**Analyzing the Themes of Lies, and Guns in the Poem The White Man’s Burden**

[Name of the Writer]

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**Theme Analysis of Lies, and Guns in the Poem “The White Man’s Burden”**

The Poem, “The White Man’s Burden” was written by the American Writer Rudyard Kipling during 1899. It was written during the aftermath of the Spanish-American war. The poem has a subtitle namely "The United States and the Philippine Islands". The poet is trying to persuade the Americans to take the responsibility of the non-white and to put an end the famine, and disease, even though natives may dislike it, and may be that many of the country fellows also disagree with this idea still they should carry the burden and should reach out to the people there. The poet is supporting the concept of new imperialism. He is of the view that it is alright that the people will hate them and will judge them. Don’t give up because they don’t know the favor white men are going to do to them. The Poet is British born and in the back of his mind, there is a concept that the white people are superior to the non-whites, and the idea of new imperialism in line with this. As the concept of imperialism and white supremacy is running through the poem, the themes of Power, money, and lies are embodied and are talked about in the poem. Kipling is giving a kind of advice to the Americans to use their power, to resolve the issues of the non-whites that are needy and to refrain from the lies. However, the approach is not sincere because he totally excluded the evils that are attached to imperialism. The poet is considered to be the white supremacist and the imperialist poet. The main theme of the poem is that the nonwhites should be taken full control of them by the Whites. It specifically refers to white Americans. The poet is asking them clearly to exert the full force to take hold of the country, whether the people there like it or not. The readers are deceived about the abuse of power by the colonizers through this poem, and the image of the colonizers is altered.

The world today is not in support of the imperialism. Imperialism is the policy of extending the rule or the authority of one nation to the foreign nations. There is a huge difference between what is said and what is done. Colonialism barely ever abuses the entire country. It contents itself with bringing to light the natural resources, which it mines, and trades to meet the needs of the mother country's industries[[1]](#footnote-1).

The poet apparently is saying to take the responsibility of the nonwhites however this Approach is considered to be the justification for the wicked agenda of imperialism. Whether or not it was out of goodwill, the fact is that the theme of power and its acknowledgment is prevalent throughout the poem. By using expressions such as “savages” for the locals clearly depicts the real agenda of the poem. Even in the title he intentionally used the term such as “Burden” and the starting letter of the words “White Men” are intentionally kept capital. This all indicates that at the back of the mind of the poet there is a thing that the white race is superior to the other races and that the other races needed to be "introduced" to the civilization of the west. The use of the term “savage” for the nonwhites manifests that Kipling considered them as lowly and rough. The poem is idealizing the false ideology. It displays the white men as the adults and mature ones, while the non-whites are referred to as the sullen, childlike, and thankless people. When the US defeated Spain in the Spanish-American war, the Philippines was the state that the US “inherited” from Spain. The state had been under the control of Spain for 33 years. Kipling inspired by the British imperialism invoked the Americans to take full control of the Philippines and build an empire similar to the one that was created by Britain. He tells them that the task is not going to be so easy however they have to carry the “Burden” and they have to “civilize” them. Both the countries Spain and America and the like-minded of Kipling had this opinion that introducing the western civilization was a good thing and that's why they always defended the ill agenda of the imperialism. The idea is all about the exertion of power and force that they had. They want to exert that force to draw benefits from the other nations. Kipling, however, produced the idea rather naively that the burden if the civilization was on the white nation and that they were supposed to carry that. It is, however, a philosophical manipulation and the justification for exercising political control over an independent region and abusing the occupied land for the imperialist country's financial profits.

Even if we say that many of the people in the former colonies agree that the British imperials provide a better political system and better infrastructure than their own leaders could provide, the idea of colonizing the other nations is still wrong. Europe has regarded the public of Africa through the falsifying veil of discrimination and ethic philosophy. The worst thing that colonialism did was to cloud our view of our past[[2]](#footnote-2)

At the back of creating an empire or colony in the other nation is the notion that some are superior to the others and the ones that “need” to be colonized are not civilized and cannot help themselves. The approach to judge people based on their looks and color is implied by the poet here.

Unquestionably, the use of the expression “White Man” is the lightning rod that triggers the opinion that Kipling's views were that of a colonist having at its essential principles of Community Darwinism. According to Kretchner, the theory of Social Darwinism signifies that “natural order compels influential, cultured countries to correct the limited resources of the weak.”

Though Kipling is trying to convey the concept that colonialism is the task assigned from God and is the religious duty of the whites to carry the Burden of the non-whites, however, the facts are not so charming and alluring. The reality is harsh and is totally the opposite of what is being said and what is done. The history is evident that the colonized nations were always exploited and the colonizers took the benefits from the nation. In this scenario, the statement of someone that taking over a country by the use of force and carrying their "Burden" as a holy task, sounds a bit silly and rather foolish. Further, in the poem, Kipling says that the "send forth the best ye breed” has very robust racial implications. At that time the Blacks were not given the equal status as the whites in America so the remark is surely about the “Whites” specifically. Calling white men as the “best of ye breed” is explicitly racial, and it clears all the doubts about Kipling being racist. He says in the poem that the nation needs to be civilized, but for that purpose, they should send only the whites. Why is this so that the people living in the same country are civilized and uncivilized base on their skin color? The theme of power can be traced in such statements. The power and the influence that the whites had and used to colonize the other nations. Britain exerted the force and colonized India and Africa, similarly, the Americas are urged to use the force and make their colonies in the regions that they “inherited” by the poet.

Kipling’s use of phrases such as “To veil the threat of terror / And check the show of pride.” proclaims that the Domain needs to do what is essential to eradicate resistance and to pacify rebellions against Imperialism. Not only should the Empire quiet the opinions of the detainees, but she must also limit or eliminate any symbols of conceit that they might muster. The poet is urging the Americans to exert the force and their power to take the full command and even take all the pride of the locals. Furthermore, Kipling’s portrayal of the people as “On fluttered folk and wild / New caught- sullen peoples, / Half-devil and half-child.” may be easily interpreted as cognitively patronizing. He calls them as "Wild” and “sullen” people that are “Half devil/ Half child” without a doubt puts the point that he clearly not thinks of them as equal to whites. It can be concluded that Kipling supports that the Empire is superior and therefore has the duty to bring civility to the uncivilized.

The undercurrent theme of power is prevalent throughout the poem. The choice of the vocabulary by the poet and the way he characterizes the people manifests the true meaning of the poem. The pro-colonial approach is dominant.

The other dominating theme in the poem is of pretentions, lies, and deceptions. The European colonists manipulated their words and the contradiction between their words and actions was huge. They spoke about the prosperity if the natives and that they were there to serve them however the reality was drastically different from this. They transgressed in the use of their power and abused the rights of the natives. The same is the case everywhere where there is colonialism. The poet Kipling is the Child born in a British family that was living in British India and the regal treatment that he got there, left an impression on his personality and that is reflected in his writings. Through the use of his poetry specifically this poem, he uses the philosophical ideas to give s justification for the transgressions that were made by the British in their colonies. The lies and the deceit of the colonists is crystal clear to everyone, and the poem seems to be an attempt to cover the policies of the white and to manipulate the things in a totally different way. The title uses the word "Burden" for the white people, here the fact that is manipulated is that the actual people who need to sympathize are the Whites as they are the ones that are sacrificing their time and lives to carry the “burden” of the non-whites and are also showing them the light of "Western Culture" that will take them out of their "savage". So, the image is totally altered to evoke the desired results, because the whites actually got benefits from the locals and not only this but also exploited them socially, and economically. A poet has a responsibility upon his shoulders because he has a community that follows his writings and the thoughts of the poet have a lasting impact on it. The poet should convey the facts and should not create the altered image for the sake of some political agenda behind it. The Poem that is under discussion is an attempt to clear the image of the colonists, by creating the feelings of sympathy among the readers for whites.

The pretentions of colonialists are crystal clear in front of the world now. They deceived the natives of the colonies, and to grow the economy of their own country they shattered the economy of the colonies. The British colonizers did the same to the locals, of the colonies and they exploited them. The poet is trying to put up the case of the colonizers in front of the people. He came up with many things and tried to persuade the readers, and the world that the colony is not a bad thing as the common perception is. He called it a religious duty of the white people to go andante colonies in the non-white and uncivilized nations. He is using the religion to incite the feelings of the audience that the task is going to be really scared and golly. It makes it look like the task of making a colony in the other nations is a really spiritual and virtuous deed. This manipulation of religion for political gains is absolutely crooked. The manipulation of words and the twisting of the facts is common in this world but to use religion for the gains of personal or political benefits is a really ignoble thing. The poet here did the same by inciting the religious feelings of the people by involving religion with this matter. The people usually believe blindly whatever is said in the name of religion. The political matters frequently get manipulated by the politicians and the scholars by using the religion, for the personal gains.

Kipling's efforts to present the positive image of the audience to the general public continues throughout the poem. He comes up with many other things like he says that the “famine” should be brought to an end by the colonizers. The irony is that the colonizers destroy the economy of the country where they settle and make their colony, as they suck the resources from there and leave the people there devastated and hopeless. The same happened in the British colonies of India and Africa. This leftist explanation of words like colonialism and imperialism alters them into ideologically loaded expressions that eventually twist the disastrous facts of the past. However, the reality is, that the travels of peoples in pursuit of resources, as well as the annihilation of those previously in ownership of them, is the perpetual dynamic of history. Human account has been blemished by man’s incessant use of ruthless fierceness to obtain land and resources and abolish or interchange those possessing them. Still, there have always been people like Kipling that defended the evils of the colonialism, and imperialism, by giving justifications for them. The wordplay and psychological play are used to alter human feelings. Here in the poem, the poet is asking the Americans to go there to put an end to "famine", and the “sickness”, and just serve them. In return, the people there will scold you and will never appreciate you for the good you would have done for them, but you should not get affected by that and should continue to serve them. He asks them to take the “blame” by the locals. Here the poet has manipulated the facts in such a subtle way that the reader at the first reading may think that the colonizers are really the ones that should be pitied, and the natives are the thankless people. However, the reality is the complete opposite of what the poet has written. The colonizers never go to make the colonies serve the people there and the real agendas of them are never to serve the people there. They go there to suck the resources from the land and to get them back to their own country to strengthen their economy. They never have anything like curing the people suffering from disease or to end the “famine” there, in their goals. The actual examples are there in front of the whole world, and it is witnessed that the native people always suffer and the benefits are taken by the colonizers solely. In the light of the facts and the history, the writer saying things like curing the “sickness” and to put an end to “famine” seems too deceptive. It is not that the colonizers can guide that they should do this and avoid this, rather the act of taking over a country is itself a threat to the human rights in the first place. The colonial system and the imperial system is never the desired system that any country or the nation would want for them. It is never ever the wish of any country that he outsiders come and rule them. It’s the pride of the people to strengthen the nation by themselves and to try their best to avoid the invaders.

Colonies that were ever made in the history of humans never got appreciation the reason was that their true intentions were crystal clear in front of the world and the nations got to know their true agendas. They never desired for the welfare of the colonized nations as they usually try to tell the people. The common narrative that they propagate is that the nations are in need to be civilized and that they need the “western civilization” to prosper in the world. The philosophical interpretations that they give to justify their agendas are in line with the narrative of the poet Kipling in this poem. He is apparently telling that those people are wild" and they need to be civilized and for that purpose, the white people have to take their time and go for this sacred and the holy task. He further adds that the natives will scold them and will not be grateful for their kind actions and the service hat the white is giving them, however, they should be patient. This narrative is built and propagated intentionally by the poet, as it clears the image of the colonizers. The poet is a British national and was also born at the time when Britain was ruling over India. It may be the reason that he was in favor of the colonialism because his own country had colonized the other nations for a long time. To encourage the Americans to make the colony in Philippine he used the strategy of persuading them by asking them to take it as a duty and to fulfill it as a sacred task for the welfare of the natives. One can justifiably defy the true objects of the mandatory supremacies, doubt their authenticity in protesting their worry for the state’s folks. The idea that the colonized nations were inferior and calling the “sullen” and “wild” people are clearly showing that the poet had this thought in his mind that the people living there were inferior to the white people that were living in America. The ultimate theme of power is running through the whole poem in each and every line. Be it when he calls the other people “sullen” and “wild’ or when he says that Americans should not get disheartened by the thanklessness of the natives the theme of power is manifested. The other major theme that is found is that of lies. The poem itself is a deception for the people that hide the reality of the colonies and the reasons they are made for.

# End Notes

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1. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “Fff705a9a02b1bf60848c4e612e888.Pdf.” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)