


The Victorian Gothic Short Story
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Lecture – 09
Rudyard Kipling ‘My Own True Ghost Story’
Close reading and the implications of imperial Gothic – II

Hello and welcome back to this session on Rudyard Kipling’s ‘My Own True Ghost Story’. I am going to do a close reading of the final sections of the story through the lens of the imperial gothic.


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The Ratub 

□ Then came the ratub--a curious meal, half native and half English in composition--with the old khansamah babbling behind my chair about dead and gone English people, and the wind-blown candles playing shadow-bo-peep with the bed and the mosquito-curtains. It was just the sort of dinner and evening to make a man think of every single one of his past sins, and of all the others that he intended to commit if he lived.

Handwritten notes:

- Hybrid meal
- ↳ Steward
- ↳ English + Native ingredients
- ↳ Compound what are what they?
- Gothic atmosphere recreated



Now, if you remember the previous section of the story, we have this English narrator spending a night at this katmal dak bungalow and he meets with an ancient retainer or steward or caretaker or a pensioner who is associated with such houses. And, this figure is old, dirty, senile and there are comparisons going on between the characteristics of this ancient steward and the dak bungalow.

So, this steward is trying to prepare some meal for this English traveler, administrator and he calls that meal ratub and we saw in the previous section that ratub is the word used to refer to dog’s ration, not a human being’s meal. So, while the narrator is spending his time observing his setting, being observant of the elements outside of the

bungalow, and taking stock of the adjacent rooms and the partitions of the bungalow, the ratub, the food, is being prepared by the khansamah.

Then came the ratub, a curious meal half native half English in composition with the old Khansamah babbling behind my chair about dead and gone English people and the windblown candles playing shadow-bo-peep with the bed and the mosquito curtains. It was just the sort of dinner and evening to make a man think of every single one of his past sins and of all the others that he intended to commit if he lived. So, there are several things going on in this paragraph let me first tackle the first one, which is the composition of the meal- it is a hybrid meal, which is prepared by the steward. It is both an English dish as well as a native recipe.

So, this khansamah's experience with all these English travelers leads him to prepare something which is neither of these two kinds completely, but is a bit of both. So, that is what we have. So, we have this hybrid rendition, (Refer Time: 03:03) this composition which takes into consideration the food of types of these two ethnic groups. And, what this kind of preparation implies is that, this man is not as senile as perhaps the narrator wants us to think, he is still you know functioning in a very efficient manner, he is able to prepare something keeping in mind both traditions.

So, there is nothing entirely senile about the khansamah is what we can interpret from his gesture of this kind of meal, but the narrator also tells us that he is babbling. Look at the word babbling, mumbling continuously behind the chair about dead English people administrators or officials. And, the khansamah's constant evocation or reminiscences of past English people again tells us that Kipling is using this figure to somehow constantly remind us of the glories or the ancient tradition of a constant line of English people, who have lived and ruled over this land. So, that function is given to this khansamah and the second thing that is happening in this paragraph is this gothic atmosphere being recreated, which is accomplished through the candles which are being windblown and the shadows which are created as a result of this. They seem to be kind of playing a game of shadow-bo-peep with the bed and the mosquito curtains. The mosquito curtains are very essential in this landscape, because of the infestation that we know to be the fact in this particular country. So, that is a reminder of the protection that these English people have to resort to in order to remain protected.

And the third aspect of this paragraph is being led by the previous point about the gothic atmosphere. Since it is a ghostly or ghastly scenario which is being set up in this bungalow, the narrator has to be careful because he might not live to see another day. So, he is thinking about all his past sins and he is also forced to think about the future sins that he may commit and perhaps not commit them because of such incidents which can happen in the future too.

The phrase past sins is interesting what could they possibly be? What could this English narrator have committed? What are they? Are they in relation to the British administration of India? That is an interesting question to ask. Are they the sins of the British empire in India and what are the future sins? Are they going to be committed against this country once again? So, these ghostly possibilities embedded in all these dak bungalows may be a caution to these English administrators perhaps not to commit them because they might be taken to task by these specters.

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The ambience of the room

- Sleep, for several hundred reasons, was not easy. The lamp in the bathroom threw the most absurd shadows into the room, and the wind was beginning to talk nonsense.

Wind - personified
↳ unreasonable matters

The Red Room
Shadows
↳ stupid, unreasonable
↳ wind



Now, in such an ambience, sleep is not going to be easy, which is what the narrator tells us. Sleep for several hundred reasons was not easy, the lamp in the bathroom threw the most absurd shadows into the room and the wind was beginning to talk nonsense. Again two things, firstly, we have the effect of the shadows and the sound of the winds which may be scary. So, that is the first category. Ghostly setting through the shadows and the

noise of the wind. The second is also a significant because this is an imperial narrative-imperial short narrative.


So, what is interesting in this regard is this, the shadows are absurd, stupid, unreasonable and two, the wind is also not being reasonable. It is also unreasonable, it is talking nonsense. So, even the elements even nature in this landscape in this dark landscape of colonial India is not as reasonable or as rational as the elements perhaps of Great Britain. So, that kind of discrimination is also possible as a subtext to this gothic story.

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Doolie-bearers

Just when the reasons were drowsy with blood-sucking I heard the regular —“Let-us-take-and-heave-him-over” grunt of doolie-bearers in the compound. First one doolie came in, then a second, and then a third. I heard the doolies dumped on the ground, and the shutter in front of my door shook. “That’s some one trying to come in,” I said. But no one spoke, and I persuaded myself that it was the gusty wind. The shutter of the room next to mine was attacked, flung back, and the inner door opened. “That’s some Sub-Deputy Assistant,” I said, “and he has brought his friends with him. Now they’ll talk and spit and smoke for an hour.”

Let us take and heave him over
noise that complicates one of the story
Native official



It is late and the narrator is drowsy and he is about to go to bed when he hears some sound and he writes down ‘just when the reasons were drowsy with blood sucking’- of the mosquitoes or the bedbugs- ‘I heard the regular let us take and heave him over grunt of doolie bearers in the compound. First one doolie came in, then a second, then a third. I heard the doolies dumped on the ground and the shutter in front of my door shook. That is someone trying to come in, I said, but no one spoke and I persuaded myself that it was the gusty wind. The shutter of the room next to mine was attacked, flung back and the inner door opened that is some sub deputy assistant I said and he has brought his friends with him. Now they will talk and spit and smoke for an hour.’

So, when the narrator is about to retire, he hears some sound and he immediately recognizes that sound to be made by the doolie bearers. Doolie bearers are the men who carry doolies and he is also able to hear the sound of doolies being dumped on the

ground- put down roughly- and he also hears some noise after that and he realizes that somebody is trying to get into this dak bungalow and he thinks that somebody is going to occupy the room next to him and that could be some sub deputy assistant. This reference is significant because this refers to a native official, native official in the British government, in the service of the British government.

So, he is going to occupy the room and the narrator believes that he has brought his friends along with him and these friends are going to talk and spit and smoke. Smoking is alright, but spitting is considered to be uncivilized. And this manner is attributed to the natives and that is very interesting because a certain perspective of the Orient as barbaric is being constructed in this story in relation to the khansamah and in relation to the ghosts who were categorized at the beginning of the story, if you remember the section on the Indian ghosts.

So, if you consider all this the presence of the sub deputy is not very pleasant to this English narrator and which is why he kind of anticipates such behavior which might disturb him. And if you look at all the sounds being created in this scene in relation to shutters being opened, doors being opened, the narrator is trying to figure out or come to a conclusion about what the function of such sound is. So, he is kind of highly attuned. So, he is absolutely sure what each sound implies and this is very interesting in terms of the narrative complications of this story.

Because you will see quite soon that the narrator does not come to the right conclusion about every sound and another thing that comes to mind is the similarity which this English narrator has with the narrator in *The Red Room*, because both of them are highly attuned to the senses, are highly attuned to the sounds which are occurring in the space that they occupy. So, their sensory abilities are sharp and kind of wary as well as to what is going to happen.

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Doolie-bearers

- **doolie-bearers** ^{men} a doolie is a covered cot slung from a bamboo pole and carried by two or four men. It is also used as the ambulance of the Indian Army.



Now, let me go back to this point about doolie bearers. A doolie is a covered cot. Doolie, the object, is a covered cot and the men who carried that covered cot are the doolie bearers. So, doolie bearers are men who carry doolies. So, it is a cot slung from a bamboo pole and carried by two or four men. It is also used as the ambulance of the Indian army.

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Doolie bearers



Indian doolies carrying the wounded back from the battle



So, I have an image of the doolie here and these are Indian doolies carrying the wounded back from the battle.. This is in relation to the Boer war- the Boer war in South Africa.

So, this will tell you the kind of function the doolie bearers perform- carry people both the injured and the healthy from point A to point B.

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Game of billiards

- There was a whir and a click, and both sounds could only have been made by one thing — a billiard ball. I argued the matter out at great length with myself; and the more I argued the less probable it seemed that one bed, one table, and two chairs — all the furniture of the room next to mine — could so exactly duplicate the sounds of a game of billiards.



Now, the narrator settles down because he is very tired and he goes to sleep and that is at least that is what he tries, when there was a whir and a click and both sounds could only have been made by one thing- a billiard ball. So, he is kind of hearing some sound from the adjacent room. The narrator hears some sound f from the room next to his and he thinks that this sound could be made by only one thing, that is a billiard ball.

I argued the matter out at great length with myself and the more I argued the less probable it seemed that one bed, one table and two chairs- all the furniture of the room next to mine could so exactly duplicate the sounds of a game of billiards. So, this man is trying to talk to himself about the possibilities of such a thing happening next door. He knows that there is just a bed, a table two chairs in the next room, but then he is able to hear all the sounds which can only be made in relation to a game of billiards.

So, how is that possible? It is only possible if there are some supernatural incidents happening in the room next door, and that is what he comes to believe.

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Game of Billiards



So, I have a picture of a game of billiards being carried out there.

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Billiards terminology

□ https://www.tutorialspoint.com/billiards/billiards_terms.htm



Now, in terms of the billiards terminology which occurs in this particular story, I would like to point you to this particular web page where you can get the meanings of all the various terms used in connection with this particular game.

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Do you know what fear is?

□ Not ordinary fear of insult, injury or death, but abject, quivering dread of something that you cannot see--fear that dries the inside of the mouth and half of the throat--fear that makes you sweat on the palms of the hands, and gulp in order to keep the uvula at work? This is a fine Fear--a great cowardice, and must be felt to be appreciated. The very improbability of billiards in a dak-bungalow proved the reality of the thing. No man--drunk or sober--could imagine a game a billiards, or invent the spitting crack of a "screw-cannon."

*Gothic
territory
terror*

*Physiological
Effect*



Now, once this narrator realizes that it is indeed a game that is going on in the room next to his, he is frightened and he asks: 'Do you know what fear is?' He answers that question- 'Not ordinary fear of insult injury or death, but abject, quivering, dread of something that you cannot see. Fear that dries the inside of the mouth and half of the throat. This is a fine fear, a great cowardice and must be felt to be appreciated. The very improbability of billiards in a dak bungalow proved the reality of the thing. No man drunk or sober could imagine a game of billiards or invent the spitting crack of a screw cannon.'

So, this passage should at once remind you of The Red Room where there is an a discussion of the nature of fear towards the end of that story, where we have the narrator say that it is unreason- fear is about irrationality. And here we have a description of the effect of fear- physiological effect of fear. So, that is what is being described in this particular section by the narrator. He tells us what happens when we are experiencing fear and this description takes us back to gothic territory and this is terror. This is terror that is being experienced and you can see what happens when you are experiencing extreme fear- you sweat, the palms sweat and you try to gulp in order to parch your throat, in order to make sure that everything is fine in terms of your body.

This is a fine fear and he says that this is great cowardice and you cannot understand this feeling unless you experience it yourself. This is the most important thing in this

particular paragraph: The improbability, the impossibility of a game being played next door is the very idea which kind of reinforces the fact that it is possible in this dak bungalow because dak bungalows are usually hunted, the dak bungalows are the ideal setting for such specters and he again asserts that no man sober or drunk can imagine a game of billiards being played. Why cannot you imagine something else? So, if you are imagining a game of billiards, then it is reasonable that it is that game that is being played out.

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SCREW CANNON

- **cannon** in this context, two billiard-balls meeting and rebounding, making a characteristic clicking sound.



Now, the meaning of the word cannon in this context refers to two billiard balls meeting and rebounding, making a characteristic clicking sound. So, that is the meaning of the word screw cannon here.

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Dak-bungalows

□ A severe course of dak-bungalows has this disadvantage--it breeds infinite credulity. If a man said to a confirmed dak-bungalow-haunter--"There is a corpse in the next room, and there's a mad girl in the next but one, and the woman and man on that camel have just eloped from a place sixty miles away," the hearer would not disbelieve because he would know that nothing is too wild, grotesque, or horrible to happen in a dak-bungalow.

Why should he believe a mad girl?
mad girl
tropes of gothic narratives.
B. Empire
influenced in a negative manner
Country



Now the narrator begins to theorize about the function of dak bungalows. A severe course of dak bungalows has this disadvantage. It breeds infinite credulity. So, if you travel quite a bit and if you spend quite a lot of time in dak bungalows, then you will believe almost anything. Nothing will be too farfetched for you to believe in, because the dak bungalows prepare you for that kind of mentality. So, it is very interesting if the dak bungalows come to symbolize British empire, then the implication is that the British empire is being influenced in a negative manner by this country.

So, this is having an effect on the way the empire is run. So, it is as if the country itself is tainting the empire and its administration. So, it's a very disturbing notion that is being mentioned here, very carelessly almost sarcastically. If a man said to a confirmed dak bungalow haunter, there is a corpse in the next room and there is a mad girl in the next but one and the woman and the woman and a man on that camel have just eloped from a place 60 miles away, the hearer would not disbelieve because he would know that nothing is too wild, grotesque or horrible to happen in a dak bungalow.

Again look at this list and this list should remind you of the early list of categories of ghosts in Indian society and this is something very similar. In fact, this idea mirrors the previous idea, I would argue. So, he says that if a man is a frequent haunter of dak bungalows, he would almost believe anything that is said to him. If somebody comes to him and says there is a dead body in the next room, there is a mad girl in another room

and there is a man and woman who have eloped on a camel from a place 60 miles away this dak bungalow haunter would believe everything.

Now, I want to go back to the details. The dead body would imply that somebody has been possibly murdered, since this is a ghost story, perhaps scared to death by a ghost possibly. Look at the next list. Mad girl. Again this is a trope of gothic narratives, that is one thing, that is the literal connection to gothic stuff. The other is why should there be a mad girl? So, in this story the female figures who are sketched are either women who die in childbirth and become ghosts or there are maternity cases who are wandering about possibly in ghost form or there are insane young girls.

So, if you look at the list this is again very very dysfunctional. Is this what the society is composed of is a question that you can ask of this narrator. Look at the other reference- an eloping woman and a man. So, again I am reminded of the word seductive that is used in connection with women ghosts which haunt the passageways or pathways of India. So, what you get is a set of suggestions which indicate that nothing is normal, nothing is ordinary, nothing is commonplace, everything is extraordinary, but all these extraordinarily insane, wild ideas would look normal to a dak bungalow traveler because you know all sorts of weird stuff happen here. That is what the last statement is about; nothing is too wild, too grotesque or horrible to happen in dak bungalow.

And you can argue that since dak bungalows are dark, grimy, set in wild areas, then these are normal. These are to be expected. But then again the narrator himself had mentioned that an English traveler lives out his entire life in dak bungalows, which means this is the stuff that is the norm for English men, but is this reflective of reality? That is a question that you can again ask.

So, when the dak bungalows become representative of the function of English men, if the dak bungalows are associated with English administration, then we are also led to believe that this is how the English administration looks at the cross section of Indian society. So, what we have is a perspective of the empire of men and women and children and girls who are in India.

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Creatures who... play in the dark?

- So surely as I was given up as a bad carcass by the scores of things in the bed because the bulk of my blood was in my heart, so surely did I hear every stroke of a long game at billiards played in the echoing room behind the iron-barred door. My dominant fear was that the players might want a marker. It was an absurd fear; because creatures who could play in the dark would be above such superfluities. I only know that that was my terror, and it was real.



So surely as I was given up as a bad carcass by the scores of things in the bed, because the bulk of my blood was in my heart, so surely did I hear every stroke of a long game at billiards played in the echoing room behind the iron barred door. My dominant fear was that the players might want a marker it was an absurd fear because creatures who play in the dark would be above such superfluities. I only know that that was my terror and it was real.

Now, the first statement could appear as an ordinary remark, you know, he simply says that I am not being bitten by the bedbugs or some of the scores of things that are there on the bed and that he is immune to these pests, and the reason is that the blood is collected in my heart because my heart is thumping so wildly, so, all the blood is there. That is the literal interpretation. The second is that he is immune to attack from Indian vermin. So, if you remember the early section of the story, he mentioned that you know English men are safe from Indian ghosts. So, this English man is also safe from Indian vermin, pests-Indian pests.

So, that connection is there in this particular remark, and the second one is that, this man is also frightened. We can see that because he acknowledges it and the fear is that, not that he would be affected killed or injured by the ghost, but that they would want him as a marker. As a man who will keep track or keep count of the points scored by the players. And he himself mentioned that it was an absurd fear, right? It is not a very

reasonable rational fear and again he is not frightened for his life that point comes through indicating that this narrator believes himself to be very very courageous too, even though he kind of manifests some external elements of fear, he is above such qualities of being frightened of injury or any such stuff.

And it was his only terror and it was a real terror, the fact that, these ghosts would want him to be part of their game order to keep track of their points.

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British Empire

Fear | Immune to being attacked

Indian Ghosts English Ghosts

- "By the way, khansamah," I said, "what were those three doolies doing in my compound in the night?"
- "There were no doolies," said the khansamah.
- I went into the next room and the daylight streamed through the open door. I was immensely brave. I would, at that hour, have played Black Pool with the owner of the big Black Pool down below.

Dak bungalow → British Government

Narrator Represents the British Government

The Red Room

light -> hope & courage

Now, the next day what happens is that the narrator quizzes the khansamah. He asks him about the doolies- the sound made by the doolies. And the khansamah says that there were no doolies in this place. So, this is the question that the narrator asks 'By the way khansamah what were those three doolies doing in my compound in the night?' and the khansamah responds by saying there were no doolies. I went into the next room and the daylight streamed through the open door. I was immensely brave. I would at that hour have played Black Pool with the owner of the big black pool down below. What is interesting about this exchange is this. He says my compound. Why does he say that? This dak bungalow is the property of the British government. If he says my compound, the interpretation is that the narrator stands in or represents British government, which is why he kind of talks about this bungalow as his property and so, he goes through the next room to check as to what could have happened and the daylight makes him immensely brave. So, light is associated with hope and courage, this is what we see in

The Red Room too. If you remember, the narrator tries to get into the corridor, the moon lit corridor. So, he is drawn to light and in light there is a lot of confidence and the same thing happens with this narrator. He feels immensely brave and he claims that at this hour he would have played black pool, he would have played a game of billiards with the owner of the big black pool and that reference is to the Satan.

We need to understand something about the narrator in relation to his fear. So, while this narrator exhibits certain qualities which are identical with men who are troubled by certain aspects in relation to gothic settings, we need to realize that this man is not going to be affected by this incident of the ghosts in the dak bungalow. So, that is something we need to realize, he is immune to being attacked. He is immune to being attacked by anything- not just Indian ghosts, but by English ghosts as well.

So, the reason being this particular narrator represents the British Empire the British government. So, he is above being threatened- really threatened in a very very tangible manner- by all these instants which are happening in the Indian landscape.

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Billiard Room

→ Dak-bungalow
→ The Railway } - physical remnants of the British Empire


- "A billiard-room for the Sahibs who built the Railway. I was khansamah then in the big house where all the Railway-Sahibs lived, and I used to come across with brandy-shrab. These three rooms were all one, and they held a big table on which the Sahibs played every evening. But the Sahibs are all dead now, and the Railway runs, you say, nearly to Kabul."
- "Aha, he was a strong Sahib! But he is dead and I, old Mangal Khan, am still living, by your favor."

the Sahibs are all dead & gone.

Hybrid

Survivor

Khansamah



Now, once he realizes that there are no doolies then he asks about the sound of the game of billiards. He does not ask him point blank if there was a game of billiards that took place in this particular room. He asks him if this room was used or if this bungalow was used for other purposes and the khansamah says that long back this particular room was used as a billiard room for the sahibs who built the railway. 'I was khansamah then in the

big house where all the railway sahibs lived and I used to come across with brandy shrab. These three rooms were all one and they held a big table on which the sahibs played every evening, but the sahibs are all dead now and the railway runs you say nearly to Kabul.'

So, the game of billiards becomes more real by this particular reference of the khansamah. The khansamah says that this dak bungalow 20 or 30 years ago was used as a place of entertainment involving the billiards game and all these rooms were one single room and all these officials from the railway participated in these entertainments, in these games, both events. And he says that this man, khansamah, used to supply them with brandy shrab and look at the word- brandy is English, shrab Hindi. So, this is a hybrid term that this khansamah coins to talk about his particular job in relation to these railway sahibs and he says that this particular sahib 'was a strong sahib, but he is dead and I old Mangal Khan am still living by your favor'.

So, something very sarcastic about that line, because we have the railway lines being there to everywhere, but then the railway sahibs are all dead and gone whereas, this man the khansamah, old Mangal Khan, is the survivor. For the first time we have a reference to the name of the khansamah and it's very interesting that he mentions his name at this particular point, the point where he is trying to strike a comparison between this railway official who is dead and this survivor khansamah who is very much alive.

So, he is a survivor. This khansamah is a survivor. The empire is still there- the British empire is still there, but it is there in structures such as the dak bungalow and in transportation spaces, transportation structures such as the railway. So, these are the physical presences or physical remnants of the British Empire whereas, the sahibs are all gone- all dead and gone whereas, the khansamah is still around.

So, we can see a weird kind of setup being orchestrated. A weird kind of power relationship being orchestrated by the khansamah and that is why I am suggesting that this particular line becomes very very sarcastic, that the official is dead, the railway official is dead whereas, Mangal Khan the khansamah is still around.

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Authenticated Article

I had my ghost--a first-hand, authenticated article I would write to the Society for Psychical Research--I would paralyze the Empire with the news! But I would, first of all, put eighty miles of assessed cropland between myself and that dak-bungalow before nightfall. The Society might send their regular agent to investigate later on.


Massive discovery

"map" discover record

Who assesses it? the British

Ghost - Object

Curiosity like the Vernacular paper or Viceroy



Now, at this stage the stage narrator realizes that this ghost is real and tangible and this is a massive discovery that he has finally authenticated the presence of a ghost and he calls it a firsthand authenticated article. I find the word article very interesting here because the ghost becomes an object, a curiosity. A curiosity like the vernacular paper or a viceroy, these two were referred to at the beginning of the story. So, this ghost this insubstantial specter is made into an object in the perception of the narrator who is going to sell it to somebody and let us see who is that. He says that I would write to the Society for Psychical Research, I would paralyze the empire with the news, but I would first of all put 80 miles of assessed cropland between myself and the dak bungalow before night fall. The Society might send their regular agent to investigate later on. So, he thinks that this discovery is going to make waves, it is going to be a fantastic news which would bring the empire to a halt- it would paralyze the empire. But before doing that he says that I am going to get away from this dak bungalow put a lot of distance between myself and this dak bungalow and look at the word that he uses- Assessed crop land- who assesses the crop land? At this point of time who assesses it is the British and what is interesting in this usage is the fact that the British are associated with mapping everything. They map, they discover, they record and that is what this particular narrator is also going to do in relation to the authenticated article that he has bumped into. So, he is going to record with the Society for Psychical Research. This is very symptomatic of the way in which the British administrator's officials function in colonial landscapes. So, this is highly indicative- the behavior of the narrator is highly indicative- of such general

attitude that we have come across in relation to other narratives, especially the narrator of The Red Room and as well as in the context of The Red Headed League, especially in relation to Holmes, Sherlock Holmes, the detective who kind of gathers all the data and analyzes them and comes to a conclusion. So, he says in a humorous vein that he is going to run away and that comment is perhaps put there to bring a smile to the reader rather than being really really indicative of the actual nature of this particular figure the English narrator.

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The Facts behind the game

- As I smoked I heard the game begin again — with a miss in balk this time, for the whirl was a short one.
- The door was open and I could see into the room. Click — click! That was a cannon. I entered the room without fear, for there was sunlight within and a fresh breeze without. The unseen game was going on at a tremendous rate. And well it might, when a restless little rat was running to and fro inside the dingy ceiling-cloth, and a piece of loose window-sash was making fifty breaks off the window-bolt as it shook in the breeze!

No Spectre
Nothing Supernatural



Now, once he has had his chat with the khansamah, he goes back to pack and he is kind of relaxing and he smokes and then he hears the sound again. He says that I heard the game begin again with a miss in balk this time, for the whirl was a short one. So, he is hearing similar sounds that are associated with this game of billiards and then he goes to check. The door was open and I could see into the room. Click-click that was a cannon. I entered the room without fear for there was sunlight within and a fresh breeze without. The unseen game was going on at a tremendous rate. And well it might, when a restless little rat was running to and fro inside the dingy ceiling cloth and a piece of loose window sash was making 50 breaks off the window bolt as it shook in the breeze.

So, we here we have the facts behind the game. The mystery is real. So, what is that? When hears the sound of a game of billiards, he goes into the next room to check and he sees that it is just a restless little rat which is running to and fro inside the ceiling cloth.

And, that is what is making this particular noise and then he also sees that a piece of loose window sash is also making that similar sound, the sound that you would associate with the game of billiards. So, there is nothing terrible, there is no specter, nothing supernatural just a restless rat. The word restless is very interesting because if you go back to the earlier sections of the story, the elements of nature outside this dak bungalow-- the wind is restless and that restless wind is making those toddy palms buffet in the wind. So, the restlessness is associated with a particular quality of this Indian landscape and we could kind of ask if that is indicative of a symbolic anxiety that is there in the minds of this particular populace which is being colonized by the empire.

So, just a rat and this rat is sufficient to scare this English narrator and also come to the wrong conclusion, which he has decided to inform the Society for Psychical Research. So, this particular discovery makes him realize that you know he is not actually going to get in touch with the Society for Psychical Research because the data that he has is insufficient or wrong a data.

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Bungalow

□ "This bungalow is very bad and low-caste! No wonder the Presence was disturbed and is speckled. Three sets of doolie-bearers came to the bungalow late last night when I was sleeping outside, and said that it was their custom to rest in the rooms set apart for the English people! What honor has the khansamah? They tried to enter, but I told them to go. No wonder, if these Oorias have been here, that the Presence is sorely spotted. It is shame, and the work of a dirty man!"

Another native of the same who is enlightening the presence. Very late entry.

Spiritual Presence.



Now, we have another figure coming in at this point in the story-- very late entry-- and he comes in and says something about the dak bungalow. He says that this bungalow is very bad and low caste; it is a very interesting term. No wonder the presence was disturbed and is speckled. Three sets of doolie bearers came to the bungalow late last night when I was sleeping outside and said that it was their custom to rest in the room set

apart for the English people. What honor has the khansamah? They tried to enter, but I told them to go. No wonder if these Oorias have been here that the presence is sorely spotted. It is a shame and the work of a dirty man.

So, who is this new entry? He is the servant this narrator-- Kadir Baksh--- and he has something to say about the bungalow and he says that this is a very bad place probably tainted by the presence of low caste figures and he says that the presence was disturbed about that, there is a presence in the dak bungalow, a spiritual presence, and that is being disturbed.

And you got to remember that this Kadir Baksh is not an English figure- he is a native, he is an indigenous character he belongs to this country and he makes a comment about all this. The evil nature of the bungalow, the lower caste nature of the bungalow and the other fact that the spiritual presence of the bungalow is being disturb speckled, spotted. And he says that 'I saw three sets of doolie bearers come to the bungalow and they were resting in the rooms which are kept for the English people' and this had happened because the khansamah had allowed these people to enter the dak bungalow. And he says that 'they tried to enter, but I told them to go', I told them not to do this. 'No wonder if these Oorias have been here' and he says that these people are from the region of Oria-- we did not have proper states then-- and he says that since these Oorias have been here the presence is sorely disturbed. It is a shame and the work of a dirty man and he is accusing the khansamah of allowing these figures to use the dak bungalow.

So, we have another native figure who is exhibiting hierarchical principles and we got to remember that he is not an English man. So, we are constantly being told about different kinds of stratified layers in this society. So, we have the Oorias being associated with all these lower caste associations and then we have you know the doolies being associated with all these lower caste associations. So, a hierarchy is being made manifest and the khansamah and Kadir Baksh are reflecting the discriminatory nature of the society in which they are in.

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Kadir Baksh

- Kadir Baksh did not say that he had taken from each gang two annas for rent in advance, and then, beyond my earshot, had beaten them with the big green umbrella whose use I could never before divine. But Kadir Baksh has no notions of morality.

*The natives → a) liars
b) double-standards
c) they are highly slavish.*



Now, Kadir Baksh did not say that he had taken from each gang two annas for rent in advance and then beyond my earshot had beaten them with the big green umbrella whose use I could never before divine, but Kadir Baksh has no notions of morality. So, the narrator somehow knows that Kadir Baksh did get some bribe from these gangs of doolie bearers these groups of doolie bearers and they and he and khansamah had allowed them to stay in the dak bungalow.

The question is how did the narrator come to know about this? We don't know, but the narrator claims that this man had got bribe from the doolie bearers and in fact, not only that, he had also beaten the doolie bearers with a big green umbrella and you know that green umbrella is something that has been with him and the narrator claims that I could never think that this umbrella had such a purpose. So, what this set of ideas that we get from the narrator tells us is this: The natives are liars, they have double standards and they are highly slavish as well, they have a very strong sense of apparent loyalty to the English and at the same time they try to exploit the situation for their benefit as well, as happens in the case of the doolie bearers who are allowed to stay in the dak bungalow.

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Khansamah

- There was an interview with the khansamah, but as he promptly lost his head, wrath gave place to pity, and pity led to a long conversation, in the course of which he put the fat Engineer-Sahib's tragic death in three separate stations--two of them fifty miles away. The third shift was to Calcutta, and there the Sahib died while driving a dog-cart.

*lie
the natives a lot?*



Now, the narrator gets angry and he goes back to the khansamah to quiz him on this set of circumstances. So, the narrator writes ‘there was an interview with the khansamah, but as he promptly lost his head, wrath gave place to pity and pity led to a long conversation, in the course of which he put the fat engineer sahib’s tragic death in three separate stations, two of them 50 miles away. The third shift was to Calcutta and there the sahib died while driving a dog-cart’. So, look at the shifting narratives that come from the mouth of the khansamah. So, initially he claimed that this dak bungalow was a place where billiard games were carried on and the sahib died while he drank and played. He then changes the narrative to something else. So, once again it reinforces the fact that the natives lie a lot. Once again the issue of the native as the subaltern who is trying to undermine the authority and the stability of the British empire is suggested in these lines. So, that is something we need to consider too.

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Conclusion

- Then the wind ran out and the billiards stopped, and I felt that I had ruined my one genuine, hall-marked ghost story.
- Had I only stopped at the proper time, I could have made anything out of it.
- That was the bitterest thought of all!

fact →
Glory ⇒
Supernatural



When we come to the conclusion of this particular story, the narrator says that the wind ran out and the billiards stopped and I felt that I had ruined my one genuine hallmarked ghost story. So, the narrator is at a loss. He is saddened to realize that in fact, there are no ghosts, it is just a restless rat running about in a ceiling cloth and he is a saddened by that realization because he says that ‘had I only stopped at the proper time’, If I did not go to that next room to check, I could have made anything out of it I could have made this into a proper ghost story and got all the credit, I could have written to the Society of Psychological Research and claim that there is in fact, a ghost that is haunting the dak bungalow at this particular place.

And it is this desire to check everything, examine everything perhaps as a scientific bent of mind, that has ruined this project of a ghost being recorded in this particular katmal dak bungalow and that was the bitterest thought of all, he records. So, what is interesting is that, if you get to know the fact then you cannot get your glory which is associated with supernatural stuff.

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Discussion Questions

- What sort of a steward is the Khansamah?
- How does the narrator know about the bribe that his servant takes?
- What sort of a character is the narrator?
- What sort of worldview do we get of India under the Raj through this story?

narrative puzzle
ideological implications



Now, some of the discussion questions that I want you to think about are these: What sort of a steward is the khansamah? What is his nature? Is he extremely loyal to the British Empire or is he kind of undermining the empire in his own way? The other question is how does the narrator know about the bribe that his servant takes? So, we have the narrator claim that Kadir Baksh did get a bribe from the doolie bearers and he allowed them to stay in the bungalow. How did he know about that?

So, that is a narrative puzzle that you need to think about and possibly work out the ideological implications of that puzzle. What sort of a character is the narrator himself? This English narrator who has a warped idea of this particular set of native figures Kadir Baksh and khansamah? What sort of a man is he? So, that is something you need to work out. What sort of a world view do we get of India under the Raj through this story? What kind of society do we see? Do we see dysfunctional people or do we see well adjusted human beings? So, that is a question that you need to think about.

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Thank you for watching, I will continue in the next session.