

Victorian Types in Rudyard Kipling's

The Jungle Book

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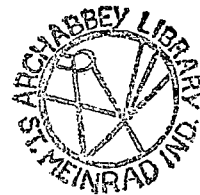


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I. Introduction

It is remarkable how often a work that has played a role in the criticism of an age can be set aside lightly as irrelevant or juvenile by a later generation. Yet this is not so difficult to accept when it is remembered that the critics and readers of one age live in a different environment with tastes and needs different from those of an earlier one. In this light, the Mowgli stories of The Jungle Book have been conveniently reserved for the younger set by today's culture as interesting but hardly enlightening. The tag of "children's book" has been attached to it. Consequently, much of the internal value of the book has been overlooked. A study of the characters of the Mowgli tales, viewed against the cultural and social backdrop of late nineteenth century England, indicates that the stories are much more than allegorical fantasies. They reveal a glimpse into an age that cannot be ignored.

Rudyard Kipling was living in America when he composed The Jungle Book in the spring of 1894. He had sampled only bits of Victorian society during his twenty-nine years, but he stepped back and gave his verdict. The influence of Darwin's Origin of Species (1859) and Descent of Man (1871), of Huxley's Ethics and Evolution (1893) had been sifting through English thinking, playing up the idea of human cogs in an economic wheel that had grown with the Industrial Revolution. To counteract this accent on the "brute", Oscar Wilde, in Lady Winder-

mere's Fan (1892) and A Woman of No Importance (1893), along with Algernon Swinburne (Poems and Ballads, 1889), Coventry Patmore (Principles in Art, 1889), Walter Pater (Marcus the Epicurean, 1885) and others of the art-for-art's-sake cult were attempting to escape altogether man's struggle for survival. Kipling sought a combination of both elements; and the result was a form of literature that appealed to all classes, reaching its culmination in his short stories.

The Jungle Book (and we are concerned with the first book of 1884 and not the second of 1885) is a collection of stories, each pursuing a different plot, but all nine tied together with the same characters. These characters reveal a development which this thesis proposes to investigate in the light of the late Victorian society. To add perspective to this investigation, it is necessary to examine the Victorian age and some of its characteristics.

II. Background : Victorian England

England was riding on the financial crest of the Industrial Revolution and the courtly prestige of a long-lived and extremely able monarch. Her population had doubled between 1821 and 1891. Her exports, especially iron, topped by more than half those of any other nation.¹ The English people were enjoying unchallenged success such as the world had never experienced before, and the philosophy of "live and let live" was creeping into the English way of life.

The Victorians built their England on the confidence that came of having beaten the great Napoleon, and in their dealings with the outside world they made it plain that they were quite prepared to do the same sort of thing again if need be. They were not aggressive--they had no need to be--but they had no great dread of war, and their national totem was more like the truculent, swaggering John Bull of the eighteenth century than the subdued conciliator of later times.²

They were "biding their time", devoting their lives (especially in the upper circles) to the norms of etiquette and intellectualization. They had lost much of their sensitive touch for the practical, while the nations around them were doing just the opposite. Germany had begun to realize her military potential under Bismarck's tutelage in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71. France and Italy, struggling under the burden of revolutions and new constitutional governments, were beginning to exploit their natural resources to match strides with the Industrial Revolution, especially in the field of textiles. American industry, booming in the aftermath of the Civil War, was able to undersell British prices in Asian, South American, and even European markets, thanks to the swift

efficiency of the clipper ships. The "John Bull" facade of security hid an instability that would eventually spell the downfall of modern England as a world power. Threats of war in India, South Africa, the Transvaal, the ignominious Jameson Raid, labor strife, resulting in the Dock Strike of 1889, and the rampant yet quietly pooh-poohed upheaval of the jobless and the degenerate at home---all composed the panorama of the Victorian scene that its literature avoided in a search for airy escapes and sublime rationalizations. "The union of the ideal and the practical", states John C. Metcalf, "is more strikingly exemplified in this age than in any other period of English literature"³---the "ideal" of the social elite and their crumb-snatches, who typified the Victorian picture to the rest of the world, and the "practical" of the working classes, who were forced to keep an eye on life and the job of making it livable. Naturally, the literary men catered to the whims of the moneyed classes; and, as a result, much of the literature of the age, with its "art for art's sake" formula, went over the heads of the masses.

Kipling arrived at the psychological moment with his Jungle Books in 1894.

The English reading public was weary of introspection and preciosity and the hectic atmosphere of decadence. It viewed at first with distrust and then with impatience those novels which possessed a maximum of psychological refinement and a minimum of human interest; which gave more thought to the niceties of soul analysis than to the soul itself; which forgot, in telling what men and women felt, to tell what they did. That same public was surfeited with men who had no business in life except to dance attendance upon clever, and soulless, women, to wear, like a carnation in their coat lapels, a title which some huge-limbed forebear had seized by virtue of a bloody mace and a mailed

fist. It felt stifled among the perfumes and the hot-house flowers of fashionable drawing-rooms, where there was no bloom but that of the intellectual, where "wan" women with "dainty" youths and blasé men foregathered in quest of new sensations for their jaded nerves. 4

Kipling shattered the glass bubble of the Victorian sophisticates with his down-to-earth philosophy of action. Having married just two years earlier in 1892, he was enjoying an extended vacation with his new family in Brattleboro, Vermont, when he wrote The Jungle Book in honor of Josephine, his first child. His earlier works, beginning with Departmental Ditties and Other Verses in 1886 and carrying through Plain Tales from the Hills (1887), Soldiers Three (1888), and his piercing short story, The Phantom Rickshaw (1888) had made him the most popular of his time. But The Light That Failed, published in 1891, lived up to its title. Lack of plot development and the shallow naiveté of Dick had lost some of the zing which had permeated his earlier characters. The English public were waiting to see if their favorite, away in America, still had his spark. When The Jungle Book came out in 1894, their faith was restored. Kipling's animals spoke a language which the people, high and low, could understand.

The benefits of education were becoming more and more available to the lower classes. Elementary and compulsory education to the sixth-grade level had arrived with the Education Acts of 1870 and 1880, free education finally being achieved in 1891.⁵ The opportunity for learning, and particularly for learning to read, was open to the not-so-rich as well as to the wealthy; and in their effort to segregate themselves from the "groundlings", the upper classes clung to a literature that spoke a

message which only they could understand and which, consequently, held little of the appeal for all classes that only universal literature can offer. The majority of newly-educated Englishmen wanted more.

These were not satisfied with the Bible or with rationalistic literature. They wanted satires, and they yearned for romance, for something to take them outside the dullness and monotony of their lives. . . .⁶

Likewise, the Victorian tower of past triumphs and respected morals was beginning to totter.

In the midst of economic and political triumphs, the Victorians were disturbed by what was happening to their inherited sentiments and ideals. They were suffering a loss of values; they were losing the significance and reality of their religion.⁷

The people were hungry for anything that sparkled with the excitement of the future, yet preserved its hold on past virtues and heritage.

Kipling rose from the ranks with his Jungle Books, and the populace devoured them. With the newly-advanced mass media of the press and with the popular and quite inexpensive method of publishing novels in short series of eight or nine articles, the Mowgli stories were available to anyone at any time. The very fact that the book was so widely circulated in its own day is a credit to its value, for it must have played on the thinking habits of a fair majority of the people. Upper, middle, and lower classes alike saw a picture of the England they had once known projected into the future but at present clouded over by a barrage of abstractions, false morality, and mechanization. The Mowgli stories offered a glimpse into a world that was crumbling, but a glimpse

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that held the promise of a reconstructed hope in man as man and not merely as machine.

III. Models for the Ideal England

Baloo

Old Baloo, the Indian honey-bear, stands out as a devotee to the Law and its positive guarantee of safety in a life that threatens to deny it. He is a mirror of Kipling himself, for he firmly believes that "liberty is not lawlessness; on the contrary, that it is fundamentally dependent on respect for the laws and on obedience to the chief."⁸ Having taught Mowgli the Master Words of the Jungle, by which all the jungle people know that the person using them is a respecter of the Law, Baloo sums up the Law's promise of safety: "No one then is to be feared".⁹ For Baloo is the Teacher of the Law, and, like Kipling, believes that

there are persons. . . who are manifestly destined to rule and regulate; there are other persons as manifestly destined to be ruled and regulated; . . . this truth, which you see exemplified in India, is actually of universal application.¹⁰

Even when Mowgli has been captured by the Bandar-log, and Baloo and Bagheera are forced to fight off hordes of the monkey people to rescue him, Bagheera demands that Mowgli be treated for his offense in accordance with the Law; and Baloo, though reluctant, still "could not tamper with the Law". Mowgli is soundly spanked. Obedience to the Law and its dictates, for Baloo and the rest of the jungle people, is the one solid guarantee of liberty. Baloo is convinced of it.

Better he should be bruised from head to foot by me who love him than that he should come to harm through ignorance. I am now teaching him the Master Words of the Jungle that shall protect him with the birds and the Snake-People, and all that hunt on four feet. . . He can now claim protection, if he will only remember the words, from all in the Jungle. Is not that worth a little beating? 11

In his Life in Victorian England, W.J. Reader comments on this notion of obedience.

From God downwards through the Queen and the established social order, there were those, it was generally held, whose place it was to give orders and those whose duty it was to obey. Obedience was one of the first of many duties exacted of a child by those who considered they had a right to demand it. 12

But the age was one of a new-found yet undefined freedom that fostered violence instead of security. Strikes, generally violent, were becoming common, especially after the killing of two miners near Pontefract in 1893 by soldiers acting in the name of "civil power".¹³ Taxes had boomed to meet the demand of American trade competition and the war effort; the railroads were absorbing industry, and the burden was falling to the working classes; farmers were shackled by a too-low tariff. General distress in the countryside resulted in the depression of 1873 to 1896. While stability in society was becoming rare, Kipling presented Baloo with his promise of security under the Law; and the hearts of the people snatched it up.

Baloo's personality, despite its stringent regard for the Law, is filled with simple wisdom and a calm appreciation of life. With all the turmoil of industrialization and "penny's pay for a penny's work",

the beauty of Victorian life had become smeared with the sixteen-hour work day. Baloo appreciates the Law and the Jungle for what it is worth; and although he is "no more than the old and sometimes very foolish Teacher of the Law,"¹⁴ he has an optimistic eye on the life around him that can only make it enjoyable.

. . .so Baloo taught him (Mowgli) the Wood and Water Laws; how to tell a rotten branch from a sound one; how to speak politely to the wild bees when he came upon a hive of them fifty feet above ground; what to say to Mang the Bat when he disturbed him in the branches at mid-day; and how to warn the water-snakes in the pools before he splashed down among them.¹⁵

An appreciation of life's good things, tempered by an open respect for the Law and the people subject to it, is Baloo's forte. Likewise, the dignity of honest work, not as a drudge but as a means of molding the full man, stands out in his evaluation of nature. Each jungle creature has his accorded job to do in the interest of the whole; and that job cannot be discarded for selfish motives. Kipling's personal attitude toward work, according to Hilton Brown, is that

Man's ultimate satisfaction will derive not from overcoming the universe or even permanently affecting it. . .but . . .in doing his appointed work so well that it cannot possibly score him off, in laughing at it whenever and however he can, in refusing to allow it to defeat his spirit.¹⁶

This accords with Baloo's teaching.

In conjunction with this idea of the dignity of work, C.E. Carrington remarks that Kipling's reflection of work in Baloo is a plea that "man should keep the rules or take the consequences; he should finish his daily work whole-heartedly, and without offering excuses for

failure".¹⁷ Once again, referring to Baloo's respect for the Law, it is evident how much better off humanity is when bound to it, especially in the light of man's daily efforts. As Carrington goes on to say, singling out Baloo as a prime example of Kipling's respect for work, to him

self-reliance meant not merely a willing acceptance of the Law, but much more than that, a readiness to exploit every opportunity to be found within its widest limits, a contempt for short views and niggardly interpretations of its purpose.¹⁸

Baloo is always consistent, always himself. Such a picture of stability and honest subjection to the Law was easily accepted by the Victorians. With the world spinning around them, Baloo stood out as a monument to obedience and integrity. He is not perfect, but he is always himself: blubbering, sometimes cranky and huffy, yet stalwart and true-blue. His is a practical wisdom that guides Mowgli through the loopholes of life and in the end teaches Mowgli the greatest lesson of all: sincerity with oneself and one's own kind.

I taught thee the Law. It is for me to speak, and though
I cannot now see the rocks before me, I see far. Little
Frog, take thine own trail; make thy lair with thine own
blood and pack and people. . .¹⁹

Mowgli's education is complete, and it is time for him to take his proper place in the world, the place accorded him by the Law and nature. Baloo has always been at his side to defend him and protect him in the jungle, but Mowgli's time is up. With a pledge of loyalty on the part of the blind old honey-bear, Mowgli is given his final commission:

For the sake of him who showed
One wise Frog the Jungle-Road,
Keep the Law the Man-Pack make--
For thy blind old Baloo's sake! ²⁰

Bagheera

The theme of respect for the Law and its promise for a stabilized society carries throughout the Mowgli tales. Kipling subjects all to the Law, even those outside the Wolf Pack. Otherwise, social order will dissolve in a flurry of personal whims and desires. Even Bagheera, "as cunning as Tabaqui, as bold as the wild buffalo, and as reckless as the wounded elephant",²¹ is no exception. Though an outsider to the Pack and a lone hunter by nature, Bagheera still maintains respect for the all-encompassing Law and those bound by its code. In the opening pages of The Jungle Book, at Mowgli's initiation into the Wolf-Pack, Bagheera addresses the Pack leader:

O Akela, and ye the Free People, I have no right in your assembly; but the Law of the Jungle says that if there is a doubt which is not a killing matter in regard to a new cub, the life of that cub may be bought at a price. And the Law does not say who may or may not pay that price. Am I right? ²²

At no time in the book would anyone think Bagheera needed to ask permission to do anything; but when it comes to matters under the Law, even he, "black as the Pit and terrible as a demon",²³ is submissive. Reminding Mowgli of his salvation, he tells him that "he must never touch cattle because he had been bought into the Pack at the price of a bull's life."²⁴ This is the Law. For all the wonders and opportunities of the Jungle, the Law is still the Law.

'All the jungle is thine', said Bagheera (to Mowgli), 'and thou canst kill everything that thou art strong enough to kill; but for the sake of the bull that bought thee thou must never kill or eat any cattle, young or old. That is the Law of the Jungle.' ²⁵

It is just such a respect in the heart of one who could exempt himself from the Law that appealed to the Victorians who saw around them capitalists regarding the Law as a toy to be used at their will, then laid aside for another when it no longer amused them. The Law was fine but only for those who could afford it.

Not so Bagheera. To some extent, the Black Panther epitomizes all the Anglo-Saxon traits of manliness, love of strength, virility, and drive---a rugged individualist, in the good sense of the term. Bagheera is a character of practical action. When old Baloo rolls himself up in a ball and moans that Mowgli has been stolen by the Monkey-people, Bagheera is sarcastic. "Baloo, thou has neither memory nor respect. What would the jungle think if I, the Black Panther, curled myself up like Sahi the Porcupine, and howled?"²⁶ Baloo then snaps out of his mourning spell, and the two are off for Kaa, the Rock Python, to reclaim Mowgli. The Panther never makes any bones about false modesty or show. Baloo introduces himself to Kaa with a somewhat resounding air, but upon turning to Bagheera to begin citing his glories, the Black Panther cuts him short with a snap of the jaws for, as Kipling adds, "he (Bagheera) did not believe in being humble".²⁷ In his survey of the eighteen-nineties, Holbrook Jackson has this remark concerning Kipling:

Rudyard Kipling was undeniably a protest also against the artistic intellectualism of the time, with its tendency to enclose life in the conservatory of culture; and he was all the more effective as he used his protagonists' favorite weapons. He knew what he thought and said when he thought in his own way, with as little apology to precedent or convention as the most ultra-realist or impressionist.²⁸

Bagheera is the closest likeness of Kipling's personality we have in The Jungle Book, for he mirrors the ideas of action, personal liberty, strength, and confidence in oneself that was Kipling's life-long creed. Like Kipling, Bagheera "reasserted the claims of virility and actuality, and, if you like, of vulgarity---that underlying grossness of life which is Nature's safeguard."²⁹ He never, throughout the book, seeks the empty escapism of words for words' sake. The age, points out André Maurois in his Prophets and Poets, was one of

Oscar Wilde and Aubrey Beardsley, the time of the 'decadent' aesthetes, the time when artists sought to shun the sentimental convention of progress, and to pursue the cult of art isolated from life. ³⁰

But for Kipling and his audience, it was time for manliness and an almost cold-blooded outlook on life. It was just such an attitude that struck home with the people, tired of sugary, soul-searching ventures, airy abstractions that had no bearing whatsoever on their own work-a-day lives. Wilde, Pater, Beardsley, Ruskin---to cite a few of the propagators of the movement---had padded the literary scene with brocaded velvet. Action, not escapism, was the remedy for happiness; and what mattered most for Kipling was not what a man felt, but what he did.

Ah! What avails the classic bent
And what the cultured world,
Against the undoctored incident
That actually occurred?

And what is Art whereto we press
Through paint and prose and rhyme--
When Nature in her nakedness
Defeats us every time? ³¹

Bagheera is nature in the "raw", and he speaks for Kipling against the hollow words and ideas of the aesthetes of the late Victorian scene. His last words to Mowgli, about to return to the world of men, are a plea to action, determination, and a straightforward looking at life in the face.

Choose no idle tree-cat trail,
Pack or council, hunt or den,
Cry no truce with Jackal-Men.
Feed them silence when they say:
'Come with us an easy way.'
Feed them silence when they seek
Help of thine to hurt the weak.
Make no bandar's boast of skill;
Hold thy peace above the kill.
Let not call nor song nor sign
Turn thee from thy hunting line. 32

Like Kipling, Bagheera has no use for man as weak-kneed and easily flattered; but his respect for man the way he should be, as mirrored in Mowgli, is unwavering. From the very first entrance of Mowgli onto the jungle scene, Bagheera is behind him, confident in his manliness, which knows no equal in the world of brutes. Nursing his wrath, Shere Khan roars his protest at being denied a supper of Mowgli; but Bagheera warns him: "Ay, roar well, for the time comes when this naked thing will make thee roar to another tune, or I know nothing of man." 33 Throughout The Jungle Book, Bagheera shows an insight into Mowgli as "man" that is reflective of Kipling's personal notion of the man who should be typical of his age.

Master of the Jungle, when my strength goes, speak for me
---speak for Baloo---speak for us all! We are cubs before
thee! Snapped twigs before foot! Fawns that have lost
their does! 34

Man, maintaining and using his rationality to its full extent, draws complete surrender and recognition from the jungle. Even the Law comes after man's word. "There is more in the Jungle now than Jungle Law, Baloo",³⁵ Bagheera muses; and Mowgli's mastery is undeniable. Mowgli has learned the ultimate lesson from Bagheera: sincerity and determination. Ralph Waldo Emerson, quoted by C.E. Carrington in his Life of Rudyard Kipling, supports Kipling's ideas against the critics who slashed them.

Your genuine action will explain itself, and will explain all your other actions. Your conformity explains nothing. Act singly, and what you have done singly will justify you. Power is in nature the essential measure of right. Nature suffers nothing to remain in its Kingdom which cannot help itself. ³⁶

Bagheera always sticks to his guns. Once a decision is made, he carries it out with the cold calculation of a determined individualist. The contrast with the sporadic, oftentimes unsteady decisions of an age reaching out too far toward the future without keeping its feet on the ground is obvious. For Bagheera, the Law must have its due; but personal drive and initiative in the day-to-day job of living is the way in which the Law is best served.

Kaa

Other characters, particularly Mother and Father Wolf and Akela, leader of the Wolf-Pack, stand out prominently in The Jungle Book as respecters of the Law and of the virtues of well-established society; but no one character so well combines Kipling's notion of today's practicality, tomorrow's speculation, and yesterday's experience as Kaa, the Rock Python. Like the wisdom he personifies, Kaa is ageless.

I have seen a hundred and a hundred Rains. Ere Hahti cast his milktushes my trail was big in the dust. By the First Egg I am older than many trees, and I have seen all that the Jungle has done. 37

He has seen the jungle in its every facet---above, on the ground, and below; and, like the others of the jungle, his respect for the Law is complete, for this respect is another mirror of Kipling's own. Maurois' opinion of the Law and Kipling's admiration of it paints a picture of Kaa himself:

That Law, with a capital L, of which he speaks so often is, in his eyes, the natural outcome of the age-old wisdom of the races. It could not spring from the talky-talk of an assembly nor from the votes of a crowd. It is. And it can be altered only by wise men who translate the law of hard fact into the written word. 38

When Mowgli, desperate to turn aside the voracious dholes, comes to Kaa for advice, he receives counsel almost too terrible to be followed; but he still respects the old python. "It is to pull the very whiskers of Death; but---Kaa, thou art, indeed, the wisest of all the Jungle." 39 Wisdom lies in honor for the Law; and Kaa, who has honored and administered it since the jungle began, can only love its inevitable truth.

With such men as Wilde, Parnell, and Dilke questioning the justice of humanity, Kipling's respect for unquestionable standards of right and wrong, backed by the force of established authority, was an immense support to the people.

Although somewhat Burkean in his traditional outlook on life, Kaa is not nearly so nostalgic. To him, the Law is eternally plastic and adjustable to the needs of today. He does not cling to the past for past's sake. When the time comes to shed his skin, he does so without chagrin. Old things, having run their proper course, need to be set aside for new ones. It is just this practicality for the present that the English people enjoyed in Kipling, for it gave them hope in the Law for day-to-day life. Kaa is a man of action. Rebuking the Bandar-log and their foolish, empty lives, he realizes the concrete value of wisdom.

They fear me alone. They have good reason. Chattering, foolish vain---vain, foolish, and chattering, are the monkeys. . . They grow tired of nuts they pick, and throw them down. They carry a branch a half a day, meaning to do great things with it, and then they snap it in two. 40

His action against them is direct and deadly. Conjuring the weak minds of the monkeys, he charms the entire mob into walking down his throat.

Kaa's wisdom extends to man as well. At the White Cobra's den, he rejects worldly riches as vain. "Very many men would kill thrice in a night for the sake of that one red stone alone." 41 As Mowgli discovers later, the ruby is not even good to eat. He cannot understand why man would kill for it. Kaa's only answer is "Mowgli, go thou and sleep", 42

for Mowgli has not learned the ways of men that can make life an empty shell-game. Kaa is a cautious but convinced worker; and he sees to it that the Law is ever behind him, tempered by his years of experience as a servant and interpreter of its dictates.

IV. Caricatures of a Decadent Age

Bandar-log

In his model characters, Kipling has set forth the universal ideals for England which he detected missing in late Victorian society. Through his secondary characters in the Mowgli stories, Kipling jabs at the failings of a society that is starting to decay. He draws a sharp picture of the English land-owning classes in the Bandar-log. Idleness and inactivity, coupled with a hollowness of head and a stubborn confidence in their own empty ability, are the earmarks of the monkey-people. The Bandar-log are completely self-centered. They demand all the respect that the jungle creatures will pay them. Like most spineless individuals, they are starved for attention. Running off with Mowgli in "Kaa's Hunting", they howl with delight when Bagheera struggles to catch them before it is too late. "He has noticed us! Bagheera has noticed us!" 43 And the conceit of the Bandar-log is not a light one.

Sore, sleepy, and hungry as he was, Mowgli could not help laughing when the Bandar-log began, twenty at a time, to tell him how great and wise and strong and gentle they were, and how foolish he was to wish to leave them. "We are great. We are free. We are wonderful. We are the most wonderful people in all the jungle! We all say so, so it must be true. . ." 44

This is just the type of idle talk Kipling admired least in the world around him. As Holbrook Jackson says of him,

He can forgive all faults of passion or ambition; but he has no place in his system for the characterless nonentity who is neither good for something nor bad for anything. 45

Such a hollowness of spirit was poignantly reflected in the late-Victorian gentry who were still building castles on the sands of the past. W.J.

Reader, in his Life in Victorian England, writes in this regard:

In theory, the gentry justified their privileges by disinterested public service and devoted care for the interests of their dependants. The theory was fairly new. . . but it did something to satisfy the stirrings of newly aroused social consciences and it had some effect in practice: enough, at any rate, to cast a rosy glow around the landowning class which was extremely gratifying to themselves, their admirers, and their emulators. 46

The Bandar-log are a shallow lot who, as Chile the Kite points out, never go far. "They never do what they set out to do. Always pecking at new things are the Bandar-log." 47 And not only the gentry of the age, but the philosophers and politicians as well are summed up in them. To a man of action like Kipling, such a way of life was nauseating. The Bandar-log speak to Mowgli, as Parliament speaks to its younger members, of the glory of a power that has apathied long ago.

'Now as you are a new listener and can carry our words back to the Jungle-People so that they may notice us in the future, we will tell you all about our most excellent selves.' Mowgli made no objection, and the monkeys gathered by hundreds on the terrace to listen to their own speakers singing the praises of the Bandar-log and whenever a speaker stopped for want of breath, they would all shout together: 'This is true, we all say so.' 48

Reflecting on the political picture of America in a letter to the Pioneer, Kipling puts in a nutshell his ideas on politics.

Scores of men have told me that they would as soon concern themselves with the public affairs of the city or State as rake muck. Turn now to the august spectacle of a Government of the people, by the people, for the people. . .The Democrat at a party drinks more than the Republican, and

when drunk may be heard to talk about a thing called the Tariff, which he does not understand, but which he conceives to be the bulwark of the country or else the surest power for its destruction. Sometimes he says one thing and sometimes another, in order to contradict the Republican, who is always contradicting himself. 49

With regard to such people, Mowgli only has this to say: "Tabaqui, the Jackal, must have bitten all these people. . .and now they have the madness." 50 Madness is the worst disease that can happen in the jungle, for it makes one's head swell to the tune of his own words and not his own deeds. In general, at least as far as Kipling was concerned, this was the worst failing of his age. The action so much a part of Baloo and Bagheera is often threatened by the Victorian "monkies" in these last years before World War I. The only difference was that the outcome in The Jungle Book leans toward the heroes---not so in the actual tragedy of the English scene. John Metcalf sums it up neatly. "No other era can show so many earnest disinterested seekers after truth, or so many practical idealists." 51

The other and perhaps the most despicable failing of the Bandar-log is their lack of respect for law and order of any type. In the words of H.V. Routh, the Bandar-log have become like the new middle class,

guilty of the same kind of selfishness as had proved the downfall of the landed aristocracy: they were so busy administering the Empire for their own profit that they overlooked the rights of those beneath them. 52

Baloo rebukes Mowgli for even talking with them. "Thou hast been with the Monkey-People--the gray apes--the people without a law--the eaters

of everything." 53 Then, going on, Baloo explodes in a torrent of criticism.

I have taught thee all the Law of the Jungle for all the people of the jungle---except the Monkey-Folk who live in the trees. They have no Law. They are outcaste. They have no speech of their own, but use the stolen words which they overhear when they listen, and peep, and wait up above in the branches. Their way is not our way. They are without leaders. They have no remembrance. They boast and chatter and pretend that they are a great people about to do great affairs in the jungle, but the falling of a nut turns their minds to laughter and all is forgotten. 54

Later, when actually captured by the Bandar-log and introduced to their hollow form of living, Mowgli cannot understand or accept them. He has been raised under Baloo's teaching, and that teaching has meant full observance of the Law as the only guarantee of a harmonious society. Kaa masters the naive monkey-folk later in the story, for his is the power of one wise in the Law. He knows the emptiness of mind that can only be the result of such a lawless life, a life that means nothing better to the people who live it than a huge baby rattle with the "less fortunates" as beads inside.

Shere Khan

In the Bandar-log, Kipling fuses the emptiness of rash speculation with the hollow sophistication of do-nothings; but his probing into the Victorian clock-work runs deeper. Shere Khan, the lame tiger, epitomizes two of the most prominent yet inwardly disgusting characteristics of the age: cowardice and boastful pride. Formerly the Lord of the jungle, Shere Khan has been stripped of his position under the Law and reduced to a mere servant and outcast of the jungle-folk. He is violently indignant. At the Council Rock, before the entire Wolf-Pack, he is enraged that Mowgli has been given asylum, in accordance with the Law, and howls his opposition.

Bah! What have we to do with this toothless fool? He is doomed to die! It is the man-cub who has lived too long. Free People, he was my meat from the first. Give him to me. I am weary of this man-wolf folly. He has troubled the jungle for ten seasons. Give me the man-cub, or I will hunt here always, and not give you one bone. He is a man, a man's child, and from the marrow of my bones I hate him! 55

Like so many of the capitalists of Kipling's time, Shere Khan is concerned with his own interests. His pride is his god; and it is through his pride that his fall from position as Lord of the jungle was effected. Through his ancestors, he has taught the jungle to fear and to hate and to kill. There is no repentance on his part. Hathi, the wise old rogue elephant, tells of the result of the First Tiger's taste of blood among the jungle-folk:

Till that night never one of us had died, and the First of the Tigers, seeing what he had done, and being made foolish by the scent of the blood, ran away into the marshes of the

North, and we of the Jungle, left without a judge, fell to fighting among ourselves. 56

Since then, only the Darwinian code of "survival of the fittest" has ruled the jungle. Shere Khan has slowly degenerated. This "hunter of little naked cubs--frog-eater--fish-killer" has never learned to hold his face up before the Pack. He has learned to hunt Man, expressly forbidden by the Law.

Ye may kill for yourselves, and your mates, and your cubs,
as they need, and ye can;
But kill not for pleasure of killing, and seven times never
kill Man! 57

Like most man-eaters, and like the men of Kipling's era who used the helpless and defenseless simply as stepping-stones to personal satisfaction, Shere Khan has become mangy and has lost the "teeth" of human respect. Even in the worst of crises, when the jungle is caught up in a severe drought, and all the laws of hunting rights have been suspended, according to the Truce of the Water Rock, Shere Khan has no respect for the weaker classes. Hahti rebukes the tiger, reeking with the blood of a fresh human kill, before the entire jungle.

Go then. The river is to drink, and not to defile. None but the Lane Tiger would have boasted of his right at this season --when we suffer together--Man and Jungle People alike. Clean or unclean, get to thy lair, Shere Khan! 58

Kipling is particularly severe in his judgment of the Lane Tiger, but his feelings are founded on the observations he has made of the men around him. Poverty and agricultural distress was being given no more than a shrug of concern. More often than not, advantage was taken of the less fortunate; and any hopes they may have harbored for recovery

of their common dignity were promptly smashed. True, with the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 and the Factory Acts of 1833, 1850, and 1874, the working classes were gaining voice;⁵⁹ but capitalism still prevailed, and back-stage graft and corruption were growing fast toward its wholesale eruption in America with the Tweed scandal of 1876. The laissez-faire mentality and utilitarianism of many of the nouveau riche was also typical of the self-righteous attitude that dominated the world of big business.⁶⁰ A non-respecter of individuals can never be a respecter of self; and unless self is respected, life, for Kipling, is an empty dream.

Shere Khan, likewise, entertains no respect for the Law. In the opening story of The Jungle Book, he has shifted his hunting grounds without warning, violating the right of the jungle folk to know when and where all eaters-of-flesh hunt. He has slain Man. He threatens to take over the leadership of the Pack if Mowgli is not given to him. He has given in once too often to his personal whims, and now the Law means no more to him than an obstacle to be circumvented. Such resistance to the Law can have no place in the existing state of Victorian England if there is to be any hope for endurance. Crane Brinton reflects on this idea, as proposed by Thomas Hill Green.

Therefore a modern Englishman has not a right to resist the Law. In the first place, any existing social system incorporates the efforts of so many generations of men, is so thoroughly in accordance with the national character, that the presumption must be in its favor against even a very wise individual. Moreover, resistance to a single law is apt to end in resistance to the whole fabric of the law, in an attempt at complete revolution.⁶¹

Shere Khan is not even a "very wise individual". His dog's death is the final rejection by jungle society, a rejection tempered by countless infringements of the Law that is the only guarantee for peaceful co-existence.

Even the Jungle has its law, and the animals respect it. When the wolf tribe, under the influence of the bad tiger, ceases for a few days to respect its old chief, Akela, the leaderless clan immediately suffers. Here are some of the wolves gone lame through falling into traps; here is one dragging a leg shattered by a gunshot; others are mangy through eating tainted food; and when Mowgli brings them the tiger's striped skin, one of the pack calls on him to be their leader: 'Lead us again, O man-cub, for we be sick of this lawlessness, and we would be the Free People once more.' 62

White Cobra

One of Kipling's most effective literary techniques in The Jungle Book is his pairing off of characters to add greater perspective to each: Shere Khan and his utter rejection of the Law for his own ends is contrasted with Baloo, whose only goal is observance of its every letter; the Bandar-log and their unrealistic acceptance of life are opposed to Bagheera's rock-hard outlook on the job of living actively from day to day; Man, represented by Buldeo and his blindness to life's fundamental values, highlights Mowgli's simple yet open acceptance of life and its natural beauties. Kaa, too, has his counter-part. The White Cobra of "The King's Ankus" is a reflection of those people whom Kipling sees as unrealistic, as doting on their past glories and completely oblivious of tomorrow's promise for development. Kaa respects the past but is willing to alter its experiences to meet new situations. The White Cobra, on the other hand, has a death grip on the past. When Kaa and Mowgli attempt to pull the snake from his nostalgia by showing him that the world is not what it used to be, he is savagely indignant.

But ye come with lies, Man and Snake both, and would have
me believe that my city is not, and that my wardship ends.
Little do men change in the years. But I change never! 63

Here Kipling has leveled his pen at the political shallowness of the previous twenty years. Beginning with Disraeli in 1874, English politics had fallen heir to the Tory regime. Lord Randolph Churchill, during his short ministry from 1883 to 1886, attempted to break away from traditional ties; but the return of Gladstone and the Tory camp in 1886

reclosed the liberal doors and England settled back into its armchair of national pride and past glories. 64

'What of the city?' said the White Cobra. 'What of the great, the walled city--the city of an hundred elephants and twenty thousand horses, and cattle past counting--the city of the King of Twenty Kings? I grow deaf here, and it is long since I heard the war-gongs.' 65

When this one-sided reverence is threatened by news from Kaa that the world has changed, that there is no longer any great palace of kings and maharajas, the cobra grows furious and rejects even the Master Word of the Jungle. "There is but one Master-word here. It is mine!" 66 It would take until the First World War for England to snap out of her reverie and realize that the present was what mattered and that it alone determined the greatness of any nation.

Deluded with the greatness of a forgotten past, the White Cobra is naturally led to praise the material riches that went in to making that past so brilliant. "Stoop down, then, and take what ye will," he says. "Earth has no treasure like these." 67 The hollow riches of man have no place in the jungle, but the cobra has become enamoured with their former reflection of spreading silks and alabaster pillars. To his eyes, they never fade.

The city--the great city of the forest whose gates are guarded by the King's towers--can never pass. They built it before my father's father came from the egg, and it shall endure when my son's sons are as white as I. 68

Kipling himself, like Kaa, was an admirer of the past; and by the fact that he recalled much of its lost virtue to the English people, he was

respected and loved. Yet he does not, like the White Cobra, let the past become an obsession with him. Such an obsession is sterility. "Thuu", says Mowgli—"It is dried up." 69 For the cobra has outlived his poison, and his fangs are withered from inactivity. Man's only hope for an active spirit is a soul that never grows stale with life, that cherishes the past only for its aid in making the present more vital.

V. Mowgli versus the Victorian "man".

Kipling places immense faith in his animal characters. They speak his thoughts opening and poignantly, never without purpose. They study man in a new light. But when he actually looks at man as man and not animal, Kipling is at his best. The two universal "men" in The Jungle Book (with the exception of Mowgli's natural mother, Messua) are Buldeo and Mowgli. Kipling's approach to these characters is extremely direct, and his point is clear.

The biggest complaint against the Victorian man was that he had lost sight of the truly valuable things of life. To Mowgli, the Man-Pack has no idea what life is all about.

Thou knowest the village of the Man-Pack that cast me out? They are idle, senseless, and cruel; they play with their mouths, and they do not kill their weaker for food, but for sport. When they are full-fed, they would throw their own breed into the Red Flower. This I have seen. It is not well that they should live here any more. 70

Kipling's "man" has grown smug and self-complacent. He has become satisfied with chasing dreams. Superstition plays a large part in his life. Buldeo calls Mowgli a "Sorcerer", a "Jungle-demon"; but Mowgli is only bewildered with the strange ways of these strange people whom he certainly does not recognize as his own. There is nothing supernatural in the jungle; but the very marvels of its naturalness, which man has grown less and less to appreciate in his world of engine parts and grinding gears, are feared as something mysterious. Kipling was a great opter

for observing nature. In it he saw the perfect complement to man's rationality, and he was indignant to see man so easily set it aside. For this was the age of prestige and self-sufficiency, and there was no need to lower oneself to such vulgar things as enjoying a swim in a mountain stream or simply climbing a tree to loosen one's muscles.

Buldeo does not know how to cope with Mowgli's innocent strength when he comes across the jungle boy skinning Shere Khan's trampled carcass.

What is this folly? To think that thou canst skin a tiger?
. . . It is the lame Tiger, too, and there is a hundred rupees on his head. Well, well, we will overlook thy letting the herd run off, and perhaps I will give thee one of the rupees of the reward when I have taken the skin to Khanhiwara. 71

Buldeo has only one thing on his mind: himself. This was exactly the type of man Kipling preached against. As Bonamy Dobree points out in his biography of Rudyard Kipling: "He loathed presumption, the malignant stupidity exhibited by little gods in minor positions, and these are the victims of his boisterously farcical stories." 72 Life must be lived in the jungle, not presumed; and unless Man can overcome his weaknesses, it can only be hollow. Bagheera, who has been born in captivity and spent his entire youth among men, points out the trait coming through even in Mowgli that undeniably shows him to be a man. "What is the Law of the Jungle; Strike first and then give tongue? By thy very carelessness they know that thou are a man." 73 For Mowgli has become negligent in mastering the meaning of the Law, a thing which not even the smallest jackal-cub would consider. Mowgli must learn to tear himself away from

the ways of men if he is ever to find his life and live it fully.

Mowgli's rejection of man, combined with the Wolf-Pack's natural hatred for humans, harmonizes with Kipling's own sentiments. "Who is Man that we should care for him", purrs Bagheera, "---the naked brown digger, the hairless and toothless, the eater of earth?" 74 Kipling interjects a short paragraph that sums up much of what the jungle-folk feel toward Man.

The reason the beasts give among themselves is that Man is the weakest and most defenseless of all living things, and it is unsportsmanlike to touch him. They say, too--and it is true--that man-eaters become mangy and lose their teeth. 75

Mowgli's physical powers amaze the villagers. Like a god he stands among them, displaying all the strength and vigor of a naturally healthy body. The wolves, too, are anxious over Mowgli among men, for they know how idleness and smugness can snuff out the fire of life. The interchange between Gray Brother and Mowgli is an excellent example of such a feeling among the jungle-folk.

'Thou wilt not forget that thou are a wolf? Men will not make thee forget?', said Gray Brother, anxiously.

'Never. I will always remember that I love thee and all in our cave; but also I will always remember that I have been cast out of the Pack.'

'And that thou may'st be cast out of another pack. Men are only men, Little Brother, and their talk is like the talk of frogs in a pond.' 76

Later, having lived with men for awhile, Mowgli is fed-up.

Bah! Chatter--chatter! Talk, talk! Men are blood-brothers of the Bandar-log. Now he must wash his mouth with water; now he must blow smoke; and when all that is done he has

still his story to tell. They are a very wise people--men.
. . .and--I grow as lazy as they! 77

Naturally, all this rejection of man by his characters is good fun for Kipling. The dialogue remains bright, seldom heavy or moralizing. This was exactly the sort of sophisticated "rib-tickling" that caught the ears and minds of the English people, even those implicated in Kipling's decadent characters. Man's vision needed some refocusing on the good things of nature. It had become cluttered with the pipe dreams of capitalism and the promise of worldly success. The White Cobra epitomizes the hollowness of riches. Mowgli cannot even begin to understand why men would be so eager for them, since "they are hard and cold, and by no means good to eat"; but before the end of the story, six men have slain one another over them. 78

In The Jungle Book, Kipling is free in his bombardment of man's abuse of his social responsibility; but he is even more open in praising man as man should be in Mowgli. Primarily, Mowgli is a person of simple tastes. He appreciates the good and beautiful things in nature for what they are worth in themselves and not for what they are worth for his personal use. From the first night of his arrival, naked, in Father Wolf's lair, Mowgli faces the world with an open and unflinching eye. As Father Wolf says, "He is altogether without hair, and I could kill him with a touch of my foot. But see, he looks up and is not afraid." ⁷⁹ His bold outlook on life, tempered by an inward realization of his human capabilities, helps Mowgli finally blossom into the Lord and Master of the jungle man should be. Like Wordsworth, Kipling has fused into Mowgli an "honest poverty". Here is man in his primitive state, in constant contact with nature. It is all that Mowgli wants; it is all that man, for Kipling, needs. "What more can I wish? I have the jungle, and the Favor of the Jungle! Is there more between sunrise and sunset?" ⁸⁰

Kipling saw through the pseudo-educational fog that smothered much of the late Victorian society. With Mowgli, he attempted to cut through this fog to the extent of denying formal education altogether. Mowgli becomes a fully mature man through a strictly natural environment. Kipling's idea went hand-in-glove with Rousseau's of the child in nature. As stated by Peter Coveney, Rousseau's primary demand was

that the child is important in himself, and not as a diminutive adult. For him, the child was not the passive creature

of external perception, but a self-active soul, endowed with natural tendencies to virtue from birth, which in a state of nature could be developed, and with extreme care, be nourished slowly toward the necessities of social existence. 81

Mowgli is a child of nature, but his arrival at adulthood is inevitable. Before doing so, one of the biggest steps of his maturing process is to reject the empty society of Buldeo and the rest of false-faced mankind. Baloo and Bagheera, from the beginning, have warned him to "Leave Man alone"; but Mowgli must see for himself. His return to the village of his birth is a revelation. The people gawk, open-mouthed, at this wolf-child who is really one of them. "They have no manners, these Men Folk," says Mowgli to himself. "Only the gray ape would behave as they do." 82 Learning the customs of men is a hardship.

First, he had to wear a cloth round him, which annoyed him horribly; and then he had to learn about money, which he did not in the least understand, and about plowing, of which he did not see the use. . . And Mowgli had not the faintest idea of the difference that caste makes between man and man. When the potter's donkey slipped in the clay-pit, Mowgli hauled it out by the tail, and helped to stack the pots for their journey to the market at Khanhiwara. That was very shocking, too, for the potter is a low-cast man, and his donkey is worse. When the priest scolded him, Mowgli threatened to put him on the donkey, too. . . 83

Mowgli is patient and manages to endure one more night with the villagers, during the better part of which Buldeo spins out tale after wonderful tale of animal ghosts and jungle superstition. Mowgli, at length, can take no more. "All the evening I have lain here listening, and, except once or twice, Buldeo has not said one word of truth concerning the jungle, which is at his very doors." 84 With that, Mowgli's affiliation with man

is at an end until his time with the jungle is finished. His education will lie with the jungle people and their code of ethics instead of with flabby human society. Even in the last tale of the Mowgli stories, he is reluctant to return to his rightful people. "Nay, nay, I am a wolf. I am of one skin with the Free People. It is no will of mine that I am a man." ⁸⁵ But the animals recognize that Mowgli is not one of them. Kaa's wisdom speaks again: "Remember thou art a man; and remember what pack cast thee out. Let the wolf look to the dog. Thou art a man." ⁸⁶

Throughout The Jungle Book, Baloo and Bagheera have raised this Frog of the jungle as one of their own, and yet as not one of the jungle. He is Man with all the human failings of curiosity, impetuosity, and sometimes a disregard for the Law. Mowgli has become, for Kipling, man as he is and should be, with all the human emotions and drives that are undeniably human. He learns courtesy and courage from Baloo, and it holds him in good stead during a common crisis with the monkey-people. Kaa's praise is lavish. "A brave heart and a courteous tongue. They shall carry thee far through the jungle, manling." ⁸⁷ He is mankind with his unconquerable mind; and all the jungle is subject to his eyes that do not blaze like Bagheera's but "only grow more and more interested and excited." ⁸⁸ Kipling's interest was not so much the Darwinian aspect of man as that of Wordsworth, Rousseau, and even Dickens. His one love for his mother is as true as any for the jungle creatures. When she is mistreated by Buldeo and the men of the village, his heart goes out to her.

And Messua had been kind to him, and so far as he knew anything about love, he loved Messua as completely as he hated the rest of mankind. 89

Mowgli learns social justice as laid down in the Law. J.M.S. Thompkins, in The Art of Rudyard Kipling, sums up the general tenor of Mowgli's recognition of the Law as demonstrated throughout The Jungle Book.

In the jungle all respectable people pay their debts. When Mowgli takes a knife from a dead man, killed by a boar, he scrupulously tracks and kills the boar. He lets in the jungle to destroy the village that stoned him and would have put his foster-mother to death, and he enjoys in consequence "The good conscience that comes from paying a just debt". He knows hate and he exercises retaliation, which is part of the righteousness of the wild boy in his wild life. 90

Mowgli's maturation is a slow process but a fully-rewarding one. His final discovery in himself is his ability to feel sorrow and to cry.

'What is it? What is it?' he (Mowgli) said. 'I do not wish to leave the jungle, and I do not know what this is. Am I dying, Bagheera?'

'No, Little Brother. That is only tears, such as men use', said Bagheera. 'Now I know thou art a man, and a man's cub no longer. The Jungle is shut indeed to thee henceforward. Let them fall, Mowgli. They are only tears.'

So Mowgli sat and cried as though his heart would break; and he had never cried in all his life before. 91

Mowgli has reached his age-of-becoming. What Holbrook Jackson says of Kipling can be said also of Mowgli:

Wonder was reborn in him; but it was not the wonder of childhood. It was the wonder of the grown man who had known and observed life and become illusion-proof---but wondered still and was thankful always. 92

Kipling has molded Mowgli through nature. Baloo is there to hold him fast to the Law and its insurance for social justice. Bagheera stands

ready to warn and keep the senses alert. Kaa's advice is profound; and the Wolf-Pack, Chile the Kite, Tabaqui, Hahti, all have made their contribution. When Mowgli returns to his own society, it is with the heavy heart of one leaving his life-long friends. "Man must go to Man" in the end; for, unless he takes his place with his own tribe, life will be meaningless. In "The Spring Running", Mowgli has discovered that the jungle has done its job for him, and it is time to face the world as a mature human being. The cycle is complete.

VI. Conclusion

Kipling's popularity was transitory. As Mary Kelly states in her book, The Well of English,

The conclusion is warranted that one reason why his popularity dwindled is precisely because he dealt so exclusively with the things of a day that was passing to the avoidance of themes that reach to the undying spirit of man. 93

His work was not profound. But perhaps this was the reason for its appeal. Mowgli and Baloo, Bagheera and Kaa and the Wolf-Pack are the summation of man as he should be if he is to advance in science and wealth and yet maintain respect for the God of things as they are and not as they were becoming twisted by the materialistic advances of a mechanical world or the airy sophistication of a new gentry.

The Jungle Book was not written as a profound allegory. It was the work of a man who observed life from a stuffy editor's office at Lahore, along the Grand Trunk Road of India, in the bush country among brown-skinned natives---a romantic, but a romantic who stood on equal ground with the new-breed mill workers as well as the dilettantes of English society. As the Law of the Jungle indicates, life is a struggle, a challenge of man against men, of men against new ideas and discoveries, of men against environment and social prejudice. Unless man faces up to this struggle, it will overcome him. Kipling's characters, as animals and as men, held up for the late Victorians a picture of man winning this struggle. Oscar Wilde, ironically enough, is quoted by H.V. Routh in his English Literature and Ideas in the Twentieth Century as stating

"Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask and he will tell the truth." 94 Kipling has done just that. The jungle characters had their message for the late Victorians, and it was not a profound one; but the truth contained in it is surprisingly universal.

* * * *

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