

## COLONIZATION AND IDENTITY IN *THE JUNGLE BOOK*

W. Angel, M.A., M.Phil.,

Department of English, St. Joseph's College of Arts and Science (Autonomous), Cuddalore

Jeyanthi Ravichandran

Head, Department of English, St. Joseph's College of Arts and Science (Autonomous), Cuddalore

### Abstract

*The ideology of colonialism defines the identity of people within the general cultural sphere. It is based on cultural hierarchy and supremacy. The theory of colonialism is domination of the metropolitan center over the distant territory through the settlements. The colonial system does not destroy the native culture and tradition. Culture once alive and open to the future becomes classified and confined through the interpretation, oppression and to the values of the colonialist system. Finally, the native culture turns against its members and is used to devalue and define the identity of the native population. Culture exist as a tangible entity, it is the abstract ideology of comparison between cultures that create cultural identity situated in social hierarchy. Kipling in his novel The Jungle Book discusses the urge for identity and the supremacy of colonization.*

**Keywords:** Identity, Colonization, Oppression, Cultural hierarchy, Supremacy

### Introduction

*The Jungle Book* is a curious hybrid of the genre, a work that has inspired as much as criticism as reverence. In the first three stories, Kipling jumps back and forth in time, detailing how Mowgli came to be raised by wolves. The jungle is intended to appear as a place of development, where laws and rules and shared values dominate. Kipling depicts the jungle as an Arcadia, a part of ancient Greece idyllic pastoralism one of its salient characteristics.

*The Jungle Book* was published in 1893, is a collection of short stories and poems. It is one of the best known and treasured works of children's literature. Kipling employs anthropomorphism, the attribution of human-like emotions and traits to non-human entities. Kipling conveys ethical values through his stories.

The most famous stories from *The Jungle Book* include the eight stories revolving around the adventures of Mowgli, an abandoned man-cub who is raised by wolves in the Indian jungle. The other famous stories are "Rikki-Tikki-Tavi", the story of a heroic mongoose who saves a human by killing a dangerous snake, and "Toomai of the Elephants" the tale of a young elephant handler. Though Kipling was born in India, his stories were greatly influenced by his years in the British colony.

In *The Jungle Book*, Kipling uses the names and phrases that are popular in the Indian subcontinent, Bagheera which is a Hindi word that translates to the Black Panther. *The Jungle Book* was extremely popular that it has been adapted into various films and the most famous is Disney's animated classic from 1967 to the most recent

release in 2016. The series has been adapted into comic books for younger readers, and there have also been several adaptations by Marvel comics too. The settings and characterizations are drawn from Kipling's own experiences during his nineteenth-century travels around the British Empire. The stories all feature talking animals and are designed with the themes that easily reach mature audience as well. The paper deals with the first series of the novel.

*The Jungle Book* examines the colonial subtexts within some of the stories, using the technique of the animal story that attempts to put forward the ideas of colonial education and rule. After being nurtured under the care of animals, Mowgli soon feels at home. The life of Mowgli represents the colonial rule in India. Mowgli struggles between liminal status and sense of belonging to two worlds. Mowgli's identity takes a long time to develop because he is not constant in either of the world. He chooses the life of a man at the end, but he can never reconcile with the fact that he will truly be a man or a cub. Mowgli appeared in eight of the fifteen stories.

The new *Jungle Book* acts gently to Kipling's central point that Mowgli, a man in general, is seen as an inevitable threat to jungle life. Mowgli may represent lost innocence and purity, but to the animals, in the story he is an enigmatic symbol of the evil men. Perhaps there can never be an honest *Jungle Book* until the central character Mowgli is present all over in it.

Mowgli does not belong to the world of animals, his use of fire confirms it. There is a basic disconnection

between Mowgli and the other animals because of his physical appearance as a human being. At the same time, he finds that he is not immediately accepted by the world of humans because of his characteristics as that of animals.

Mowgli's identity is conflicted because he neither belongs to the world of animals nor to the world of human beings. He recognizes at the end that as a man-cub he belong to the world of humans and decides hemust learn to be like the human being. Another identity issue that Mowgli undergoes in the midst of the existential crisis is how and why evil persists. He has little understanding as why Shere Khan is driven to get him and at last recognizes that his own survival depends on ending the tiger's life. Another element of his identity crisis is his position against evil, something that is coupled with his struggle to understand his own self.

### Conclusion

The symbolism of Mowgli as an outsider in the world of jungle represents the colonial rule in which the Indian nation was kept under. In spite of being a human being Mowgli controls over the native inhabitants of the jungle. Mowgli's inequitable place in the jungle hierarchy casts him as a symbol of imperialism and colonialism. Shere Khan, the tiger enemy of Mowgli is a symbol of the lack of

civilization, rules, law and order which colonial imperialists used to justify their invasion of foreign lands and forced assimilation into their own culture. Shere Khan does not just violate law by hunting outside his territory and by killing man but also uses devious means to turn others against Mowgli. Baloo, the bear is a wonderful amiable companion for Mowgli, capable of instructing him on how to obtain and use the bare necessities in life. Baloo symbolizes the colonial view towards any culture blessed with the richness of natural resources with which they have done nothing but ensuring the deadly means of their survival.

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