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Dr. Faustus : Marlowe

Renaissance Tragedy.

The days of Queen Elizabethan i.e. Elizabethan age can well be described as the "spacious days". The spacious was the product of factors, external as well as internal. The internal factor was the great intellectual movement known as Renaissance. It was a movement led in 16th century which intended to liberate the mind, soul especially the Christian outlook and conventional dogmas. It was started from revival of the classical learning but above all was the revival of the peculiar philosophy of life which is known as humanism. The Christian philosophy was God centered, God was the measure of all things and man was weak and sinful, a strange compound of body and soul. The duty of man was to move Godward by renouncing all these things, by avoiding the snares of physical love and beauty, by cultivating humility and submitting his will to the will of God and depending on his grace and mercy for the salvation of his soul which would otherwise be damned and suffer eternal torment in hell. Contrary to this, Renaissance placed man in the centre and made him the measure of all things. It laid emphasis on beauty of human body, loneliness of nature and the beauty of work of art. It meant that man must enjoy ~~the~~ to the ~~the~~ fullest possible limit.

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The Renaissance Philosophy sought to liberate the human mind and free it from the fetters of religion. It gave birth to scientific spirit, the spirit of enquiry, which was ready to explore those fields of knowledge which was forbidden by Christianity. In its extreme form it meant the renunciation of God and sanctities of religion and turning knowledge into an instrument of power for mastering the elements and natural energies. Man must have line and struggle for his own aggrandisement. But in spite of all this Renaissance did not mean a complete liberation from medieval thoughts.

Marlowe was deeply imbued with the spirit of the Renaissance and his plays are concrete embodiments of this spirit. It is only in 'Dr. Faustus' that Marlowe's Tragic vision reaches its perfection; for in this play he gives a balanced view both of man's heroic struggle against all odds and the very limitations inherent in the human limitations and in situation. Dr. Faustus rebels against his human limitations and tries to possess infinite knowledge and power, and even to usurp God's place in the created universe. In this respect it does not represent Renaissance thinking, which questioned all orthodoxy and emphasized man's rather than God's centrality in the world. The soul of Renaissance is embodied in the great heroes of Marlowe who are imbued with the lust for the impossible.

Dr. Faustus starts as Renaissance man because, filled with pride and ~~an~~ inordinate conceit, he aspires to soar above his mortal limitations, like Icarus, to attain to the status of God. He discards theology because it rests upon morality of man, his sin and liability to damnation. In 'Doctor Faustus' man is the in the status of God upon this earth which the Protagonist seeks to attain through the knowledge of the black art of magic forbidden by Christianity. Magic has ravished his mind because it is supposed to confer upon him power, omnipotence the superlordship of the world, so that he may reign on earth as Jove in heaven, a second magician is a mighty God; and Faustus resolves to give his brain and magic to gain a deity. Courting damnation, which <sup>he</sup> Faustus, the Renaissance humanist, deliberately does. The mind of Faustus is glutted with the dream of Profit and delight, of honour and of omnipotence, which magic will place at his disposal.

The dream has filled him with pride and presumption so that he is not afraid of 'damnation', laughs at the idea of Hell, objects his abjures his God and elects to workship of the devil and executes a deed of gift in his favour with his own blood.

Marlowe's sense of tragedy inherent in his age is further sharpened by his consciousness of both the medieval and modern world. The spiritual combat struggle of Dr. Faustus is exposed in terms of figures that are both dramatic and allegorical. Faustus choice dramatizes the intellectual relation of medieval Christianity by the new thrust of humanistic knowledge. This is a crisis that Marlowe feels to be both contemporary and timeless. It results in a loss of unity and harmonizing between human soul and universe. Throughout the play modern experience is played in context of the medieval values embodied in religious words and phrases, such as "Christ's blood", heaven, hell, miracle, saints etc.

Dr. Faustus represent Marlowe's first version of Renaissance tragedy that rises from an inner spiritual conflict rather than an external conflict. Marlowe was writing a tragedy with a prophetic insight into the nature of his age. The Tragedy of Renaissance was that pursuit of knowledge, that, becomes fruitless if opposed to natural human experience. The Passion for the infinite is doomed; the gulf between man's nature and his ambition is so profound that the hope to bridge it, turns into a despair; It is this despair, the sense of vanity and nothingness that Marlowe grasps in both the medieval allegory of Adam and classical mythology of Prometheus. The essence of Renaissance tragedy is the free will of man, who is forced with a choice between two alternatives, adopts one and thereby

creates his fate, good or bad. Man becomes the architect of his own fate, and external agencies, if any, serve only to accelerate the trend he himself has set in motion. In the final analysis, Faustus is his own enemy and decides to face the consequences of his action all alone, asking his friends leave him and save themselves.

The cause of his tragedy is his own pride which expels him to soar above the human limitations and become a god upon this earth. He therefore takes to the study of black magic which will enable him to realise his heaven high aspiration. He makes himself King of Kings, the sovereign of his own country, the possessor of limitless wealth, with voluptuous pleasure and princely delicacies always at his disposal.

Dr Faustus is a typical mind of the age when the Renaissance humanism was crossed by the spirit of Reformation, that is the spirit of Christian religion and morality, which attached a serious significance to damnation and torment in hell, and enjoyed upon sinner to repent, break heart, Pray for God's mercy and the blood of the saviour for the redemption of his soul. This medicinal element is latent in the heart of Faustus and opposes his presumption first gently and indirectly then with greater force and intensity, till his heart becomes the battle ground the forces of good and evil and of hell and ~~of~~ grace

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