

Didacticism through Magical realism in Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *The BFG*

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ABSTRACT

Literature for children has its own significance in all literatures. The objective of children's literature is to educate and entertain. Didacticism is one of the key features of a children's book. Writers like Carlo Collodi, Rudyard Kipling, C. S. Lewis and many others have provided books for children with didactic themes. Roald Dahl is one such prominent writer acknowledged as one of the best storytellers of the twentieth century. His novels *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *The BFG* are good sources of didacticism. The story is delivered to the readers using myriad techniques, one among it is magical realism. Magical realism is the juxtaposition of the magical and the real. *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *The BFG* teaches children to discern between the good and the evil. The paper focuses on the did active values featured in these novels and the effective result of using magical realism as the narrative technique. It further deals with the extraordinary portrayal of the plot, setting and the characters as real and the didactic values expressed in it.

Keywords: Roald Dahl, Children's literature, Magical realism, Didacticism.

Didacticism has always been an important theme of children's books. The writers focus on teaching moral lessons to the children through their stories. It is made sure that children learn the values of life and also get entertained by the books they read. To provide children with the best of their genius the writers employ various methods and techniques. They use colourful books and illustrations in order to get the attention of the young

readers. One such method is magical realism, a narrative technique in which a writer blends fantasy and reality elements. Franz Roh, a German art critic coined the term Magical realism. The fantasy world and the real world in artistically amalgamated in this type of narrative technique.

A good writer is one who always understands the heart of the readers and writes accordingly. The authors of children's books bring out the child inside them to write a particular story which is enjoyed by the children. The books serve in teaching children the values of life. As Anju Bala Agarwal quotes in her essay "J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter Series A Revolutionary Attempt in Children's Literature" in the book *Canons of Children's Literature*: "The great and beloved books for children take them to places they have never been – and never will visit – to learn about values they can use every day" (174).

Roald Dahl is one such writer who by his wit writes simple stories for children imbining them with moral values. Dahl is known as one of the best story-tellers of the twentieth century. His works are best known for the narrative technique, magical realism. This technique is the juxtaposition of the ordinary and the extra ordinary elements. Children like to create their own world of fantasy, a dreamland where they are a creator creating a whole new world. As Joyashri Choudhury mentions in her essay Truth and Power in the Magical World of Children's literature in the book *Canons of Children's Literature*: "Because a child wishes for fairies to inhabit his world, a child quickly can escape into a world full of fantasy and make-believe, where only good happens and everything ends on the note of, "...and they lived happily ever after".... Hope is the vital dimension of children's book (1)" The writers make sure they create a world which attracts the children. The books are produced with happy endings and positivity. Dahl's writings focus on all these aspects and he makes sure that he creates a world which the young readers would love to visit. In the novel *Charlie and the Chocolate*

Factory and *The BFG* Dahl asserts the moral values through magical realism.

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory is a novel in which Dahl teaches the consequences on being a mischievous and disobedient child. It is about the story of five children who are lucky enough to find the golden tickets to visit the wonderful chocolate factory of Willy Wonka. Each kid has a negative character trait except for the hero Charlie Bucket. He hails from a poor family but he is rich in virtues. As Ahmad Sarifudin mentions in his article "Moral development in Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*": "In Roald Dahl's book *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* we can see through moral development in terms of characters that exist in the story, each character has each moral problem" (1).

The trouble makers are punished inside the chocolate factory according to their characters. To begin with Augustus Gloop the first child to find one of the five golden tickets is a glutton and is very greedy. In spite of Willy Wonka's and his mother warnings he drinks from the chocolate river spoiling it and as a result of his disobedience he is sucked up into the suction pipe. As Dahl narrates it: "But Augustus was deaf to everything except the call of his enormous stomach" (87). After him comes the turn of Violet Beauregarde the girl with well-trained jaws of chewing gum. She turns into a big blueberry by eating the newly invented gum of Wonka which was still under observation. Next comes the spoilt child Veruca Salt who is very greedy. Dahl explains her greed in the book as Veruca says: "I don't care about that!" shouted Veruca. "I want one. All I've got at home is two dogs and four cats and six bunny rabbits and two parakeets and three canaries and a green parrot and a turtle and a bowl of gold fish and a cage of white mice and a silly old hamster! I want a *squirrel*!" (131)". The reader gets a clear sketch of the greediness of Veruca here. She has all this still she is not satisfied and her reluctant attitude makes her to be thrown

inside the rubbish chute. Now there remain only two children Mike Teavee and Charlie Bucket. Mike is known for his habit of watching television for hours together and he also dresses himself like the goons in the TV. He is transported into the television and is parted into million pieces. All the children are punished and only Charlie is left. Wonka is happy that atleast one child is left who is obedient and good. Wonka makes Charlie the heir of his enormous chocolate factory because he seemed to be the only deserving person to run the business after Wonka.

Dahl makes the readers understand the consequences of being greedy, spoilt, and disobedient. The punishment given to the children are not something normal it is magical at the same time real and normal. The writers use fantasy as a tool to create moral stories. As Saurabh Kumar Singh writes in his essay *Fairy Tales and Fantasy as the Upholder of Values in Children's Literature: A visit to The Winged Horse: Fairy-tales from Bengal* in the book *Canons of Children's Literature*:

Children's literature has always been associated with the elements of fairies and fantasies. These fairies and fantasies contain in themselves the seed of basic values, principles, and certain positive associate factors which in turn help a lot in the pruning and nurturing of children, and at the same time offering young readers ways to negotiate their place in the world. (147)

Children are good at imagination and when they find similar fantasies, they are eager to read and know about it. The reason behind writers using fantasy in children's tales is that children are easily attracted toward fantasies. Writers provide fantasy-coated stories in which they include moral values that a child need. If Dahl would have talked about greed and gluttony directly through children, they may either not understand it or they 'll not want to understand but the use of Dahl's imagination has made the story so interesting.

Archetypal approach of good and evil is seen in the novels. The good children are rewarded in the end and the nuisance

makers are punished. All the five children are different and through them Dahl brings out the general troublesome attitude of children which should be corrected. Another method used in the novel to talk about the mistake of each of the children is the use of chorus. The Oompa-Loompas, they are the hired workers of Willy Wonka who love singing and they sing about the blunders of the children. When Mike Teavee is transported into the television they sing about the dangers of television. In that chorus Dahl mentions how the imagination of the children is destroyed by watching TV.

'The most important thing we've learned,
So far as children are concerned,
Is never, Never, Never let
Them near your television set

.....

It Rots The Senses In The Head!

It Kills Imagination Dead!

It Clogs And Clutters Up The Mind!

It Makes A Child So Dull And Blind

.....

His Powers Of Thinking Rust And Freeze! (161,162)

Dahl asserts the importance of books and according to him TV sets should be replaced with book shelves. This novel has a lesson both for children and parents. As Nicole Williams writes in her article "Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory: Lessons for Parents and Children": "...has something for the whole family, from the youngest child to the oldest grandparent. Perhaps less apparent than the colourful world in which it is set, however, are the lessons embedded... which are about the parent/child relationship and how to raise children to "be good".

The BFG by Dahl is another novel in which simple habits to be followed are given. Eating meat always is not good, drinking cool drinks like Coke and Pepsi is not good, hurting plants is not good because they too have life. Dahl's writing skills is proved in

the way he balances the story, the fantasy and also the values that children should learn.

The BFG is the story of a young orphan named Sophie who encounters the big friendly giant in the witching hours of night. BFG takes her to the giant land they talk about many things mainly about the other man-eating giants who swallow human beings every night. They take this information to the queen of England and with the help of the army they capture all the nine man eating giants.

BFG is not educated but he is very good at heart. He teaches Sophie about many things. He can hear the screams of the plants he says: " 'They is not exactly talking', the BFG said. 'But they is making noises. For instance, if I come along and I is picking a lovely flower, if I is twisting the stem of the flower till it breaks, then the plant is screaming. I can hear it screaming and screaming very clear.'" (37).

Books for children aim at teaching them or instructing them about many things. As Rebecca J. Lukens mentions in her book *A Critical Handbook of Children's Literature*: "Didacticism, or instruction, is the function of textbooks" (139). In that case the novel *The BFG* has certain values to be taught. According to Emma Oultan in her Article "6 Life Lessons 'The BFG' taught Us About Friendship, Fairness and Farting", the novel has six main messages. They are Don't judge people by appearances, give people a chance, two wrong don't make a right, you can be strong on your own, whizzpopping is a sign of happiness and dreams can come true literally.

The BFG instructs the readers about necessary basic thing which they should be aware of. Children are usually fond of soft drinks which is not healthy to consume often. But Dahl can give them the idea that is not good for health though BFG. Children love meat but they hardly prefer vegetables but BFG says: "'Vegetables is very good for you', he went on. 'It is not health

some always to be eating meaty things'. (51). Children may not listen to parents but they will listen to BFG and will eat some vegetables. Amanda Bell in her article "Why the BFG is Roald Dahl's Most Important Story Ever says": "At one point the BFG observes that giants may eat humans, but humans are the only creatures on earth who kill their own kind with guns and bombs". Likewise, many moral insights and commentaries about injustice is given in the novel.

The books are the best source of knowledge and information. The lessons learnt from the book will be practised by children in reality so the author makes sure he gives the necessary food for thought. The writers take into account the basic requirements of the readers and design their books accordingly. For instance, the children's book authors know that children are fascinated by fantasy stories so they include a lot of imaginative ingredients in their story. They in fact create a different world which the child believes to exist in its imaginary world. As Anju Bala Agarwal quotes in her essay "J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter Series A Revolutionary Attempt in Children's Literature" in the book *Canons of Children's Literature*: "The world J. K. Rowling created is both completely separate from and yet intimately connected to the real world. The wizarding world of Harry Potter exist alongside that of the real world and contains magical elements similar to things in the non-magical world "(168).

This art of creating a magical real world is a technique which the writers use to allure the young minds. The Magic in Magical realism doesn't mean the conjuring magic but the fantasy elements that the author introduce in his writings, like the enormous chocolate factory or the giant land where man eating giants exist.

The fantasy world strongly holds the reader's attention and creates excitement to read more. The readers are so much dazzled by fantasy that they read everything written in the book.

The writers along with fantasy also include the message which they want to convey to the audience. In children's books it is didactic values which the writers mainly focus on. If you want to become the heir of a giant chocolate factory then you should to be good and obedient like Charlie. In reality to achieve great height it is important to be virtuous the is the main moral of the story *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. That is how writers use different unique methods to speak to the readers through the medium 'book'.

In both the novels *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *The BFG* the writers convey many messages to the readers seasoning it with magical realism. Children are the present who will form the future and it is important to equip them with knowledge which will help them survive in this world. Through books they get ideas about life situations and the way they should face them to achieve victory in the end.

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