CHAPTER - V

FANTASY IN KIPLING'S ANIMAL STORIES
The device of making animals talk and act like human-beings dates back to ancient times in all climes and countries. But no eminent writer, more triumphantly than Kipling, has performed the difficult feat of persuading the readers to believe that animals can talk well and naturally as human beings. Kipling's animal world as exhibited in his animal fantasies is not an animal world at all. His technique of regarding animals as sentient and intelligent beings with their own needs and modes of expression provides the writer as well as the readers with another source of bright and vivid imagery in his tales. And it is perhaps a step, if a small one, to the completer appreciation of the relations of man and animals as fellow-citizens of the same universe, and so, again, a real widening of our consciousness. Some critics, however, have criticised Kipling by saying that his scope shrank from "the Tommies to the quadrupeds, from the quadrupeds to the fish, and from the fish to the engines and screws." These critics have failed to see that Kipling has used the animal world or mechanical world not only as a playground, but as a platform
to express some of his favourite convictions about life and art.

His animal stories occur mainly in *Just So Stories* and *The Jungle Books*; but some other famous animal stories occur in the other collections also. The sources of the animal stories are, as Martin Seymour-Smith points out, Sterndale's *Mammalia of India*, John Lockwood Kipling's *Beast and Man in India: A Popular Sketch of Indian Animals in their Relations with People*, and, above all, the *Jataka tales* of India. Of the three sources, Kipling seems to have been most influenced by the *Jataka tales*. These *Jataka tales* are moral fables which purport to tell of the wise actions of the Buddha in previous incarnations. Buddha appears in each of these 550 stories in every human and animal guise. Some of these beast fables resemble *Aesop's*. These tales teach not merely that men should be tender towards animals, but the equivalence of all life. The animals (each human being represents some animal in type) here have an "inside life" and are not mere agents of action. The influence of these tales on Kipling, clearly, was profound. There are verses in each Jataka tale. This might be the basis of the form Kipling chose - the main story preceded by a few lines of poetry. Moreover, Kipling's animal stories, like their great original *Jataka tales*, impress themselves on the mind of the readers at more than one level.
It is better to begin discussion of animal tales with *Just So Stories*. If we keep in view Eric S. Rabkin's definition of the fantastic "as conceived or appearing as if conceived by unrestrained imagination",\(^3\) we find that all the tales of *Just So Stories* are fantastic. Their charm lies in the hints of mystery and remoteness. They tell us how things came as we see them, the elephant's trunk, the camel's hump, the whale's throat, the leopard's spots, armadillo's scales, the alphabet that children learn. They are full of inventive and appropriate details. They transport us to mysterious regions and remote times and deal with uncanny events. Todorov also remarks: "Fantastic is defined as a special perception of uncanny events. The fantastic text may or may not be characterized by a certain composition, by a certain style. But without uncanny events the fantastic cannot even appear."\(^4\) If we examine a few tales in *Just So Stories*, we find how they abound in uncanny events.

In the first tale, "How the Whale Got his Throat", the huge whale travels the ocean, gulping down fish to satisfy his hunger, until he meets a 'stute fish who suggests that the whale should try tasting Man. So the whale swallows a shipwrecked mariner who spends hour after hour dancing in the animal's stomach. Eventually, exhausted by
the tickling sensation, the whale disgorges him on the seashore near his home. But the raft remains stuck in its throat. "From that day on", explains Kipling, "the grating in his throat, which he could neither cough up nor swallow down, prevented him from eating anything except very, very small fish; and that is the reason why whales nowadays never eat men or boys or little girls." [J.S.S., P.5].

However, "How the Whale Got his Throat" is not so simple as it appears in the simple summary given above. It is full of strange things. The very opening paragraph of the tale takes us to its mysterious world where whales and fish can talk like human beings. In this world, man does not die even after he has been swallowed by the whale, but remains alive in the whale's stomach, to jump and dance and to work for shortening his throat. Kipling makes reference to many strange and unheard of places in the story so that it might look more fantastic. For example, the man in the story says to the whale: "Change here for Winchester, Ashuelot, Nashua, Keene and stations on the Fitchburg Road" [J.S.S., P.5]. To make his fantastic details look credible, Kipling combines them with certain realistic details. While describing the variety of fish that whale used to eat, Kipling mentions the fish which really exist along with the fish which don't exist and are only the creation of his mind. He says, "...there was a whale, and he ate fishes. He ate the starfish and the garfish, and the crab and the dab, and the
plaice and the dace, and the skate and his mate, and the mackereel and the pickreel, and the really truly twirly - whirly eel." [J.S.S., P.1]. Thus the names of the fish and the places, and the incident described - all show Kipling's inventive genius at his best.

Another story of the collection is "The Elephant's Child" which tells how the elephant got its trunk. Originally he had only "a blackish, bulgy nose, as big as a boat," [J.S.S., P.37], but because he was so inquisitive he was spanked by his father, his mother, his tall aunt the Ostrich, his tall uncle the Giraffe, his broad aunt the Hippopotamus and his hairy uncle the Baboon. All he wants to know is what the crocodile has for dinner and he soon discovers this on the banks of the "great, grey-green greasy Limpopo river." [J.S.S., P.38]. The crocodile tries to pull the baby elephant into the river but he stands firm, his nose getting longer and longer until the crocodile lets it go. He wraps it in banana leaves and trails it in the water to cool but it does not shrink; and he returns home with a five-foot trunk.

The uncanny event described above has been told by Kipling with many inventive details. The first line of the story takes us to "High and Far off Times" and into the strange world of talking birds, beasts and snakes. We meet here a bird "Kolokolo" we never see in real life. Even the
fruits of this world have a touch of mystery about them. "...Elephant's child took a hundred pounds of bananas (the little short red kind), and a hundred pounds of sugar cane (the long purple kind), and seventeen melons (the greeny-crackly kind)...." [J.S.S., P.38]. The places that the elephant's child crosses are again imaginary. "He went from Graham's Town to Kimberley, and from Kimberley to Khama's Country, and from Khama's country he went east by north, eating melons all the time, till at last he came to the banks of the great grey-green, greasy Limpopo River...." [J.S.S., P.38]. But more fantastic than the talking birds, beasts and snakes or the strange rivers, places and fruits mentioned in the story is the fact that the elephant's trunk does not break (as it would have done in the real world), but goes on stretching till it changes into a long trunk.

"How the Camel Got his Hump" also describes an uncanny event, like the two tales discussed above. When the world was just created by God, and all the animals like dog, horse and ox were working for men, the camel refused to work, saying "Humph." So the Djinn who was incharge of all deserts decided to punish the camel and made him utter the word 'humph' before him. The moment the camel spoke out the word, Djinn's Magic started working. The camel "saw his back, that he was so proud of, puffing up and puffing up into a great big lolloping humph" [J.S.S., P.13].
This tale takes us back to "the beginning of years, when the world was so new-and-all." [J.S.S., P.9]. In this world, the camel, horse, ox and dog talk like human beings. This world is controlled by a Djinn who travels on a dust of cloud. Kipling remarks, "Djinns always travel that way because it is Magic." [J.S.S., P.12]. With the help of his magical powers, Djinn is able to perform strange things. He succeeds in changing the beautiful back of the camel into an ugly hump.

Other tales in Just So Stories offer equally ingenious explanations as to "How the Rhinoceros Got his skin" and "How the Leopard Got his Spots." In "How the Leopard Got his Spots", Kipling tells us, "Then the Ethiopian put his five fingers close together (there was plenty of black left on his new skin still) and pressed them all over the Leopard, and wherever the five fingers touched they left five little black marks, all close together." [J.S.S., P.34]. In "The Sing-Song of Old Man Kangaroo", Kipling tells us how arrogant Kangaroo went to God Nqong and asked him to make him a creature different from all others, and how Nqong made hungry Dingo chase the Kangaroo relentlessly till the kangaroo found his hind legs longer and stronger than the front legs. "The Crab that Played with the Sea "tells us how the huge crab that played with the sea for fun was punished by the Great Magician and changed into
a smaller creature. "How the First Letter was Made" deals with the invention of letter-writing and the alphabet by the daughter of a cave-dweller. In this tale Kipling tells us how different letters were formed by observing the ways in which different sounds were produced by different objects.

It is obvious that all these tales describe strange things. They present animals, for instance, as primeval man saw them, not as types and numbers in an elaborate biological scheme of knowledge, but as walking portents, things marked by extravagant and peculiar features. An elephant is a monstrosity with his tail between his eyes; a rhinoceros is a monstrosity with a horn balanced on his nose; a camel, a zebra, a tortoise are fragments of a fantastic dream, to see which is not seeing a scientific species, but seeing a man with three legs or bird with three wings, or seeing men as trees walking. The whole opens a very deep question, the question of the relations between the old wonder and the new wonder, between knowledge and science. The hump of the camel is very likely not so much his characteristic from a scientific point of view as third bone in the joint of his hind leg; but to the eyes of the child and the poet it remains his main feature. J.M.S. Tompkins has praised these stories in the following words: "These tales are not at all misleading; the fancy and the nonsense are apparent, and the reassuringly familiar is
nicely mixed in with Djinns, Afrits and the high and far-off times on the Turbid Amazon."⁵

We can conclude our discussion of *Just So Stories* with the words of Chesterton: "For the character of the *Just So Stories* is really unique. They are not fairy-tales; they are legends. A fairy-tale is a tale told in a morbid age to the only remaining sane person, a child. A legend is a fairy tale told to men when men are sane."⁶ There are manners and morals in these tales, but they are not at all oppressive, because of the humour present in the stories. There is a smacking good moral to each story. The Elephant's Child was over-inquisitive; King Crab could not wait for orders; Kangaroo had shown a kind of impudence by his words, "Make me different from all other animals; make me also, wonderfully popular by five this afternoon" [J.S.S., P.51]; Camel had been very lazy. So all of them were punished. Kipling seems to be teaching the young children for whom he has written these tales that they must be obedient, diligent, hard-working and patient if they wish to enjoy their elders' love and affection. In each of the stories, there is an openly pedagogic element, but with it goes an absence of pressure and tension, a lightness of tone. The exempla are there, but they are made pleasant by a more "unbuttoned" Kipling who is eager to explore these imaginary worlds with his young audience.
The two *Jungle Books* contain the most famous animal-stories written by Kipling. As Harvey Darton puts it, "The *Jungle Books* were not romance, not fiction even; they were young life conscious of itself and its extraordinarily stimulating world. And, while boys, girls and grown ups could enjoy them, still younger readers could find them, after a little practice in the language, enchanting fairy-tales. The two volumes were and are genuinely a modern children's book, with no predecessors in their kind." Even Robert Buchanan, one of Kipling's most hostile critics, has a word of praise for these *Jungle Books*. He says, "...in the *Jungle Books*, he got near to a really imaginative presentation of fine material, and, if he had continued his work in that direction, criticism might have had little or nothing to say against him." It is the smartness, the novelty and the imaginative sweep of Kipling's *Jungle Books* which have always captivated the readers. To quote J.H. Millar's comments on the *Jungle Books*, "The peculiar attraction of Mr. Kipling's prose work lies much less in any solicitude for style than in his unique fertility of imagination." In the *Jungle Books*, Kipling has created a brave new world of Mowgli and Rikki. Here the realm of wonder extends beyond the limits of myth. As J.M.S. Tompkins puts it, "The magical
distance and strangeness, of which there are hints in the Just So Stories, are here all around us."\(^{10}\) In the midst of the jungle there is a vast ruined city, and under it an abandoned treasure house where a sacred cobra guards the jewels; there are glades, too, where the axe of the little Gond hunter flies across the clearing like a dragon-fly. Up in the Arctic the pack-ice grinds and roars round the unseen shores, and the sorcerer sings charms in his snow-hut. The wise elephants, tame and wild, in the Assamese hills, meet at night to trample out their dancing ground. A Himalayan mountain-side is loosened by rain, and the animals sense the coming landslide and save the holyman who has shown them hospitality. And in all these places people live with strange skills and beliefs. Kotuko buckles himself into his belt for the long watch by the seal's breathing hole; old Buldeo asserts that the lame tiger embodies the spirit of a dead money-lender; the seasonal round of a Himalayan Village takes place at a great depth below the shrine where Purun Bhagat meditates. The refinement of human senses to meet special conditions and the intuitive knowledge of ancestral habit are often brought to notice. In the Jungle Mowgli weaves little huts with sticks and creepers, like his forefathers the woodcutters. All this wonder comes with a vivid and concrete detail. The world unfolds, unspeakably various and wild and old; and everywhere the family group keeps the child in touch with its own reality. Toomai's
mother and Matkah the seal sing their lullabies; Big Toomai and sea-catch grumble; and Kotuko's little brother gnaws a nice nutty strip of blubber.

More fantastic than the above-mentioned things is the mysterious animal-human relationship in *The Jungle Books*. Todorov says, "...in fantastic texts, the author describes events which are not likely to occur in everyday life." He adds, "The fantastic has what at glance appears to be a tautological function: it permits the description of a fantastic universe, one that has no reality outside language; the description and what is described are not of a different nature." In *The Jungle Books*, Mowgli lives as a master and friend of the wild animals who love him more than themselves. Mowgli and the animals put themselves in great danger for each other's sake. Baloo, Bagheera and Kaa undertake grave risks to rescue Mowgli from the clutches of the "Bandar-log." On Mowgli's return to the jungle after his maltreatment at the hands of the villagers, the possibility of Mowgli's pursuit by the Man-Pack is considered by the animals, and the Wolf Brothers prove their love for Mowgli by stressing that they will sacrifice their lives for his sake. Mowgli has similar feelings for the animals of the jungle. When the red dogs attack he decides to stay with the pack though he could have easily escaped from the jungle with Kaa. At the time of Mowgli's departure from the jungle, the animals lament: "Man goes to Man! Cry the Challenge

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through the jungle! He that was our Brother goes away." [S.J.B., P.155]. The scene of Mowgli's final leave-taking from the jungle people is charged with emotion. "Hai-mai, my brothers", cried Mowgli, throwing up his arms with a sob", I know not what I know! I know! I would not go." [S.J.B., P.174]. But having cast off his skin he cannot creep into it afresh. "It is hard to cast the skin", says Kaa as Mowgli sobbed and sobbed, with his head on the blind bear's side and his arms around his neck, while Baloo tried feebly to lick his feet. [S.J.B., P.175]. Love, thus, creates the bond between the animals and Mowgli, a pre requisite for the establishment of an ideal tribal (and hence social) structure. This friendship of Mowgli and the wild animals is the most fantastic thing in the Jungle Books.

There are seven stories in the Jungle Books which trace the course of Mowgli's wonderful relationship with the animals. But all these tales have more than one layer of meaning. On the surface they look like simple tales, telling us how Mowgli was adopted, brought up, taught and later advised by the beasts to go back to the world of men. But deep down, these appear to be rich allegories in which every beast and Mowgli become symbols of something else. Seen in this light, the whole animal world of the tales seems to be a fine commentary on the world created by man.
The very first tale "Mowgli's Brothers" transports us to the fantastic world of Mowgli and wild animals wherein the animals are intelligent creatures, talking and behaving like human beings. The tale describes how Mowgli was adopted into the Wolf-Pack. One night, Father Wolf of the Seonee Pack surprises Shere Khan, who has been on the point of devouring a naked, brown "man-cub" abducted from a nearby village. The Wolf saves the boy from the tiger and takes him to his lair to be raised with his own cubs. But in order to keep the man-cub, he is obliged to seek the permission of the other animals. On the fixed day, the Father and Mother Wolf take the cubs and Mowgli to the Council Rock to attend the Pack Meeting.

The Pack meeting of the wolves is as well-organised as a meeting arranged by human beings. Things are done according to the Law of the Jungle. Shere Khan appears there and asks Akela, the great grey Lone Wolf, who presides over the meeting, to hand over the child to him. Now, the Law of the Jungle lays down that if there is any dispute as to the right of a cub to be accepted by the Pack, he must be spoken for by at least two members of the Pack who are not his father and mother. Baloo, the Bear, is the first creature to speak in favour of Man Cub. Then Bagheera, the Black Panther reminds them : "...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."
So Bagheera adds one bull, newly killed, to Baloo's word, and the Man's Cub, according to the Law, is accepted as member of the Pack by all. Baloo is the wise interpreter of the Law of the Jungle and Bagheera is the personification of the Jungle itself, wild, cunning, but soft-spoken. Both animals remain Mowgli's inseparable companions during the fifteen years he stays in the jungle. This tale conveys an extremely important impression about the wonderful world of the animals. Animals, throughout the tale, behave according to the Law of the Jungle. Meetings are held in a very orderly manner. Everyone bows before the Law of the Jungle.

The next story "Kaa's Hunting", which has been called by Robert Howe Fletcher "the greatest snake-story ever written", sheds some more light on this fantastic world. In this tale we see Mowgli as the pupil and companion of Baloo and Bagheera but visibly approaching the end of his apprenticeship to the ways of the Jungle. Baloo is the teacher of Theory and Bagheera the believer in action. Mowgli is the still unlicked cub, with plenty of good stuff in him, who has to learn not only from the precept and example of his friends but also from his own experiences. When Baloo has finished boasting to Bagheera of what he has taught his charge, they suddenly find that Mowgli has been listening to the wayward and aimless seductions of the
"Bandar-log." When Baloo and Bagheera go to sleep, Mowgli is snatched away from between them and hurried across the tops of the trees by the Monkeys. Baloo and Bagheera know that the Monkey-People may forget and drop him at any moment, because to Kipling the 'Bandar-log' symbolize conceit and planlessness. They stand for lawlessness, disorder and anarchy. So Baloo and Bagheera seek advice and help of Kaa, symbol of memory and experience. A decisive battle takes place between the Evil Powers represented by the monkeys and Good Powers represented by Kaa, Bagheera and Baloo. The forces of lawlessness ultimately suffer defeat. After the battle, Mowgli shows the sweetness of the sound young material that is him. "We be of one blood, thou and I", Mowgli answered, "I take my life from thee tonight. My kill shall be thy kill, if ever thou art hungry, O Kaa." [J.B., P.43].

Now Kaa hypnotises the monkeys, by dancing to them and it is only Mowgli, with his hands on their shoulders, who draws Baloo and Bagheera away from the dreadful fascination. Angus Wilson finds this scene to be "one of the most horrible scenes in all Kipling's work." It is the picture of the Bandar Log (monkeys) swaying helplessly towards their doom in the great ruins of the King's palace in a hypnotic trance induced by the coiling and looping of Kaa, the python's body and his "never stopping, low humming song" [S.J.B., P.44]. It is made more terrible by the jungle
fact that, were it not for Mowgli's human unsusceptibility to the snake's enchantment, Baloo and Bagheera, Kaa's erstwhile co-hunters, would inevitably have swayed towards their death with the monkeys. For, in the jungle, all alliances - and bear, python and leopard have hunted together to rescue Mowgli - break up when the kill is on. It is made, indeed, even a little too horrible by a certain relish with which Kipling describes the awful fate of the frivolous, mischievous monkey folk.

After Mowgli's rescue from the monkeys, he must be punished, not because he has knowingly done wrong but because by playing with the monkeys he has brought on Baloo and Bagheera pain and humiliation. It was not his fault, but he must be punished to put things right. So Bagheera now appeals to the Law of the Jungle:

Baloo did not wish to bring Mowgli into any more trouble, but he could not tamper with the Law. So he mumbled: "Sorrow never stays punishment. But remember, Bagheera, he is very little." "I will remember; but he has done mischief, and blows must be dealt now. Mowgli, hast thou anything to say?" "Nothing. I did wrong. Baloo and thou are wounded. It is just." Bagheera gave him half a dozen love-taps; from a panther's point of view they would hardly have waked on of his own cubs, but for a seven-year-old boy they amounted to as severe a beating as you could wish to avoid. When it was all over Mowgli sneezed, and picked himself up without a word.[J.B., PP.45-46].

Thus Mowgli learns that sorrow never turns aside punishment. He comes out to be a wiser person after his bitter ordeal.

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The victory in "Kaa's Hunting" yields rich dividends in "Tiger! Tiger!" Here Mowgli gains control over the evil powers with less difficulty as shown by the relative ease with which he kills Shere Khan, symbol of power that corrupts. With the passage of time and the broadening of his knowledge, Mowgli becomes the lord of the Jungle, mainly because his strong animal instincts are reinforced by human intelligence. As the boy grows up, he demonstrates his guile and bravery when he and his fellow animals face a number of dangerous situations which initiate him into the realities of life. As we have seen, in his adventures in the Cold Lairs of the Monkey-People, he was saved by the cunning of Baloo, Bagheera and Kaa. But now in his fight with Shere Khan, he exercises his human intelligence. Todorov says: "This is one of the constants of the literature of the fantastic: the existence of beings more powerful than ordinary human beings."15 In this tale Mowgli really appears to be an extraordinarily powerful man who succeeds in killing Shere Khan with the help of his friends.

When Mowgli learns from the Grey Brother that Shere Khan has just arrived in the jungle and plans to wait for him at the village gate, Mowgli decides to use his buffaloes and cows to kill him. He discloses his wonderful plan to the Grey Wolf. The Tiger was lying in the big dry ravine of the
Wainganga. So Mowgli would take the herd of cattle round the jungle to the head of the ravine and then sweep down. As the tiger can slink out at the foot, he would block that end too. For that purpose he needs someone who can divide the herd into two groups. The Grey Brother proposes that he should seek Akela's help. Mowgli advises Akela to cut the herd into two, keeping the cows and calves together, and the bulls and the plough buffaloes by themselves. Now Akela and the Grey Brother act according to this advice and divide the herd into two clumps. Then Akela drives the bulls away to the left, while Grey Brother drives them into the foot of the ravine. Mowgli plans to make a big circle uphill and get at the head of the ravine, and then take the bulls down it and catch Shere Khan between the bulls and the cows. Mowgli, Akela and Grey Brother act according to the plan. Before the terrible charge of the buffalo-herd, tiger has no chance to stand. In a trice, he lies dead in the ravine, badly trampled over by the cattle. This story tells us something more about this fantastic world of Mowgli and his animals. With the help of his loyal animal friends, Mowgli is able to kill Shere Khan and thus commit this feat of extreme bravery.

The next significant battle which Mowgli wages takes place in "Red Dog", when the Forces of Disorder and Lawlessness make a last ditch struggle to subjugate Mowgli. These powers now appear in the shape of the
ferocious red Deccan dogs - the people without Law. Won - Tolla, the maimed outlier, whose mate and cubs have been killed by the horde and who asks only to fight them and die, runs three-legged along the river bank, as his enemies come down-stream, taunting them and playing "his horrible sport." On hearing the news of the dogs' intrusion into the jungle, Mowgli loses no time in preparing for the fight.

With his unbelievable wisdom and strength, Mowgli comes out victorious in this battle too. He advises the wolves to make the Red Dogs reach the shallows. It will be easier to kill them there. When he goes to Kaa to seek his advice, Kaa takes him to another place, called "Place of Death." He learns from Kaa how the bees of that place can be used against Red Dogs. He plans that he will make the Red Dogs reach this Place of Death first. Some will be killed by the wild bees, while others who run for life will be drowned in the river. Those who still live will go down to the shallows by the Seeonee Lairs where the wolves will kill them. Mowgli carries out his plan successfully. He enrages the Red Dogs by stretching down one naked leg and wriggling his bare toes just above the leader's head. Then he moves, like monkeys, from one tree to another, the Red Dogs following him. When he comes to the last tree, he takes the garlic and rubs himself all over carefully, so that bees don't hurt him. After reaching the Bee Rocks, he disturbs
the bees and then jumps into the river where Kaa receives him. A large number of Red Dogs, maddened by the stings, fall into the river and die. Others who had seen the trap into which their friends had rushed jump into the river and reach the shallows where they hear the challenge of the Secone Pack growing louder and deeper in the gathering darkness. Then the long fight begins, ending in the death of all the Red Dogs. The tale ends with the cold requiem of Chil the Kite as his hosts drop to their feast. But before that Won-Tolla has died on his slain enemy, and Mowgli has held up Akela to sing his death song. It is carried through with astonishing conviction and intensity, and with an elevation that does not flag.

"Red Dog" has been considered 'Superb' by many critics. It has everything - every situation that has stirred the blood of imaginative youth since tales were first told. There is the threat of invasion by barbarian hordes - far numerous than the Free People. There is the mustering of a whole people to fight in defence of homes and children; there is the wise old counsellor thinking back into the past; the brilliant exploit of one hero who "pulls the very whiskers of death" and leads the enemy into a trap; there is the vengeance of Won-Tolla whose family has been killed by the Red Dogs; there is the death of the glorious old leader and Mowgli the victor left mourning on the battlefield. Every situation is archetypal; we have been
there before a hundred times, but it is so fresh and original a setting that it compels identification. Tompkins remarks that "in the 'The Undertakers' the note is macabre but in 'Red Dog' it is heroic."

Whereas "Tiger! Tiger!" and "Red Dog" describe how Mowgli, with the help of his loyal jungle - friends, is able to kill ferocious Red Dog and Shere Khan, "Letting in Jungle" tells us how he takes revenge on the village people who torture Messua and her husband whom he loves so much. "Literature of the fantastic", says Todorov, "is concerned to describe desire in its excessive forms...."16 Here we find that Mowgli's desire for revenge overpowers him so much that for a moment he does not feel for the innocent people who may also be living in the village along with the wicked really responsible for the whole mischief. As a punishment for the evil deeds of a few persons like Buldeo and the village priest, he gets the whole village wiped off by his jungle - mates.

The last of the Mowgli-tales "The Spring Running" describes with great sensitivity and skill the actual return of Mowgli to the world of men. "Red Dog" and "Tiger! Tiger!" could be told through bare facts; but to convey the compulsion that is driving Mowgli, which he does not understand, Kipling has to move indirectly. Mowgli wonders if he has eaten poison; his unhappiness covers him as water

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covers a log, and the tears that Raksha, the wolf-mother, has told him are the signs of manhood, come to his eyes. Mowgli senses that the time has at last arrived for him to go back to his own people. Like all the jungle animals which, when spring comes, run for the sheer pleasure of movement, Mowgli now runs towards his own kind, towards love, towards his completeness as a human being - things jungle can no longer give him. This has already been predicted by Akela, the old leader of the Wolf Pack, who, when fatally wounded after a furious fight against wild dogs implores Mowgli to abandon those he has loved and served and to seek his future elsewhere. This last tale proves that although a man may be brought up in a jungle environment and learn its languages and laws, he will essentially remain a man and must fulfil his destiny within human society. Kipling seems to be saying indirectly: "East is East, and West is West, though sometimes the twain can meet."

With the last story, we come out of the fantastic world of animals and enter the real world of human beings. In the fantastic world, to use Lionel Trilling's words,"...there were the marvellous but credible abilities of Mowgli; there were the deadly enmities and grandiose revenges, strangely and tragically real. And it was a world peopled by wonderful parents, not only Mother Wolf and Father Wolf, but also - the Fathers were more numerous than
the Mothers - Bagheera the panther, Baloo the bear, Hathi the elephant, and the dreadful but decent Kaa the python, a whole council of strength and wisdom which was as benign as it was dangerous, and no doubt much of the delight came from discovering the benignity of the feral world."17 But Mowgli suddenly feels one evening as if his strength had left him. He bids farewell to his jungle friends and goes to live with human beings.

But these animal tales of The Jungle Books are more than mere stories of Mowgli and his animals. Though the generations of children have come to enjoy Mowgli's adventures simply as entertaining fables, yet they have clearly a number of deeper meanings. First of all, these tales can be interpreted as a kind of panorama of primitive existence, before man's appearance on earth. The jungle animals have been there for thousands of years but suddenly they are confronted by a human baby, capable of understanding and learning the principles of ancient laws. Mowgli is a simple, innocent creature but endowed with the same measure of physical strength as his fellow - animals. Initially his ideas are limited, concentrated on immediate, practical matters associated with sheer survival. He has no dreams, no fantasies. The plans that take shape in his brain, when difficulties arise, are designed merely to surmount impending dangers, without a thought for tomorrow. The boy is a stranger to lies, hypocrisy, cruelty and vice.
He has no experience of such things for he has had no contact with the corrupt society from which he had escaped as a baby. Mowgli is, therefore, a better person. His intelligence does not yet rise above the level of the inhabitants of the animal kingdom and he remains one of them because he has not discovered such human attributes as pride, deception and wickedness.

Mowgli is an incarnation of the myth of primeval innocence and purity and at the same time, he voices a sorrowful protest against civilisation. It is as if Kipling wished to negate the 19th century's proud achievements, notably in science, which were, in his view, dehumanising people and corrupting their lives. There are, of course, numerous parallels in European literature, echoing the urge to return to a primitive way of life as a possible solution to the evils of civilized society. For instance, Rousseau avers that man is debased by civilization, which corrupts and destroys his inherent propensity for good. Thus his hero, Emile, must be brought up in direct contact with nature in order to equip himself spiritually for the harsh challenges of life. But in Emile's system of education there is always the thought of "tomorrow", the need to prepare for what comes next. There is no such future so far as Mowgli is concerned; there is simply a wonderful and happy present among animal friends who can teach him all
there is to know about life. When Mowgli eventually returns to the world of man he is incapable of adapting himself to conventional rules and patterns of behaviour because he had only seen the sway of the primitive laws of the jungle.

In Robinson Crusoe, Daniel Defoe also describes the impact of long isolation and close relationship of man and nature. But in the adventures of this shipwrecked sailor on a desert island there is an everpresent awareness of civilized society as a contrasted, corruptive force. Crusoe's first impulse, almost as soon as he awakes on his island, is to get back to his ship and acquire as many articles as may be necessary to ensure his survival. His subsequent struggles against loneliness, wild animals and cannibals represent dramatic attempts not to sink back to the level of primitive life. For Mowgli, on the other hand, the Jungle experience is the very point of departure for his human development. When he realises that to remain there is to contravene the laws of nature and to deny his own dignity, the youth finds the moral strength to abandon his Eden and return to mankind - a conclusion that Kipling provides in order to demonstrate that escape and isolation cannot provide solutions to the problem of living. To preserve his spiritual integrity, man has to face reality, however cruel that appears to be. This seems to be one of the messages transmitted by the author of The Jungle Books.
by subtly blending poetry, fantasy, myth and reality in work of great beauty and imaginative power.

There is another interpretation which can be given to these stories. Since Kipling had been glorifying Empire in most of his works, these tales have also not remained untouched by the imperial theme. If we go through Mowgli tales several times, we find a number of hints which convince us that Mowgli, despite all the love and care which he gets from his beloved animals, does not seem to "belong" to the jungle. Throughout the eight stories, the saying that "man returns to man at last" runs like a motif, and considerable space is given to the pain that this tactlessly uttered wisdom causes Mowgli, and to his sense of betrayal by the Jungle Community even among those who are his closest allies. Mowgli is undoubtedly the young "Sahib" of the Jungle, and he has to contend with the "native ingratitude" that his superiority arouses. "The others they hate thee because their eyes cannot meet thine; because thou art wise; because thou hast pulled out thorns from their feet - because thou art man." (J.B., P.13). The point of allegory, however, is not merely to confirm that sense of ingratitude, but to give it a depth that the Anglo-Indian's aloof stance would not normally permit. Mowgli, by contrast, "was furious with rage and sorrow, for wolf-like, the wolves had never told him how they hated him!" [J.B., P.18]. The final story "The Spring Running" resolves
the issue finally, as Mowgli chooses to return to mankind, but it also probes more deeply the experience of the white man who may feel excluded from the life around him. This is strikingly - and classically, in terms of the whiteman's latent response to India - expressed in an "aside" in "The Spring Running":

"A girl in a white cloth came down some path that led from the outskirts of the village. Grey Brother dropped out of sight at once, and Mowgli backed noiselessly into a field of high springing crops. He could almost have touched her with his hand when the warm, green stalks closed before his face and he disappeared like a ghost. The girl screamed, for she thought that she had seen a spirit and then she gave a deep sigh. Mowgli parted the stalks with his hands and watched her till she was out of sight." [S.J.B., P.171].

This is quite a startling passage to find in what is, after all, a late - Victorian collection of stories for children. It serves to underline the depth of Kipling's preoccupation with feelings and problems that he tries to explore in his soldier stories. The net result of Mowgli's astonishing strength and beauty is that he has no natural home or community. "The Sahib" in India suffers the loneliness of a god among mere mortals.

The two interpretations of the stories given above, however, are not meant to suggest that Kipling's preoccupation with "Education through Nature" theme or "Imperial" theme mars the other qualities of these stories.
These tales, like other Kipling tales, have a wonderful moral to convey. T.S. Eliot remarks, "The moralist is always present, even in those tales of The Jungle Books which are taken by many readers to be merely fantasies to amuse the very young." Tompkins also remarks, "The elements of moral instruction, which are certainly not alien to a child's world, are systematized. The beasts, without discarding pleasingly incongruous habits of their own, are plainly representative of human traits and conditions, and we are never oblivious of their counterparts in the world of men. They are grouped into arrangements that point a moral, and the moral may extend beyond a child's comprehension, though it should not lie wholly outside it." All the animals which move around Mowgli are conventional symbols of sheer physical power, wisdom and cunning. Baloo, the bear, is the sage, the master, the spokesman - a convenient mouthpiece for the laws that govern the actions of the jungle beasts. Bagheera, the panther, who has been imprisoned in a human cage, represents the cunning of those who know life and to whom nothing comes as a surprise. He fears neither the more ferocious animals like Shere Khan, the lame tiger, nor man himself, knowing the latter's innate cowardice; yet he sensibly shies away from encounters with both, aware of their superior strength. Kaa, the python, is the silent force against which nobody can struggle; and
Akela, the Wolf represents the principle of authority in the pack.

Last thing to be noted about The Jungle Books is the fact that Kipling highlights the importance of Law in Human Life through these stories. He thinks that society cannot function smoothly unless its component parts agree to observe certain rules of conduct towards one another; the stability of the social fabric depends on the steadiness with which the members abide by that agreement. Without some kind of law, civilization cannot exist. Law might undergo changes with the passage of time, it might vary between one culture and another, but law of some kind there must be, otherwise there can be no freedom, for men need to know within what limits they are free, so as to be sure of what they can do without fear. In the Wolf-Pack, after Akela had been deposed, there was anarchy; but in due course, at the meeting where Mowgli handed in, so to speak his resignation, one tattered Wolf howled, "Lead us again, O Akela. Lead us again, O Man Cub, for we be sick of this lawlessness, and we would be the Free People once more." [J.B., P.64].

"In a later Jungle Book tale, at a meeting of young wolves, Akela tells them that they ought of gather themselves together and "follow the Law, and run under one head as befitted the Free People." [S.J.B., P.131]. Thus
Kipling underscores the importance of Law in the *Jungle Books*. He shows great hostility to those who are frivolous like the Bandar-LOG the monkeys, brutally unlawful like the Shere Khan the tiger, or cunningly parasitical like the jackal— who seek to evade the Law in one way or the other. At the same time he exhibits a great love for Baloo, the Bear and Bagheera, the Panther, who teach Mowgli everything about the Law of the Jungle. He gives Kaa a superior moral status to other snakes because he uses his strength to kill the lawless creatures like the Bandar-LOG, the monkeys. But Kipling's meaning of the word "Law" is quite different from the meaning we attach to this term. The Law which appears in the form of a fable in *The Jungle Books* consists of rules of conduct such as the keeping of promises, loyalty of friends, bravery, generosity, respect for parents, and so on—which act as a brake on men's egotism and which all races and creeds hold in esteem.

Thus we see that there are five ways of reading the stories in *The Jungle Books*. First of all they can be enjoyed as pure fantasies which have enthralled thousands of readers of all ages since the times they were written. Rabkin remarks, "We enter a narrative world with the preconceptions of our armchair world intact, and these preconceptions only change as the narrative reconfigures them. In our world, the dead do not speak. Their speaking is unexpected in the sense of anti—expected. When the anti
expected happens, we are in the presence of the fantastic."²⁰ This is what happens in The Jungle Books. When we go through them, we find ourselves amidst intelligent animals who talk, unlike the animals of our real world. Wolves, snakes, panthers, who in the real world are known for their ferocity, show amazing love and kindness for Mowgli. Mowgli, unlike the men of the real world, walks fearlessly in the jungle, knows the roads over the trees, understands the language of birds, beasts and snakes, and kills ferocious Red Dogs and Shere Khan with his unbelievable wisdom and strength. Hence all the time we feel ourselves to be in the presence of a fantastic world around us.

Secondly the Jungle books make the most central statement about the principle called the "Law which dominated Kipling's philosophy of life. Law, according to Kipling, was the only barrier between Man and Anarchy. Thirdly, Kipling gives his message of "Return to Nature" in a beautiful way through these tales. Thus there is a strongly contemporary note in his aim of restoring a balance to over-urbanized, over-intellectualized industrial society by linking it with the underdeveloped world and renewing it spiritually by fresh contact with Nature; this is the message of not only Kim, but also the Jungle Books. Fourthly these stories can be read as rich allegories where
every animal becomes symbol of something else. Lastly, they make an indirect comment on the whiteman's "loneliness" in the country where he has come to rule. Mowgli does not belong to the Jungle. He wants to be wolf, but the wolves keep reminding him that he is a man. He is odd man out whichever way he turns, alone on his island like Crusoe and Prospero, like the heroic whiteman alone among a thousand natives, who recognise his hateful superiority because he is immune from their magic. They are afraid of his eyes and of the Red Flower, the fire which only he can feed and control. Thus we find that Kipling has provided us with a rich and multilayered tale in The Jungle Books.

(III)

Animal fantasy continued to remain a favourite mode of writing for Kipling throughout his life. "A Walking Delegate" (The Day's Work), "Below the Mill Dam" (Traffics and Discoveries), "The Mother Hive" (Actions and Reactions), "The Dog Hervey" (A Diversity of Creatures) and "The Bull that Thought" (Debits and Credits) are some of the popular animal fantasies which were written in the middle and later parts of his literary career.

"A Walking Delegate" is set in Vermont, in a rough pasture where a number of horses are grazing. The owner brings them salt on a Sunday morning and overhears their conversation. They are joined by an outsider, a horse from
a livery stable, who has been sent there for the summer; he preaches a subversive doctrine about the inalienable rights of a horse and the duty of all horses to rise against their oppressors. The others are honest working horses who have found out that it does not pay to rebel against man. Long ago when they were colts, they had tried rearing in harness; someone yanked them over backwards and it hurt. So now they unite to half kick the intruder to death.

This story, in fact, can be read as a political fable. It shows Kipling's profound antipathy to socialism and his strong belief in the "day's work". In this story, he has chosen to represent the contempt of real workers for the idle demagogue in terms of horseflesh. Thus "A Walking Delegate" shows Kipling's belief that Labour Organisation is an obvious product of the malicious hatred of the idle poor for the industrious rich. This tale also tells us something about the hardening of Kipling's opinions, concerning America. But the fact that its characters are parabolic horses, not real Vermonters, suggests even more about Kipling's imaginative estrangement from the life around him. For America still presented herself to him as a dilemma to be analysed, a puzzle rather than a scene. Her lawlessness, for example, gave rise to the speculations about the very meaning of the Law itself that informs the Jungle Books; her trade unionism gave rise to "A Walking Delegate" which has
been called by Eric Stokes, "the surly snarl against American trade unionism."\textsuperscript{21} For Kipling, the ordinary working man stands in the same relation to the employing and governing classes in which the horse stands to its owner; his primary duty is to serve his master faithfully; thinking of rebellion against the Master means inviting trouble and even death for himself.

Kipling's aversion to socialism is also expressed in "The Mother Hive" another popular fantasy that occurs in \textit{Actions and Reactions}. Here, thanks to a moment's bad temper, due to fatigue, on the part of the Guard of the hive, a wax-moth is able to seize the opportunity she has been waiting for to get in. She is a charming, soft creature, who raises up in the bees the vision of that happy socialist state where, in the words of "The Gods of the Copy-Book Heading," "all men are paid for existing, and no man shall pay for sins."\textsuperscript{22} She lays eggs promiscuously, and when told that to do so is the privilege of the Queen Bee, protests that they are not eggs that she lays, but principles, a lie she later justifies. She and her brood eat into and destroy all the wax essential to the structure of the hive, which becomes useless; malformed and morally uninspired bees are produced, no honey is gathered, and the call to swarm is ignored. Worst of all, the scrap wax pillars which should guard against the entry of Death's Head Moths fail to be built. In the end, the hive is destroyed.
by the human owners in a grand holocaust, and all the bees are killed, save for a group of sensible, disciplined ones, who create a Queen, and Swarm. The implications are obvious when we know that this story was written in 1908, during the period when "The City of Brass" and "The Dykes" were published. It is an old lesson, an old warning that Kipling wanted to convey to his countrymen. He desired them to stop this self-regarding socialist nonsense, think of the Germans, and look to their Army and Navy. The story "The Mother Hive" can be interpreted in one more way also. The Mother Hive represents the British Empire and the things which ultimately destroy this hive are progressivism, liberal individualism, pacifism, cosmopolitanism, egalitarianism, little Englandism and class division. Kipling believed that these elements in the liberal Government's rule indirectly worked against a cohesive, well armed Empire ready both physically and psychologically to resist the growing German menace to English world civilizing mission.

"Below the Mill Dam" turns to one area of Kipling's life that was entirely satisfactory. Bateman's seemed too large and dark to be lit by candles, and so Kipling had an old mill on the River Dudwell harnessed to generate electricity, and carried the power up to the house on a rejected deep sea cable, laid underground. The mill was
mentioned in Domesday Book, and it delighted Kipling to create around it a little fantasy in which complacent nostalgia for English history was thrown out in interest of modern technical progress.

Kipling has taken up the theme of age long growth in this story. Here native black rat is superseded by the alien brown rat; the mill wheel could be yoked to a dynamo and the countryside electrified. In this fantasy, the wheel, the mill stones, and the waters talk as well as the rat and the cat, not to mention the human beings. It tells of not only technological development but also of political development since Domesday Book; the wheel tends to quote it automatically as it dwells on the past, but quickly adapting itself to changed conditions, such as the introduction of electricity, finally deriving pride from being converted into a turbine. On the one hand, Kipling seems to be tendering the advice that man should joyfully accept what is happening around in the world. He should not forget the past but welcome the future. On the other hand the writer seems to be satirizing those people who do not like change. Angus Wilson has rightly observed about this tale: "It is his principal satire upon the inability of the Tory Guards to adapt themselves to a changing world."23 Grey Cat and the Black Rat represent Tory parasites lazily clinging on to their entrenched privileges, and the Mill wheel's pastiche Domesday-book dead-letter meanderings,
set against the busy, forward-pushing bossiness of the utilitarian waters, makes an energetic counterpoint.

The three animal fantasies which have been discussed above have not elicited so much praise as those which appear in The Jungle Books or Just So Stories. The reason for this may be that the particularity of political satire seldom allows a story to be read by the later generations. Swift's satires or Dryden's and Byron's poems are more admired from a distance than read; Animal Farm by Orwell might meet the same fate when the time has wholly effaced the dreadful outlines of Stalinist conformity.

"The Bull that Thought" is the story of a bull endowed with almost human intelligence and supreme artistry in the one art open to him—the art of which the other half is that of the matador, who with graceful judgement of the exact inch and second must draw the bull's deadly horns as close to his body as he can. But Apis is a different kind of bull—a bull who sees through the device of the cloak and can read the mind of the man, who takes the initiative from the man and holds it! Apis is a top rank artist, a Michaelangelo, a Beethoven among bulls; he understands what he is doing and knows that an audience demands variety. He is also a humorist, and a murderer of any bull who presumes to be a rival, but a fastidious murderer who cleans his horns in the earth after disembowelling his victim. When he
goes into the Spanish bull ring, he kills several men and horses before at last he makes his triumphal exit as no bull has ever done before - the idol of the crowd! Thus we can read "The Bull that Thought" as a bull fighting story with a difference, and be carried along to the crescendo of excitement when Apis puts on his final stupendous act with a matador with whom he has reached an understanding.

But there can be no doubt that the readers are expected to go farther than this. The references to the artistry are explicit and deliberate in this story. The words "art" and "artist" occur fourteen times during the course of the story, and the bull fighting scenes are described in terms that suggest a work of art and include a disquisition on its principles, its inspiration and the conditions necessary for its production. Apis displays "a breath of technique that comes of seasoned art and, above all, the passion that arrives after experience" [D&C., P.216]; he studies the troupe of bull fighters "with the gravity of an equal in intellect and the remote and merciless resolution of a master in his art" [D&C. P.223]. In the final scene he "despaired in statuesque abandon and thence flashed into fresh paroxysms of wrath - but always with the detachment of the true artist who knows he is but the vessel of an emotion whence others, not he, must drink" [D&C, P.227]. The story thus is a superb display of
Kipling's technique; it is also saying something about art - that the artist must be ruthless, that he may have to be cruel, that he is born but must perfect his technique by labour, that he must have passion and inspiration. Bull, in short, is a symbol of the artist in the story.

This symbolical interpretation, however, should not make us lose sight of the moral that Kipling has conveyed through this tale. As in the *Jungle Books*, Kipling no doubt, gives his animals human characteristics. But when has anyone who has even owned and loved an animal or a bird not thought of it as having the same feelings as we have, and credited it with being able to think as we do? True, Apis is a murderer. But he is fighting for his life against men who, having selected him for his fighting qualities, have driven him into the bull ring to be killed for the entertainment of hundreds of blood thirsty human-beings. It is salutatory to find him turning the tables on them.

Most of the readers feel that Kipling's animal fantasies which deal with dogs, cats, rats and horses are inferior to the ones which deal with wild animals. One of the reasons might be that the sense of a secret world known only to the author and the animals, a secret imparted by a creation of a small total world from the territory of wild animals, is lacking when the animals are too domestic, too bound up with the lives and purposes of men to arouse a
sense of wonder in the people. It accounts for the less popularity of the four stories discussed in the third section of this chapter. However, his three collections of animal fantasies in Just So Stories and The Jungle Books have always remained best selling volumes since their first publication; they were written at the time when Kipling was in full command of his creative power. Other animal stories were written when his power had started declining. Naturally they could never possess, in the words of Gillian Avery, "a fantasy and a wonder and a sadness," which only the Mowgli stories possess.
REFERENCES


11. Todorov, The Fantastic, P. 34.

12. Ibid., P.92.


16. Ibid., P.138.


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