Contrapuntal Reading of Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*: Theorizing the Raj through Narritivity

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Abstract

In this paper, the researchers make a contrapuntal reading of Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (1994) with reference to a narrativity of power which characterized the British colonial Raj in India. The purpose is to reground critical understanding of colonial literary discourses as a corrective to widespread apolitical readings of the imperial literary texts. Drawing on Edward Said's technique of contrapuntal reading, we contend that *The Jungle Book* is an imperial narrative couched in a beast fable with far-reaching subtexts, tropes, metaphors, and analogies which have been playing a cumulative (albeit unconscious) role in the intellectualization of the colonial archive. We also maintain that theorizing power and employing it in the narrativity of the colonial discourses have been foundational to the territorial as well as textual triumph of the Raj. Therefore, the act of reading a colonial text is presented here as an extremely challenging task which dialogically involves multiple socio-historical perspectives and calls on the reader to constantly battle a textual dialectics of power. Therefore, it is not for nothing that such imperial narratives coincided with the British colonialism as the territorialization of the Subcontinent had to be supplemented by its extensive archival textualization. The way the law of the jungle operates in the story has been (re)read as a metaphorical functioning of the British imperial officialdom in the Subcontinent—a beastly locale marked by exilic and surrealist features.

Keywords: *colonialism, Raj, contrapuntal reading, power*

I. Introduction

English novelist, poet, storywriter, Nobel laureate and a veritable troubadour of the Empire, Rudyard Kipling occupies a special place in the postcolonial studies. His writings consistently foreground three notions: strong patriotism, a strenuous ethics for his countrymen, and Britain's imperial obligation to "civilize" its colonies (Walsh, 2010). Generations of readers have read and relished Kipling's elegant prose and there is no dearth of either his admirer or detractors. Many have accused him of being an apologist for British colonialism and, to them, his infatuation with imperialism looks more like an echo of the Victorian past of Britain (Cain & Hopkin, 2015; David, 1995). In the present paper, the researchers have made a contrapuntal reading of his famous story collection *The Jungle*

Book (1894) and has brought out distinctly imperial persuasions of this work. It is not uncommon for literary works to be complicit with power or the more subtle hegemonic schemes at one time or the other (Firchow, 2015). The roots of imperialism in British culture as well as in Indian consciousness have largely been strengthened by literary and ideological narratives. From Jane Austen to W. B. Yeats and from Joseph Conrad to Kipling, the catalogue of the writers whose works had clear colonial and racist orientations is extremely long.

Kipling also played an extremely crucial role in embedding a colonially conceived cultural legacy in the Western view of the Orient. Examining a wide range of elements such as characters, plot, setting, theme, style and story, the researchers have shown how the imperial connotations and tendencies are rooted in the text of *The Jungle Book*. It is also interesting to note how the colonial imagination of the writer comes into play in the conceptualization of the characters and the narration of the story (Ahmad, 1994). Imperialism implicit in *The Jungle Book* makes this piece of literature one of those systemic discourses which, according to Edward Said, enabled Europe to "manage" the Orient not just militarily but also ideologically (1978).

The Jungle Book is a tale of a young boy named Mowgli, who is left by his parents in a jungle and is found by a pack of wolves. The pack raises Mowgli as one of the young members of their group but soon the Shere Khan — a ferocious man-eating tiger — comes to know of his existence in the jungle and forces him to leave his wolf family and return to the "man village." However, Mowgli's stay at the jungle remains very eventful, adventurous and hazardous before he returns to his village. The story ends with Mowgli's violent killing of Shere Khan and his settling in the village life for good. Primarily a children's work, *The Jungle Book* soon acquired the status of a classic.

II. What is Contrapuntal Reading?

The twentieth century literary critic and writer Edward Said presented significantly intriguing and ingenious notion of contrapuntal reading which the researcher has employed as his main tool in this paper. To him, by looking at a text contrapuntally, we take into account both the sides of the narratives and the text is simultaneously and dialogically judged by two perspectives—that of the colonizers and of the colonized (1993). The term has its origin in Western classical music and Said describes it etymologically:

> In the counterpoint of Western classical music, various themes play off one another, with only a provisional privilege being given to any particular one; yet in the

> resulting polyphony there is concert and order, an organized interplay that derives from the themes, not from a rigorous melodic or formal principle outside the work. *In the same way, I believe, we can read and interpret English novels*, for example, whose engagement with the West Indies or India, say, is shaped and perhaps even determined by the specific history of colonization, resistance, and finally native nationalism. At this point alternative or new narratives emerge and they become institutionalized or discursively stable entities. (1993, p. 51)

A contrapuntal reading, therefore, proposes that appreciating a colonial text is not a monolithic or even a coherent venture which can yield meanings at will. Every text is written and read by two intertwined perspectives: that of the writer and of the reader. This approach is not only helpful but also necessary not only in elucidating crucial discursive connections and points of disjuncture but also in detecting fault lines and narrative praxis in any work of fiction (Docker, 1992; Jameson, 2013; Nash, 2005). Interpreting contrapuntally is interpreting different perspectives simultaneously and seeing how the text interacts with itself as well as with the larger sociocultural framings without privileging any one side.

When viewed from this angle, contrapuntal reading appears to be an "awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts" (Said, 1993, p. 51). Since what is not stated (or what is elided) in the text may be as important as what is stated, it is important to read with an understanding of small plot lines or even peripheral elements with an avowed purpose to find out how literary texts are deeply embedded in the matrices of imperial ideologies (Cuddon, 2012). For example, a contrapuntal reading will enable the reader to find out how, in *Jane Ayer,* St. John River's desire to visit India is implicated in the idea of a "civilizing" mission (Cuddon, 2012). Or how, in *Mansfield Park*, a colonial sugar plantation happens to be indispensable to the process of maintaining a particular lifestyle in Britain (Said, 1993).

Similarly, contrapuntally one may ask if *Mansfield Park* is about an estate possessed by the Bertrams whose wealth derives from sugar plantations in Antigua then why there is no reference to Antigua in the novel as such. The more so when we consider the fact that in a structural sense the narrative relies heavily on it since without their holdings in the colonies the Bertrams would not be so rich. Therefore, the point of this kind of reading is not just to appreciate the structural and the thematic

dependency but also to bring "the forgotten other" back into the narrative (Buchanan, 2010).

In this way, contrapuntal reading calls upon the reader to scrutinize how seemingly disparate experiences (i.e. playing off of various themes as mentioned above) inform one another to construct a more complex and and interactive textual praxis (Said, 2004). It holds the promise to overthrow the colonizing effect of any text which seeks to inscribe the reader's consciousness with imperial subtexts and even strategic *silences* (Hutchins, 2015). It also enables a counter voice that seeks to dilute and evnetually inflect the "melodic" movement of the dominant theme. This is how a reader can forge "a counterpoint to the long-accepted reading of a text and uncovers its colonial implicatoins" and debunk their ideological underpinings (Cuddon, 2012, p. 57).

The term Said has used to qualify this kind of reading is "strategy"—a word primarily hailing from militalry and war discourses. This characterization of contrapuntal reading is very significant in order to understand its purpose as well as opertion. 'Strategy' is from Greek *stratēgia* which means the "art of troop leader; office of general, command, generalship" (Pitts, 2005, p. 124) or a high level plan to achieve one or more goals under conditions of uncertainty (p. 167). For that reason, in order to meet its 'tactical' objectives, this reading technique seeks to historiricize the cultural texts by situating them back in time and space.

III. The Imperialism of *The Jungle Book*

As the Empire engaged in 'civilizing' the 'barbarians' of the conquered lands, the colonizers first sought to 'other' these people and, in this way, their racial and civilizational inferiority had to be foregrounded in the imperial literary archives. Almost every notable writer of the colonial period contributed to the construction and of these imperial literary narratives and among them chiefly included Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Joseph Conrad, E. M. Forster, Talbot Mundy, Rudyard Kipling and William Thackeray. These literary discourses and imperial narratives, in fact, coincided with the advent and subsequent triumph of colonialism wherever it spread its tentacles. Similarly, the imperialism of *The Jungle Book* is also evidenced when we subject it to a contrapuntal reading. The characters, the plot, the theme and the setting, all have multiple imperialist orientations. In other words the imperialism evinced by the conduct of the characters is reinforced and complemented by the setting and vice versa. It is because of this formal and thematic interconnectedness that all the strands of imperialism tend to converge as the narrative of the story steadily moves on.

First and foremost we should discuss the characters and let us begin with the monkeys. The monkey-king aspires to be like Mowgli—a human being. He wants to get rid of his 'monkeying' and live a human life. This can be read as an earnest longing on the part of the disinherited and marginalized Indians to transform their lot and aspire for a better living. It can also be read as a desire to have access to the imperial privileges available to the colonizers only. To the monkey-king, human beings are superior as they can make use of fire—a unique human privilege which animals do not possess. Literally as well as metaphorically, fire stands for power and light to which only man has an exclusive claim:

> Man has fearsome powers of wisdom and fire over beasts. All beasts fear fire, which perhaps represents the Promethean gift of technology. With human wisdom comes human folly, both of which are characterized by excess over simple need. Man wants to know more than he needs to know, and this unnecessary desire can lead him to folly. (Mansfield, 2006, p. 104)

Moreover, it is widely acknowledged that fire is the supreme source of civilization. Without fire, there is no question of building a civilization. Therefore, the civilization signaled by the use of fire can be metaphorically interlinked with the *mission civilisatrice* of the colonizers. Hence the desire to use fire can be read as an urge to partake in the colonial civilizing mission.

The monkeys have no speech, no memory, no status, no decorum and no law (Colebatch, 2016). This can be read as the speechlessness of the subalterns and the absence of memory stands for a loss of continuity with the past—a temporal dislocation. Moreover, in the jungle following the 'Law' is the measure of one's dignity but here the 'Law' stands for British imperial law which the mutinous (monkeys) tend to trample upon. The monkeys kidnap Mowgli which can be paralleled to the kidnapping of the British officials and troops during the 1857 War of Independence by the Indians which the British historians dub as the Mutiny. In the words of Don Randall, "The story of Mowgli's ultimately victorious struggle against Shere Khan thus mirrors key features of Mutiny history and of the British reconstitution of that history, recapitulating a British 'triumph' in the midst of treachery and adversity" (1998, p. 18).

Additionally, when the monkeys kidnap Mowgli, the latter is taken as an agent of civilization who could rid the former of their uncouth ways and a wretched living. We learn from the story that the monkeys do not have any positive attributes and they are deemed in desperate need of

civilization. This is how Baloo the bear warns Mowgli about the subversive and outrageously thieving nature of monkeys:

> I have taught thee all the Law of the Jungle for all the peoples of the jungle—except the Monkey-Folk who live in the trees. They have no law. They are outcasts. 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. (Kippling, 1920, p. 47)

The wretched account of the monkeys can also be read as an utter marginalization and wholesale stereotyping of the Indians who are considered to be unruly, loquacious, irrational, pretentions, and problematic. Not only that monkeys are not to be mixed up with, they are to be shunned at all cost. Another contrapuntal perspective warrants a slightly different mode of appreciation i.e., monkeys stand not just for Indians but for humans at large. In this way, the deleterious depiction of monkeys can also be read as a Swiftian satire on human race, particularly the colored races. Human stupidity is symbolized in the aimless gossiping of monkeys who think that as they live in the top of the trees; therefore, they have a more authentic view of things than other animals (Mansfield, 2006).

The next interesting character is Bagheera the Indian leopard who stands for the apologists of colonialism and his job is to intellectualize the imperial narrative and to dole out pieces of advice whenever needed. He plays the part of Mowgli's trusted friend and mentor. Clever, crafty, courageous and wild, Bagheera can be taken as the powerful native feudal lords who lent sustained support to the Raj. This parallel is further reinforced when we come to know that when Mowgli first arrives in the jungle, it is Bagheera who launches a campaign to convince the other animals to accept "the man cub"—making the mastery of an alien more palatable to his fellow animals. Just like the Indian feudal lords who turned out to be the footstools of the colonizers, Bagheera teaches Mowgli such important techniques as hunting for food, climbing the tree tops and locating the traps. Interestingly, he too warns Mowgli of socializing with the monkeys:

> 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. We of the jungle have no dealings with them. We do not drink where the monkeys drink; we do not go where the monkeys go; we

> do not hunt where they hunt; we do not die where they die. Hast thou ever heard me speak of the Bandar-log till today? (Kipling, 1920, p. 123)

The Shere Khan also occupies an important place among the characters of the jungle and it is in his death that the violence of the story culminates. While going deep into the storyline, we realize that the implacable hatred evinced by the Shere Khan against Mowgli can have multiple layers of interpretations. Contrapuntally, it can be read as the hatred of the 'uncouth' and 'resentful' native Indians against their 'civilized' colonial masters. The Shere Khan hates mankind, its depravity, its ways and, above all, its much touted 'civilization'. This symbolizes the overall attitude of the Indians towards their colonial conquerors. His encounter with mankind is sudden, dramatic and fateful, just as the Indians' encounter with the British. The Shere Khan was previously the sole master of the jungle whose mastery is now threatened by Mowgli. Similarly, the Indians were the masters of India before it was occupied by the colonizers. All this turns the Shere Khan into a comparatively good villain and gives us at least some reason to sympathize with him.

There is yet another contrapuntal extrapolation which is indicated by the surname *Khan*—an honorific traditionally bestowed upon Muslim notables, leaders and warriors. The surname *Khan* is also used by Pashtuns. In this way, it is interesting find a parallel between the Shere Khan and the Muslim warriors and notables, especially of the Pashtun origin. Coincidently, in *Kim* also Kipling has employed a Pashtun character, namely Mehboob Ali. These ethnic references may not be willfully malicious (Ahmed, 1988) but in the larger framework of Empire all these representations acquire an added significance.

The wolves also have a crucial role to play in the storyline. As the colonizers were able to won the support of the local warlords and tribal heads, Mowgli is also able to won the support and protection of the wolves. They are strong, stubborn and swift, and it is largely in their character that the law of jungle is epitomized as Kipling puts it:

> Now this is the law of the jungle, as old and as true as the sky,
> And the wolf that shall keep it may prosper, but the wolf that shall break it must die.
> As the creeper that girdles the tree trunk, the law runneth forward and back;
> For the strength of the Pack is the Wolf, and the strength of the Wolf is the Pack. (1920, p. 193)

The *hathis* (elephants) symbolize a declining Empire long past its glory days. They are depicted marching through the trees and shrubs with a

motely regiment of elderly pachyderms that includes *hathi's* ailing wife and young son (Booth, 2011). The *hathi* brigade embodies discipline, neatness, patience, character-building and industriousness. It is also remarkable that Kipling wrote *The Jungle Book* as a plea for discipline during a particularly turbulent phase of imperialism. The *hathi* brigade is led by a Colonel *Hathi*, whose gallantry is proverbial and has been officially acknowledged. This is how he boasts of his bravery:

> Espirit de Corps. That's the way I earned my commission in the Majarajah's Fifth Pachyderm Brigade. Back in '88 it was. Or . . . or was it? . . . It was then I received the Victoria Cross for bravery above and beyond the call of duty. Ha ha! Those were the days. Discipline! Discipline was the thing! Builds character, and all that sort of thing, you know. (Kipling, 1920, p. 176)

Last but not least, Mowgli, the protagonist and a feral child, represents not only a human among the animals but he also stands for the British incursion into the Subcontinent. Mowgli possesses all the qualities of an efficient British functionary deployed in India. He is sharp, resolute and brave—he can scare the wild animals away just by staring into their eyes. Mowgli sits over the top of a hierarchy and all the animals obey his command. He fraternizes with the wild animals and, in time, builds fantastic rapport with them. The idea was that in order to be a successful colonizer, one has to be thoroughly acquainted with the ways of the natives. It is this idea which Mowgli's character upholds. Don Randall throws substantial light on this this aspect of Mowgli's character and role:

> Mowgli, by overcoming Shere Khan, stands in the place of the British imperial adventurer and restages the British consolidation of empire in India. This jungle-child, youthful and energetic yet duly schooled in the codes of the Law, is the alien liberator whose final victory signals the establishment of just rule in the place of an ostensibly corrupt and decrepit Mughal dynasty. As the rebel Sepoys of 1857 looked to Bahadur Shah for leadership, so, during a troubled period . . . restless young wolves rally around Shere Khan and turn against Mowgli. Just as the British, in 1858, put an end to the symbolic kingship of Bahadur Shah, so Mowgli puts an end to the lame tiger's pretensions to power. As the British, after 1858, articulated a new imperial order . . . so Mowgli uses the tiger's splendid skin to symbolize his accession to the role of Master of the Jungle. (1998, p. 18)

Strictly put, Mowgli inhabits two worlds (that of the jungle and of the humans) without actually belonging to either. He is a man-cub among the jungle animals and an uncouth creature among the villagers he later joins. The frivolous and boyish nature of Mowgli on the one hand and his higher calling to serve the Raj on the other hand drives a wedge in his personality. Therefore, it is not difficult to discern that Mowgli is a product of an imperial imagination with a massively stereotypical profiling: a 'subject' schooled in the manners of his 'masters' with an avowed duty to serve them. But the anarchist nature of Mowgli still comes out every now and then. He, at times, behaves like Rousseau's noble savage (Cranston, 1991) who refuses to conform to the norms of human society e.g., he does not have the slightest idea about the significance of the caste system in the Indian culture. His physical resemblance to monkeys further reinforces his image of a rowdy creature.

Lastly, Mowgli's ogling a village girl can be read as an evidence of the voyeurism of the prototypical white European male. It turns the European male into a subject and the Indian village girl into an object. This is how the objectification of the Orient is reinforced and the binary nature of the relations between the East and the West is re-centered.

So much about the contrapuntal discussion of the characters. Along with the role of the characters, the thematic mood of the story also plays a critical role in defining the imperial undercurrents of the narrative. Similarly, the thematically-grounded violence of *The Jungle Book* is also very foundational to its colonial scheme. The battle against the monkeys results in their mass killing and the Shere Khan also meets his tragic end in a tactically organized cattle stampede. The stormy fight between Baloo and the Shere Khan also depicts the violence of the story. Violence was a central policy of all the colonizers and they unrestrainedly applied it wherever they felt any real or perceived need for it. The British Empire was also not unknown for its quick resort to violence. This is evidenced by such bloody episodes as the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and Croke Park massacre (Kolsky, 2010). British imperial violence usually operated as a collective punishment (here evidenced by the indiscriminate killing of the monkeys).

Besides the thematically grounded violence of the story, the interplay of the characters and the setting is also very significant. The jungle can be seen as the efficient and elephantine British colonial machinery in India. With its locales which are not only exotic and exilic but also sensual and surrealist, the book reinforces the distance and otherness of the Orient. Notable characters, by and large, live in accordance with its 'law.' Bagheera the wolf, Kaa the snake, Baloo the bear, Chil the kite and the legendary Shere Khan, at one time or another, seem to behave like

typical Oriental tyrants whom the rest of the animal routinely obey but also have the right to 'depose,' at least in principle. The racial stereotyping of the storyline is also visible through its setting i.e., the jungle. The story is set in the Indian jungles which symbolize an exotic, timeless, wild primordiality —the jungles are ever green and are home to untamed animals and myriad mysteries.

IV. Theorizing Power and Narrativity of *the Jungle Book*

Theorizing power and employing it in the narrativity of imperial discourses has always been essential to the success of colonialism. This theorization of power is as much discursive as strategic i.e., as much textual as ideological. Arguably it is an offshoot of this discursive narrativity that a Pakistani, an Indian or an African scholar of English literature would read a text like *The Jungle Book* with an urgency and difference not usually felt in quite the same way by an American, or say, a French scholar. Kipling's India has an inevitability of its own. The writer presents an India which is fated to be governed by the colonial masters (Cain & Hopkins, 2016). In that land of inevitability, the building of an Empire itself is a noble calling and work of art to be undertaken by the suave European conquerors.

It is not for nothing that the native Indians are depicted as credulous, rash and juvenile. These natives inherits all the stereotypes attached to the Orient. In fact, in history, the texts like *The Jungle Book* prove to be the sine qua non of colonial mastery over the colonized in which the natives are destined to be portrayed in a specific light. In the 19th and the 20th centuries, the colonial literature made use of fiction as an archival repository of imperial tropes and subtexts. To read these narratives was to "read a fact of power" as Edward Said would term it (1978, p. 143). Therefore, it is not enough to get hold of the meta-textual intents of such narratives just by giving a pleasure reading to them. The most viable way to deal with the multilayered and much worked over narrativity of the colonial discourses is to have something more than mere textual understanding of these accounts.

Viewing from this perspective, the job of a reader appears to be to go well beyond the apparent world of fictional realities and tropes constructed during the heyday of the British Empire (Achebe, 1988). In fact, rarely in human history do we come across an Empire so deeply embedded in the dense layers of texts and pretexts all aimed at legitimating its ascendency and determining the terms of its conduct (Brown & Boussebaa, 2016). The British Empire was obviously no ordinary kingdom. Legions of administrators, functionaries, journalists and literary figures 'textualized' it partaking in its ideological and territorial expansionism. Hence what is required is a theorization of its narrativity

which calls on the readers to reach back a "cultural archive" and retrieve the crucial contextual considerations of a metropolitan history (Smith, 2011).

However, in spite of this symbiotic relation between literary works like *The Jungle Book* and the Empire, it is, obviously, not being implied here that such works 'produced' imperialism as such. Rather what is being maintained is that imperialism is unimaginable without such works as they provide it with a historico-cultural configuration. They are entwined with it at cultural, linguistic and semiotic levels. Such literary discourses tend to invoke the ideas of imperialism and relate it to the destiny of the colonized. This is not done in a linear or unproblematic way. Rather the narrativity is turned and twisted and is finally aligned with the contours of the imperial power structure at the heart of which operate the protagonists like Mowgli and Kurtz. Edward Said makes this point.

> In Kipling's India for example, where the natives and the Raj inhabit differently ordained spaces, and where, with his extraordinary genius Kipling devised Mowgli, a marvelous character whose youth and energy allow him to explore both spaces, crossing from one to the other with daring grace as if to confound the authority of colonial barrier. The barriers within social space exist in Conrad too, and in Haggard, in Loti, in Doyle, in Gide, Psichari, Malraux, Camus, and Orwell. (Said 1993, p. 78)

In the light of this assessment, it is pertinent to mention here that Said did not criticize imperialism in any simplistic way. What he is actually taking an issue with is the quasi-Hegelian triumphalism which terms Europe subject and its colonies object. This dichotomous and mutually exclusive relationship was textually reinforced by the narrative authority of the 19th century realist novel. This brings to mind the notion of a colonially condescending attitude in which "spatial differentiation is always moralized and the power to narrate is an imperial prerogative" (Said, 1993, p. 45).

All of these aspects, one way or the other, touch on the theme of imperialism by reinstating such questions as culture, representation and racism. Moreover, the British imperialism in India took time in striking its roots. It advanced incrementally and, with every push, it not only took a chunk of land but also added a discursive layer to its imperial literary archive. In the long run this lead to a mighty transition and all this is manifested by the inversion of power relations between the Shere Khan and Mowgli. The Shere Khan has the upper hand initially but in the end it is Mowgli who prevails upon him and eliminate him. This transition is also a

befitting example of 'civilization' eventually taking over 'wilderness.' This is how the discursive, meta-literary and ideological workings of the colonial subtexts can be detected in *The Jungle Book*.

V. Law of the Jungle and Spenserian Social Darwinism: A Narrativity of Power

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines Law of the Jungle as "the code of survival in jungle life, now usually with reference to the superiority of brute force or self-interest in the struggle for survival" (Law of the Jungle, 1989). The phrase, as has been hinted above, was used by Kipling to describe the obligations and behavior of a wolf in a pack. So what is the law of the jungle in *The Jungle Book*? It implies a code of conduct for those who discard human law in favor of the edict *might makes right*.

This law of jungle is meant for animals, not for humans. Similarly, the colonized were considered by their masters as less than human. They were represented as exotic beings with an inherent cultural and civilizational inferiority (Marriott, 2010). The real strength of this law is not moral but pragmatic as it holds sway in condition harder than the Hobbesian state of nature—the jungle houses predators who would rather immediately devour what they kill. Thus in order to live, they have to kill. It is in contrast to the Hobbesian state of nature in which men can live in peace if they agree to form a government, at least in principle (Mansfield, 2006).

Furthermore, in the world of beasts, Mowgli himself is presented by Kipling as the law incarnate—a law by which a balance is maintained between different species through a ceaseless struggle which can be read as an assiduous labor to buttress the foundations of the Raj. This struggle can also be seen as a truce-less war between the Whiteman and the beastly Indians. Contrapuntally, we may ask the question whether this war must ever be condemned as evil. More specifically when it is the only mode available to govern the unruly, then how it can be condemned at all. This leads us to the conclusion that in the quasi utilitarian and Darwinian sense the only viable code for the jungle is the one premised upon brute force and intimidation—an intimidation which is signified by fire (See, Hodge, 2008).

In the same way, the law accords a higher social status to those who are fitter and more ferocious. Animals which hunt like wolves and snakes are admired while those that scavenge like hyenas and jackals are looked down upon. And lastly those that are prey like deer hardly count at all as their featuring in the narrative is the minimalist. With such a monolithic orientation, the law of the jungle is deemed superior to man's law because it prescribes simple and immediate penalties that settle

scores then and there without much nagging. The law also operates to effect what we may call a *species-transmogrification* evidenced by the bizarre neologism "man-cub" itself and it is interesting to note that "Mowgli's species remains foregrounded, with the animalism remaining more a performance than a replacement" (Ratelle, 2014, p. 47). Moreover, each species is endowed with special characteristics and the success and merit of the individual is inextricably associated with the success and the merit of the species: "For the strength of the pack is the Wolf, and the strength of the Wolf is the Pack" runs the adage (Singh, 2004, p. 171).

The law of jungle has a clear imprint of Spenserian social Darwinism as the whole premise of the story is a struggle for survival marked by the superiority, strength and invincibility of the imperial power. The social Darwinism prevalent in the jungle does not admit of communal equality and the wild society remains rigidly hierarchical and authoritarian. At a time when *The Jungle Book* was being written, the supremacy of the white race was more than a mere claim (Loomba, 2015). This supremacy was being paraded as a scientific fact—a fact lent all the more credibility by the European colonial and cultural triumphs.

Throughout the book, the law painstakingly maintains a distinction between the white men and the rest of the species. For instance, Rikki the mongoose is instructed as to what he should do if he ever encounters white men (Kipling, 1920). Similarly, a link between ability and authority is created when Purun Bhagat, a Buddha-like hermit, deliberates that "if any one wished to get on in the world he must stand well with the English, and imitate all that the English believed to be good" (p. 56). In the final analysis, Bhagat's counsel boils down to this:

> You can work it out by Fractions or by simple Rule of Three,
> But the way of Tweedle-dum is not the way of Tweedle-dee.
> You can twist it, you can turn it, you can plait it till you drop,
> But the way of Pilly Winky's not the way of Winkie Pop! (p. 177).

There is yet another corollary of this law i.e., it bureaucratizes Nature, or alternatively, it reinvents Nature as a bureaucratic order. In any case, this elaborate bureaucratic officialdom of jungle can be read as a signifier for the vast imperial machinery with built-in notions of efficiency and obedience. This imperial bureaucracy governs all the communal praxis and is marked by a high degree of specialization in which each species has pre-assigned roles and duties (Bivona, 1998) and any amount of transgression is not just a crime but also a sin.

We also notice that this law is more interested in 'group cohesion' than in individualism and if any violation takes place, the option of sanctioning is always at hand—"The Wolf that shall keep it may prosper,

but the Wolf that shall break it must die" (Kipling, 1920, p. 158). Besides, where this ledger of stated laws ends, Kipling proposes Darwinian-Hobbesian tactics:

> Because of his age and his cussing, because of his gripe and his paw,
> In all that the Law leaveth open, the word of the Head Wolf is Law (Kipling, 1920, p. 199).

Finally every now and then it is not uncommon for the reader to come across such urbane notions of the Victorian era such as cleanliness, prudish conduct, sufficiency of sleep, self-defense, prevention of needless conflict, construction of safe shelter, avoidance of waste, prevention of retribution, etc. All these notions are parts of this law.

VI. Conclusion

In this study, the researchers aim at showing the colonial subtexts and tropes in the storyline of *The Jungle Book* in which the master-narratives and the slave-narratives run in a parallel and dialogic way. The story has clear patterns, representations and themes which can be correlated with the broader contours of the Raj and the meta-narratives of Empire. A contrapuntal reading of *The Jungle Book* considerably brings such themes and representations to the fore. From the wilderness of the jungle to its law of the fittest and from the elephant's scrupulous regard for discipline to the monkey's anarchist conduct, everything has an extremely nuanced relation with the colonial discursive praxis in India. The researchers have also theorized the narrativity of power which throughout the book holds sway over the imagination of the reader. The most characteristic expression of this narrativity is Kipling's conviction that to govern a textualized and territorialized continent effectively is to be between two realms: the realm of beasts and the realm of men. Any effort to bridge the gap between these two realms is fore-doomed and this imperial conviction is evidenced by the eventual killing of the Shere Khan and the return of Mowgli to his village for good.

It has also been seen that the *discursive power* to narrate, or to obstruct other *narratives* from emerging has been at the root of the prodigious power of the Empire. Imperialism comes from the Latin word *imperium*, meaning to command and this command, more than any form of physical coercion, is backed by a benign *discursive* persuasion enshrined in the canonical literary works. This patently discursive orientation turns imperialism into Gramscian *hegemony* which proclaims that the imperial dominance ultimately rests upon a "consented" coercion which is achieved by a myriad literary narratives and cultural discourses—*The Jungle Book* just being one of them. In the words of Iqbal, the legendary Urdu poet:

دورِ حاضر ہے حقیقت میں وہی عہدِ قدیم
اہلِ سجادہ ہیں یا اہلِ سیاست ہیں امام
اس میں پیری کی کرامت ہے نہ میری کا ہے زور
سینکڑوں صدیوں سے خوگر ہیں غلامی کے عوام!
خواجگی میں کوئی مشکل نہیں رہتی باقی
پختہ ہو جاتے ہیں جب خوئے غلامی میں غلام!

The English translation of the lines is as follows:

The present age is really the same old age:
It is either the men of prayer or the politicians who are in charge.
Neither the miracles of those men of prayer
Nor the power of government is the reason for it –
For centuries the people have been used to slavery.
There is no difficulty about being a master
When the people are entrenched deep in slavery (Mir, 1990, p. 99).

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