

Anxiety of Modern Man in Renaissance Period: A study of Christopher Marlowe's
Doctor Faustus.

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Abstract

Christopher Marlowe (1564-93) was great writer of renaissance period, and he wrote almost tragedy which depicts the human psyche. One of the great tragedies is *Doctor Faustus* that was performed in 1592, and hero, Doctor Faustus, is great and renowned scholar who has desperate ambition and lust for having infinite knowledge and knowing world secrets. This paper helps to analysis the whole journey of his life where he goes on peak point of his life and then decline from that of point. This story is not the story of Doctor Faustus only, but it shows the psyche of modern man also who has desperate desire for having honor and wealth.

Introduction

Renaissance means is reawaking, rebirth, regeneration etc. and renaissance age was the age of reproducing of culture, political, economic, technical and most important religion aspect of Europe. The all aspects are inter-relate, inter-link, and inter-depend to each other, so that if one of them is going to change, then definitely whole scenario of an area or country will change. And such a changing was happened in 15th century in Europe. We cannot draw a line on fixed date for changing any aspect or field which was the first or pioneer to change the whole scenario of any country. But we can start on Turkey, that invaded on Italy and rest of Europe in 1453, and some of scholar of Italy escaped the requisite scripture and settle down in another country with great philosophy and doctrine, so then the great ideas of great writers as Plato, Aristotle, and Saussure were scattered. And after that, the printing press was invented by German goldsmith, Johanse Gatenberg, in 1440, and then ideas were started to reach person to person in easy way.

One of the European countries was England which saw the first herald of renaissance in mid of 15th century, even we cannot point out on fixed date, but roughly we can say that it was

the year when we can draw the line of renaissance in England. Renaissance itself is a big meaning, it cannot come with limitation, and basically it is open and limitless in itself. The printing press was brought to England in 1476 by William Caxton (1422-91) and then first time in England a book or ideas could reach to every person, even ideas of great men were become accessible and boundless. The Greek ideas and culture started to come in England, and then many writers of England used the great term 'Renaissance' first time, even Taine says, "that man, so long blinded," had suddenly opened his eyes and seen" (Long, 80) There are so many reasons of heralding renaissance in England and some of them are religion and political matters in reign of Henry Eighth, rising of science, ascending Elizabeth 1 to the throne of England and made England more powerful in the world, and many more reasons are there.

Literature of renaissance period was considered pivotal in every facet of life, because literature tells us reality of society, and another word, we can say literature is mirror of society and helps us to tackle the problem of life. Renaissance literature has a universal appeal, because it is not confined in one genre like earlier era that was confined only in poetry, but in renaissance it has no boundary, it can find in form of poetry, dramas, prose and biographies also. This is not only difference but in matter of theme also changed, earlier theme was limited and on one point, that was regal, but in renaissance, theme comes down to the throne and talks about common people. The theme of renaissance does not mean that it clearly cuts to throne, but some writers try to their best to show common human and their emotion, and one of them was great writer Christopher Marlowe (1564-93) who was contemporary of William Shakespeare. The works of Christopher Marlowe totally oppose of that tradition which prevailed in renaissance period, even every writer followed Aristotle's theory of tragedy in that period, but he neglected the role of theory of tragedy and tragic hero, and did different. In the works of Christopher Marlowe, we easily find universal appeal and heroes of his works are common men, even problems, weakness, strength, achievements, sadness, happiness, all are facet of hero psyche are as common man's.

Christopher Marlowe was one of the 'University Wit' and his work, especially tragedy is considered extra-ordinary among all contemporary writers, because almost all the heroes of his great tragedies as *Tamburlaine*, *Doctor Faustus*, and *Jew of Malta* are the common man, not as belong to regal families. Heroes of his tragedies have ambition and desire those are not strange

and different, but common one, as they want power in *Tamburlaine*, huge wealth in *Jew of Malta*, and last but not least, search for the supreme power through infinite knowledge in *Doctor Faustus*. Indeed, we can say that his tragic heroes are not different to us, actually they behave in same manner as we do in particular situation. As we read his works, we easily match them as modern man and modern man needs, wants and desire which find in society as same they find in his tragedies. This research paper shows the similarity and closeness between modern man and tragic hero of Christopher Marlowe that is portrayed in renaissance period. Basically, there are so many tragic heroes of Marlowe whose characteristics and traits resembling in modern society, but discussion will be one of them, *Doctor Faustus* (1592).

According to Aristotle, there must be flaw in character that plays in tragedy, so such type of flaw finds in drama, *Doctor Faustus*'s one character, as Doctor Faustus. So, the tragic hero, Faustus, has various types of flaw in this drama. There are so many reasons to tragic flaw of modern man and Doctor Faustus; some of them are ambitious, sexual perversion, loss of faith and moral values, and mental tension.

Ambition and Desire

Modern man is full of desire and ambition for attaining everything in a single movement; he seems unsatisfied every time, despite, he can survive well with whatever he has, but he needs more and more. As in this drama, Faustus has good knowledge, even great one, but he is unsatisfied and full of pride on his great knowledge and scholarly mind, and in last he decides to gain super human power through it. We come to know through the Chorus, before the action of drama starts.

“Till swoln with cunning, of a self-conciet,

His waxen wings did mount above his reach,

And, melting, heavens conspired his overthrow;

For falling to a devilish exercise,

And glutted now with learning's golden gifts,

He surfeits upon cursed necromancy;” (1)

Then in the first scene of that drama tells us that how Faustus dissatisfies his current knowledge and curses himself. He thinks that he has infinite knowledge of Philosophy, Physics, Divinity, Law, but he considers himself only common man despite of all, “ Yet art thou still Faustus, and a man.” (3) These conceits and his personality show that he is unsatisfied man as we can easily find such men in modern era too.

Sexual Perversion

Human body designs well and it works accordingly, but it is also right that human mind effects whole mechanical system of body, and human mind is worked by our up-bringing. According to Abraham Maslow, there are five tier of human needs and one of them is Psychological need. And in Psychological needs are air, water, food, shelter, clothing, sleep, and reproduction. So all needs play very important role in human life, and all needs give full satisfaction of human body, and amazing think is that our body signals to our mind about which need is urgent for our body, thereby we do action for getting fulfill that need. But problem is that we interpret one of those need is in wrong way, we think doing more sex is good achievement for human, but we forget, it is also one of psychological needs and equal to all. This is the main problem of modern human as well as depicts in renaissance's great tragedy of Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. Doctor Faustus knows almost everything about universe and secrete of cosmos, but his desire remains unsatisfied somewhere, thereby he demands something different, Lady of Troy, Helen, most beautiful in the universe, to be showed super power man in universe.

“For that I know your friendship is unfeign'd

And Faustus' custom is not to deny

The just requests of those that wish him well,

You shall beloved that peerless dame of Greece,

No otherways for pomp and majesty

Than when Sir Paris crossed the seas with her,

And brought the spoil to rich Dardania.

Be silent, then, for danger in words.” (28)

Loss of Faith and Moral Values

We are social animal, and we cannot survive alone, we are inter-link and inter-depend to each other. So, the society is formed for human surviving. But, society is not formed by giving rights its people, but must follow duties also. Society has some rights, duties and some values which help us to live and let other live. But time and again, we all neglect these moral values, and faith in religion, religion teaches us how to handle senses. No doubt, human is best creation of Almighty God, and human is most powerful creation in the world that can make peace and destruction in the world. Faith in Almighty God and hold moral values play important role in human life, but if we lose them, then definitely have to face destruction as depicts in *Doctor Faustus*. His faith is strong, so every time, in form of good angel comes, before doing bad, and preaches him about what is good and bad.

“O, Faustus, lay that damned book aside,

And gaze not on it, lest it tempt the soul,

And heap God’s heavy wrath upon thy head!” (4)

But in the end of dilemma, his faith is no more stand with him, then he listens or follows bad angel.

“Go forward, Faustus, in that famous art” (4)

In the end of the drama, we see how Faustus recall the faith in Almighty God and feels guilty on his act that was done by charming deal between Satan and him. He prays to Almighty for salvation and forgiveness, but he becomes late for that, and ends his life with repentance and guilt.

“O soul, be changed into little water- dropes.

And fall into the ocean, ne’er be found!” (48)

Mental Tension

Man has great power to control everything in this world; it can be possible by rise of science: discoveries, and invention, but it also true that as we are being invented many things, but lost many too. We all invent for comfort of human being and live life peacefully, but somehow we left many things behind us, even we have forgotten about internally achievements. real happiness, peace or serene, satisfaction, and pleasure all are lost somewhere, and reason was simply running for having objects, external things, and material things, because we consider that real achievements are getting these things only.

We lost worthy things, and chasing worthless things in our life, and due to this, we all are in such a race where finishing line cannot find anywhere. Human being has no mental peace, and he cannot make sound decision in his life, so it affects the all human life, and we all seem as a confuse creature. Such type of problem we see in modern era as depicts in the great creation of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922).

“I think we are in rat's alley

Where the dead men lost their bones.” (115-16)

This problem is not only for modern man, but we see the same problem in renaissance period also, as depicts in William Shakespeare's great tragedy *Hamlet* (1599-1601). In this great drama, the hero, Hamlet, is always in confusion or dilemma before doing act, as in the act 3, scene 1 “To be, or not to be, that is the question.” (15) Even we see confusion, worries, and dilemma in *Doctor Faustus*, in the form of the good angel and bad angel come to Doctor Faustus to show his dilemma and confusion before doing act. He wants power and pelf in his life, but as a scholar, he knows pros and cons of that act, and that is the reason his mind always tells him what is the right and wrong to him in the form of good and bad angel. He has to wright contract to Lucifer to rendering service him, as he wants, for only 24 years. Before sign on contract, good angel comes and says, “Sweet Faustus, think of heaven and heavenly things” (12) but same time bad angel comes and convinces him for continuing act, and sign on the contract, “No, Faustus; think of honour and of wealth.” (12) So, these problems are not only of Faustus, but modern man has the same.

Conclusion

Christopher Marlowe does not draw only the society of renaissance, but he draws the inner conflict of human. He was the great psycho-analytical writer of renaissance period as well as modern period. Because his writing has universally appeal, and such writings cannot be bounded in one era. As he depicts in one of the great dramas of him, *Doctor Faustus*, and in this drama, hero has desperate lust, ambition, and desire for having knowing secrets, getting infinite knowledge and pleasure through materialistic achievements. He acts in same way as modern man and his worries, decisions and finally tragedy not seem as old as drama is, but seem as modern man's tragedy. These all show the human psyche, not a particular hero's psyche of the drama, and in the end, we cannot say that all lust, ambitions, worries, anxieties, and dilemma dead with the death of hero, but they all are prevailed in modern era also.

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