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HEDONISM IN ITS UNIQUE SIDE: A DETAILED STUDY OF *THE GREAT GATSBY* BY FITZGERALD

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ABSTRACT

Hedonism and its assumptions believed happiness and well being as an extreme adherent entity. They relied on the account of happiness and concluded that it is going to bury the pain regardless of the severity. In presuming so, life can be full of pleasant moments. As far as the text *The Great Gatsby* is concerned, it glances at the hedonistic objective of art in its fullest sense. The description of happiness and happy events that circles the characters is generated out of their struggle to obtain the pragmatic assurance. Here hedonism and its delight formula are associated with money and affluence a character enjoy. If a character has the financial setup to cover his dubious past, he is regarded as renowned among others. This paper assembles a detailed inquiry of materialistic attitude of life which is sustained by the money. The paper further investigates how this approach in a way negatively serves the pleasure chasing ethics of one's own life. Gatsby and the characters that surround him head all through the novel by having a faith in American dream without being certain of its unreliable outlook which they believe will provide a sort of guarantee to their entity in the established world. Each of the characters put together their own effort to be acknowledged in the busy world of materialistic hopelessness. The world here is categorized as old money and new money where each of the characters in these zones is occupied with different fortunes and misfortunes. The conflict with life and death are infused in different consecutive parts of the text where an elaborate emphasis to the notion of emptiness in death is interpreted by detailing how three characters died and murdered mercilessly despite their belief that they have everyone and everything on this earth, which by the end shatter the philosophy of materialism in all grounds.

Key Words: American Dream, Hedonism, Materialism, New Money, Old Money Pleasure Principle.

The pursuit of delight and gratifying self contentment are the two cardinal motives of hedonistic movement. It can be put in words as the pleasure-seeking jovial lives that exist for self appeasement. The deliberate aim of human life is to reach at pleasure in anyway. As stated by the oxford dictionary, hedonism is the "ethical theory that pleasure (in the sense of the satisfaction of desires) is the highest good and proper aim of human life".

One of the finest and most appropriate examples of hedonist literature is Francis. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. The entire narrative is all about a set of characters who occupy their own spot to be in the world of pleasure and self satisfaction. In the text *Utilitarianism, Hedonism and Desert*, Fred Fiedman talked about hedonism which goes like this:

We can roughly sketch the fundamental insight behind hedonism by saying that it is

the view that pleasure is The Good –it is ultimately pleasure that gives value to everything else that is valuable, a life filled with pleasure is the best life one can live (109).

Fitzgerald himself as a traveler always dotes on partying. To a certain extent it helped him to put together the convenient circumstances and episodes of hedonistic manner of living in the novel which is cooked up mainly through the characterization of the protagonist. But following the publication of the volume, the text obtained contrasting assessment and it got sold poorly. Only after 1940s, posthumously, during world war second the text made its comeback. The era gets going on with a stretch of economic expansion. It can be observed as the era of jazz music, aesthetic design and the phase of the evolution of flapper culture where young generations of women bring sensational deviation in their frame of mind that prompted to get out of the clutches of the existing conventions. This was the period of motion pictures, broadcasters, radio, and recorded music which so far influenced the lifestyle of the people.

Simultaneously, people started developing deplorable conduct and notion to convince their money-grubbing mentality and profit oriented greedy life. In history, the phase is noted as roaring twenties /jazz age. The whole text draws the expansion of the society of America throughout the time of 1920s. It describes the list of characters that represent the harsh community who came in to view only during the economic hike in America. Most of the characters and their manner of living give out societies who through their actions and deeds generate a set of circumstance of rotten social and moral worth.

As a part of jazz age or roaring 20s, there appeared boundless materialism, which, almost all casted characters hold in high esteem to represent the diverge feelings of jazz age. Fitzgerald managed to absorb the essentials of hedonism in the habitual actions of each and every character by highlighting pleasure as the endmost target of their actions. Their entity was kept aside for clubs and parties where they can show off their worldly way of existence. A further regard of pleasure seeking life is

the motif of the recurrent drug or alcohol use that frequently involve with health, work or social relationship.

All the characters, particularly, the chief figure Gatsby is liable to substance abuse. They celebrated marriage, love and even their unconfirmed relationship. The text put forward the notion that pleasure seeking survival reaches its eventual happiness only when there occurs a certain kind of hindrances of rules. For instance, Gatsby on one occasion was stopped for speeding; however, recognizing him as wealthy Gatsby, he was apologized by the police. Here the ethics and principles of life are designed according to the wish of ones on want. Here it is the money that determines what decision they must undertake in their life. Most of the characters regardless of their gender are characterized by apparent sexual relationship. Any way these people are prone to get cheated in their relationships too. The sanctity of love and marriage is vanished and stay as a big question that are yet to be answered. The characters here look for the monetary benefits. They smile and their eyes sparkle but only with robotic emotions and feelings. They live to persuade their consumer society who only looks forward for benefits. Thus their spiritual intuition gets devastated by their material intentions of life. Most of them believed religion as foolish and prayer as something for personal benefit and utility. Whatever they take on, they not once get disturbed on the outcome. Compelling inclination on partying, sex, beverages etc can be seen throughout. Most of the characters are vulnerable to cynicism and skepticism.

In the novel, we can see boundless depiction of excessively luxurious celebrations in its extreme sense. We have the central character Mr. Gatsby who is portrayed as a strange millionaire who throws the party in most expensive immoderate way. The extravaganza of his festivity is obvious through an account of his place and belongings. The party was actually hosted to pursue a lady named Daisy expecting that he could make contact with this long time back lover and with an anticipation to make her attracted to him one day

through posh lifestyle. The text gives the grand description of his home, which goes like this:

There was music from my neighbor's house through the summer nights. In his blue garden men and girls came and went like months among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars. At high tide in the afternoon I watched his guests diving from the tower of his raft, or taking the sun on the hot sand of his beach while his two motor boats slit the waters of the sound, drawing aquaplanes over cataracts of foam. On week-ends his Rolls Roys become an omnibus, bearing parties to and from the city between nine in the morning and long past midnight, while his station wagon scampered like a brisk yellow bug to meet all trains. And on Monday eight servants, including an extra gardener, toiled all day with mops and scrubbing-brushes and hammers and garden-shears, repairing the ravages of the night before (19).

The description provides an exact image of Gatsby's high-class car roll Royce and how the public has a kind of desire to get in to it at least for once. His vast swimming pool which get along with his nature of extravagant attitude mark his richness and his standard life but by the end the same pool creates a contrast atmosphere of agony, pain, death and vainness as it is here he got shot dead. His party, its gatherings and the abode are bordered with cheery celebrations. All the visitors regardless of their number are arranged with huge variety of mouth-watering cuisine. His receptions never become real in the absence of unrestricted alcohol. These jollifications make these characters happy who enjoy their life in its fullest sense. Rumrunners were very prominent in America during its period of economical hike. Gossips were there Gatsby acquired large amount of money and status through bootlegging. Tom Buchanan wonders about Gatsby in one chapter which goes like this, "who is that Gatsby anyhow...some big bootlegger" (6).

Gatsby holds his social event to lure Daisy. Even though Daisy is married, she desires Gatsby. Tom, Daisy's husband has an unlawful connection with Myrtle, wife of Wilson. They used to put on vulgar parties with lot of gossips. But at the same time Tom who constantly indulged in flirtation

always watches his own wife for being friendly with men, he frequently gets upset with a kind of doubt on his wife's attraction to Gatsby. Regarding the concept of the pure marital relationships and on the sanctity of love, Fitzgerald had relied on the mocking tone to display the negatively committed life of each character to one another. Nearly all the characters are given with unreliable pairing. The kind of love explained here is a paid love. They change their mind according to the choice of happiness. One of the best examples is Daisy, who was in love with Gatsby while doing voluntary service in the war. They set a promise in the past that both of them are going to wait until the war end to get married. But when Daisy's parents bring a proposal of a man named Tom who has a comfortable public standing, she couldn't dismiss it. She married Tom and cheated on Gatsby. But later, Daisy got occupied and fascinated with the extravagant life of Gatsby. Soon this fascination also set aside when she came to know about his impoverished, struggled youth and its embarrassing stories on wealth from Tom. But no matter what and how things go on with cheating, each of the characters is well acquainted with the hidden intentions of one another. For instance, once Nick talked on Daisy to Gatsby in spite of his friendship with her that "she's got an indiscreet voice", I remarked. "It's full of money", [Gatsby] said suddenly, that was it. I'd never understood before. It was full of money-that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbals' song of it (120).

This money minded group invariably dismisses religion and its philosophical doctrines. They deliberately had forsaken the concern of God in their talk and surprisingly in their life too. Fitzgerald not at any time speaks even briefly of the religious affiliation of the characters. Thereby he accidentally represents how the people of the era dare the actuality of God and demonstrate their appeal to the philosophy of nihilism. Even the character George Wilson, husband of Myrtle who is comparably religious than other characters expresses his tiredness with the religion in his talk with his friend Michaelis:

'Have you got a church you go to some times, George? May be even if you haven't

been there for a long time? May her I could call up the church and get a priest to come over and could talk to you, see?' 'don't belong any.' 'you ought to have a church, George, for times like this. You must have gone to church once. Didn't you get married in a church? Listen, George, listen to me. Didn't you get married in a church?' 'That was a long time ago.' (76)

Characters make use of their hours on gossip which is reflected as their notable delight seeking principles in life. All most all the characters largely take part in the party laid on by Gatsby. But among them only few meet Gatsby face to face. Instead of making an attempt to meet the person who hosts party, the gathered indulged in evil gossips on the host. They gossiped about his past life as if Gatsby as a bootlegger, as a nephew of von Hindenburg (Greek commander in army), even they made a story that he killed a man and that he served as German spy during world wars.

"Somebody told me they thought he killed a man once. "A thrill passed over all of us. The three Mr. Mumbles bent forward and listened eagerly. "I don't think it's so much THAT," argued Lucille skeptically; "it's more that he was a German spy during the war." One of the men nodded in confirmation. "I heard that from a man who knew all about him grew up with him in Germany," he assured us positively. (30-35)

Gatsby at the same time lived his whole life locking up his secretive bygone days from everyone. He professes himself as a descendant of a leading mid western ancestry from San Francisco, who studied at oxford. He pretends himself as someone who lived in the capital of Europe as a promoted major in army. But these lies are unwrapped when the author somewhere in the novel brings out the real name of Gatsby as James Gatz who is from an impoverished farmer family in North Dakota who dropped college to work as a fisherman. Later, he inherited his master Dan Cody's property to transform himself as a millionaire.

The made-up happiness and pretended joy is thoroughly smashed like a glass when he got shot dead by Wilson who misinterprets Gatsby as the murderer of his wife Myrtle. These fanciful bubbles

of life get popped out when all most all characters that cherished Gatsby's party never made up on his funeral. Few countable people who appeared his funeral comprise his father Hary C.Gatz, an owl eyed man who keeps library for Gatsby and Nick. This shows beyond doubt that his extravaganza was all in vain. People were only after his money but no one keeps any kind of concern for him in spite of his pretensions for a standard life. Thus the character Gatsby who leads a hedonistic lifestyle was an utter failure. And the entire text portrays the contradictions of the purpose of the life of each character by depicting the difficulties encountered in the pursuit of pleasure.

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BIO NOTE

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