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J.R.R. Tolkien's Literary Works: A Review

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Abstract

This paper examines the literary works, writing style, language and narrative structure of the well-known British writer J.R.R. Tolkien by analyzing the books, journal articles, and research works interrelated to his works. John Ronald Reuel Tolkien is the most incredible fantasy writer, children's literature writer, philologist and university professor. His famous novels, The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings have been adapted into movies, television serials, and animated games. Tolkien's writings are based on physical, emotional and social issues. These works also maintain the themes like the battles between good and evil, the triumph of humility over pride, graceful actions, friendship, mortal, immortality, pity, mercy, resurrection, salvation, self-sacrifice, free will, justice, authority, healing, and corruption of human-beings towards nature. This review essay helps to clearly understand the concepts of Tolkien and his literary works.

Keywords: J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, Literature Review

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Charles Moseley portrays in his Biography book *J.R.R. Tolkien*, outside of Oxford, Tolkien is known as the best author of The *Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings,* which made him a wealthy man and also these books have a wide readership and imitated by many writers (Moseley, 1). Moseley states that Tolkien's philology and fiction have no division; *The Lord of the Rings* and its related manuscripts are secondary to his invented language (2). Moseley states that Tolkien wrote his works as a Christian but was entirely aware of the narrative elements of the Gospel, which are digitalized in other myths and other cultures (27).

Moseley denotes that Tolkien articulated his theory of art and sub-creation and its philosophical importance from 1936 to 1939; these years seem crucial in developing and understanding himself as a writer (24). Further, Moseley states how the journey of Tolkien within the Alps gives elements to the hobbit Bilbo's voyage through the Misty Mountains of rocks falling from the high ice over the path. Moseley relates Bilbo's actions with Beowulf's characters; the elves of Tolkien are medieval romance figures, courtly musical, polished, powerful and potentially dangerous and the noble creatures are related to the 'Elvish Knights' of Spencer's *The Faerie Queene* (31).

Sophia Friedman examines how religion and morality are characterized in the novel *The Hobbit* in the Journal *Scholarly Undergraduate Research* under the title "Religion and Morality in Tolkien's *The Hobbit"*; she examines that the novel is a combination of both fairy stories that create morals and the mythology replicates values and morals. (Friedman, 3). Mathew examines how violence in *The Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter* is associated with their theme of scrap between Good and Evil in the research *Fantasy and Violence in the Selected Fiction of J.K. Rowling and J.R.R. Tolkien*. In chapter - V, Mathew states that Tolkien agreed to great moderation in his portrayal of violence and maintained it mostly serious and philosophical: the evil characters' influence in Middle-earth's surroundings gives troubles to the people and controls their minds and fading hope (Mathew, 162).

In his book, *Modern Critical views: J.R.R. Tolkien,* Bloom points out that *The Hobbit* is written for intellectual children. As opposed to his heroic nephew Frodo Baggins who serves as the main character of the lengthy and challenging *The Lord of the Rings*, the hero Bilbo Baggins seems to be easier to accept. Despite being an outstanding hobbit, Bilbo Baggins is more of a burglar than a hero. According to Bloom, Bilbo is loved by everyone because he is a hobbit to whom things are happening, while Frodo is the one who causes things to happen (Bloom,1). Bloom compares Bilbo Baggins with Beowulf: Beowulf's physical strength limits his heroic character but Bilbo has the physical and moral courage and a way of honour which makes him decide to give up his share of the treasure. Bloom says that even the small creature does not shoot the dragon unlike Beowulf; the action Bilbo in the crucial moments made him a great hero (Bloom, 47-48).

In the research "How J.R.R. Tolkien Came to Write the Stories of 'The Rings of Power'", John Garth denotes that John Ronald Reuel Tolkien has built the most complete world which has ever been created and written in English. His renowned stories are set in Middle-earth, which is intended to be an alternate history of our globe. Tolkien created elaborate maps and extraordinarily detailed societies. Most of the fantasy works from the *Harry Potter* books and Star Wars films to games like Dungeons & Dragons, owe a significant debt to and pay acknowledgement to Tolkien's extraordinary imagination.

Janet Brennan Croft has pointed out in the magazine *World Literature Today*, under the title "Beyond *The Hobbit* J.R.R. Tolkien's other Works for Children", the children's books of J.R.R. Tolkien are significant to read and pleasant; especially humour and wit are combined in "Former Giles of Ham", the outstanding atmosphere in "Smith of Wooden Major" and the charm in *Father Christmas's Letters*; furthermore, She states that "Roverandom" and *Father Christmas's Letters* are written during World War II which denote Tolkien's concerns about harm to the environment and the consequences of war evident (Croft, 70).

Shobha Ramaswamy examines the archetypal features in the books *The Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter* in her dissertation, *Archetypes in Fantasy Fiction: A Study of J.R.R. Tolkien and J.K. Rowling*. According to her, Tolkien's and Rowling's heroes are classic "Orphans" who inherit fame

and power. She states that they live their formative years in insignificance and are not aware of who they are (Ramaswamy, 225).

The general features of the archetypal heroes are living in unusual circumstances, leaving the family to require an adventure or on a quest, and always being helped by supernatural elements (Imran and Wei 2022). Like that the hero Frodo, who is adopted by his cousin Bilbo, departs from his luxurious existence to follow the advice of the wizard Gandalf on a mission to destroy the ring. Frodo does not expect the fame that he gains at the end of the struggle but while the journey as an orphan child he often longs to go back to his home where he lives as a child who does not care about anything.

Through the project *Fantasy Literature and Christianity: Morality in J. R. R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit*, Pavic illustrates how Christian ideals and moral principles are excellently portrayed in Tolkien's fantasy novels in his fictional Middle-earth. She states that Tolkien provides life to the fictional world and characters, allowing readers to view their lives in an entirely new way. Even though Christianity and fantasy literature appear to be at probabilities, Tolkien's fantasy works provide the best proof of how thoroughly Christian principles and values are incorporated into the magical world (Pavic, 32). Tolkien shows the facility of Christ's sacrifices through the characters Gandalf and Aragorn who are sacrificing their own lives for their friends and people of the world.

Garner illustrates how the environment is delineated by Tolkien in her study *Far Over the Misty Mountains Cold: An Eco Critical Reading of The Hobbit*. The physical setting of 'The Shire' is depicted by Tolkien as the actual setting of Warwickshire, which is a part of the former Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia, which Tolkien frequently thought of as his ancestral motherland. Tolkien claims that the advent of industrialization drastically changed the topography and culture of Warwickshire, yet 'The Shire' evokes the region's beauty before industrialization (Garner, 24). 'The Shire' is a delightful place where the hobbits live comfortably deprived of any war, where no one fights with others and keep a good relationship with other creatures.

Haley Bedell denotes in his study *Frodo Baggins: The Modern Parallel to Christ in Literature*, like Christ, sacrifices himself for the people, Frodo saves Middle-earth. Bedell describes that Frodo's journey to destroy the Ring for Middle-earth is like the life journey of Christ who died on the cross for the sin of mankind. Frodo becomes a courageous and heroic hobbit through the search and eagerly sacrifices himself to save Middle-earth (Bedell, 23).

In the research *The Myth of Creation in Tolkien's The Silmarillion*, Martina analyses the first two parts of Tolkien's *The Silmarillion*, which are "Ainulindalë" and "Valaquenta"; these parts are describing the formation of the splendid world. She analyses Tolkien's inspirations on Christian motives and beliefs by depicting the five origins in Middle-earth. She states that this work aims to denote the Christian motives which are Tolkien applied to the novel *The Silmarillion*; also, she states that Tolkien's creation of the earth is matched Christian principles. The foremost important of them is the formation of God, Paradise, Angels, the Holy Spirit, Evils and the children of God (Martina, 31).

Martina denotes the signified myths in Tolkien's novel; The first origin in the mythology world is the God named Eru who is the creator of elves and men; the second figure is The Ainur who is representing the angels; the third figure is the Holy Spirit which stands for the Secret Fire which is located in the centre of the Middle-earth, secretly it denotes that religious is centre to anything of the world; the fourth figure is evil or Satan which represents Melkor, as Satan he wants to replace himself in the place of God, but he never overcomes the God; the fifth figure is children of the God who are divided into two groups in Tolkien's mythology they are immortal Elves and mortal human beings.

Kelsey Ryan helps the readers of Tolkien to understand the linguistic context and merits by analyzing each language of Tolkien in the research *Tolkien's Tongues: The Phonetics and Phonology of Tolkien's Quenya Language*. Ryan states that the 'Quenya' language is seen through Tolkien's poetry like "Namárië" ("Farewell"); the elf Galadriel sings the song in *The Fellowship of the Ring*. 'Sindarin' language is found in the names such as Aragorn who is the king of Reverend and Legolas which is a kind of green leaf: The hobbits are using a common dialect of English (Ryan, 9). Ryan notes that Tolkien's creation of the Elvish languages such as "Quenya" which is the high-Elvish

literary language, and "Sindarin" which is the language of current Grey-Elvish and is indelicately based on the Finnish and Welsh languages, serves as a medium for the theme of beauty. Additionally, he claims that languages are more important to his stories than the characters (Ryan, 6).

In the research *J.R.R. Tolkien and the Morality of Monstrosity*, Fawcett describes monsters' cruel characters and the way they are thought morals to the people about how not to be in life. Fawcett states that Tolkien remains aware of the warm moral role of the various races; the Dwarves have changed their good responsibility because of the wars in the Third Age; the Dragon has shameless greed and the Orcs are represented for their deadly corruption. Each creature has an important role to demonstrate moral messages; these are indicating Tolkien's depiction of the traditions of these creatures in literary history that represent modern Catholic morality (Fawcett, 169). The scholar, Fawcett states that *Beowulf* is the primary work of the formation of Tolkien's Middle-earth which is essential to understanding his monsters. She describes the monster as an antagonist who encounters the protagonists and the troublemaker of the narrative achievement (Fawcett, 15).

A study by Chris Larimore titled *The Problem of Greed in J.R.R. Tolkien's The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings* shows how greed corrupts the Middle-earth characters. He states that the Dwarves' desire for wealth drives them to join forces with the impoverished Bilbo Baggins and abandon a luxurious existence. The willpower of the hobbit Bilbo is much less considerable than his companions because he is unaware of greed or desire for power (Larimore, 66).

John Seland states in the research, *A Comparison between Hayao Miyazaki's Princess Mononoke and Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings* that Hayao Miyazaki and Tolkien are focused on environmental concerns in their works. Seland examines that the authors indicate the expansion of the world which is brought by machines and technology leads to destroying the earth (Seland, 7). Further, she states that nature plays an important role in Tolkien's novel because he presents nature as a human being through the characters Tom Bombodail, the Eagles and the Ents who are helping Frodo and his friends in a dangerous situation. Through it, Tolkien indirectly says that people are helped by nature and dependent on nature their whole life.

Greta Rogers describes in the research *Iarwain Ben-Adar on the Road to Faerie: Tom Bombadil's Recovery of Premodern Fantasy Values,* Tom Bombadil's characteristics as prominent aspects of Tolkien's works. Tom Bombadil gives more importance to nature and protects them from strangers. In the modern era, people give more importance to power and wealth like Sauron and Saruman who destroy the world because of their greed for power; but in the pre-modern age, people live harmonious and peaceful life like Tom Bombadil who indicates Tolkien's pre-modern ideas.

Leif Jacobsen states the importance of the hobbits' quests in the research *The Quest for the Empirical Hobbit: A Comparative Study of J.R.R. Tolkien's The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings*; Bilbo is a brave, energetic and self-confident hobbit and undergoes a significant modification and increase his self-confidence, independent in nature and have a manner of kindness and justice (Jacobsen, 36). During the quest, he enthusiastically goes along with the dwarves and keeps a good relationship with everyone until the end. Bilbo's quest is to protect the ring to recover the treasure from the dragon while Frodo's quest is to destroy the ring for the well-being of Middle-earth (Jacobsen, 36). Jacobsen states as Frodo depends on others and is not brave to make a decision; he is always encouraged by his friend Sam to go further in their quest to destroy the ring and is also accompanied by untrustworthy characters like Gollum and Boromir who desire to gain the ring for their reasons.

Jan Kovář characterizes the great and evil characters in the novels *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Ring* in the research *Good and Evil in the Imaginary World of J. R. R. Tolkien*; the characters are played important roles in most of the fairy tales. Tolkien uses colours to differentiate good and evil characters; the light colours represent good characters and the dark colours stand for evil characters. He gives examples from *The Lord of the Rings* which are Mordor's Black Speech, Black Gate, or Black Riders to represent evil things and therefore the White Rider, the White Tree and the White Council represent good things (Kovář, 25).

William H. Stoddard analyses the melancholic observation of the purpose of memory represents in Tolkien's works in the article *"Simbelmynë*: Mortality and Memory in Middle Earth"*. He states that Tolkien's expression of consolation is the elegiac power, but people who have

experienced true losses greatly need the consolation (Stoddard, 158). He implies that Middle-earth is a picture of losses because it suffered obstructions as a result of the War of the Ring, the destruction of two trees, and the disappearance of the Silmarils. Simbelmyne is a flower that grows on the grave; the word simbelmyne is derived from the Old English word which means 'ever mind'. The elegy for the person's death makes them immortal; the memory of the dead soul is always in the mind of those who think about him or her. Through memory or elegiac power, most people console themselves.

Diane Marchesani denotes that songs in Middle-earth are essential for narrating a story, it describes parts of the story and also the verses give different effects on the people in the research *Tolkien's Lore: The Songs of Middle-Earth* (Marchesani, 5). The verses in Tolkien's novels reveal the character's individuality, emotions and situations. The readers do not need to refer meanings of any words because as a great poet he gives the verses in simple language and the songs narrate the story separately without the need for any references in prose.

The American novelist, George R.R. Martin states that he is greatly admired and influenced by his books enormously; over the years, plenty of authors use his ideas of the dark Lord and his Evil monsters but no one gives out the genre well as Tolkien (Good reads). In the journal *Fansided*, Richard E Preston states that under the title "George R.R. Martin Explains What He Borrowed from J.R.R. Tolkien" Martin takes an excellent lesson from Tolkien and *The Lord of the Rings* which helps him handle the magic in the epic fantasy particularly while he is started to write his *Game of Thrones*.

In the international newspaper *The Gardian*, under the title "From Bag End to Babel: Top 10 Libraries in Fiction", Stuart Kells states that Tolkien's works are placed within the real fantasy world that features grand libraries; through the places like Minas Tirith, Rivendell and the humble Shire the readers recognized it. Kells describes how the hobbit is lived a civilized lifestyle by describing the 'Bag End' which is found in the Shire where the hobbits are lived; he states that the civilized hobbits have everything such as panelled walls, a tiled floor, fireplace, fine furniture and low bookshelves because they hate ladders.

Alun Morgan examines in the research "*The Lord of the Rings* – A Mythos Applicable in Unsustainable Times?" how Tolkien's environmental biography and the story's elements emphasize the connection between his own informal environmental education learning journey and his creative "sub-creation". Alun gives focus on how Tolkien treats place, character and environmental ethics, and how *The Lord of the Rings* is regarded as a work of "fantasy" or "speculative literature" which has the power to re-enchant the Earth by appealing to the mythopoetic imagination. Particularly, he is stated that the narrative indirectly supports and is based on a "Creation-centred" ethic.

In the journal *Fantasy Literature,* Rebecca Fisher states under the title "*The Silmarilion*: More Enjoyable Than LOTR" *The Silmarillion* is a challenging and epic reading work and it as 'the Bible' of Middle-earth that portrays the 'Elder days' when Elves and Men are divided by the dark Lord Morgoth's desire for the Silmarils which is a powerful magic jewel. In the journal *The Literary Omnivore,* Clare reviewed the novel *The Silmarillion* because the novel is hard to understand at first time because of its high style and lack of humour but if the readers read it, again and again, some incredible amusing happens; the collection of the myths is tragedies but they reveal the best things about human nature.

Allan Turner states in his research "Study and Intertextual Echoes", literary critics frequently criticized J.R.R. Tolkien's decisions of the future and the stylistic characteristics are used to differentiate between characters and various cultural and ethical perspectives; the analysis of Tolkien's two most well-known books *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* demonstrates this. Through the use of a significant number of intertextual allusions to earlier works of literature, Tolkien creates a sense of place and time. And also, Turner denotes *The Silmarillion* is perceived as a challenging book that demands extra effort from the reader.

Yacobu Innaci evaluates the indifference, inconsequence and uniformity of the women characters of Tolkien's books in the research "Feminism and Transformation: The Feminineness and its Revolution in J.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*". The women have two-dimensional; the gentle Rosie Cotton gatherings are unadulterated as the object of Sam's unrequited love and his precious thing. Lobelia Sackville-Baggins represents the reediest and idealized family member. Galadriel and Arwen who are two of the eleven females are the driving forces behind the

men's deeds. Innaci gives examples of recognized women in Tolkien's other works; Varda is known as Elbereth Gilthoniel, who is respected by the sprites as the Queen of Heaven; Melian the Maia is a wise and great ruler, and her daughter Luthien Tinviel is not only protected her worldly beloved Beren but also succeeds in rescuing one of the Silmarils. If all of these incidences are taken into consideration, it becomes clear that not only men but also women, hold royal authority and are established with deity rank in Tolkien's world (Imran and Hart 2022).

Daniel Timmons states in the journal "J.R.R. Tolkien: The Monstrous in the Mirror" critics like Ursula K le Guin and T.A. Shippey eloquently praised Tolkien's works. Daniel denotes that whenever Middle-earth tales appeared they are considered to be superior to similar writings which are available at the time and also Tolkien's works greatly inspired hundreds of scholarly articles and fantasy writers through the kind of literature that he has written (pg.234).

David C. Downing analyses the religion and fantasy of Tolkien and Lewis in the C.S. Lewis blog article titled "Tolkien vs. Lewis on Faith and Fantasy". He denotes that Tolkien's faith and fantasy are implicit, and he thinks the prime objective for a Christian must be a sub-creator to create a reasonable and self-consistent secondary world. In contrast, Lewis's faith and fantasy are explicit, and he humorously describes "smuggling theology" in his stories. Colin Duriez denotes in the article, "The Theology of Fantasy in Lewis and Tolkien" Tolkien has seen the sub-creation as the best part of fantasy and Lewis sees fantasy as imaginative creation. Tolkien used the sub-creation for expressing significant features but Lewis gave less importance to the sub-creation and used fantasy as a primary vehicle for confining the indefinable quality of joy. But both Lewis and Tolkien are carefully concerned about the craft of literary fantasy.

Jane Beal compares Gyges, a character in Plato's "Republic" with Tolkien's Bilbo in the research *Why is Bilbo Baggins Invisible?: The Hidden War in The Hobbit*. Gyges' ring helps him to invisible from others' eyes, without having any hesitation he would do any injustice activities but Bilbo uses the ring for his issues such as to escape from the evil Gollum and reuniting with Gandalf's group after accidentally separating from them.

Ioan Marc Jones in the blog, "Platonic Morality in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*" signifies "The Ring of Gyges" is a myth in Plato's *Republic*; Plato mentions the magical ring has tempted the shepherd Gyges who is the owner of the ring and has used the power of the invisible to do immoral and injustice acts. Socrates states that the moral man must resist illegal activities and do not fascinate by magical creations. Like Bilbo, the noble hobbit uses the ring to the advantage of Middle-earth unlike his younger cousin Frodo. The One Ring is like the Ring of Gyges, which tempts great persons but only those who have 'purity of heart' can overcome the temptation.

Elise Ringo has examined the region of darkness within the Middle-earth of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion* in the blog *Hell Divers* under the title "Beyond Good and Evil: The Complex Moral System of Tolkien's Middle-earth". According to Elise Ringo, numerous people throughout middle-history earth lose some of their endearing qualities due to their conceit and arrogance, like Fëanor in the First Age and Isildur in the Second Age. The one ring speaks to the darkness that resides within each person; Gandalf and Elrond refuse to handle the ring, but Bilbo and Frodo are seduced by the ring and decide to claim it as their own revealing their conceited nature.

Natasha Minnerly explores in the project "Snowflakes out of Fire: J.R.R. Tolkien's Anatomy of Joy" the idea of brightness, hope, and admiration of Tolkien. She asserts that throughout Tolkien's works, happiness and hope are never kept apart from misery and hopelessness, and she highlights the numerous forms of joy that can be found there, such as the joy of food, comfort and home. She claims that Tolkien's writings make readers happy because of the wordplay of the characters, the interplay of several languages and musical instruments, the descriptions of the setting and the home, the unexpected friendship in risky areas, and the lovely scenery and waterfalls. She claims that the sorrow and despair in Tolkien's works are humorously depicted because they are rarely broken by tiny, magnificent glimmers of joy. The joy may diminish, but it will always return, just as the water settles underground, evaporates out of sight, and perpetually pours back; similarly, the miseries of this world are like Melkor's fire and cold, which may not destroy the joy of water, but can create the snowflake.

In the research, *The Tolkien Paradox: The Silmarillion and the Denouncement of War Using Heroic Style*, Samantha Skipper denotes as Tolkien has constantly used mock-heroic as his use of

high language in *The Silmarilion* to exhibit the war and the significance of traditional values; at the same time, Tolkien exhibits the bravery and joyous events as warning against the qualities of pride, greed and vanity through the tales of war. *The Silmarillion* states the story of individual wars, the deaths of great elves and men, and the individuals who are driven by pride, envy and greed which are brought their ruin.

Dimitra Fimi explores in the article "'Mad' Elves and 'Elusive Beauty': Some Celtic Strands of Tolkien's Mythology" Tolkien drew inspiration from Celtic myth and folklore as well as his compound treatment of Celtic effects. According to Femi, Tolkien's mythology is strongly intertwined with England's Anglo-Saxon past. Tolkien's main criticism of the Celtic elements is incoherence, bright colour and lack of design for that he mentions it as 'broken language' (pg. 165). Fimi denotes that within the essay "English and Welsh", Tolkien states that he has rejected old idealized depictions of the Celts and Anglo-Saxons as well as expressed his respect for the Welsh language, which he views as a crucial component of the British people's history and identity (pg. 167).

Kassandra Marie Perlongo has concentrated on Tolkien's involvement with the Welsh language, mythology, and history in her research "Mythic Archetypes: Welsh Mythology in Tolkien's Lord of the Rings" and discovered similarities between the Welsh and the Secondary World Middle-earth. According to Perlongo, Tolkien's epic depicts a spiritual 'primary universe' and becomes comprised of the heart and soul of Middle-earth; the language Sindarin has linguistic and historical ties to Wales.

Andrew S. Higgins analyses in the research, *The Genesis of J.R.R. Tolkien's Mythology* how Tolkien's criticism, myth-making and language invention are close to his earliest works and explores the primary religious gives support for Tolkien's mythology and states he makes an effort to combine Roman Catholic terminology and ideas into his intriguing secondary universe and also connecting his mythology to the primary world.

This study analyzed and review J.R.R. Tolkien's literary works and examined the various authors' and researchers' works related to Tolkien's literary works. Through the reviews, readers clearly understand Tolkien's writing style, language, narrative structure, themes, characters, and the main concepts of his works.

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Declaration:

My name is Dr Gokulapriya. T, Assistant Professor in English at Arulmigu Palaniandavar Arts and Science College for Women, Oddanchatram. I confirm that I have read, understand, and agreed to the journal's submission guidelines, policies, and submission declaration. I confirm that the manuscript is the author's original work, and the manuscript has not received prior publication and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere. I confirm that the paper now submitted is not copied or plagiarized version of any other published work. I declare that I shall not submit the paper for publication in any other Journal or Magazine until journal editors decide. I understand that submission of false or incorrect information/undertakings would invite appropriate penal actions as per the norms/rules of the journal and UGC guidelines.