



THE JUNGLE BOOK : A STUDY ON “LIGHT SKIN DARK SKIN” PREJUDICE

MOUSUMI KUNDU

Research scholar

Bankura, West Bengal

(WB)-INDIA

ABSTRACT

This diligent inquiry has been attempted to show how Mowgli, a man-cub remains protected in the jungle, full of hungry animals in Rudyard Kipling's The Jungle Book .Usually such kind of safe is interpreted as the humanity on the part of the sub human creatures .The main objective of this investigation is to probe deep into the struggle of psychic representation resulting from the skin color where Mowgli represents white skinned people and the animals stands for the black. Power is associated with those post colonial hierarchy characterized by the light skinned people ; and the dark skinned people are considered to be less qualified to negotiate the global strategy of equality. This article is concluded with how this light skin dark skin prejudice saves Mowgli 's life in The Jungle Book.

Keywords Post Colonial, Hierarchy, Hegemony, Artefact

INTRODUCTION

Discriminations in skin color are not only perceived as indicating physical differences between groups, but also to point out the social and cultural distinctions in terms of racial and historical background. In Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* Mowgli the human baby, representing white man is found safe even in the jungle, full of animals who stand for the black skin so far as the skin color of the animals used in the story “Mowgli's Brothers” in *The Jungle Book* , is concerned. This diligent inquiry has been attempted to show how the post colonial hierarchy related to skin color saves Mowgli's life.

The post colonial hierarchy reveals the deep psychic uncertainty of the colonial relation which is based on the skin - white and black - of individual and social authority. It again forms a power that is practiced at the very limits of identity and authority. According to Fanon , the black soul is merely a white man's artefact .

MOUSUMI KUNDU

1P a g e



The white man is sealed in his whiteness.

The black man in his blackness (Fanon, 11)

The black men are trapped in their blackness as they were born with original skin, and white men in their whiteness as they were born pure ; both they are trapped into their mutual and aggressive narcissism.

Now the question is what is the experience of the black people in the white world? The white men considers black men as “Machine - animal - man”. The white men represent themselves as the masters and objects to be feared and desired. According to Fanon Frantze :

White men consider themselves

Superior to black men. (Fanon,12)

They appear to be superior in respect of their intellect and power.

The black man wants to be white . (Fanon, 11)

Blackman wants to prove to be white men,

At all costs, the richness of their thought, the

Equal value of their intellect (Fanon, 12)

The power is discriminated according to the post colonial hierarchy based on fragile skin color - white and black.

The power is associated with

Those sovereignties characterized

By light skinned populations.

Those characterized by dark

Skin are denigrated and assumed

Less qualified to negotiate global

Issues as equals . (Hall Re)

The black people, therefore, try to be more like the (desirable) white men. Sometimes he puts on white mask.

Light skin dark skin prejudice, when

People discriminate against each other

On the basis of the color of the skin.



*This attitude towards the skin whitening
Has a prominent base on a racial hierarchy ,
They fuel in intolerance and causing serious
Social harm. Skin color bias affects people
Psychologically.(Kaur)*

The main objective of the present investigation is to probe into the struggle of psychic representation resulting from the skin color where Mowgli represents the white skinned people and the animals stands for the black. Before opening the petals of argument regarding the light skin dark skin prejudice in the story, the writer Rudyard Kipling and the story “Mowgli’s Brothers” in *The Jungle Book* should be introduced.

The great Imperial poet and propagandist Joseph Rudyard Kipling (1865-1915) saw the Empire as a way to maintain order, peace and stability in a balanced way among the heathen. In *The Jungle Book* (1894) the incidents and events go towards a state of order, peace and stability at the end of the story. In *Kim* (1901) Kipling has portrayed a young European boy, Kim in India, who works as a spy for the British secret service and also travels with a Tibetan Lama on his search for a river of purifying water. Kim's duty as a spy for the British Empire and his search for spiritual harmony work side by side. Kipling’s poems “The White Man's Burden”(1899) considered that it is necessary for the white man to civilize the backward savages. The post colonial hierarchy based on skin color is beautifully expressed here .

The Jungle Book is one of the most popular children stories and it has been made into several movies produced by Alexander Korda and Walt Disney Company. The stories are fables with moral lessons. A ‘man-cub’ Mowgli is brought up in the jungle by the Mother wolf and Father wolf with the help of Baloo the bear and Bagheera the black panther. Except from Shere Khan, the tiger Mowgli remains safe and protected. Previous literary reviews interpreted. *The Jungle Book* as a story about humanity as it is found in the voice of the animals in the jungle as well as in the character of Mowgli who rejects the civilized human society, bravely saves the life of Baloo the bear, and ultimately becomes a hero of the jungle and of humanity. *The Jungle Book* contains of seven tales that are all about life in the jungle, with Mowgli a man - cub as the principal character. The stories are about family, nature, relationships and living in the society. They all learn the fundamental values of life i. e. whom to trust, what friendship is and how to behave towards others in certain situation. Another research paper on *The Jungle Book* discusses Kipling’s novel in the light of Darwin’s theories which proves the development of human characteristics within the animals.



The present paper has been attempted to bring out the struggle of psychic representation resulting from the light skin dark skin prejudice which saves 'man-cub' Mowgli's life. The title of the novel *The Jungle Book* Connotes the juxtaposition of two contradictory ideas such as uncivilized culture and civilization. The word 'book' denotes the store house of knowledge, education and civilization; the word 'Jungle' denotes the gathering of wild animals and barbarism. Only human beings can access the book. The novel also tells the story of wild animals and one and only man - cub, Mowgli. Thus the title signifies the setting of the novel i. e. Jungle. A human being is always superior to the animals in respect of intellect. Therefore the root of binary is embedded in the title. Let it be discussed how the novel deals with the binary between the white skin and black Skin.

The story "Mowgli's Brothers" opens in the jungle where a 'man-cub' is found by Shere Khan, a tiger. The law of the jungle forbids the animals to do any harm to the 'man-cub'. Now what is the law designed by the animals? Kipling has written :

*The real reason for this is that
Man - killing means, sooner or
Later, the arrival of white men on
The elephants, with guns, and hundreds
Of brown men with gongs and rockets
And torches. Then everybody in the
Jungle suffers. (Kipling, 4)*

Human beings are taken for granted as white men ; and the animals in the jungle are in fear and suffer from an inferiority complex. The question is whether the animals stand for the black skinned people. The very phrases, 'Bagheera's beautiful black skin' and 'black Panther' were the first evidence where black skin is referred to.

Secondly, it should be pointed out what the animals think of the 'man-cub' Mowgli and how the black skinned animals behave with Mowgli. The animals put the boy in a superior position as it is written by Rudyard Kipling :

*'How little! How naked! and - how
Bold!' said Mother Wolf. (Kipling,5)
Man and their cubs are very wise he
May be a help in time. (Kipling,11)
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 a man (Kipling, 15)
He is a man, and none of us can look
Him between the eyes (Kipling, 20)*

A great psychological gulf or distance can be seen between the man-cub and the animals.

On the other hand, the master like attitude of the man- cub is expressed here where Mowgli is never afraid of the animals. Father Wolf says :

*He is altogether without hair, and
I could kill him with a touch of my
Foot. But see, he looks up and is not
Afraid. (Kipling 5-6)*

Again Kipling has written :

*'Yes,' said Mowgli, 'all the jungle
Fears Bagheera - all except Mowgli'
Oh, thou art a man's cub, 'said the
Black panther. (Kipling, 15)*

The binary opposition of light color and dark color is again manifested through the theory of 'Orientalism' The color hegemony over the other creates psychological dimension of the race According to Fanon what is called the black soul is merely a white man's artefact. They both remain mysterious and unknown to each other. As the animals say :

*I know nothing of man. (Kipling, 11)
He is a man, and none of us can look
Him between the eyes.(Kipling, 20)*

Chapter one of *The Jungle Book*, "Mowgli's Brothers" ends with the following words :

*The dawn was beginning to break
When Mowgli went down the hillside
Alone, to meet those mysterious things
That are called men (Kipling, 23)*



Kipling has narrated very artistically the suppressed desire of the animals when a man cub is demanding food for them Not only out of humanity but also the law of the jungle or the color hegemony over the other makes the man-cub alive even in the jungle. Kipling has written :

*Mowgli was still deeply interested
In the pebbles, and he did not notice
When the wolves came and looked at
Him one by one. At last they all went
Down the hill for the dead bull, and
Only Akela, Bagheera, Baloo, and
Mowgli's own wolves were left. (Kipling, 10-11)*

Another most important psychic demand of the black skinned animals reveals the skin whitening culture of the post colonialism where the black skinned people have a tendency to be white men; and at the same time they feel proud when they find themselves among the white men as it is seen in *The Jungle Book*.

*And so this is a man's cub. Now, was
There ever a wolf that could boast of a
Man's cub among her children? (Kipling, 05)*

Throughout the whole novel Mowgli plays a major role and his human like behavior appears to be one kind of attraction to the animals. Tiger the antagonist is always afraid of Mowgli's human like violent and destructive qualities ; that's why the tiger wants to assassinate the man-cub. The tiger as an animal and as a black skinned one fears the fire which can be produced by human being for the destruction of the jungle. Mowgli the man-cub is presented as a white skinned people for whom the animals are in fear . Mowgli not only produces fire but also he can save the baby elephant and can collect the honey for Baloo. Mowgli becomes superior to them in all respect. The king of Monkey kidnaps Mowgli in order to increase his power and to rule over the jungle. The king of Monkey believes that the man-cub Mowgli can produce fire and by dint of this fire like instruments the monkey will enable to dominate the land . Again Baloo protects Mowgli from a snake for a purpose i. e. only the man-cub Mowgli can collect honey for him. Finally, Mowgli kills his enemy tiger by virtue of his intellect and saves the animals.

Now, the conclusion of the paper has been drawn on the basis of the valid findings which support the post colonial skin whitening culture. The story, "Mowgli's Brothers" in *The Jungle Book* passes through a struggle of psychic representation resulting from the light skin dark skin prejudice and ends with Mowgli's safe life. Thus, this paper has shown how the



post colonial hierarchy based on skin color saves Mowgli's life as well as how Mowgli becomes superior to the animals in the jungle.

WORKS CITED

- Fanon, Frantz. Trans. Markmann, Charles Lam. *Black Skin White Masks* . London : Pluto Press, 1986. <https://monoskop.org>. Accessed 20 March 2017.
- Hall, Re. "Skin Color as Post Colonial Hierarchy :A Global Strategy for Conflict Resolution". Pubmed : *The Journal of Psychology Interdisciplinary and Applied* 137(1): 41-53. Feb 2003. n.pag. www.researchgate.net. Accessed 20 March 2017.
- Kaur, Satminder. Sharma, Alka. "Skin Whitening Culture in Post Colonial Era. Delhi: India International Centre, 2006. n. pag. <https://www.wijstm.com> . Accessed 22 March 2017.
- Kipling, Rudyard. *The Jungle Book* .Howrah : Skylark Books, 2006. "Research Papers on Darwinism in The Jungle Book" . n. pag. www.papermasters.com. Accessed 28 March 2017 .
- Wulan, R, R. *The Myth of White Skin : A Post Colonial Review of Cosmetics Ads in Indonesia*. Indonesia, Feb 2, 2017. n. pag. www.shs-conferences.org. Accessed 25 March 2017