

MYSTERY IN J. K. ROWLING'S HARRY POTTER AND THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE: A RELIGIOUS THEME

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Abstract : *The artistic and aesthetic beauty of literature can be appreciated and rejoiced when it is compared and correlated with diverse literature across the boundaries. There is prevalence of ideologies, socio-cultural intersections between religion and literature from the medieval to contemporary periods. Religion is saturated with several mythological characters, settings and situations that facilitate the readers to juxtapose diverse literatures to strike contrast and mark the relationship of the creative works of the authors. This paper traces out the parallelism and similarity between J.K.Rowling's Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone and Hindu mythology. One can enjoy the beauty of a work of art and delve deep into the subtle and literary meanings by comparing with other works of art and literature. The Harry Potter series cannot be taken only as a story of magic and adventure but can be interpreted in relation to Hindu mythology. The analysis in this vein reveals the rich tapestry of incidents and situations in the Harry Potter series have a close association with our religion .*

IndexTerms - Wizard, Harry potter, Rowling, Mystery, Hogwarts School, Muggles.

Introduction

J. K. Rowling, (1965-) is one of the eminent British writers endowed with boundless fertile imagination and ingenious artistry. Her creativity redefines the children's literature. The stupendous fabrication of Rowling demarcates her novels from generic commercial creations and propels the seven Harry Potter series to the highest sphere of literature. Reading the Potter makes the readers indulge in an alternate universe superior to the ordinary world. The success of the author lies in her ability to combine fantasy and reality. Rowling incorporates the elements of mythology, fairy tales and legends to give a rich texture to her own plot, character and setting. She reinvents the old myths through a pattern of amazing and astounding twists to fulfill the readers' desire.

The birth of Harry Potter in Harry Potter and Philosopher's Stone is similar to the birth of Karna and Krishna in The Mahabharatha, Jesus Christ and Moses in Bible and Abijit of Tagore's Mukta-dhara. Karna is the son of Kunti by the sun deity and he is born with a pair of golden ear rings and an armor like coating which glimmers like the sun. He is put in a basket to float down the Ashwa river. At Champapuri, on the banks of Ganga, he is rescued by a charioteer Adhiratha and his wife Radha, who being childless are delighted to adopt this god-like child. Karna is reared by his foster parents who has close resemblance to the birth and growth of Harry. According to the Book of Exodus in Bible, a new Pharaoh who ascends to power in Egypt around 1200 BC enslaves the Jews. He decides to kill all boy babies of the Jews. But one mother saves her baby by putting him in a basket made of reeds and leaves it in the river Nile and sends her daughter to watch the basket afloat. The Princess, the daughter of Pharaoh notices the basket, and saves the baby and names him "Moses". The sister of the baby is called to find a nurse to take care of Moses. The mother of Moses is appointed as the nurse to take care of her baby son. Moses grows up in the royal court and attains high level of education. He matures to be the leader of the Hebrew tribes and later the Promulgator of the Ten Commandments.

Reflecting on these literary happenings, Harry is considered as a destitute, abandoned by his wizard parents, James and Lily. The Headmaster of Hogwarts, Dumbledore and professor McGonagall to save the baby Harry from the cruel hands of Voldemort, leave him under Dursleys. In response to the rare meteorological events, baby Harry arrives at the door step of his aunt and uncle. Rowling correlates this incident with the life of Christ. Hagrid transfers Harry, the child of magicians to an ordinary world. The visit of the three gift-bearing wise men to the new born Christ is also altered by Rowling. Shortly after the birth of Harry, three wise persons visit him, and they are Dumbledore, McGonagall and Hagrid. In the gospel story, the three wise men deliver gifts to the new-born Christ, whereas, Rowling's three wise persons, leave Harry to his uncle and aunt. The fact that Harry is raised by his relatives also bears resemblance to the story of Christ, for Christ's true father is the Father in Heaven and Joseph, like Dursley is only a step father.

Krishna of The Mahabharatha born in prison is brought up by foster parents in Brindhavan in order to protect him from the brutal hands of Kamsa. He is nurtured with care and affection by his foster parents. But Harry gets humiliation in the hands of his foster parents. Krishna and Karna of The Mahabharatha, Moses of The Bible, Alvars of Vaishnava Sidhantha are foundlings, later elevated to the exalted status to serve mankind. Krishna becomes the king of Madhura, Karna is bestowed with the kingdom of Angatha, and Moses is uplifted as the promulgator of Ten Commandments. In The Philosopher's Stone, Harry endures the tortures and torments for ten years under Dursleys. Later he is shifted to Hogwarts where he regains his true identity and the dormant wizardry is stimulated and is recognized as an acclaimed personality.

Karna of The Mahabharatha is born with armor and celestial earrings. Harry is gifted with bolt like lightning scar which serves as a badge of honour. “Dumbledore and Professor McGonagall bent forward over the bundle of blankets. Inside, just visible, was a baby boy, fast asleep. Under a tuft of jet-black hair over his forehead they could see a curiously shaped cut, like a bolt of lightning” (16-17).

Harry's distinctiveness is shown by his birthmark. The scar is the distinctive feature for Harry. Even though he is small and skinny for his age, he wears Dudley's old clothes and puts a pathetic appearance. The only thing he relishes about his personality is his bolt of lightning thin scar on his forehead. “The only thing Harry liked about his own appearance was a very thin scar on his forehead which was shaped like a bolt of lightning. He had had it as long as he could remember and the first question he could ever remember asking Aunt Petunia was how he had got it”(20). The origin of the scar remains a mystery to Harry and there is no one to explicate the cause. But the scar of Harry elevates his status as a notable personality. Harry arises from the ironic world of distress and frustration, and attains the eminent stature in the magical world. Voldemort, the dark lord casts the dangerous mortal spell on the parents of Harry. Lily's sacrificial attempt to save baby Harry backfires the spell and destroys the physical structure of Voldemort. A connection between attacker and victim is formed during which parts of Voldemort's powers are transferred to the infant, and Harry is bestowed with a lightning-bolt shaped scar on his forehead. The scar serves as an identity for Harry and acts as an indicator alerting him towards the approach of danger. The scar is a part of link between his mind and the dark lord. He experiences a terrible pain in the scar whenever Voldemort advances strong negative emotions on him. The impending crisis is forecasted through the unbearable pain. The centaur realizes Harry as a distinguished personality in the wizard world by the scar.

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone is J. K. Rowling's famous novel, a literary genre with fantasy, adventure, mystery, fairy-tale stuff and the ideal romantic hero. Most reviewers commented favourably on Rowling's imaginative power, humour, simple and direct style and proper plot construction. Rowling's writing can be compared to that of Jane Austen or Ronald Dahl or stories of Homer. Some found the book like the Victorian and Edwardian boarding school stories; however, it placed the genre firmly in the modern world by featuring contemporary ethical and social issues.

Though the novel has been attacked by several religious groups for promoting witchcraft, the book exemplifies the power of self-sacrifice. Alton describes this novel as something new and complete in itself: “By fusing the genres in this way, Rowling has created something new- a way that allows to keep their original shape while constantly changing their significance... and [interpretation] at any given time by any given reader”.

Kiberd comments on the process of conception and combination: “...it is really in [Rowling's] imaginative combination of so many disparate elements of previous children's literature that the brilliance of the Harry Potter conception may be found”. (67-68)”.

Rowling not only hits each literary genre on the mark but also manages to delight adult readers as well. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* is a brilliantly imagined and beautifully written fantasy that incorporates elements of traditional British school stories without once violating the magical underpinnings of the plot. In fact, Rowling's wonderful ability to put a fantastic spin on sports, student rivalry, and eccentric faculty contributes to the humor, charm, and delight of her utterly captivating story.

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone (1997) is full of mystery where magical events take place. Harry Potter is a protagonist of all seven series by J.K.Rowling. Harry's parents James and Lily Potter were killed by the dark wizard Lord Voldemort but he couldn't kill baby Harry. Harry was one year old then and had a lightning bolt-shaped scar on his forehead.

“...what they're saying, she pressed on, is that last night Voldemort turned up in Godric's hallow. He went to find the Potters...the rumor is that Lily and James Potter are – are - that they're –dead.”(284).

Harry's only left relatives were Mrs. Petunia Dursley, sister of Lily Potter who are muggles and always pretend that she has no sister. Mr.Dursley on his way to office notices the cloudy sky as a sign of some mysterious event happening. In the corner of the street, he noticed the first thing-a cat reading a map. Later tabby cat standing on the corner of Privet Drive, but there was no map. When Vernon Dursley stared at the cat, it stared back. Again, the cat was reading the sign “Privet Drive”. It was something mysterious, as a cat cannot read maps or signs. Mr. Dursley saw a man wearing an emerald-green cloak. Mr.Dursley in the office was unable to concentrate on drills that morning.

When Mr.Dursley reached full of imagination around him he saw the tabby cat sitting on the wall. Mr. Dursley was listening to the news-report. “...shooting stars all over Britain? Owls flying by daylight? Mysterious people in cloaks all over the place? and a whisper, a whisper, about the Potters ”. Mr.Dursley on hearing the whispers became fear flooded and wanted to say something but in vain. One of the tiny old man fell on the ground and smiled and said in a squeaky voice that made passers-by stare: “...don't be sorry, my dear sir, for nothing could [disturb] me today! Even muggles like you should be celebrating, this happy, happy day!”.

Baby Harry was brought by gigantic Hagrid on his huge motorbike flying in the air and landed on road in front of Dumbledore and McGonagall. They could see under set- black hair over his forehead curiously shaped cut like a bolt of lightning. Dumbledore utters:

“... Scars can come in useful. I have one myself above my left knee which is a perfect map of the London underground.”

Rowling introduces an eclectic cast of characters, first among them being Vernon Dursley. Harry, an orphan, lived his miserable childhood with Dursley family. Rowling imagined him as a „black-haired, be spectacled boy who didn't know he was a wizard“ and transferred part of her pain about losing her mother to him.

Rowling has made it clear in one of her interviews: „...I knew he didn't know he was a wizard. And so then I kind of worked backwards ...when he was one year old, the most evil wizard for hundreds and hundreds of years attempted to kill him. He killed Harry's parents... but for some mysterious reason, the curse didn't work on Harry. So he's left with this lightning bolt shaped scar on his forehead and the curse rebounded upon the evil wizard, who has been in hiding ever since.“

The eponymous hero becomes an orphan practically as a baby, which according to Maria Nikolajeva is a very common narrative hook, since „parents“ foremost obligation in children's fiction is to be absent, preferably dead“.

Harry spends ten years living with his dreadful, cold-hearted relatives, unaware of his renown among the magical folk. After a decade of loneliness, maltreatment and neglect, „The Boy Who Lived“(Rowling, Sorcerer's 17) is initiated into a parallel, fairy tale- like world where he is celebrated as a wizarding prodigy, the only one who survived the killing curse shot by the wicked dark wizard of the deadly magic, he is also „The Chosen One“ who thwarted Lord Voldemort „...all three of the main protagonists appeal to readers: everyone can either identify with or knows someone like brainy Hermione, faithful and funny Ron and orphan Harry.“ (Alton 2003:143)

Harry, Ron and Hermione begin school at Hogwarts as energetic pre-adolescents, who worry about friends, school and Quidditch -except perhaps Harry, who worries more about being murdered. Rowling identifies the wizarding world as a mysterious culture as soon as Hagrid introduces it to Harry- „we're best left alone.“ (Rowling, 1997. 65)

Rowling captures her readers with the drab, hopeless, all- too- real life with the Dursley and controls it with Harry's entrance into the technicolor, wonderland of the wizarding world and by the end of each book, the readers find themselves suddenly realizing that they are not in England anymore.

The ability to combine fantasy and reality is one of Rowling's greatest strengths, and she makes it effortless for readers to invoke their willing suspension of disbelief. (Alton, 155) Alton mentions that Rowling's elements of mystery also evoke something- „the audience's prejudices, which work quite well in relation to both Rowling's creation of the Dursley's and her assumption that most readers will be as offended by Draco Malfoy's anti-Muggle sentiments as Harry, Ron and Hermione (145)“.

Rowling explains bluntly that Harry goes off into this magical world and magic does not make his world better significantly. The relationships make his world better. Magic in many ways complicates his life. Nikolajeva explains that this mystery novel „empower the protagonists by letting them be smarter than the adults, to succeed where real detectives fail, and to happen to be at the right place at the right moment“ (130)

Conclusion

One can enjoy the beauty of a work of art and delve deep into the subtle and literary meanings by comparing with other works of art and literature. The Harry Potter series cannot be taken only as a story of magic and adventure but can be interpreted in relation to Hindu mythology. The analysis in this vein reveals the rich tapestry of incidents and situations in the Harry Potter series have a close association with our religion .This way of correlation brings to light the greatness inherent in the myths and the enriching perspectives that illumine and enthuse the readers. The cornucopia of religion - fantastic, intellectual, aesthetic, emotional, passionate and spiritual speculations can be achieved with the association of various literatures across the globe.

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