

SPIRITUAL CONFLICT IN CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE'S DOCTOR FAUSTUS

Mohd Haris Bin Mansoor

Research Scholar

Department of English,

Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India.

Abstract

The reign of Queen Elizabeth I is known for Sir Francis Drake's exploration of the "new world", the English defeat of Spanish Armada, Sir Walter Raleigh's colonial exploration, the blossoming of theatre and poetry. Yet, it was also a time marked by war, economic depression, and complex spiritual and political conflict. Basically, the time was full flowering of Renaissance spirit and transition that all established norms of the society was going to be changed and the medieval society was entering into the new phase of life. This change and transition was the main reason behind spiritual and inner conflict in the society. Conflict is the essence of tragedy. It may be two types: physical and spiritual. The conflict generally occurs between the forces of two rival groups and the central character belongs to one of them. The central character's heart and soul is the battlefield for the internal or spiritual conflict. Two opposite ideas, thoughts and emotions may contend against each other in human soul giving rise to the most acute spiritual conflict. Marlowe's Dr. Faustus is the milestone in the introduction of spiritual conflict in the mind of the central character. It is a psychological struggle raging in the heart of the hero. Generally, this inner conflict takes place when someone has to face two alternatives at the same time, one of which he must have to choose but other thing pulls him in opposite direction. On the one hand, Faustus was inspired by the Renaissance spirit intellectually; On the contrary, he was emotionally attached to the spirit of medieval time. And now, the conflict starts.

Key Words: Spirituality, Conflict, Dr. Faustus, Medieval Period, Society, Renaissance Spirit, Opposite Ideas, Transition.

SPRITUAL CONFLICT IN CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE'S DOCTOR FAUSTUS

- Mohd Haris Bin Mansoor

Introduction:

Conflict is the core and spirit of tragedy and it is conceived out of some inspiring cause. This might be on two planes; the physical and the spiritual. So there might be external conflict and internal conflict. The contention by and large happens between the strengths of two opponents. The central character has a place with one of these gatherings and the conflict frequently appears as a fight, a scheme or a grand battle. Be that as it may, the legend's absolute entirety is the considerable combat zone for the internal or spiritual conflict. Two inverse deliberations, wants, feelings, loyalties, or affiliations may fight against each other in human soul offering ascend to the most intense spiritual conflict.

This play is the account of a human who lives in such a society which has been affected by some settled standards of religion for a long time. The lives of the considerable number of individuals living in that society are stuck in the chains of built up standards. After a long time, there comes a change and individuals get the opportunity to come out of those standards and now they are allowed to think. Every human has two alternatives; in the first place, to spend the life under the influence of old established norms. And in the second, to exploit the opportunity and do what he gets a kick out of the chance to do and that what his heart wills to do. This is the main confusion and the source of conflict. A man can intellectually dismiss the old standards and can do what he wishes to manage without bothering about the things which have been prohibited. But the problem is that, emotionally he is attached to these standards. This is the conflict between Will and Conscience. There are some forces which persuade, impact on one's self and legitimize as according to needs. What's more, consequently, that man's heart resembles a battle-field where two inverse gatherings are drawing on their side. What's more, this contention is persistently working inside a man constantly.

Critics divide the career of Faustus into three stages. In the first stage, Faustus intellectually rejects the traditional norms and adopts necromancy to fulfill his material purposes. In the second stage, he struggles to escape from damnation and deep sense of helplessness. And in the last stage, Faustus loses the hope of redemption and finally meets his tragic death.

This paper will show the conflict through the fluctuation of mind between the two situations where the Medieval and Renaissance ideas contend against each other for domination: the first situation is where Renaissance spirit dominates and the second one is where the medieval spirit prevails and brings the situation under control.

Renaissance Spirit Dominates :

The spiritual conflict begins at outset of the play. The initial segment of the play delineates how learned pride and aspiration drives Faustus into deal with the Devil. In the expository scene of Act 1, Faustus is disillusioned with all branches of knowledge like material science, philosophy, law and Divinity as these don't have the potential to accomplish his purposes. In the sentence "What will be shall be" Faustus demonstrates his lack of regard towards the convictions and authority of Christianity. Lastly, he chooses necromancy which is unholy and against the teachings of Christianity as well:

*These Metaphysics of Magicians
And necromantic books are heavenly
A sound magician is a Demi-God.
(Act 1, scene1)*

The play proceeds and Good angle and Bad angle show up on the phase as they speak to the two aspects of mind: one perspective tends to the Christian convictions, that is Good angle; and the second viewpoint supports the Renaissance ideal, bolsters his aspiration and choice to receive dark enchantment to satisfy his craving, that is Bad angle:

*O Faustus, lay that damned book aside and
Gaze not on it least it tempt thy soul, and
Head God's heavy wrath upon thy head
Read, read the scriptures: that is blasphemy.*

(Act 1, scene 1)

However, the Bad point brings the circumstance under his control and ingrains in the psyche of Faustus that necromancy is the best way to accomplish his objectives:

Go forward Faustus, in that famous art
Wherein all nature's treasury is contained
Be thou on earth as Jove in the sky
Lord and Commander of these elements. (Act 1, scene 1)

In Act 1 scene 3, Faustus tells Mephistopheles that he has made up his mind to offer his spirit to the Devil and prepared to “live in voluptuousness” and all erotic raptures. He declares, since now, through his activity that Man is the focal point of universe rather than God and the subject of humanism sparkles splendidly in the character of Faustus that he turns into the agent of Renaissance ideal.

In Act 2 scene 1, the two Angels return and this time, additionally, the steady desire works in his psyche and the Renaissance spirit prevails once more:

Good angel: sweet Faustus, leave thy execrable art
Faustus: Contrition, prayer, repentance, what of these

Good angel: O they are means to bring thee unto heaven

Bad angel: Rather illusions, fruits of lunacy. That makes men foolish that do trust them most

Good angel: Sweet Faustus, think of heaven and heavenly things

Bad angel: No Faustus, think of honor and of wealth. (Act 2, scene 1)

Medieval spirit overcomes

In the Act2 Scene2, Medieval doctrines wake up and stir the mind of Faustus:

*When I behold the heavens then repent
And curse thee, Wicked Mephistopheles
Because thou hast deprived me of those*

*If heaven was made for man; it was made for me
I will renounce this magic and repent.*

(Act 2, scene 2)

At that point, once more, the contention ensues and the two angels show up once more:

Good Angel: *Faustus, repent, yet God will pity thee*

Bad Angel: *thou art a spirit; God cannot pity thee*

Faustus: *yea, God will pity me if I repent*

Bad angel: *Ay, but Faustus never shall return.*

(Act 2, scene 2)

Faustus acknowledges with profound despondency as he says “My heart's so harden'd, I cannot repent”. Faustus tries to withdraw and escape from damnation and condemnation yet he feels himself powerless.

The moment when Good angle unequivocally impacts on him, persuades and convinces that on the off chance that you repent, God will forgive you. At that point, the Bad angle interferes that; Lucifer will destroy you if you give any consideration to the atonement.

The Act 5 is significantly critical for spiritual clash when the old man, symbol of goodness and virtue, appears before Faustus and calls to the celestial will and warns him not to incur the wrath of God and destroy his unceasing life hereafter:

‘Old Man: *O gentleman Faustus, leave this damned Art*

This magic, that will charm thy soul to hell

And quite bereave thee of salvation

Though thou hast now offended like a man

Do not persever in it like a Devil'

(Act 5, scene 1)

The most intense mental pressure is exhibited in the following lines:

"Where art thou Faustus, wretch what hast thou done

Damned art thou, Faustus, damned, despair and die"

(Act 5, scene 1)

In the previously mentioned circumstances, Faustus demonstrates his discontentment and disappointment with the present circumstance and wants to repent but Mephistopheles comes and reminds him of the deed of agreement which Faustus has signed with Lucifer.

At long last, the concluding part of the play results in the fiasco. Faustus surely believes that there is no hope of redemption and trust of salvation and he will be destined to interminable punishment. The Final soliloquy of the play just before his tragic demise uncovers the terrible circumstance of an anguished soul. At last, devils grab the soul of Faustus and take it to Hell for endless punishment.

The play is based upon the mental battle between the two aspects of mind. Both fight against each other and the disaster culminates with the grievous passing of deplorable figure of Doctor Faustus.

There is a long discussion whether the play is religious in tone and the focal topic is religion or the play is with the Renaissance ideal where the main subject is an ambitious man who wishes to satisfy his material needs and does not bother about the religious restrictions and prohibitions. However, it is obvious that the play is remarkable for the subject of spiritual conflict where the two inverse perspectives of mind have been displayed in a commanding way.

Works Cited:

Bakeless, John. *The Tragical history of Christopher Marlowe*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1942. Print.

Cole, Douglas. *Suffering and Evil in the plays of Christopher Marlowe*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1962. Print.

E.M.W.TILLYARD. *The Elizabethan World Picture*. London: Penguin, 1990. Print.

J.P.Brockbank. "The Damnation of Faustus." Harold Bloom, Blake Hobby. *Rebirth and Renewal*. Infobase Publishing, 2009. 83-94. Print.

Marlowe, Christopher. *Doctor Faustus*. Oxford University Press, 1986. Print.

W.W.GREG. "The Damnation of Faustus." *Modern Humanities Research Association* (1946): 97-107. Print.

