

IMPACT OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND CLASS SNOBBISHNESS ON CHILDREN'S CHARACTERS: A LITERARY STUDY OF HARRY POTTER SERIES

Ria Pujhari¹ And Ranjan Kumar Harichandan²

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Basic Sciences, Aryan Institute of Engineering and Technology, Bhubnaeswar

²Assistant Professor, Department of Basic Sciences, Raajdhani Engineering College, Bhubaneswar

Abstract

This research paper will explore racial discrimination and class Snobbishness and its impacts on children characters of Harry Potter Series. Children have to suffer a lot due to these social evils mentally as well as physically. Like ordinary world, Rowling's wizarding world also divided into several categories, even wizards also divided into three categories according to their blood status. Discrimination on the basis of race and class is one of the burning issues of Harry Potter series. Rowling emphasized the impact of these social evils such as-racism, classism, stereotypes on children characters; which badly affects them throughout the series. Victimized people suffer a lot due to these social ills; some common symptoms maybe lack of confidence, inferiority complex, financial insecurities and nervous breakdown. The elders may have tolerance against these negative traits of humanity, but when it victimized children, grim effects can be seen on them. It may have shaken their existential roots, or they have to suffer psychologically or physically (as in the last novel).

Keywords- Racial discriminations, classicism, prejudice, purebloods, Muggles.

Introduction

Elders may have tolerance against these negative traits of humanity, but when it victimized children, grim effects can be seen on them. It may have shaken their existential roots, or they have to suffer psychologically or physically(as in the last novel). Wizarding World of Harry Potter series is divided into following categories on the basis of racism:

- a. Wizards- the wand bearers are considered the superior in this social hierarchy.
- b. Muggles (non-magical people)- Dursleys, Grangers and Muggles Minister are those few Muggles, who know about magical

world while other Muggles are unaware of it.

- c. House Elves – they are used as household servants by prominent wizarding families like Malfoys, Blacks, Crouchs. Dobby, Kreacher and Winky are those particular house elves, we know by names. They have their own magic which even wizards cannot perform.
- d. Goblins – they are “the guardian of fabulous treasures”(Deathly Hallows 398) and it is kept on Gringotts- the only wizarding bank portrayed in the series.

Some Goblins we know by names are – Griphook, Gornuk, Ragnok and Bogrod .

- e. Other Species – Centaurs, Giants and Werewolves are considered merely animals by some arrogant wizards like-Dolores Umbridge and Malfoys. They are treated as mean creatures, who do not deserve any kind of concern.

Most of the wizarding communities look down upon other species and exploit them to grind their own axes. Except this, there are classicism or elitism among wizards. According to their blood status all wizards are divided into following categories:

- I. Purebloods – Those witches and wizards come into this category who have magical inheritance from ancient time. They think themselves as Purebloods because they have parents and grandparents and other forefathers who belong to magical world . They are – Malfoys , Blacks Longbottoms, Weasleys, Lovegoods and Potters (James Potter’s family) etc.
- II. Half – Bloods – Those witches and wizards, who are offsprings of a couple of which one belongs to magical world and other belongs to the Muggle world. In other words, one of their parents is Muggle-born and other is from Wizarding World, for example – Harry Potter (mother- Muggle-born, father- Pureblood), Voldemort (mother- witch, father- Muggle) and Snape (mother- witch and father- Muggle).
- III. Muggle-borns – those witches and wizards fall in this who have magical abilities but born in a Muggle world and have Muggle parents. For example – Hermione Granger, Colin Creevey and his brother. Snobbish Purebloods like Malfoys use an abusive word ‘Mudbloods’ for Muggle-borns, which means dirty blood. Malfoys hate them especially Hermione from the bottom of their hearts.
- IV. Squibs – These are those poor souls. Who are born in a magical family but without magical abilities. In other words they

cannot perform magic and live their lives like Muggles. For instance – Argus Flich (caretaker of Hogwarts), Mrs. Arabella Figg.

Draco Malfoy(Harry’s nemesis), a pureblood wizard, belongs to an elite family and he has inherited his father’s Pureblood mania. In Hogwarts, he targets those students who seemed weak or inferior to him in status. For instance – Ron Weasley is targeted by Draco due to Ron’s low economical status; Draco always uses abusive word Mudblood for Hermione; Draco tortures Neville Long bottom because he is aware of Neville’s nervous breakdown, though is a Pureblood. When Draco meets Harry first time in Diagon Alley, he complains in front of Harry that only children belong to wizarding family should allow to attend Hogwarts, the School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, “I really don’t think they should let the other sort in, do you? They’re just not the same, they’ve never been brought up to know our ways. Some of them have never even heard of Hogwarts until they get the letter, imagine. I think they should keep it in the old wizarding families” (*Philosopher’s Stone* 84). We find glimpse of wizarding snobbishness in Draco Malfoy for the very first time. Even during their first train journey, when Draco sees Harry with Ron Weasley; he advises Harry that he should select his friends carefully. Draco’s Snobbishness is clearly visible in these lines, “ You’ll soon find out some wizarding families are much better than others, Potter. You don’t want to go making friends with the wrong sort. I can help you there” (*PS* 116).

Draco also makes fun of Ron’s poverty in following manner, “My father told me all the Weasleys have red hair, freckles and more children than they can afford”(PS 115-16). Such type of classicists attitude of Draco affects Ron very much. Ron feels shyness and humiliation, and later his financial insecurities give way to inferiority complex. Racist and classicists attitude is dangerous not only for victim, but for victimizers also. We see Draco makes friends according to his social status and this thing resulted in friendlessness in the end. Ironically, what Draco said to warn Harry while giving suggestions on friendship that “you hang around with riff-raff like the Weasleys and that Hagrid ... it’ll rub off on you” (*PS* 116). It proved right in the case

of Draco as Crab and Goyle do not prove his true friends and they just follow him out of fear

In book second, Malfoys again target Weasleys for their low social economic status. Draco taunts that he is surprised to see Weasleys in a shop and says, "I suppose your parents will go hungry for a month to pay for that lot" (*Chamber of Secrets* 65). Not only Draco even his father also taunts Mr. Weasley for keeping the company of Muggles that is Mr. and Mrs. Granger (Hermione's parents). According to Malfoys, such type of company is a disgrace for a Pureblood family (Weasleys are Pureblood also) and Mr. Malfoy comments rudely as, "The company you keep, Weasley ... and I thought your family could sink no lower" (CS 66).

If Ron is teased for his poverty, Hermione is teased for being Muggle-born by Draco. When Hermione speaks in favor of Gryffindor Quidditch team as, "They got in on pure talent" (CS 117); not like Draco Malfoy, whose father bribed Slytherin team by gifting the latest brooms 'Nimbus Two Thousand and One' to all players. Unable to tolerate the truth Draco react furiously and uses derogatory language for Hermione as, "No one asked your opinion, you filthy little Mudblood" (CS 117). Harry and Hermione had no idea what it means, but all Gryffindor players and Ron reacted aggressively after hearing it. Ron explains it as it is the most insulting Draco think of. Ron further explains "Mudblood is a really foul name for someone who was Muggle-born – you know, non-magic parents. There are some wizards like Malfoy's family who think they are better than everyone else because they're what people call pure-blood ... the rest of us know it doesn't make any difference at all. Look at Neville Longbottom – he's pure-blood and he can hardly stand a cauldron the right way up An they haven't invented a spell our Hermione can't do," said Hagrid proudly (CS 121).

In *Order of the Phoenix* when Umbridge makes Draco a member of Inquisitorial Squad, he docks Gryffindor's point unfairly on a racist base, "oh yeah, I forgot you're a Mudblood, Granger, so ten (point) off for that" (OP 551). This type of humiliating remarks for Hermione has been Continued throughout the series. In the end Draco's father is

arrested with other Death Eaters and after his father's imprisonment Draco is frustrated on Harry and his friends when he sees them in madam Malkin's shop Draco targets Hermione in stead of Harry and Ron directly, in following manner, "if you are wondering what the smell is, mother, a Mudblood just walked in" (*Half-Blood Prince* 94). Not only Draco, his mother also used the word 'Scum' for Hermione and suggests they should shop else where, "you are right Draco", said Narcissa, with a contemptuous glance at Hermione, "now I know the kind of scum that shops here ... We'll do better at Twilfitt and Tattings" (HBP 96).

When Sirius died in the end of *Order of the Phoenix* then Harry becomes the owner of Grimmauld place because Sirius stated it in his will. But Dumbledore is not sure of this as he reminds Harry, "it is nevertheless possible that some spell or enchantment has been set up on the place to ensure that it cannot be owned by anyone other than a pure-blood" (HBP 41-42). So, if they enchanted it in this manner then Bellatrix Lestrange maybe the owner of the property. Even the house elf of Blacks' family, Kreacher, feels proud of being servant in a elite pure-blood family. Like his mistress he also uses derogatory language for Weasleys and Hermione in following manner:

... Smells like a drain and a criminal to boot, but she's not better, nasty old blood traitor with her brats messing up my mistress's house, oh, my poor mistress, if she knew, if she knew the scum they've let into her house, what would she say to old Kreacher, oh, The shame of it, Mudbloods and werewolves and traitors and thieves, poor old Kreacher, what can he do (*Order of the Phoenix* 100)

After Malfoys and Blacks the next discriminator is – Umbridge, the representative of ministry at Hogwarts. When she inspects Hagrid's class about Thestrals, we see her biased behaviour towards Hagrid, though the class was safer than the previous class of Blast-Ended Skrewts. She remarks it dangerous and insults Hagrid by using sign language as though Hagrid cannot understand normal English. Hermione is right in judging Umbridge as, "it's her thing about half-breeds all

over again – she is trying to make out Hagrid’s some kind of dimwitted troll, just because he had a giantess for a mother”(OP 397-98). In *Deathly Hallows*, The Ministry has changed drastically under the influence of Voldemort; even the interior of ministry Atrium has changed. It seems darker now because of a giant statue of a black stone replaced the previous golden magical fountain bearing statues of a Witch and a Wizard, a Goblin, a Centaur and a House Elf but the present statue of a witch and wizard was “rather frightening , this vast sculpture of a witch and wizard sitting on ornately carved thrones, looking down at Ministry workers toppling out of fire places below them. Engraved in foot- high letters at the base of the statue were the words: MAGIC IS MIGHT” (*Deathly Hallows* 195) . This phrase is enough to show the racial and classicists discrimination of Ministry. The present Ministry works like a puppet in the hands of Voldemort.

Umbridge becomes the head of the Muggle-born Registration Commission, and she uses this opportunity to torture Muggles and imprisoned them. Even at Hogwarts, students are allowed only after the verification of their blood status and in this way they sort out Muggle-born wizards in the school. Even some students have to escape in hidings because they were not sure about their blood status. For instance, Dean Thomas tells Goblins and Teds that “ My dad left my mum when I was a kid. I’ve got no proof he was a wizard though”(DH 240).Even Hermione Granger becomes the most wanted Mudblood. Except this Ministry hired snatchers to capture Mudbloods and Blood-traitors in return they will earn gold.

In *Deathly Hallows* Voldemort ridicules Malfoys and Bellatrix because of their niece Tonks, who has married Remus Lupin – a werewolf ; their pure- blood family stained with impurity due to this act of Tonks. Bellatrix clarifies , “She is no niece of,... we-Narcissa and I- d have never set eyes on our sister since she married the Mudblood. This brat has nothing to do with either of us, nor any beast she marries”(DH 8). When his other Death Eaters laugh on Malfoys and Bellatrix’s humiliation; Voldemort warns them to take care of their families rather than laughing on others. He says, “Many of our oldest family trees become a little diseased over time ... you

must prune yours , must you not , to keep it healthy? Cut away those parts that threaten the health of the rest ... And in your family, so in the world ... we shall cut away the canker that infects us until only those of the true blood remain ...”(DH 9).

Voldemort further manipulated things at Hogwarts in a way so that he can poison the mind of young wizards against Muggle-born wizards and Muggles. First of all he kidnapped Charity Burbage ,who taught Muggle Studies at Hogwarts until the point and tortured her in front of his Death Eaters including Draco. He explained the reason for torturing Burbage to his Death Eaters in following words:

Professor Burbage taught the children of witches and wizards all about Muggles ... how they are not so different from us Not content with corrupting and polluting the minds of wizarding children , last week Professor Burbage wrote an impassioned defense of Mudbloods in the Daily Prophet. Wizards, she says, must accept these thieves of their knowledge and magic. The dwindling of the pure-bloods is , says Professor Burbage, a most desirable circumstances ...she would have us all mate with Muggles ... or no doubt, Werewolves(DH 10)

After this long speech, Voldemort killed professor Burbage. According to Voldemort’s manipulation, Snape becomes the headmaster of Hogwarts and appoints Carrows(Death Eaters)as the teachers of Dark Arts, which was previously known as Defence Against the Dark Arts and Muggle Studies but in a different version quite contrary to the previous one. Now in Amycus Carrow’s class students practice Cruciatus Curse on those students , who are either Muggle- born and half-bloods or who are not obedient for Carrows. Muggles Studies is now compulsory for everyone. Neville told to Harry Ron and Hermione in following words:

Alecto, Amycus’ sister teaches Muggle Studies ...we’ve all got to listen to her explain how Muggles are like animals, stupid and dirty, and how they drove wizards into hiding by being vicious towards them, and how the natural order is being established. I got this one, he indicated another

slash to his face, for asking her how much Muggle blood she and her brother have got. (DH 467)

When Purebloods like Neville Longbottom opposed the Carrows; they only torture them a little bit and they won't kill them because, " They don't want to spill too much pure blood"(DH 468).

Conclusion

In this way, they are trying to transform young children as Muggle haters. Hermione also suffers badly for being Muggle-born. In Malfoys Manner Bellatrix tortured her barbarously with Cruciatus curse while asking about the Gryffindor sword, she abused her as filthy Mudblood. Ron and his family is treated as blood traitors and ridiculed frequently by Malfoys for their low economic status throughout the Series

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