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Christopher Marlowe's Dr. Faustus, as a Play of Exploration of Possibilities of Knowledge.

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ABSTRACT: Christopher Marlowe was the first among the great playwrights of English. His magnum opus, *Dr. Faustus* is often considered as a play which speaks about the moral ambiguities of a scholar. It is also observed as the was of doom of a misguided genius. It tells the consequences of fulfilling all the dreams and desires with one single bargain, which ultimately would lead towards one's downfall. But this article tries to shed new light on this celebrated character, as a reflection of the Renaissance spirit of discovery of new lands and a dream to go beyond Byzantine.

KEYWORDS: wits, pursuit, adventure, Byzantine, renaissance.

Christopher Marlowe was the greatest of Shakespeare's forerunner in English literary history. He is considered as the true founder of English dramatic tradition. Though born and brought up in very poor family, he was able to be good educated. Marlowe was the greatest among the group of young writers generally called, "University wits." Before his untimely death at the age of twenty-nine he had founded English romantic tragedy, by then he had written arguably one of the greatest conflict Plays in the English language. One such play with the flavor of psychological grandeur is *Doctor Faustus*. For, this great symbolic tragedy deals with a theme which is not only of the author's inner experience but of the very stuff which nourished the renaissance spirit that gripped the European Art forms. Quest of knowledge was the spirit of the time which was mirrored aptly in his dramas.

Marlowe was able to give his audience an immensity of joy; he made them experience a trance like freedom. His play met with a great success, but even when his plays had come to seem unbelievably out worldly, they garnered public support. His characters feel so unreal and hard to be fathomable; and yet they brim with vitality. Marlowe is regarded as a flag bearer and maverick. He raised the standard of revolt against the convention of writing plays in rhyme and against the "clown age" of popular comedy. The position of Christopher Marlowe in English literature is so tall, that the critics took a long time to notice his greatness, to be as gifted as Shakespeare himself. He first and he alone guided Shakespeare into the right way. He is the gifted inventor, the most daring and an inspired path breaker, of all playwrights prior to Shakespeare.

His works dawned the light upon the genuine blank verse or a genuine tragedy in English language. After his arrival, there was a sense of revelation, a new found zeal to pen novel ways to characterize the plays. The cascade flowed towards the river etched by Shakespeare. The old Legend that a man could obtain supernatural power by selling his soul to the devil found in climax, inspired *Doctor Faustus*, who was really the source for it, in the first half of that in the 16th century. This man was a wandering scholar notorious as a necromancer, boaster and super- quack, who abandoned the disinterested pursuit of knowledge, in favor of its worldly exploitation and attaining some temporary success, ultimately met disaster. Marlowe raises the character of *Doctor Faustus* to a higher level than, is touched by his character in the original and the serious scenes of the play seem to some extent to be a subtle artistic touch given to the vulgar sensationalism of the original. The grave and the humorous scenes gel seamlessly together form a curiously an ethereal amalgamation. Marlowe makes excellent use of a religious convention which is undoubtedly Christian. What Marlowe creates out of the story of *Faustus* is a medieval explorer of possibilities play with a late Renaissance temper.

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Dr. Faustus As An Explorer:

Doctor Faustus marks the culmination of the English adventure tradition. As a morality play, it vindicates humility, faith and obedience to the law of god. Indeed, an eminent critic has described this play as the most obvious Christian document in all Elizabethan drama. It preaches the basic Christian values and should therefore be regarded as morality play.

The basic beliefs of Christianity are inherent in every line of Doctor Faustus and the Doctrine of damnation pervades it. The devil and hell are omnipresent in this play and are terrifying Realities, Faustus makes a bargain with the devil and for the sake of Earthly learning, earthly power, earthly satisfaction goes down to horrible and everlasting prediction. The “Hero” is depicted as a wretched creature who for lower value give-up higher ones. Thus the drama is morality play in which heaven struggles with hell for the soul of a renaissance. Everyman loses the battle on account of his psychological and moral weaknesses. It would be Incorrect to treat Faustus as the noble victim of tyrannical deity. On the contrary, God is exceedingly good in his gifts to the hero, until the latter becomes the victim of his own insatiable desires and even then god is willing to forgive of the repents. But Faustus intentionally refuses all aid and so fall to damnation. There is no ambiguity at all in the play on this main issue. Marlowe establishes the moral values of the play by various means; by the Chorus, by Faustus’s own recognition, by the good angel, by the old man, by the action itself and even Mephistopheles. As an example of the pervasive Christian view point, we also witness the deterioration and the roughing of Faustus’s character and his indulgence in cheap, sadistic fun. The struggle between Faustus’s uncontrolled appetites and the powers of haven, continues the good angel and the evil angel reappear the former urging him to give up magic, and the latter encouraging him to “Go forward in that famous art” Faustus consciously and deliberately sets his will against gods.

But he is in this state; Mephistopheles summons a few devils who offer him sensual satisfaction in order to distract his mind from spiritual concern. Repeatedly God Angel confirms Faustus’s urge, by saying; “Faustus repent; yet god will pity thee” but overwhelmed by the will power he says, “My heart is hardened, I cannot repent. This must be taken as an egocentric conclusion.

Hell Strives against Heaven and despair strives against repentance, but as soon as Mephistopheles threatens to tear Faustus’s flesh for disobedience. Then the weak-willed voluptuary quickly surrenders. There are some silent protests against the official Christianity of play. Yet one must note that it is a quest towards the unexplored. One must understand the flow and ebb of the Renaissance spirit. If Dr. Faustus appears as a moral compass from the religious point of view, it is also an open invitation towards the exploration of new vistas of knowledge. Knowledge can also be land and power. It must be noted that the Europeans travelled far and wide to the corners of globe to discover various ways to the unseen lands. Here land is possibility and power is knowledge. In this way Dr. Faustus also represents the European spirit of quest into the unknown and to benefit from it. Mephistopheles and the good angels are the returns from such an adventure. The famed and legendaru Byzantiner land was a dreamland for many. But Europeans wanted to travel past that territory. While theirs was physical quest, Dr. Faustus did the intellectual leap. That was all the difference between the real and literary explores here.

On the whole we can conclude that, if a person yields to a temptation, it would mean a failure of his willpower. But Faustus’s self damnation is not due to a failure of his will power but to an assertion of his willpower the foundation of Marlowe’s Philosophical position is that man has certain over-riding desires whose realization is denied by any form of servitude, and that the scheme of things as laid down by the god, who demands servitude. It is also a reminder that man is an animal of curiosity who would look for new ways of understanding the universe. We can observe Dr. Faustus, as an adventurous soul who sought the ways reflective of his times and could inspire the slew of explorations, literally and figuratively as well.



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