

**The Failure of The American Dream: A Study of Francis Scott Fitzgerald's
Novel *The Great Gatsby***

Ashish,

(Scholar, Department of English, Kurukshetra University Kurukshetra, Haryana)

Abstract

The American Dream is one of the most major issues, which has created the attention of literary criticism through many years. It manifests the ideals of a nation: equality, liberty, pursuit of happiness and democracy; ideals that have been grasped in different ways by people. The exact values related to these ideals has turned and diverged from what it was exact meant into the huge yen and lust for wealth and power. Fitzgerald portrayed to unveil that social bias is present and no one is considered as equal to others. The following research on the novel *The Great Gatsby* shows how the dream cannot be fulfill because of the way it is misinterpreted by the society and people's materialistic think of life. The characters of the novel and their attitudes through the story are the representation of illusion and the lack of moral values in the getting or fulfill of a dream. This research shows how a men becomes blind for fulfill their misinterpreted dream that leads them to destruction and finally death.

Key Words: American Dream, Wealth, Power, Fitzgerald, destruction.

Introduction

America was independence on 4th July, in 1776, and after independence, state set of ideals (democracy, rights, liberty, opportunities and equality) for its people, even America independence was carried with great ideals and an upward social mobility for all through the hard work in a society with few barriers. These ideals were considered the American dream. According to James Truslow Adams, the American dream is "Life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement".

The people of the America have lived only for achieving the American dream and they did every efforts for getting it, but it has changed over the course of history, and people have imbibed the meaning of American dream according to their taste: for some, it's tangible achievement such as getting own home and motor car etc. and other have believed for doing good for other, and hand the great ideals off to our next generation for enjoying life so that no one would blame for the American dream is dead. The dream was not merely motor car and high wages but more than this- a dream of social order in which all men and women get equal opportunity for success. The original definition of American dream was not defined to society where everyone was perfect, but each individual to define what perfect to them.

The Americans are good dreamers who are willing to work hard to turn their dreams into reality but important was that which types of dream they have at that time because everyone has different kinds of dream. Many people have lived for getting large amount of money, and material achievement, and then the purity of The American Dream has been gradually corrupted. Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby* shows how the material excessiveness corrupts the basic nature of the human and ideals of life. The novel opens with materialistic scenery through the luxurious life style. We can smell the fresh richness through chapter to chapter and feel warm of the money. But, it is true, as we analysis the text; we also feel the coldness in relationship among all characters as novel opens we see unhealthy relationship between husband, Tom Buchanan and wife, Daisy Buchanan. They do treachery to each other as we learn during the course of dinner when Tom receives a phone call that turns out to be from his mistress. We come to know about extramarital affair of Tom through the conversation between Nick Carraw and Jordan Baker.

"Don't talk. I [Jordan Barker] want to hear what happens".

"Is something happening? I [Nick] inquired innocently".

"You mean to say you don't know? Said miss Baker".

"I [Nick] don't".

"Why- Tom's got some woman in New York"

"Got some woman? I [Nick] repeated blankly".(26)

The fake love, betray to their life partner, and sex were fashion of that time and all was considered common, not a serious issue. The meaning of life was only enjoyment without caring

anyone. Getting achievement is different for everyone as in this novel, Tom betrays his wife and indulges with another woman, Myrtle Wilson, and it does not mean they love to each other but they did all for their enjoyment, pleasure and flaunts. They all considered that achievements of tangible things were real dream of America and they forgot exactness of that and Dream unfortunately turned around for them.

The great reason of corrupted the American dream was the world war1 (1914-18) and during these four years everything has been changed. This war was not only destroying physical world but mentally world of people also. The people saw all destruction very closely and disturbed their whole equilibrium. The horrible war was ended in 1918 but it did not mean that everything was ended. The effects of that Great War were unexpected- people lost their ideals, morals, and ethics, even they questioned on existence of the God. So they decided that nothing was permanent in this world.

Further people believed for enjoying every movement of life, and they started earning more money by hook and crook. By the result, people indulged in loot, rapes, and bootlegging. In the 1919, the government passed the Volstead act to prohibiting the manufacturing, importing, and selling of all alcohol. But, this led them to increase crime because mobsters used it to sell alcohol illegally and made a lot of money.

This novel shows us the whole scenario of America in 1920s. Every character in this novel run for money, even, the hero of the novel, Gatsby wants to become more wealthy, and powerful by hook and crook. And his friendship with man, Meyer Wolfshein who prominent figures in organizes the crime. Wolfshein helps Gatsby to make his fortune bootlegging illegal liquor and his continue acquaintance with Gatsby seems that he is still involved illegal business. As we come to know through the conversation between Nick Carraway and Meyer Wolfshein.

“Have you known Gatsby for longtime? I [Nick] inquired”

“Several years, he answered in gratified way”(86).

Actually , Wolfshein is not only involve in bootlegging but more than this, because he is a gambler also. We get this through the conversation between Nick and Gatsby.

“Who is he,[Meyer Wolfshein] anyhow. An actor?”

“No”

“A dentist?”

“Meyer Wolfshein? No, he’s a gambler.” “He is the man who fixed the world’s series back in 1919”(87).

The every person of the America wanted to become more prosperous, affluent, and powerful but they all forgot the ideals of the American dream. Gatsby sets his ideal dream is Daisy who leads him to destroy everything. As same way Arthur Miller depicts in his drama “Death of The Salesman” through the character Willy Loman. He has also different type of ideal in his life as Dave Singleman as Daisy to Gatsby. In drama, Willy Loman tells to owner, Howard Wagner about his ideal as Dave Singleman who got everything very easily in his life and renowned salesman.

WILLY: His name was Dave Singleman. And he was eighty-four years old...

By the way he dead the death of a sales man...hunderds of sales man

And buyer were at his funeral. (78)

Gatesby and Lowman, both have ideals but not perfect and impurity of ideals lead them to their death.

Every person wanted to become rich overnight at that time. In this novel, the author portrays every character very beautiful and exposes money oriented society very clearly. Nick leaves his home to learn business and make huge money for getting American dream. “instead of being warm center of the world, middle west now seem like the ragged age of the universe- so I decided to go east and learn the bond business”(13).

Society ran for getting moe nad more rich and every family concentrated on collection of tangle things which considered symbol of the richdom. In this novel, Nick and his family seems very excited when Nick decides to go for learning business in East and he states, “All my aunts and uncles talked it over as if they were choosing a prep school for me. Further agreed to finance me for a year”(13).

Indeed, the people came out to search of comfort and pleasure, but they forgot real pleasure is not outside but inside. They worked whole day and night as mechanically and lost their existence. Even, they feared to the name of rebirth and reawaking. The same as depicts by T.S.Eliot’s “The Waste Land” and says “April is the cruellest month, breeding / Lilacs out of the dead land...with dried tubers”(1-7).

They wanted to fly high in the sky and did not come back on the earth, and it was happened, they flew high and forgot their nests and lost somewhere in the sky. The society became full of material and seemed happier and healthier but exactly it was not as appeared because it was full of emptiness, sigh, sorrow, pain, treachery, fraud, lie and illusion, even it was nothing but hollowness everywhere. After the death of Gatsby, Nick comes to know carelessness of the East and he knows what is real and fake in race of getting rich and famous, "I'm thirty. I'm five years too old to lie to myself and call it honor"(197).

Conclusion

The American Dream became only dream for them who have lost their roots and lost somewhere. Dream could not attain as it was, but we cannot blame on a single reason for this. In my opinion, human needs not only money but love, passion, devotion, truthiness, positive and compassion for him and other, because without it, we are just as machine and machine establishes for getting money only. We can be fulfilled our dream by not getting money and power, but hard work in right direction and love with work and love to each other. In the end of the novel, Gatsby does not fulfill his dream, and his tremendous wealth proves insufficient to match the romantic promise that was his dream. So he has lost more than won.

Works Cited:

- Adam, James Turslow. "What is the American Dream? The History That Made It Possible." The Balance, www.thebalance.com/what-is-the-american-dream-quote-and-history-3306009.
- Eliot, T.S. "The Waste Land and Other Poems". Surjeet (p),2007.
- Fitzgerald F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. Finger Print (p),2018.
- Miller, Arthur. *Death of a Salesman*. Finger Print (p),2018.