

The following is a four years old article by Khalid Baig, but with a new movie out, it is worth reading before one decides to go to the cinema. (July 10, 2007)

Harry Potter: Facts about Fiction

By Khalid Baig

Posted: 21 Rabi-u-Thani 1424, 21 June 2003

As expected there was much frenzy around the latest Harry Potter book. Bookstores and clubs around the world arranged special midnight parties and other events in celebration of the launching of the long-awaited fifth book in the series. A grandiose countdown was held in Times Square for the coming of the fifth book.

The book was set to break many old records. Online bookseller Amazon had already received one million pre-orders of the new book, its largest pre-order ever. Scholastic, the American publisher had ordered 8.5 million copies as the largest first printing ever. Worldwide, 13 million copies of the book had rolled off the presses in a massive print run.

The other books in the Harry Potter series have been translated into more than 55 languages, including Urdu, Persian, and Turkish. Nearly 200 million copies of the first four books have been sold in 200 countries.

What is all this craze about?

The series chronicles the growing up of a young orphan wizard named Harry Potter who attends a secret magic boarding school called Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

Harry is a very unique wizard. His parents are killed while he is a baby by a wicked powerful wizard named Voldemort, but generally called "you-know-who" or "he-who-must-not-be-named". Voldemort fails in his attempt to kill Harry and instead

is nearly destroyed when his magic rebounds on him. Harry is left with a lightning shaped scar on his forehead.

Harry is sent to live with his "muggle" (non-magical people) relatives for the next ten years. He lives a miserable life, tormented by his aunt and uncle and his spoiled cousin. They attempt to keep him from knowing that he is a wizard.

Then, suddenly a letter arrives from Hogwarts on his eleventh birthday, changing his life completely. Harry finds out he is a wizard and rather famous for his encounter with the evil lord Voldemort. Despite opposition from his aunt and uncle, Harry goes to the wizard boarding school where he meets new people, including his best friends Ron and Hermione. Harry discovers that he has both admirers and enemies.

Each book details the events of one school year.

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While the books are characterized by most people as innocent fantasy and entertainment, they contain many evil messages - not all of which are subtle.

The books glorify magic and sorcery. Harry and his classmates regularly cast spells, brew potions, learn to tell the future, communicate with the spirits of the dead, train magical animals, and ride brooms. They study astrology, crystal gazing, numerology, transfiguration, and divination. Darker things occur as well such as murder, human sacrifice, drinking of unicorn blood, etc. The fight between good and evil in this book is actually a conflict between "good magic" and "evil magic", both of which are evil.

The books are in effect promoters of paganism. They glorify magic and paganism while non-magical people, called Muggles, are despised and portrayed as boring, narrow-minded, and paranoid of magic.

Not surprisingly, the main characters in the story have few noble qualities; they lie with impunity, use profanity, don't respect their elders, break rules regularly, and are unrepentant.

And for all these qualities and more, the books are popular and are having an effect. It is the "thing to purchase the book. And not just the book. Children have gone crazy over Harry Potter memorabilia, surrounding themselves with Harry Potter T-shirts, posters, toys, costumes, wands, hats, etc.

The media has been glorifying the book that glorifies sorcery.

Welcome to the world of capitalism and paganism, where superstitions and the occult reign supreme in the hearts and minds of people, and where the twin forces have forged an "alliance of the willing" that is doing its "magic" on a global scale.

Capitalism is all about maximization of profits and if that requires appealing to the lowest instincts and the darkest recesses of human nature, so be it. Millions of dollars have been spent on advertising the latest craze on billboards, buttons, bumper stickers, and posters etc. U.S. publisher Scholastic alone has planned a \$4 million marketing budget for this single book - among the largest advertising budgets ever for a book.

The media machine --- equally adept at political, cultural, and commercial propaganda --- has been doing its part faithfully, paying a great deal of attention to the smallest events relating to the coming of the fifth book. It has been glorifying the book that glorifies sorcery.

Even if it were innocent entertainment (which it is not) the extreme devotion would be unjustified. But this culture is given to extremes and incidents of mass craziness are nothing new in it. The cabbage patch dolls craze in the 1980s was similar to current craze over the Harry Potter books. The Cabbage Patch Dolls were the fad of the 1980s. The most distinctive feature about them was that each doll looked a bit different from others and came with its own unique name and birthday, "adoption papers," and a "birth certificate." Marketing gimmick and television coverage combined to make sales explode starting in 1983. Chartered planes were used to bring the dolls from the overseas manufacturing plants to meet the ever increasing demand. Fist fights among eager customers often broke out in retail stores

when a shipment of dolls arrived. In 1985, Coleco posted record sales of \$600 million, thanks to their Cabbage Patch Kids.

When life has no higher purpose, entertainment and fun become the over-riding goal in life. When there is no belief in or clear concept of God as Creator and Master of the universe, superstition, sorcery, and the occult become fascinating.

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It is a reflection on the state of the society that there has been scarce opposition to this series that promises to become darker with each new release.

The Role of Muslims

In this current state of hysteria, Muslims should have played an important role in opposing this book and exposing the flaws of this culture. It is the duty of Muslims to guide the world, rather than blindly follow the ignorant masses. The Qur'an commands us in Surah Al-Kahf, "And don't obey any whose heart We have permitted to neglect the remembrance of Us, one who follows his own desires, whose case has gone beyond all bounds." [Al-Kahf 18:28]

Yet, unfortunately, we find very little opposition or reflection from Muslims, many of whom have chosen to blindly follow the pop culture. Many Muslims have assured themselves that the books are harmless fiction. Others even claim them to be beneficial because they encourage reading. Reading what? It does not occur to them to ask that question.

Islam prohibits both pointless entertainment (lahw) and sorcery. But countless Muslims seem to be unaware of that. And they are the ones fascinated by Harry Potter.

ref. url: http://www.albalagh.net/current_affairs/harry_potter.shtml

