

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE'S *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*: A STUDY**Dr. P. Madhan**, Associate Professor of English, Alagappa University, Karaikudi, TN**Abstract:**

This article examines Christopher Marlowe's Dr.Faustus, which is considered to be a child of renaissance that bloomed in fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Europe. Renaissance is a complex, multi-dimensional knowledge revolution that appears first in Italy, spreaded to other European countries and finally reached England. New discoveries and inventions in every field of human activity such as astronomy, navigation are the manifestation of renaissance. The incident that sparked renaissance in Literature was the fall of Eastern Roman Capital Constantinople at the hands of Turks following which classical scholars, who lived there then fearing for their life, departed to other countries. When they went, they took with them ancient Greek classical texts which they spreaded everywhere they settled. As a consequence, the knowledge world till then accessible only to those from higher strata society became available for all layers of society. The most important feature of the renaissance was man's enthusiasm in breaking the barriers and creating new things. Man's unquenchable thirst and insatiable appetite for knowledge characterize the intellectual movement of renaissance which brought about complete transformation in the lives of people. Dr.Faustus is a quintessence of renaissance spirit. How restless and dissatisfied the hero is with regard to his present knowledge level and how much more he aspires for and the resultant consequences are vividly presented by Christopher Marlowe.

Key Words: *Necromancy, Seven deadly sins disastrous consequences, Black magic.*

Christopher Marlowe with the publication of remarkable plays- *Tamburlaine, Doctor Faustus, The Jew of Malta* and *Edward II* to his credit is not only a university wit but a pioneer even to Shakespeare. While Shakespeare was in the workshop learning the intricacies of the dramatic world, Marlowe was resourceful enough to complete all his great works. He obtained his degree in the year 1587 from Cambridge University.

The play commences with a choric commentary on the theme of the play. Ignoring conventional themes such as War and Love, the dramatist spells out his design to picture the strange action of Dr.Faustus who was ambitious far beyond human limits and who destroyed himself because of that desire.

Faustus thinks that traditional academic subjects are of no value and use to him. He considers the subject of logic to be unimportant because it merely develops argumentative skills in the learners and it would not make them wise or powerful. Similarly, the field of medicine can make the practitioners very wealthy and rich that too in a short span of time but it cannot do anything for the abolition of death. Likewise, Law deals with disputes arising out of inheritance of property. Theology with its pre-occupation with demise is also turned down by Faustus. His inclination towards the pursuit of something that will make him powerful gets so strong that he finally chooses to study necromancy at the instigation of his friends Valdes and Cornelius.

Notwithstanding the endeavours by fellow scholars to prevent Faustus from opting for necromancy, he is bent upon pursuing it. His corrupt friends Valdes and Cornelius continue to poison him by explicating to him the benefits of studying necromancy. Faustus good friends even tried to bring to the sector's notice Faustus' association with the corrupt friends but their efforts go in vain. Mephistophilis appears before Faustus and reveals his agony of being separated from God. The point to be noted here is

though Mephistophilis is on the side of evil, he appears to have some longing for being in communion with God. His words on hell are really very profound. He describes Hell as the state of despair and despondency. When man remains hopeless, frustrated, dejected and is in gloom and deep melancholy, it is hellish experience, Mephistophilis adds. Faustus dismisses Mephistophilis' words as vain trifles and expresses his readiness to sell his soul to Satan for twenty four years of undisturbed voluptuous enjoyment. Faustus lists what all he can achieve by practicing necromancy. He is desirous of getting gold, pleasant fruits and delicacies from India and other oriental countries to fulfill his bases appetite.

In addition to that, he wishes to satisfy his intellectual curiosity by getting acquainted with strange philosophical thoughts and secretly watching the activities of all foreign kings and gaining knowledge of their secret movements and plans. His loyalty for his nation is known when he speaks about his intention to construct an impenetrable wall of brass around Germany to distract the course of the Rhine and make it flow round the University of Wittenberg and dress the poor scholars in silken finery. His love of liberty is seen in his decision to use the spirits to chase away the prince of Parama from the Netherlands. Faustus proposes to use magic for purposes like this.

Yea, Stranger engines for the brunt of war
Than was the firely keel at Antwerp's bridge
I'll make my servile spirits to invent

(Act I, Scene 1 93-95)

When Wagner forces the clown to sell his soul to the devil in turn for a few French crowns, the latter is sharp enough to realize that they are not of much value in England. And, he has developed the desire of turning into a flea so that he can be in the company of women and tickle them. Compared to Faustus, the clown seems to be more sensible than Faustus, because he wants to extract as much as he can from the devil in turn for his soul.

Act II of the drama portrays Faustus as signing an agreement with Satan under which he will have twenty four years of voluptuous enjoyment served by Mephistophilis and the other spirits and will surrender his body and soul to the latter at the expiry of twenty four years. When he is about to enter into an agreement with Satan, so many ill-omen events take place like the congealing of Faustus blood and the appearance of a warning sentence on his arm. They are all warnings to him not to sign this agreement and bring it into effect. No sooner does the signing of agreement get over, than Faustus asks for a wife but Mephistophilis arranges only a devil which is shaped like a woman and it causes chagrin to Faustus.

Subsequent scenes in the Act II depict Faustus as trying to abandon black magic and surrender to god but he has neither tranquility nor composure to worship god. All his endeavours to straighten his mind go in vein. The words of devil that he is so condemned and corrupt that he is beyond salvation and redemption now pierce the ears of Faustus. Not being able to put up with the stress and internal conflict, at a point he even ponders over ending his life but the devil does not let him do it and it brings back liveliness to him by getting the ancient Greek tragedian Homer to sing. When Faustus attempts to have a conversation with Mephistophilis on God, the latter maintains stoic silence. He displays huge reluctance in answering questions about god. At that point, Lucifer compels Faustus to talk of the devil and nothing else.

When Faustus is intent on going back to God, in order to divert his attention Lucifer parades the seven deadly sins before Faustus who has now been brought under the grip of pride, covetousness, envy, wrath, gluttony, sloth and lechery which are collectively known as seven deadly sins. Each one of them is described metaphorically as well. For instance, pride is termed as a woman's abandonment of her parents and sitting on a woman's eyebrows or lips. Covetousness is described as a miser's greed to transform both animate and inanimate things into gold.

Faustus' revelry and enjoyment arranged by Lucifer and Mephistophilis in return for the sale of his body and soul continues. He orders the spirit to take him on a universal tour as a part of which he visits

Rome with the desire of seeing the Pope and taking part in St. Peter's feast. These scenes are presented in Act III during which Marlowe gives vent to his anti-Catholic prejudice by describing the Pope as gluttonous and short-tempered. While the delicacies in the Pope's hands are taken away by the invisible spirits, he flies into rage and curses the mischievous spirits with bell, book and candle. By picturing this scene, Marlowe highlights his view that even the pope is devoid of Christian forgiveness. Faustus and Mephistophilis throw fireworks at the Pope and the friars and disperse them. Similarly, he visits many other countries of which the kingdom of Charles V is one.

The IV Act presents a clowning scene in which Robin and Ostler steal Faustus' magic book and plan to enslave Ralph offering him free drinks and Nan Spit, the kitchen maid is also disturbed by him. Robin and Ralph steal a silver goblet and when pursued by the wine seller, Robin appeals to Mephistophilis who, incensed, changes them into an ape and a dog respectively.

Faustus realizes the fast-arrival of his end and with a view to enlivening the rest of his life he indulges in all kinds of cruel activities. He deceives a poor horse seller by selling him a stock of hay that changes into a horse. But when the horse seller reaches a pond, the horse again changes into the hay stock. When the angry man pulls the sleeping Faustus' leg, it comes off for which also as punishment Faustus collects more money from him. Though Faustus behaves like this, he is not free from guilty consciousness. He consoles himself by thinking as follows.

Trust, Christ did call the thief upon the cross;

Then rest thee, Faustus, quiet in conceit. (Act IV, scene IV 41-42)

The thought of cheating the horse-seller troubles Faustus' mind. He is shown as thinking God would be kind to forgive his sins as Jesus forgave the thieves who were subjected to crucifixion along with him.

In V Act, Faustus, at the request of his friends, raises the spirit of Helen. An old man who symbolizes belief in God and spiritual values warns and dissuades Faustus from these evil practices. But Faustus could not heed old man's words.

“Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships,

And burnt the topless towers of Ilium” (Act V, scene I, 83-85).

In order to free Faustus' mind from the thought of approaching death, Mephistophilis provides him with Helen. Perilously on the brink of extinction, Faustus kisses Helen, wondering at her facial beauty that sparked the Trojan War. The whole passage is woven with irony. Faustus who previously wished to provide silken garments for the poor scholars and make them smart, Rhine circle for Wittenberg is now shown as thinking of destroying the city in the process of his romance with Helen. Another irony is some the comparisons indicate Helen's destructiveness much more than her charms.

In the V Act, the arrival of Faustus last hour on earth is shown. He wishes that this hour should stretch into year or into a month or into a week. Having told his friends what is going to happen and asked them to stay at a safe distance, Faustus pathetically wants them to stop worrying about him. In order to escape from the end, he wishes to get into the earth or to be absorbed by the clouds so that his soul ascends to haven to enter a beast, because animals are joyful and on their death their souls will be soluble in the elements of nature but nothing like that happened. The clock strikes twelve and Faustus is carried away by the devil. The play ends with chorus warning the wise against practicing unlawful things which brought about Faustus end.

Work Cited

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