

Law of the jungle

"**The law of the jungle**" is an expression that means "every man for himself", "anything goes", "survival of the strongest", "survival of the fittest", "kill or be killed", "dog eat dog" or "eat or be eaten". The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the 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."^[1] It is also known as **jungle law** or frontier justice.

The phrase was used in a poem by Rudyard Kipling to describe the obligations and behaviour of a wolf in a pack. However, this use of the term has been overtaken in popularity by the other interpretations above.

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The Jungle Book

In the novel *The Jungle Book*,^[2] Rudyard Kipling uses the term to describe an actual set of legal codes used by wolves and other animals in the jungles of India. In Chapter Two of *The Second Jungle Book*,^[3] Rudyard Kipling provides a poem, featuring the Law of the Jungle as known to the wolves, and as taught to their offspring.

In the 2016 Disney adaptation of the novel, the wolves often recite a poem referred as the "law of the jungle" and when Baloo asks Mowgli if he ever heard a song and he begins to recite this anthem, the bear responds by telling him that it is not a song, but a propaganda text.

See also

The Law for the Wolves

"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.

Wash daily from nose tip to tail tip; drink deeply, but never too deep;
And remember the night is for hunting and forget not the day is for sleep.

The jackal may follow the tiger, but, cub, when thy whiskers are grown,
Remember the wolf is a hunter—go forth and get food of thy own.

Keep peace with the lords of the jungle, the tiger, the panther, the bear;
And trouble not Hathi the Silent, and mock not the boar in his lair.

When pack meets with pack in the jungle, and neither will go from the trail,
Lie down till the leaders have spoken; it may be fair words shall prevail.

When ye fight with a wolf of the pack ye must fight him alone and afar,
Lest others take part in the quarrel and the pack is diminished by war.
The lair of the wolf is his refuge, and where he has made him his home,
Not even the head wolf may enter, not even the council may come.

The lair of the wolf is his refuge, but where he has digged it too plain,
The council shall send him a message, and so he shall change it again.

If ye kill before midnight be silent and wake not the woods with your bay,
Lest ye frighten the deer from the crop and thy brothers go empty away.

Ye may kill for yourselves, and your mates, and your cubs as they need and ye can;
But kill not for pleasure of killing, and seven times never kill man.

If ye plunder his kill from a weaker, devour not all in thy pride,
Pack-right is the right of the meanest; so leave him the head and the hide.

The kill of the pack is the meat of the pack. Ye must eat where it lies;
And no one may carry away of that meat to his lair, or he dies.

The kill of the wolf is the meat of the wolf. He may do what he will,
But, till he has given permission, the pack may not eat of that kill.

Cub right is the right of the yearling. From all of his pack he may claim
Full gorge when the killer has eaten; and none may refuse him the same.

- Anarchism
- Evolutionary psychology
- Natural law
- Stateless society
- Social Darwinism
- The Wild West

References

1. "Law of the Jungle." *Oxford English Dictionary Online*. Oxford University Press. n.d. Web. 10 May 2013.
2. Kipling, Rudyard. *The Jungle Book*. New York: Sterling Publishing, 2007.
3. Kipling, Rudyard. *The Second Jungle Book*. Middlesex: The Echo Library, 2007.

Lair right is the right of the mother. From all of her year she may claim
One haunch of each kill for her litter, and none may deny her the same.

Cave right is the right of the father, to hunt by himself for his own;
He is freed from all calls to the pack. He is judged by the council alone.

Because of his age and his cunning, because of his gripe and his paw,
In all that the law leaveth open the word of the head wolf is law.

Now these are the laws of the jungle, and many and mighty are they;
But the head and the hoof of the law and the haunch and the hump is—Obey!"

—Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936)

External links

- *The Second Jungle Book* at Project Gutenberg

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