhow sees Dick's pictures gaining popularity and publicity, and due to this the friendship becomes stronger. Torpenhow tells Dick, "You'd better stick to me You must justify your choice."(pp.21-2) But Dick is found in a state of delirium calling for Maisie, after watching a battle on the Nile. 'Behold a phenomenon,' said Torpenhow ... 'Here is a man, presumably human, who mentions the name of one woman only. And I've seen a good deal of delirium, too.'(P.29). In the battle field at Nile, due to the state of delirium, Dick is wounded in the forehead.

Dick returns to London and secures his hundred and forty seven sketches taken by the Head of the Central Southern Syndicate and put them in the exhibition. As an artist, Dick begins to achieve fame in London's art world. In London, he meets Maisie unexpectedly, who was then a grown-up woman. He falls in love with her all over again. However she does not share his passion. She has artistic ambitions, and feels that love will hinder her career. Maisie's companion, a red-haired girl at Maisie's apartment, her roommate,

who is not named in the novel and who announced that she would make a study of Dick's mind is attracted to Dick, and is jealous of the manner in which Dick coaches Maisie and gives painting lessons.

Maisie, however, hardly improves under Dick's coaching. It is due to her inability to paint. Kipling suggests that she does not have the basic artistic insight. But Maisie does not realize that she is not an artist and would never be one. Dick is frustrated at the manner in which his courtship is progressing, but feels that Maisie would fall in love with him sooner than later, if he carries on coaching her and meeting her. At one time Dick talks of his love for Maisie, but she is unresponsive and also neglecting Dick's suggestion about line-work and playing with the absurd notion for a "fancy head."

Both of them start working on their own versions of 'Melancholia' – the symbolic figure in James Thompson's poem 'The City of Dreadful Night'. Their competitiveness creates a rift between them. Dick is the superior artist, and feels that he would do a better job than Maisie. Maisie and the red-haired girl plan to go to Paris to work with the idea of the head of the Melancholia. Dick, though sceptical of their ability, sees them off at Dover.

Meanwhile, Dick finds a woman Bessie to whom Torpenhow gave shelter. He considers her a fit model for Melancholia and hires her as a model. She soon proclaims her love for Torpenhow; though Kipling is quick to imply that she does not love him, and only wants to use him to gain a better life. Dick realizes this, and warns Torpenhow of the danger of getting involved with a woman like Bessie, and sends him away. Bessie learns of this, and hates Dick, and is waiting for the time to take revenge against him.

Meanwhile he becomes blind due to the delayed effect of a wound that he got during the war in Sudan. His blindness is caused by the wound inflicted in the war. Dick Helder begins to draw sketches of war on his canvases. And

the atmosphere in the novel is dominated by war. Whether war comes in as an idea, or as an ugly, tangible reality it is obvious that war is one of the principal themes. It is necessary to present a brief outline of the narrative content of *The Light that Failed* as a preparatory ground for critical analysis.

Dick, with failing eyesight consults an oculist, whose diagnosis is not optimistic. Dick continues to paint the *Melancholia*; his best picture. Dick was addicted to drink but still was keen on his great picture. However Dick soon finishes off his painting. He feels that it is his masterpiece. Bessie, who is revengeful and waiting for time as Dick had interfered with her romance with Torpenhow, destroys Dick's masterpiece of painting 'Melancholia'.

In Kipling's creative cosmos activism operates as a dynamic source of inspiration. In *The Light that Failed*, the frustrated hero, Dick Heldar turns to war and a life of ceaseless activity as an escape from his gnawing sense of failure. His passion for Maisie becomes an instrument of destruction when he realizes that she is merely interested in her own career and not in sharing the joys and sorrows of his life. The light is failing as Dick is mysteriously becoming blind and he forces the doors of his isolated life open onto vast colonnades of heroic action. Maisie is shocked to hear of Dick's horrible misfortune and she too leaves Dick as he is of no use to her any longer, and cannot coach her. Dick realizes that his masterpiece has been destroyed by Bess at the end of the novel, and feels shattered.

The incidents mentioned above make Dick very frustrated mentally, fails to control himself and is addicted to drink at last. As Bonamy Dobree says, "Most important, perhaps, was the conviction that what matters about man is not what he feels, but what he does. Action is remedy for unhappiness".¹²

In a bid to make life meaningful, he proceeds to field of war, only to meet with death in Egypt. Dick knows that one must do things and chart out life on a more purposive and activists path, but final solution eludes him as much as it eluded Kipling himself.

Finally Dick decides to commit suicide in a heroic manner, by venturing into the battlefield in Sudan. He is struck by a stray bullet, and dies in Torpenhow's arms. As Vasant Shahane says, "Even in the end, Dick courting his death in the desert, is too sentimental and contrived to achieve the dimension a tragic finale."¹³

Kipling's belief in the cardinal principle of activism sometimes finds expression in modes purely empirical. A life of action must necessarily pass through processes of trial and error. Kipling's emphasis on experience, and the empirical element involved in it, is therefore part of his credo. In actual life this doctrine of experience must be lived from day to day and, therefore, in Kipling's view the day's work assumes significance. The value of the day's work is thus in part activist, and in part empirical, thereby forging integrity of his vision of life.

However as Vasant Shahane says: "*The Light That Failed*: thus demonstrates a phase of Kipling's art and life – his transformation from the activist into the artist."¹⁴ Kipling in endeavouring to give political expression to his activist beliefs forges a link between human work and divine blessings. In Kipling's view the concept of the craftsman's work thus assumes a god-like proportion because even the most commonplace work of man is inspired by the divine design.

The purposive application of energy to the enrichment of man's life and civilization is an essential element in Kipling's world view. The capacity for fruitful application of energy is a great quality of Western man and in Kipling's

view the genius of the Anglo-Saxon race is expressed in it. Kipling therefore instinctively praises the work and qualities of persons who fill the ranks of the army and the civil service in India.

Though it is not critically acclaimed, it is a novel of massive significance in Kipling canon according to critics because of the autobiographical overtones. Vasant Shahane in his comment praises, "*The Light that Failed* (1890) is one of the most enigmatic creations of Kipling's art."¹⁵ But it has not enjoyed the popularity of the best-known fiction of its own time, and critical reception has ranged from indifference to hostility. Nevertheless it contains some of Kipling's finest descriptive and narrative writing, and earns its rightful place in the Kipling canon.

One of the novel's main faults, according to J.M.S. Tompkins, is Kipling's artistic inability to always distance himself from his material. But she is moved to comment that: "The writing never runs to waste, but it is explicit and fully expressive. Scenes and feelings are worked out, and people declaim and debate their opinions. Nothing is hinted or bitten back; it is a style of full statement."¹⁶

The novel has variously been described as sentimental, unstructured, melodramatic, chauvinistic, and implausible. Thomas Pinney rightly edited Kipling's own comment in his autobiography, *something of myself* that: "... it was ... not a built book."¹⁷ Relatively mild reproofs are included by some critics like Professor Carrington's that it is not a good book, and not the best of Kipling. However it has fine things in it, and good things, and readable things which make Kipling a successful novelist.

The critics accused the young author of using over violent language and of treating a controversial theme with excessive frankness. J.M.S. Tompkins, one of the major critics of Kipling's works, states that 'any artist "cannot cope

with all he knows”, and that Dick’s character is “blurred in consequence”; partly as a result of Kipling’s extremes of “exaltation or chastisement” in the presentation of Dick, and because there is “less involvement in the character of Maisie.”¹⁸

Against this critical debunking there are some spirited defences. Charles Carrington defends Kipling against all attacks of ‘imperialistic trends’ and suggests that the main theme of Kipling’s fiction is “seldom caste, class or imperialism seen from a single prejudice, but moral issues.”¹⁹

Thus it is seen that this novel has never enjoyed critical acclaim.

When one looks at how the novel represents India, one is struck by the fact that the amount of information regarding to India is next to nil. The novel is not set in India, and India hardly figures in the novel. However, there are some oblique references to India. These references give an idea of what Kipling felt about India.

Similarly there are other references to colonialism and imperialism, though not in India, which speak volumes about his stance on these aspects. Kipling speaks about Sudan and other countries, and Arabs and other Asians, and what he says with reference to these give a more than a good idea of where he stood with regard to colonialism.

At the same time, it is to be remembered that it was one of his early works of fiction, be it in whatever form, and his notions with respect to India show that he still was under the influence of the manner in which India was looked in a stereotypical manner by early English writers. A few examples of the way India is depicted or referred to in an oblique manner in the novel, would bring this out.

A quotation seen quite early in the novel, when Dick tells his friend, about public's expectation and how one should respond to, shows the way the British thought of India and Indians: "And yet, you know, if you try to give these people the thing as God gave it, keyed down to their comprehension and according to the powers He has given you----" (P. 47).

Though Dick is, in fact, speaking about artists and the paying public, he could as well have been speaking about the colonizer and the colonized. What he says brings out the Caliban-Prospero relationship to the fore. One of the earliest stereotypical ways of looking at the relationship between the British colonizer and the native Indian was to look at the colonized as an ungrateful brute, a veritable Caliban.

Another feeling of the European colonizer with regard to India and the colonies is brought out through a conversation between Dick and Maisie. Later on in the novel Dick, while explaining to Maisie what he had seen abroad, gives a good idea of the manner in which India, and for that matter all colonies, are looked at by the European colonizer. For them it is a land of opportunity. It is morally decrepit, and a world of magic. In fact, one might even go as far as to say that the land is straight out of Arabian Nights. This is of course not surprising when one remembers that the Arabian Nights is translated by a European of the same period – Richard Burton.

"There are forty dead kings there, Maisie, each in a gorgeous tomb finer than all the others. You look at the palaces and streets and shops and tanks, and think that men must live there, till you find a wee gray squirrel rubbing its nose all alone in the market-place, and a jewelled peacock struts out of a carved doorway and spreads its tail against a marble screen as fine pierced as point-lace. Then a mofkey- a little black monkey - walks through the main square to get a drink from a tank forty feet deep. He slides down the creepers to the

water's edge, and a friend holds him by the tail, in case he should fall in.”
(P.104)

This depiction of the land as something magical wipes away their feeling of guilt, as they (the European colonizer) feel that the country that they are looting cannot afford to be looted and exploited. Further it also distances them from the natives, the people, and in a weird manner makes the native as someone who is not an individual like the British public, and which in turn leads to the conclusion, albeit misplaced, that they are not affected or troubled or even irked by the exploitation.

This depiction also brings out the ignorance of the European. This ignorance is brought out clearly in the following quote too, though here Kipling is not even speaking about superstitions or something magical. “It’s very pretty, specially the lettering on the sack. G.B.T.—Government Bullock Train. That’s a sack from India. It’s my initials, —Gilbert Belling Torpenhow. I stole the cloth on purpose.” (P. 23)

This conversation between Dick and his friend shows the ignorance under which most of the European colonizers laboured. Kipling, in the novel, clearly brings out that Dick is an average Englishman. By depicting Dick as an average British, who could be a typical boy-next-door, and making him utter such seriously ignorant stuff Kipling conveys that this is the manner in which the normal British thought. The English colonizer thought of India as a land of bullocks, and trains of bullocks at that!

This kind of description amuses and irritates in equal measure, when one looks at it from a post-colonial perspective. However, what is to be remembered is that Kipling was writing at a time when colonizing was not seen as a crime as it is seen now. He did not realize the amount of heartburn a couple of jocular statements can give to later readers.

But more significantly what the quotation reveals is the kind of image India had amongst the Europeans and Englishmen in particular. For one thing, colonization was looked at as a part and parcel of life. There is not even a trace of remorse or accusation in what Dick says, and this kind of simple-minded talk about exploitation and colonization reveals more about the way in which they perceived India, than a long winded statement that most politicians are apt to give.

Kipling's statement about one of the characters, Nilghai, later on in the novel, reveals a similar ignorance and fascination of the colonized land. He feels that it is a land of magic, and this is brought out clearly in the following quotation:

“...his marriages with many African princesses, his shameless betrayal, for Arab wives, of an army corps to the Mahdi, his tattooement by skilled operators in Burmah, his interview (and his fears) with the yellow headsman in the blood-stained execution-ground of Canton, and finally, the passings of his spirit into the bodies of whales, elephants, and toucans.”(P. 128).

But there is a change of attitude on the part of Kipling; or rather a different sentiment is voiced in other parts of the novel. Kipling also brings out in the novel, how the European cannot take the colonized Indian for granted. He seems to imply that colonization is a duty and responsibility. He feels that the Indian and India cannot be taken for granted.

Although Kipling does not say so in as many words; a little tweaking of the manner in which he speaks about one's duty and service and profession makes one realize that he had a similar notion with regard to colonization. Kipling is probably looking at colonization as a profession, and the government that is run by the British in India as a duty. Keeping that in mind if one looks at

the following quote, the dichotomy in Kipling's perspective of India becomes obvious.

"You are an idiot, because no man born of woman is strong enough to take liberties with his public, even though they are - which they ain't - all you say they are. But they don't know any better" (P. 50).

Dick and his friend have a conversation with respect to Art, but it could again as well have been colonization. The suggestion here, that is put across not so mildly, is that the colonizer cannot take the colonized for granted. This shows how perspicuous Kipling is. He was able to foretell how the British are finally made to give up the colonies. However, it might be that he was just drawing from history; as the 1857 Revolt had already taken place.

Kipling's view of India is brought out even more clearly a few pages later on in the novel, when the conversation that is eluded to earlier reaches its logical and inevitable conclusion: "Pigs aren't the British public; credit on the high seas isn't credit here; and self-respect is self-respect the world over." (P. 53)

Torpenhow tells Dick that self respect is the same everywhere. And by this he is referring to the fact that the colonized and the colonizer both are human and hence have feelings.

Kipling further shows a keen understanding of the way India is seen by the British in those days, when he refers to how being lionised in a colony is not necessarily a virtue. Yes, India is a land of opportunity to the colonizer – to prove him, and to make a name for him. However, India is still a colonized nation. And in that sense it is a lesser country. If someone is popular in a colony it does not naturally follow that they will be looked up to when they

return to Britain. This shows the image of India that the British public had in those days: India was an inferior country.

But Kipling still feels that the European should take pride in and responsibility for his work. Even colonization can be a respectful profession, if the colonizer gives it adequate respect. Kipling feels it is the duty to look up at something that pays for daily bread. This is a typical Victorian notion: Work is divine. This is reflected in the dialogue that one of his characters is made to speak:

"For work done without conviction, for power wasted on trivialities, for labour expended with levity for the deliberate purpose of winning the easy applause of a fashion-driven public----" (P. 59).

This sentiment is voiced yet again, a few pages later on in the novel: "...If we make light of our work by using it for our own ends, our work will make light of us, and, as we're the weaker, we shall suffer" (P. 102). Kipling also seems to criticize the manner in which the British set about colonizing. He also feels that there is a need for change and scope for improvement in the manner in which the British public looked at colonization. He feels that there is an inordinate desire for bloodbaths, which shows that the British public thought of colonization as something akin to hunting.

This implies that the Indians are like wild beasts that have to be hunted, and killed or tamed. The following quote where he speaks about the manner in which the British public compartment for blood is enlightening to say the least: "you're sent out when a war begins, to minister to the blind, brutal, British public's bestial thirst for blood." (P. 60).

His criticism does not stop there. He goes on to complain against the manner in which the British public try to get success. His criticism prolongs as

according to Thomas Pinney. "My theory is that a germ lay dormant till my change of life to London (though that is not Paris) woke it up, and that *The Light that Failed* was a sort of inverted, metaglobalised phantasmagoria based on manon."²⁰ Kipling goes on to criticize the manner in which colonization is looked at as an opportunity by youngsters desiring to make a name for them in the world. Though Kipling is assumedly speaking about Art, keeping in mind his humanitarian outlook, one cannot help but wonder if he is using Art as a basis and a mask to voice his sentiments regarding the Empire.

"And I know by what you have just said that you're on the wrong road to success. It isn't got at by sacrificing other people,--I've had that much knocked into me; you must sacrifice yourself, and live under orders, and never think for yourself, and never have real satisfaction in your work except just at the beginning, when you're reaching out after a notion." (P.109)

His comment on how success is achieved not by sacrificing others seems to be extremely poignant. However, as pointed out earlier, this is an early novel. And Kipling is yet to come to terms with his own disturbed notions of the Empire. He was confused, and this comes out clearly when he keeps contradicting himself with regard to his notions on the Empire, and his image of India – his 'motherland' and his 'home'.

Even after denouncing the manner in which sacrifice of the natives gives success to the colonizer, Kipling can say that: "Our business--the business for which we draw our money -- is to do absurd and impossible things,--generally with no reason whatever except to amuse the public. Here we have a reason. The rest doesn't matter." (P. 201)

To Kipling's credit he sees that what the colonizers are doing is absurd as well as impossible. He further feels that colonization is something that is done to amuse the general public. As pointed out earlier, this novel is not set in

India, and does not describe India in a direct manner. However, it contains some of the notions that Kipling had regarding India. They are depicted in a befitting manner.

Most of the references to India are through oblique references. But these references tell plenty about Kipling's leanings. He was not against colonization *per se*. But he felt that there should be more accountability amongst the colonizers. He also feels that the Indians are individuals and hence deserve to be respected as humans. This sentiment is probably a result of being born and his stay in India for a few years in his childhood.

His later novels work on this sentiment, and bring out how he strives for more understanding and coordination between the British and the Indian, and how he demands more for more responsibility on the part of the colonizer. Martin Green is quite right, when he points out in his *Doom of Empire* that: "*The Light That Failed* does not expound Kipling's imperialist aesthetic with any systematic clarity, but it comes closer to doing so than anything else he wrote."²¹

The handling of some of the scenes in *The Light that Failed* has a lack of emotional reserve that brings up the question of Kipling's sentimentality. At times it seems to cover all modes of treatment that are not strictly *objective*, so that it might be applied to the whole tradition of English fiction, except for a few recent practitioners. At the other extreme, it indicates those emotions, or that degree of them, with which the speaker is most reluctant to be assailed.

Eric Solomon in his perceptive essay 'English Fiction in Transition' writes, "*The Light That Failed* is a war novel". He analyzes and interprets its controlling cosmos. "Although not the subject" of a novel, he writes, "War becomes the controlling theme of *The Light That Failed*."²²

The emotion in *The Light that Failed* is heady but it is not factitious; it is genuinely a part of the subject. The friendship of the men, the craving of the lover, the passion of the artist, the pathos of his blindness—these are not slipshod conventions.

The summary of events, however sketchy, is intended to convey the complex nature of the novel's structure and its multiple themes. The structure, as described by Thomas R. Henn, is "episodic and bad, but interesting novel and that it has a negative importance."²³ It is full of violence mollified by love. All characters in this novel are successfully realised. Compared with Dick, Maisie is a deceitful and unfruitful lover; a lifeless and artificial figure. It is one of the most puzzled creations of Kipling's art.

In the view of Vasant Shahane, "Kipling is endeavouring to express in *The Light That Failed* an inwardly realized experience and the facets of that experience—love between man and woman, love between man and man, love art, love of action and war—are central to Kipling's creative cosmos."²⁴

Finally it is to be said that the novel *The Light That Failed* is basically life's fulfilment, though it touches, on a subsidiary level, several strands such as love, art, blindness, war and activistic creed.

But, apart altogether from this matter of the ending of it, *The Light That Failed* shows Kipling as a novelist who is not on the same plane as the writer of short stories.

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