

## **Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus" as a Morality Play.** (B.A.Eng.Hons.Part-2. Paper-3)

**An** allegorical play which is intended to teach a moral lesson, using characters to represent abstract qualities like virtues, vices, or death is called a morality play. It was popular in 15th and 16th centuries in Elizabethan age. Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare are the most popular morality playwright of that time. Morality play is basically about common people, characters are often allegories, dramatized allegories representing a Christian life and his quest for salvation, to show audience that luck is unpredictable and there is only one plot throughout the play.

Doctor Faustus is written by Christopher Marlowe, the only playwright before Shakespeare who is still read with full zeal and zest. He is a poet and dramatist but he is well known for his four dramas—tragedies, which are known as 'Marlowsque'. His all plays strongly show the characteristics of Elizabethan age and have an influence of Renaissance. Marlowe's work is remarkable for its splendid imagination for the state of verse, and for its poetic beauty but in dramatic instinct, in greatly knowledge of human life, in humour, in all that makes a dramatic genius, Marlowe simply paves the way for his followers. He lived very short life but his influence in English literature

can't be forgotten. We remember him for his 'Mighty lines' which he uses as an instrument of dramatic expression, for his realistic character, for his subject matter, marvellous poetry and his passionate heroes.

Dr. Faustus is his 2nd play, which presents the tragedy of German physician and scholar Dr. Faustus. The story is very pathetic. He sells his soul to devil to learn necromancy on condition that he'll have power, knowledge and wealth for 24 years. This drama is actually the story of 24 years. Rare poetic beauty has been presented in many passages of this play. The last moment is very pathetic when he departure to hell.

### **As a Morality Play:**

We see in the morality play that a pious person is attracted by some evil figure to adopt an evil way, but in Dr. Faustus we don't see an attraction by an evil figure or devil. It is Faustus who is a scholar and a man of great knowledge who consciously and willingly sets himself on an evil way.

The play starts with the tone of anti-religion. Faustus rejects the Divinity by quoting selective verses from New Testament. In this way, he succeeds in taking Christianity a negative light because he has become blind in choosing the necromancy which is the most beneficial profession according to him. He reads that "the reward of the sin is death", and that "if we say that we have no sin/ We deceive ourselves and there is no truth in us". He just has a look on these lines and takes decision to reject Divinity. Though, in the very next line of New Testament, another thing is written, "if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Hence, with the help of selective verses, he makes it seem as through religion promises, there is only death and no

forgiveness and so he leaves the religion by saying, "what will be, shall be". According to him, he can become 'a Mighty god' by learning magic.

"These metaphysics of physicians  
And necromantic books are heavenly."

Good and bad angels are also an aspect of this morality play. They come again and again to convince Faustus. Bad angel tempts him to do bad things by giving him the examples of worldly pleasure and other delightful things and good angel urges him to be true with God, otherwise he'll be damned. The bad angel makes his mind in this way that he is not stopped by the Good angel. But Faustus needs everything in his life, he makes his mind that there will be no life after death so I should enjoy my life here in this world.

When he sells his soul to Lucifer, then in other words he returns obedience to God and swears to support the devil. When Lucifer sees that Faustus is already having very disrespectful behaviour towards God, he takes him to the deeper and deeper eternal damnation. But this play ends with a trace of moral and religious belief. We find this change at the end when Faustus has no other way to escape from damnation and wishes to repent.

Seven deadly sins are also the elements of this play as a morality. We have a moral lesson in all those sins. The sins are pride, covetousness, wrath, envy, gluttony, sloth and lechery. These sins are present in many people of that time and still they are existed. But the lesson is if we avoid from these all sins, we'll be awarded heaven otherwise there will be hell in our fortune. So we should teach lesson from the sins that Faustus adopts and is damned.

Vision of hell is another feature of morality in this play, the way hell is described here and way how Faustus will be damned to hell

teaches us that we should keep in mind the sketch of hell that is too much dangerous and hateful and full of fire. One cannot live there even for a single moment. So, if we want to keep us away from the hell, we should adopt good things and virtues.

Writers use allegory in the morality plays that is a form of extended metaphor. There is the personification of good or bad qualities; characters in a narrative have symbolic meaning as well as literal meaning. Writer uses allegory to explain universal truth and to teach moral lessons. In this play Good angel and the Bad angel are allegorical characters,

There are some elements of Christian morality found in this play. Like, in this universe God sits on high, as the judge of the world, and every soul goes either heaven or to hell, there are angels and devils; devils attract people towards sin and angels urge them to be loyal and true to God. It can be called a morality play but not completely a Christian morality play. No doubt, the religion of this play is Christianity but it does not have the affirmation of goodness or justice of the religious system.

When the final hour approached, Faustus to his utmost pain and horror hears a fearful echo: "Faustus, thou art damn'd!". And before the devils snatch away his soul to the burning Hell, the excruciating pangs of a deeply agonized soul find the most poignant expression in Faustus's final soliloquy:

"My God, my God, look not so fierce to me! /

Adders and serpents, let me breath a while! /

Ugly hell, gape not: come not Lucifer: /

I'll burn my books: Ah, Mephistophilis!" (5. 3. 120-123)

The basic purpose of describing all the events of play especially sins and repentance by the Faustus in the last scene is just to learn some lessons. It teaches us that we should not stick to the unbound desires of our mind that are difficult to control. It is the nature of a human that he needs worldly pleasure and he wants life not to have an end, but we should prepare ourselves by getting rid of sins and all other evils and adopt the path of truth and virtue. After reaching the marginal extent of the discussion, we can say that Doctor Faustus is a remarkable morality play. Faustus, who was at center of the play, tells us a moral story of a man, who seeking for knowledge pledged his soul to the devil, only to find the misery of a hopeless repentance. His exaggerated ambitions not only made him a sufferer in this world, but also damned him eternally in the world to come.

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