



The 'Scrupulous Choices': Exploring the Function of Human Values in J.K. Rowling's The Tales of Beedle the Bard

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Abstract:

J. K. Rowling is a British novelist and philanthropist best known for her seven-volume children's fantasy series Harry Potter (1997-2007). She published a collection of fairytales from the wizarding world titled The Tales of Beedle the Bard for the general public on 4 December 2008. The final book in the Harry Potter series, Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows refers to the same book.

Fairytales have a didactic purpose and uphold moral principles for their audience. Through the plot, setting and characterisation, the fairytales serve as an example to instil excellent morals in the readers. Characters in these stories are placed in precarious situations where they must make decisions. The readers can assess whether the decision made was better or worse for the individual and society based on its results. Furthermore, decision-making is greatly influenced by human values.

Human values are those values that benefit humanity and contribute to the development of a peaceful and improved society. Value-driven judgements are better and more fruitful than those motivated by self-gain. It is vividly demonstrated in the selected text. The fate of the characters bespeaks how decisions made for the good of others can lessen any form of pain, while those made without regard for others' feelings can make the sufferings worse. The



research work tries to explore the function of human values behind the decisions made by the characters in the selected text.

Keywords: Choices; decision-making; human values of empathy, friendship, sense of community, non-violence, humility, patience; fairytales.

I. Introduction

Human life is very complex. Humans are made up of good and evil, greed and altruism, suffering and joy, highs and lows, and a wide range of other emotions. These are intricate beings that are not entirely good but yet not entirely bad. Despite the fact that humans can make a positive difference in the world, they are unable to survive on their own. To survive in this world, one needs the support of his fellow beings. Social life has been developed with such an objective in mind. In a social group, one relies on others for the things they need while also meeting the wants of others. In society, good interpersonal interactions are necessary for the trade of services. Some social norms have been established in order to preserve society's orderly operation and decorum. However, these laws fundamentally evolved from the human values that are ingrained in all people. They are concealed and only emerge when necessary, in particular circumstances.

Human values are essentially those that teach one to have compassion and empathy for others. These principles ensure that everyone in society has happy lives and is aware of the needs of others. These values essentially serve as a manual for how to meet one's wants without minimising or restricting those of other people. Through the life experiences of the elderly members of the tribes, these values have been transmitted to the younger generations since ancient times. Evidence of this 'idea-passing' from generation to generation can be found in the engravings found in prehistoric caves from the Stone Age. Later in written literature that dates back to the Sumerian culture in the West, which flourished approximately 3400 B.C. Whereas the Rig Veda, which consists of 1028 Vedic Sanskrit hymns, is the oldest known work of Indian literature. It was probably produced between 1500 and 1000 BCE. After the Phoenicians brought writing to Greece, the literary writing genre flourished there before spreading to Rome. The first English-language literature dates to around 450 AD and is based on oral traditions and old English literature.



These literary works from all over the world shared real-life stories that aided readers in growing cognitively. The purpose of fairy tales was to train youngsters and were typically delivered at bedtime. These stories provide a passageway from the real world into an imaginary one filled with enchantment and fantastical objects. The adult mind also experienced some degree of pleasure from the escape from reality. As a result, it gained appeal to adult readers as well. Additionally, for the author, this provided a good forum for addressing delicate issues that could not be discussed in public. For instance, *Animal Farm* (1945) by George Orwell is a political allegory about revolution and authority. *Animal Farm* examines issues of authoritarianism, the perversion of ideas, and the influence of language through the story of a group of farm animals that revolt against the farm's owner.

The research paper in hand, analyses the theme of choices in *The Tales of Beedle the Bard* (2008) by JK Rowling. The study makes an effort to explore how important human values are in the process of making decisions. While decisions made for self-gain will have negative effects like isolation, depression, sadness, and additional complications, decisions inspired by values will be positive and good for both individual and social growth.

II. Material and methods

A collection of fairy tales, *The Tales of Beedle the Bard* (2008) by J.K. Rowling serves as the study's primary text. Other sources include research articles, websites blogs and reviews, and books that address the topic of choice and the significance of human values in decision-making. As the approach for this qualitative study, a critical analysis of the book is presented.

III. The Tales of Beedle the Bard: Wizarding World Fairytales

In J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007) from the Harry Potter series, 'The Tales of Beedle the Bard' first appears as a made-up book. Albus Dumbledore, the previous headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, entrusts the book to Hermione Granger in his will. This book is a well-known compilation of Wizarding children's fairy tales. Despite Ron Weasley's familiarity with the stories, Harry Potter and Hermione Granger had never heard of them because of their non-magical upbringing.



In Harry Potter and Deathly Hallows, the book is characterised as a little, antique-looking book with "stained and peeling in some places" on the binding. Additionally, the title of the book is etched in runes on the front cover (Rowling 126).

Harry, Ron and Hermione are introduced to the Deathly Hallows through this book. Hermione Granger discovers a mysterious mark above the tale "The Tale of the Three Brothers," which Xenophilius Lovegood later identifies as the Hallows emblem. The Elder Wand is symbolised by the vertical line whereas the Invisibility Cloak is denoted by the triangle, the circle within the triangle, and the Resurrection Stone respectively. The Peverell brothers, who are later identified as being both Voldemort and Harry Potter's ancestors, are claimed to have owned these three items, which are also mentioned in the story itself (Rowling 426-433). Albus Dumbledore also affirms Harry's relationship with the Peverell brothers near the book's conclusion and suggests that the trio may have actually created the Hallows (Rowling 714).

Rowling published the book in December 2008. The book is a collection of five fairytales namely "The Wizard and the Hopping Pot," "The Fountain of Fair Fortune," "The Warlock's Hairy Heart," "Babbitty Rabbitty and Her Cackling Stump," "The Tale of the Three Brothers." In the introduction of the book, the fictional character Beedle the Bard is introduced to the reader. He is supposed to be the creator of these fairytales. He was born in Yorkshire in the 15th century. Unlike other wizards, he rather liked non-magical people. Moreover, he did not trust dark magic and believed, "the worst excesses of wizardkind sprang from the all-too-human traits of cruelty, apathy or arrogant misapplication of their own talents" (Rowling 5). Thus, he has presented humanitarian protagonists in his stories,

The heroes and heroines who triumph in his stories are not those with the most powerful magic, but rather those who demonstrate the most kindness, common sense and ingenuity (Rowling 5).

Although these tales also promote the same notion that "virtue is usually rewarded and wickedness punished" (Rowling 3). They are quite different from the fairytales of 'muggles' or non-magical people. The muggle fairytales propose magic as the solution to all suffering. On the contrary, these tales deal with the characters who can use magic but it does not solve



any problem but it “causes as much trouble as it cures” (Rowling 4). Moreover, the female characters of these tales actively participate to change their lives, rather than the ‘muggle’ females who wait for someone to come and save them from their plight.

IV. Results and Discussions

The Theme of Choice and Human Values

The theme of choice lies at the core of the five tales in the selected text. In all the stories, the characters have one or another problem that they try to solve with their magical powers. However, they learn the lesson that magic is not always the answer the hard way. They found themselves in situations where they have to choose their action wisely. If they act in a humanitarian way their problems are solved. On the other hand, the acts that are inspired by their selfish goals furthermore complicate the problems.

Empathy in "The Wizard and the Hopping Pot"

This narrative centres on actions and choices motivated by the human value of empathy. The value of empathy ensures that other people's needs are met as well and are not disregarded. Empathy drives helping behaviour, which also improves interpersonal connections. As humans are by nature sociable beings, they are more inclined to act in prosocial ways that help others when they feel empathy.

The tale tells of an empathetic elderly man's selfless acts. He had a son who was entirely opposite to him. The old man used magic to assist others with their issues while attributing the creation of his antidotes to his potion pot. He passes away and leaves everything to his only son. The son inherits his father's potion pot, with one slipper, and a letter saying, "In the fond hope, my son, that you will never need it" (Rowling 14). He shuts the door on everybody who knocks, resentful that he has nothing left but a pot. He does not assist any of the five people who come to his door seeking help. Every time he slams the door on the poor people, the pot begins to exhibit the symptoms of the applicants. It causes him extreme anxiety and thus prevents him from experiencing any serenity. This goes on until he ultimately gives up and helps those in need. He shrieks out in agitation, “Come! Let me cure you, mend you and comfort you! I have my father’s cooking pot, and I shall make you well!” (Rowling 20). Thus, all maladies of the pot are cured. The slipper that his father left



for him accidentally slips out of the pot. He puts it on the pot's foot and the two go off into the distance. Thus, his ordeal is finally over. From that day onwards, he helped one and all.

The narrative, therefore, demonstrates the essential role of 'empathy,' a core human value, in peaceful social life. The protagonist could not live in peace when he was devoid of empathy and only obsessed with his own comfort. As soon as he realises the pains of others and acts out of empathy, his torment ceases.

Friendship and Sense of Community in "The Fountain of Fair Fortune"

This story is about friendship, love, and a sense of community. For one's mental wellness, friendship is essential. Friendships prevent loneliness, increase happiness, and lower stress by providing an emotional outlet. Additionally, it increases a sense of belonging and community, "a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together." (McMillan and Chavis 24-40).

In this tale, a magical fountain is the central attraction. Once a year, one individual may bathe in it and find solutions to their troubles. Asha, who has an incurable illness, Altheda, who lost her wand and money, and Amata, who is upset after being abandoned by her beloved, decide to attempt to reach the fountain together. However, on the way there, Sir Luckless, a misfortunate Muggle knight, decides to join them as well. Here, Amata's decision to take Luckless along with them on their journey shows her compassionate nature.

They encounter three obstacles as they make their way to the fountain. A huge worm demands evidence of their agony. His thirst is quenched by Asha's tears of frustration after numerous failed attempts. Then, there is a difficult slope where they must bring the "fruit of their labours" (Rowling 38). Although striving very hard, they are unable to climb the slope. Then, Altheda encourages others, "Courage, friends, and do not yield!" (Rowling 39). This instance reflects her courageous and supportive demeanour towards her friends. While saying this she wipes the sweat off of her forehead that touches the ground. The invisible barrier disappears and they can move upwards. Additionally, they come across a river that can be crossed only after they pay their past's treasure to it. Amata understands the



meaning of this demand and utilises it as a Pensieve to wash away her regret for her harsh and deceitful boyfriend. She, thus, eliminates her need for the fountain.

After crossing the river, they faced the magical fountain. However, before they could decide who would bathe in the fountain, Asha passes out from weariness. In order to save her, Altheda makes a revitalising potion that also heals Asha of her incurable illness. Altheda learns that she can utilise her skills to create money without the fountain because Asha doesn't require the fountain. They had the choice to leave their fainted friend and march towards the fountain but they decided to help her out. In Luckless's gourd, she mixed the herbs in water that cured her friend.

Her selfless deed exemplifies when she asks Amata to bathe in the fountain who simply shakes her head and prompts Luckless to go forward. The irony here is that Luckless was actually the chosen one out of hundreds, so he wasn't all that unlucky after all. Sir Luckless bathes in the fountain. He then falls to Amata's knees and proposes to her. To that she joyfully agrees. No one realises that the fountain has no magic at all until they have a solution to their problem.

The story thus conveys the idea that in order to survive in the world, one requires a selfless quality and a sense of community. The only way to reach the summit and get rid of every obstacle is to support selflessly one another on the path of life.

The Paucity of Human Values Leads to Devastation in "The Warlock's Hairy Heart"

The tale serves as a reminder that a person without human values is nothing more than an animal. Without human ideals, one succumbs to animalistic urges. He becomes harsh and cruel. He lacks every emotion, including the ability to experience pain or appreciate joy and beauty.

In this tale, a young, attractive wizard employed black magic to safeguard him against falling in love. He believed that love was nothing more than a weakness. In the hopes that he would change, his family did nothing. He believed that his tremendous money made him the target of great envy. He happened to overhear two servants talking about him one day. One felt sorry for the man because he didn't have a wife, while the other made fun of him. So he made



the decision to marry a brilliant, wealthy, and attractive witch in order to make everyone else jealous.

By chance, he ran across that girl the following day. The warlock convinced her to attend a supper feast at his castle even though she was "fascinated and repelled" by him (Rowling 63). She told him during the meal that she must know that he possessed a heart. In his dungeon, the warlock revealed to her his beating heart hidden in a casket and covered in hair. It was cut off from the world and devoid of any value:

Long since disconnected from eyes, ears and fingers, it had never fallen prey to beauty, or to a musical voice, to the feel of silken skin... the heart was shrunken and covered in black hair. (Rowling 64).

Scared she begged him to put it back within himself. The wizard assumed that it was necessary to do so in order to please the girl.

However, his heart has become animalistic and has developed terrible tastes due to being cut off from its body for such a long time. Thus, he is forced to take a truly human heart against his will, ripping out the girls to replace his own. However, when he realised, he couldn't use magic to get the hairy heart back out of his chest, he decided to hack it out with a blade. He so dies beside the girl while still holding both of their hearts in his palms.

In the story, the wizard chose to block his heart from interacting with the outside world by concealing it in the dungeon. The wizard's heart represents his conscience in the story. He prevents it from comprehending the wider picture and taking into account the consequences of his actions by imprisoning it in the dungeon. Thus, his heart's cognitive function deteriorated as a result of the social isolation he caused. Thus, he was no longer able to differentiate between right and wrong deeds. He had abandoned all human ideals and given up to extreme hostility, which drove him to kill someone.

Non-violence and Righteous Conduct in "Babbitty Rabbitty and Her Cackling Stump"

The story promotes the values of non-violence and upright behaviour as the foundation of a strong, prosperous community. The practice of nonviolence represents the pinnacle of human development and the perfect union of the mind, heart, and hands (thinking, feeling, and action). Nonviolence cultivates morality, equality, and respect for the human rights of all



people. It also encourages respect for all cultures and religions. It is a manifestation of all-encompassing love that fosters interpersonal harmony and a sense of belonging. It propagates righteous conduct that manifests as polite behaviour, consideration for others, helpfulness, and the ability to build positive relationships.

The subject of this tale is a king who wishes to retain all magic to himself. To accomplish this, he must find solutions to two issues: first, he must find and imprison every sorcerer in the realm; second, he must master magic. He assembles a Witch Hunters and requests a magic teacher. Only a deceitful quack devoid of magic replies. After demonstrating his abilities with a few elementary tricks, the charlatan starts to demand jewels and cash to continue his teaching.

The king's washerwoman, Babbitty, however, teases him one day when he tries to perform magic using a common twig. Due to this, the monarch orders the con artist to participate in a public magic show with him and issues a death threat if anyone makes fun of him. Later, the con artist sees Babbitty perform magic in her home. If she does not help him, he says he will expose her. She consents to conceal herself and assist the protest.

The brigade captain requests the king's help in reviving his dead hound during the play. The audience believes that the previous performances were a hoax because Babbitty is unable to utilise magic to raise the dead. Babbitty is called out by the charlatan, who claims that she is obstructing the spells. Babbitty runs away and vanishes at the root of an ancient tree in a forest. The con artist claims out of desperation that she has transformed into a tree and has it chopped down.

The stump begins to laugh as the audience leaves, which forces the charlatan to confess. The stump chuckles once again, pleading with the king to never harm a wizard once more and to erect a statue of Babbitty there to serve as a constant reminder of his folly. The monarch nods in agreement and returns to the palace. Then, from a hole under the stump, a big old bunny emerges with a wand in its teeth and exits the realm.

The tale serves as a call to action for peace, equality, and justice. If these ideals are not upheld, society will descend into chaos. Following people and killing them as in the story will only encourage violence and retaliation. Out of self-interest, the monarch executed



wizards, and the quack chose to coax more money, but both were left with nothing and forced to beg for their lives. Babbity, on the other hand, wanted to assist them both in solving their issues out of compassion. She is ultimately the one who demonstrates the law of reciprocity and teaches them a valuable lesson.

Humility and Patience in "The Tale of the Three Brothers"

The story deals with the inevitable death and holds the thought that no magic can make one evade death. To live a happy and complete life one needs to have good values. The story makes a point about the need of resisting the impulse to use violence and remaining patient and humble through times of difficulty. One should be patient, humble, and gentle in difficult times. One who has a haughty attitude and believes they are invincible and all-powerful will soon meet their demise.

In the face of difficulties, humility allows for flexibility. The ultimate form of humility allows for dignity and selflessness for a more peaceful society. A humble individual accepts and listens to others. Being humble means keeping your equilibrium, your inner authority, and not externally enforcing your will on others.

Patience permits us to look deeper into situations and things than they initially appear. Patient people often have a high degree of popularity due to their ingenuity, composure, and empathy. They get inner tranquilly and the capacity to maintain their smiles in the face of difficulties. It helps people be happy and live well. Patience helps to determine when to take action.

The plot centres on three brothers who encounter a dangerous river while travelling together. They construct a magical bridge across the river, and as they cross it, they run into Death, who is furious with them for losing three prospective victims. In order to eventually bring about their deaths, he pretends to be impressed by them and rewards each with a present. Death grants the elder brother's request for an unbeatable duelling wand by giving him the Elder Wand. The Resurrection Stone is given to the middle brother after he requests it in an effort to further humiliate Death. The youngest brother was wise and modest he knew, that taunting Death- by engaging in violence, like the first brother, or by meddling in the shadowy



art of necromancy, like the second brother- means pitting oneself against a wily enemy who cannot lose (Rowling 114).

Lastly, Death grudgingly provides his Cloak of Invisibility to the youngest brother, a more modest man who doesn't trust Death and asks for a means to stop Death from following him. Then, the brothers part ways.

The eldest brother duals with a past enemy and kills him with the wand. However, because he boasted about the wand's extraordinary ability, it is stolen and he is slain while he sleeps, allowing Death to claim him. The middle brother uses the stone to bring back the woman he had intended to marry in order to make up for a prior loss. He is overcome with regret for returning her to the mortal world, when she is discovered to be incorporeal and sad, the middle brother commits suicide himself, letting Death take him.

The youngest sibling, however, is always shrouded by the invisibility cloak, making it impossible for Death to locate him. The brother takes off his cloak and presents it to his kid many years later. He lived his life happily and dies naturally. He greets Death as an old friend and parts with him.

The third brother, therefore, possesses the two traits, or human values, of humility and patience. He lives by these values and simply acts in accordance with them. As a result, he passes away naturally after leading a happy life, as opposed to his brothers who pass away prematurely because they lacked these principles.

Dumbledore's Stance to the Tales

In the Harry Potter books, Albus Dumbledore had a similar temperament and advocated for social justice, but his handwritten notes after each story also included information about the other concerns in the stories. The remarks allude to how modern wizards belittle non-magical people and wreak havoc on them as a result of muggles or non-magical people's abuse and murder of wizards in the seventeenth century. Therefore, non-humanitarian actions devoid of human values will always cause disorder in society since everyone will want to practise tit for tat.



V. Conclusion

Fairy tales thereby impart human values to their audience through their plot, setting, and characters. In the chosen text, the characters experience hardship in one way or another. Although they try to use magic to resolve the issues, their efforts are fruitless. They are placed in difficult circumstances where they must decide. They are forced to the point where they must decide whether to use their inherent skill or power for good or evil. This power is not the magical power that they already possess. Their woes inevitably end when they use the power for the good of others.

When they chose to do good to others out of empathy like (the old wizard's son started helping people after realising their pain; helping each other in their journeys like the three witches and the Knight; following non-violence and being patient like Babbity and the youngest brother) they are rewarded with a peaceful and happy life. On the other side, the consequences of making selfish decisions like (the old wizard's son refusing to help the needy; the young warlock imprisoning his own heart; the king and the charlatan fooling others and executing the people who tried to raise their voice; the oldest and middle brothers using their power to kill their enemies, resurrect people and avoid death) make the suffering worse and last longer.

The very magical techniques they sought to use to address the problems are seen to have resulted in punishment for them. Thus, the outcomes of these choices further instruct the reader. The readers just put themselves in the character's shoes and apply their own reasoning to come to the conclusion that human values are the foundation of society and must be upheld by everyone in order to elevate humanity.



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