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**J. R. R. TOLKIEN'S FANTASY FICTION "THE LORD OF THE RINGS":
A STUDY OF MORAL VICTORY OVER EVIL**

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ABSTRACT

Fantasy reading can free oneself from any limitation and enhances freedom to establish inferences. It reflects history and mythology, interacts with Good and Evil and thereby allows us to rethink of the better society for the existing flora and fauna to acquire permanence. J. R. R. Tolkien is an internationally renowned fantasy writer in the twentieth century. Tolkien developed the work that would come to be regarded as his masterpiece- 'The Lord of the Rings' series, partially inspired by ancient European myths, with its own sets of maps, lore and languages. In 'The Lord of the Rings' trilogy we see Good and Evil as diametrically opposed. Tolkien thinks Good as much bigger and more real than Evil, no matter how the evil boasts of. It shares one common theme- Good and Evil, with Good ultimately triumphing and focus on the power of love, loyalty, goodness, and truth in opposition to selfishness, greed, and exploitation.

Keywords: Evil, Fantasy, Good, Morality.

Fantasy reading can free oneself from any limitation and enhances freedom to establish inferences. It is inspired through imagination and imagination increases one's faculty of learning and creativity. It is a phenomenon whereby something and somehow valuable is to be formed with the help of scholarly thought and sociology, polity and anthropology of the present structure can be redefined. It reflects history and mythology, interacts with Good and Evil and thereby allows us to rethink of the better society for the existing flora and fauna to acquire permanence. The fantasy authors use various mechanisms, for instance, magic, wizardry, myths, folklore and create their own universes to set up their own views and opinions. But one thing is common in all of the writings, that is, they all share one common theme- Good and Evil, with Good ultimately triumphing and focus on the power of

love, loyalty, goodness, and truth in opposition to selfishness, greed, and exploitation.

In 1740s and 1750s by some children's writers such literatures were born to teach behavioural and ethical lessons. One of the first was 'The Christmas Box', published in 1746 by M. Cooper and M. Boreman and written by Mary Homebred (Mary Collyer). It included stories three or four pages long whose lessons can be easily summarized. In 'The History of Miss Polly Friendly', for instance, Polly accidentally broke a set of China and hides the pieces in the coal cellar but, when the breakage was blamed on a servant, admitted her fault. Virtue became a habit and she grew up to marry an alderman, eventually becoming the Lady Mayoress. Sarah Fielding's 'The Governess' (1749) was an early school story, but had a structure to Chaucer's 'The

Canterbury Tales, each of the school girls giving an account of her own life then telling a moral story for the education of the whole class. 'An Adventure of Master Tommy Trusty and his Delivering Miss Biddy Johnson, from the Thieves who were going to murder her' (in *The Lilliputian Magazine*, 1751-'52) was a novel in warning against the vanity of Biddy who was kidnapped because she insisted in walking around town in fine clothes and ornaments. 'The History of Little Goody Two Shoes' (1765), also published by John Newbury, was perhaps the first full-length novel for children, telling how the young Margery became an orphan, how she educated herself and then others, how she ran a school, foiled an attempted burglary, exposed a fake ghost and, eventually, married the local land owner.

By the end of the century, the moral tales could introduce the readers to psychologically complex characters put in situations in which there wasn't always a clear moral path to be taken. A famous example is Maria Edgeworth's 'The Purple Jar', first published in 'The Parent's Assistant' (1796). It portrays the agonies of indecision of a girl named Rosamond who wants to do right but, when her mother refuses to advise her, chooses (foolishly) to buy a tawdry vase instead of the new shoes she will soon need. The vase Rosamond buys turns out to be full of a foul-smelling purple liquid which, when poured away, leaves her with only a rather glass jar. This establishes why the moral tale was so successful: carefully designed narratives could allow characters, and through them the readers, to learn by their own mistakes, rather than by direct authorial admonition.

The Evangelical revival led to an increasing number of religious tales in the early nineteenth century, many of them published and distributed by the Society for the promotion of Christian Knowledge or the Religious Tract Society. The most famous was probably Mary Martha Sherwood's 'The History of the Fair Child Family' (1818-47). Even with all its overt religiosity, 'The Fair Child Family' could entertain and perhaps comfort the reader with its familiar domestic setting, its close study of parent-child relationship, its strong central characters, and the small predicaments they find themselves in.

It continued alongside the revival of the fairy tales and the new fashion for fantasy literature. Thomas Hughes's 'Tom Brown's School Days' (1857), for instance, was not so very different from Fielding's 'The Governess', written a century before, teaching a certain kind of morality in a school setting. Mrs. Ewing's 'Jackanapes' (1879) was a moral story set on an imperial battlefield. Indeed, we might say that the moral tale entered the mainstream. Charlotte Yonge's 'The Heir of Redclyffe' (1853) was not written as a children's book, though it was widely read by the young, but in classic moral tale style, it used an affecting narrative to ran home to its many readers the virtues of patience, devotion and integrity. By the start of the twentieth century, this kind of moral literature was still being mocked, in E. Nesbit's 'The Wouldbegoods' (1901) for instance. To conclude, in the twentieth and twenty first century also writings of fantasy fictions have become major literatures for growing morality among us.

J.R.R. Tolkien is an internationally renowned fantasy writer in the twentieth century. He is best known for authoring the award-winning fantasy novel 'The Hobbit'- about the small, furry-footed Bilbo Baggins and his adventures, published in 1937 and 'The Lord of the Rings' trilogy in 1954- '55. Over the years, while working on scholarly publications, Tolkien developed the work that would come to be regarded as his masterpiece- 'The Lord of the Rings' series, partially inspired by ancient European set-up with its myths, and sets of maps, lore and languages. Tolkien released part one of the series, 'The Fellowship of the Ring', in 1954; 'The Two Towers' and 'The Return of the King' followed in 1955, finishing up the trilogy. The books help the readers by giving them a rich literary trove populated by elves, goblins, talking trees and all manner of fantastic creatures, including characters like the wizard Gandalf and the dwarf Gimli.

In the trilogy 'The Lord of the Rings' we see Good and Evil as diametrically opposed. We also see Biblical themes interwoven in Tolkien's stories, such as the triumph of Good over Evil by ordinary, seemingly insignificant, 'little people', who struggle with their own failures, but who are courageous, loyal, and ultimately obedient. Always we have a

better understanding that behind the mounting battle a benevolent providence is subtly at work. Tolkien thinks Good as much bigger and more real than Evil, no matter how the evil boasts of. The important distinction between our real world and the fantasy world becomes muddled if we confuse the world of fantasy with the real world. In the world of reality, the Bible condemns such evil practices because they are deep rooted in our sinful, human desire for control and they make us vulnerable to the demonic influence ultimately controlling the sinful world.

J. R. R. Tolkien's *'The Lord of the Rings'* trilogy is essentially the story of the struggle between the forces of Good and Evil. All life in Middle-earth has the power to work for Good or Evil, and each creature must choose for himself which side he wishes to support. The eagles are allies of Gandalf, while the crows spy for Sauron. The evil wargs, which are a kind of wolf, work with the orcs, and even allow them to ride upon their backs as horses. Even forests and mountains choose sides. The Old Forest just outside the Shire leads wayfarers astray by causing the paths to shift, while Mount Caradhras tries to kill wayfarers with snowstorms and falling rocks. Each good creature has a perverse counterpart. There is Gandalf, who sacrifices himself for the fellowship and Saruman, his counterpart, whose lust for power and the Ring drives him into Evil. The counterparts of the elves are the orcs, who were actually made as a mockery of elves. While elves are refined almost to an essence, orcs are grotesquely gross. Man's counterparts are the nine Ringwraiths, Sauron's chief servants. Man has his will and his heroic identity, while the Ringwraiths have no identity beyond the hollow malevolent force that drives them. Even the hobbits have a counterpart, Frodo in particular. The counterpart is Gollum, who was once a hobbit himself. But under the torment of his lust for the ring, every aspect of hobbit nature is distorted to parody. Besides the differences between the more general forces of Good and Evil, there are several more specific ones. Good is loyal and courageous, while Evil is treacherous and its courage is dependent on numbers. Good loves nature and is close to it, while Evil ignores it and even destroys it. Good survives on wholesome food -- bread and

honey, mushrooms, compressed grain cakes -- whereas Evil eats corrupt flesh and drinks intoxicating beverages made from dreadful, nameless ingredients. Good has a great regard for freedom of choice, whereas Evil's will is enslaved. Even in the languages of Middle-earth whereas Good speaks Quenya and Westron; highly musical and sophisticated languages, Evil speaks variations of Sauron's Black Speech and corrupted forms of Westron, all of which are crude and painful to the ears.

Despite all these differences, Tolkien continually stresses the point that nothing is Evil in the beginning. Sauron became Evil by choice and was consequently diminished. The Ringwraiths were formerly men of Númenor, a powerful yet wise race of men. Saruman was originally "Saruman the White," the greatest of the five wizards. Gollum was originally a hobbit, and even now, after his fall into Evil, he still retains some of his hobbit traits. Sauron tries to win but he falls, for it is his own evil nature that is his undoing. Sauron, no matter how powerful, cannot help making mistakes to his undoing simply because he is Evil. He is not exempt from the feelings of doubt and dread which he inspires in others; therefore, the finding of the Ring by his enemies causes him great alarm. Another mistake of Sauron's is that he is not satisfied if another does what he wants; he must be bade to do it against his will. At times, this desire to dominate causes Sauron to be unduly hasty. When Pippin looks into the palantír stone of Orthanc and encounters the Dark Lord, Sauron is so eager to torment Pippin that he does not ask the right questions and therefore loses a chance to recover the Ring. Another problem Sauron has is the fact that all alliances of Evil are unstable and untrustworthy. Since Evil loves itself and bases its alliances on fear or hope of profit, it is inevitable that these alliances will, in time, destroy themselves. Sauron's primary weakness is his lack of imagination. He is unable to imagine what Good will do, except what he would do in Good's place; Good has this ability to imagine what Evil will do, and thus is somewhat prepared for each of his blows. This turns out to be quite an advantage for the forces of Good.

Another one of Good's advantages is an ironic one: it is often Evil that brings forth eventual Good. The rival orc bands of Sauron and Saruman promote a Good they never intend when they capture Merry and Pippin. Wormtongue's flight to his master Saruman seems harmless at the time. But later, Wormtongue tries to kill Gandalf by throwing down at him the precious palantír. With this palantír, Aragorn reveals himself to Sauron as Elendil's rightful heir. This shocks the Dark Lord so much that he is frightened into launching his attack on Gondor prematurely, even though he is not ready. Most important of all, though, is the role played by Gollum. With Gollum's help, Frodo and Sam find their way through the Dead Marshes, up the stairs at CirithUngol, and eventually into Mordor and the Cracks of Doom. Little does Gollum know that he is aiding in the destruction of his Precious.

Providence plays a crucial role here, as it does throughout the epic. There is a certain ordering of elements to one end: the ultimate triumph of Good. First, and most important, is the fact that Bilbo was "meant" to find the Ring, and thus pass it on to his nephew, Frodo. Secondly, it is evident that some great force besides Elrond summoned the Free Peoples to the Council of Elrond. Last, but definitely not least, is Gollum and his unknown part in the design. Providence does not always watch over Good with tender loving care, however. Evil is necessary in order to bring on hard times that test Good to the utmost, morally and physically. Thus, Evil may even be allowed to triumph -- for a time, at least.

One of the saddest parts in the book occurs when Boromir, one of Frodo's companions of the Fellowship, succumbs to the lure of the Ring and attacks Frodo. Frodo, shocked and heart-broken, leaves the Fellowship, taking with him only his closest friend, Sam. But Boromir's temporary fall into Evil is quite necessary to the successful completion of the Quest. With the fellowship broken, Frodo and Sam are able to slip into Mordor unseen. Merry and Pippin, captured by orcs, are transported to Fangorn Forest where they arouse the Ents to attack Saruman. Aragorn, pursuing the captives, meets Éomer and begins the awakening of the country of Rohan. He also meets the reincarnated Gandalf, who

frees King Théoden from Saruman's evil influence, thus destroying Saruman's threat to Rohan. With the kind freed, Rohan is now able to send her army to the city of Minas Tirith and save her from the first onset of Sauron's hosts. Aragorn, too, is free to ride the Paths of the Dead and bring the armies of southern Gondor to the rescue.

However, the final and greatest Evil is committed by Frodo when, on the verge of destroying the Ring, he weakens, and claims it as he owes. It is only by an act of Fate that he, and all of Middle-earth with him, is saved. Then Frodo stirs and speaks with a clear voice...it rises above the throb and turmoil of Mount Doom, ringing in the roofs and walls...something strikes Sam violently in the back, his legs are knocked from under him and he is flung aside, striking his head against the stony floor, as a dark shape springs over him... Sam gets up. He is dazed, and blood streaming from his head drips in his eyes. He gropes forward, and then he sees a strange and terrible thing. Gollum on the edge of the abyss is fighting like a mad thing with an unseen foe...The fires below awakes in anger, the red light blazes, and all the cavern is filled with a great glare and heat. Suddenly Sam sees Gollum's long hands draw upwards to his mouth; his white fangs gleams, and then snaps as they bite. Frodo gives a cry, and there he is, fallen upon his knees at the chasm's edge. But Gollum, dancing like a mad thing, holds aloft the Ring, a finger still thrusts within its circle... 'Precious, precious, precious!', Gollum cries. And even as his eyes are lifted up to gloat on his prize, he steps too far, toppled, wavered for a moment on the brink, and then with a shriek he falls. Sauron is finished. In the endless struggle between Good and Evil, Good triumphs again. Yet, even after the Dark Lord is destroyed and his servants are scattered, the creatures of Middle-earth are turning their eyes toward the next evil to come; the new Dark Lord in the never-ending war between Good and Evil.

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