

CHAPTER FOUR



CONCLUSION

The Jungle Books is a collection of stories in which we can observe two clear divisions - the stories in which Mowgli is the central character and the stories in which Mowgli does not appear. The surprising thing about these stories is their extraordinary grip and the impact that these stories create on the reader's mind. While reading the Jungle Books, we are left with an impression that these stories have something to convey to us. They are more than children's stories; because there are some aspects of these stories which would appeal only to the adult readers. The present Dissertation has tried to find out the undertones in this book. I also felt that Mowgli had some trends of feral children or the wolf-children, which were reported by several sociologists. I have further tried to study the development of Mowgli by tallying his case with that of a normal child brought up by human beings in human society. I have also tried to find out other important aspects of the Jungle Books. These aspects are clearly perceptible in this Book.

According to the science of development, the developmental stages of a normal child are, more or less, fixed. These stages occur gradually in a human child. According to my observations, Mowgli is not a normal child because such children become retarded as they are not attended to by the society. There are no signs of Mowgli's being a retarded child but there are plenty of examples in the book where Mowgli appears to be a supernormal child compared to fellow human beings of the same age in a normal human society.

It is a principle of psychology which says that a human being is born with the abilities to act, think, perceive and memorize, but these abilities have to be shaped and cultivated. The potentiality for thinking and learning is there, but it has to be directed in a certain way. A human child is imitative and his imitative nature helps him to learn things very rapidly. I have studied the developmental stages of a human-child recorded by the psychologist Jean Piaget and his collaborators. I have also referred to the detailed study made by Elizabeth Hurlock regarding the developmental psychology of a child. I have done this to see whether the hero of Rudyard Kipling's Jungle Books went through the same developmental stages as a normal child goes through or did his personality suffer severe setbacks as he was devoid of any human contact. I have also tried to find out the difference between a normal child and Mowgli.

Mowgli enters the Seeonee Wolf-Pack when he could just walk. With the support of the developmental psychology, I have found out that Mowgli's age would be anywhere between eight to twelve months. This means that with the help of his parents, Mowgli must have acquired all the physical and mental skills which are found in a normal child of the age anywhere between eight to twelve months. Mowgli must have learnt some motor activities like the eye coordination, to hold head up, to turn body, to sit, reach and grasp, to stand and to walk. The development of head region, trunk region, arms, hands, legs and feet must have taken place in Mowgli's case. He must have got the opportunity, guidance and inspiration to learn these activities in the human group.

There is a total absence of speech in Mowgli as he stayed away from human beings. But Kipling has made him acquire the language of animals.

But Mowgli, later, learns to speak when he goes back to Messua's house, by imitating her. This is the only normal thing about Mowgli which can also be counted as normal about a child like Mowgli.

His growth should have been delayed because he stays away from the world where he belongs. But Kipling has presented the reader with exaggerated accounts of Mowgli's abilities. From these accounts, it is hard to believe that Mowgli was a subnormal being having a delayed development. But Mowgli has grown into a physically strong youngman. He kills tiger at the age of eleven, with a calculated and planned move. This shows that mentally he is wise and intelligent. He falls from great heights and emerges without a bruise. Rudyard Kipling constantly compares him with man-trained child and Mowgli comes out as superior to him. There is a normal development of his brain. It shows no sign of retardation. The instincts of love, rage and revenge are all present in his personality. But he fails to understand his own emotions. He fails to understand the meaning of his tears. This shows that the capacity to understand any exclusively human traits is absent in Mowgli. As I have already noted in Chapter Two, Kipling has stated that Mowgli remembers the things before one year of his age. He remembers that he used to lay down by the fire to keep himself warm before he came into Seeonee Wolf-Pack. To remember things from the first twelve months of life is impossible thing psychologically. So, there seems to be no consistency in portraying Mowgli's character. There are quite a few contradictory statements in the Jungle Books regarding Mowgli's development. Sometimes he seems a supernormal child and sometimes as subnormal child. So, I think that Kipling has created a totally fictitious character, which is quite different from a normal human character. He had no intentions of

making him a 'perfect human child', which would grow according to the laws of developmental science.

Some sociologists like MacIver and Page have recorded the cases of Wolf-children. These children have been supposedly brought up by wolves. Some children were isolated from human society by the scientists for the sake of experiments. These cases were called the 'feral cases'. The sociologists have carefully studied the behaviour of such cases after they came back in the human society. I have also stated the general trends or behavioural patterns found in such cases. I have tried to find out whether Mowgli is a feral case like Kasper Houser, Kamala and Anna.

These feral cases do not know walking on two feet. The wolf-child Kamala, who was discovered in a wolf's den near Midnapur, is reported to have developed a habit of walking on all fours like the wolves. Mowgli walks on two feet in the Jungle Books, probably because he has learnt how to talk from the human beings. The skill to walk on two feet is already developed in Mowgli before he comes to the pack of wolves. In a later story, in the Jungle Books, Kipling forgets that Mowgli would walk on two feet and gives an account of Mowgli's walking on all fours. Perhaps, Kipling wanted to show the capacities of this extraordinary boy who is a blending of two different ways of life.

The feral cases show a total absence of human speech. This is true about Mowgli because unlike walking, he has learned to speak the language of animals and not of human beings. The skill of speaking has not been developed in Mowgli when he is in the company of the human group. When he comes back to the human society, he thinks that there is no fun in living with a man's pack, if he does not know their language.

He learns the language in his brief stay of three months in Messua's village. But he considers himself a wolf, he prides himself for being a wolf. He is sure that even if he could speak the language of men, he would still call himself a wolf.

The children who are isolated from society are said to shy away from human beings when they come back into their own human group. No such thing is perceptible in Mowgli's case. He goes back to the Man-Pack. He gets himself acquainted with the strange ways of men. He learns the language, to take cattle for herding, to use money and the rules of the prevailing caste-system in the village. He learns to distinguish one man from another. But it would be necessary to note that he loves being a wolf because he has a natural distrust of men. He hates men because his animal friends hate men. His likes and dislikes are same as his Wolf-Pack. He has heard about the man's cruelty from his mentors Bagheera and Baloo and so the dislike is obvious.

The children who are isolated from the society have different eating habits. Mowgli eats raw meat as his Pack eats. When Mowgli comes back to the Man-Pack, he learns to dress which annoys him to a great extent. As other feral children, Mowgli does not fail to develop a healthy human personality. He grows into a strong adolescent who seems weak compared to the animals in his pack but he seems strong as a bull in the midst of the villagers. He is a quick learner when he comes back to Messua, he learns everything from her in a very short time, including man's language. He feels apathetic and withdrawn because of the dilemma he is facing. Mowgli seems to be searching a way out of this dilemma throughout the Mowgli stories. He doubts whether he is a man or a wolf.

This dilemma is not satisfactorily solved by Kipling because even though the animals understand the necessity of parting, Mowgli is not willing to leave the jungle. Though the book ends with a happy note, something grieves and hurts the reader. It is not a happy ending because the dilemma remains as it is for Mowgli. I think that Kipling was searching an answer for his own dilemma in Mowgli's dilemma, which represents the dilemma of an Anglo-Indian who has no certain identity. This is because he is neither an Indian nor a pure Britisher. The crisis is of identity and it is clearly seen in Mowgli's pathetic condition in the Jungle Books.

Therefore, I am quite convinced that Mowgli is not a feral case. Whatever aspects of Mowgli's personality tally with those of the feral cases are purely accidental. The character of Mowgli is totally fictitious character. Kipling had no intention of making Mowgli a feral child. He wanted to give a new and unique creation to his readers and he wanted to create a sense of reality through Mowgli's character. The stories appeal to the children because they find the idea of a small boy being friendly with the animals very exciting and they are left awe-stricken. Kipling is very careful while writing about animals. He conveys to the children that like their own world, there is a world of animals. These stories seem primarily the stories for children, because in the Jungle Books, he has said that Mowgli goes to the Man-Pack and gets married but according to him, it would be a story for the grown-ups. "...But he was not always alone, because years afterwards, he became a man and married. But that is a story for grown-ups." [1]

Thus, he has committed himself indirectly to the fact that the Jungle Books are exclusively written for children. But it does not

mitigate the value of this book because he left some loose ends which appeal to the adults. These have been discussed in great detail in the present Dissertation.

The most important thing that appears in almost all the stories of the Jungle Books is Kipling's love for a definite order and discipline in the life, which is clearly enforced through the Jungle Books. He conceived Mowgli and the law together and both of them are in tune with each other. The Law protects Mowgli because Mowgli follows it. The Law of the Jungle never suits Mowgli but he obeys it because it is necessary if the Jungle is to survive. Everyone has to obey it from Tabagui, the Jackal to Purun Bhagat, K.C.I.E. They respect the code. Later, Mowgli comes to know that it is not suitable for him because it is meant for animals. So, in the last story, he sets out to make his own laws which are going to suit him. Throughout the Jungle Books, I have found out a complete book of law full of different codes helping Mowgli to survive. This shows Kipling's insistence on as well as respect for the Law.

Another aspect of the Jungle Books is that it opens before the reader an India which is seen through English eyes. As I have already noted in Chapter-I, Kipling travelled throughout India during his journalistic career. He was a keen observer and not a single thing which he observed about India was left out from his writings. He recorded everything in his literature. In the Jungle Books too, he has taken opportunity to portray his Indian experience through the descriptions of villages, farms and even men. The use of Urdu idiom gives a typical Indian touch to these stories.



The cruelty which man has shown to animals is also significantly noted in the Jungle Books, Kipling has conveyed to man his cruelty through the speech of animals. They say that they want to be friendly with men but men do not wish to be cordial with them. The use of animal skin for several purposes is also referred to by Rudyard Kipling.

The achievement of Kipling lies in the creation of wonderland of the Jungle Books. It is a wonderland because it has everything in it - magic, mystery and terror. All this holds the readers to the book. There is magic in the Jungle, in the animals which speak to Mowgli. There is mystery in the strange places like Cold Lairs and Esquimau Land. There is terror in the attack of the Red Dogs, Mowgli's attack on Shere Khan, stoning of Mowgli by the villagers - everything arouses terror in the mind of reader. There are references to the superstitions in India. Kipling has gathered all his Indian experiences together to produce this wonderland called the Jungle Books.

It is important to note that the common thing which binds the stories together is not the Jungle but the animals. There are some stories like 'The Quiquern', 'The Undertakers', 'Rikki-Tikki-Tavi' and 'The White Seal' which are without reference to the Jungle. In fact, the Jungle Books are animal books. These aspects of wonder, magic, mystery and terror give the book a quality which is admired by the children as well as by the grown-ups. To call Rudyard Kipling's Jungle Books just children's books is not belittling them because they have a lot of things for the adult readers also.

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1. Rudyard Kipling, The Jungle Books (London: Galley Press, 1987), p.81.

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