



F.SCOTT FITZGERALD'S "THE GREAT GATSBY"  
AS A FAILURE OF AMERICAN DREAM

DHANARAJ P. KENDUR

Research Scholar

Dept. of English Karnatak University, Dharwad, Karnataka.



DHANARAJ P. KENDUR

ABSTRACT

The present paper attempts to study *The Great Gatsby* as a failure of American dream. 'The Great Gatsby' is a Fitzgerald's magnum opus. It deals with the wave of disillusion which swept over the twenties. In it Fitzgerald effectively conveys "the wise and tragic sense of life". He attempted to write the tragedy of a capitalist society. Money endows man with power, stature, nobility and elevates him from the mass. But the rich are not heroic. Money serves as a shield for vulgarity, treachery and arrogance in this novel. The tragedy of Jay Gatsby, is that his enormous vitality, ambition and power of creation are all lavished on a vulgar and meretricious beauty, Daisy Fay.

**Key words** – American dream, disillusion, capitalist, vulgar, meretricious.

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F. Scott Fitzgerald is one of the popular novelists of twentieth century America. He is the representative novelist of the age because his novels deal with the American life in 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Fitzgerald regards himself as a failure, and it was only after his death in 1940 that the greatness of his novel was recognized. The novel was published in 1925. After World War II, the novel became popular. It was taught in American high schools. Many stage and film versions of the novel also appeared. The Great Gatsby even became a front runner for the title of 'The Great American novel'.

The events in the novel play out in the fictional town of West Egg in 1922. The Roaring Twenties, or the Jazz Age of America is portrayed by Fitzgerald. Social ferment, idealism, resistance to change, and decadence are dealt with in the novel. The novel sounds a warning to the believers of the 'American Dream'.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century had seen many changes in all spheres of life and the literature of this age is not an exception to this fact. All the developments of science and technology and rise of materialism directly influenced the writers of this age. F. Scott Fitzgerald was leading American novelist of 20<sup>th</sup> century who was very much influenced by the development of modern age. His masterpiece – 'The Great Gatsby' is a direct commentary on the American life. That is to say, it is the criticism of American life. The novel deals with the condition of American particularly the life style of Americans. One of the critics calls this novel "as the

mouthpiece of American life, in the beginning of twentieth century". It also deals with the theme of 'American Dream' and its ultimate failures.

The phrase 'American Dream' is used to describe the life style and the attitudes of American youth. It is a belief that America is a land of almost infinite possibilities in which everyone, however humble their origins, has the opportunity to succeed in their lives. F. Scott Fitzgerald observed keenly the way of this life and matter and also their attitude towards love and relationship. The novel of Fitzgerald highlights this very fact how money and matter influenced very emotional things like love and relationship. The American dream is essentially the dream of every American young man who wanted to become rich in a short period and marry a rich girl inspite of having poor background.

It is in this light Fitzgerald tried to explain the thinking of American youth and their unsuccessful struggle to change their class and the life style.

"The Great Gatsby" beautifully describes the tragedy of a young man who fails ultimately in his dream. Jay Gatsby is the protagonist of the novel and represents the class of American youths. Gatsby's failure is also described as failure of American dream.

The story of Gatsby provides us the very essence of American dream. Gatsby, born in a poor family, goes to the city in search of job. He joins defence forces of America thinking that he would do something interesting work like every young man. He was attracted by a beautiful girl called Daisy. Since the girl is from established class he has tell her lies to maintain his relationship. Later Gatsby is taken to the warfield in the First World War.

In the meanwhile Daisy gets married to Tom Buchanan, who is also the member of established rich. After his return from battlefield Gatsby learns Daisy's marriage but he never gives up his hope of getting her back. He leaves the army and joins the underworld to materialise his dream of becoming rich and marry Daisy. He thinks that money alone could win Daisy. It is on this wrong perception that Gatsby's dream is formed. He becomes rich very soon as he has taken the evil way of earning money like bootlegging or smuggling. He has done all this for his dream girl Daisy. He waits for her for a long time. He arranges great parties only with an intention that one or the other day Daisy would come and join him. He spends lot of money on the parties and on his big mansion only to show that he is equal to the established rich. Nick Carraway, the narrator of the novel helps Gatsby by arranging his meeting with Daisy. The meeting of Daisy and Gatsby brings an end to the high romantic drama which marked a grand beginning of the novel. The meeting does not bring any expected result. Gatsby's expectations go wrong with the refusal of Daisy on whom he built his great dream. The disintegration of his dream begins after his meeting with his dream lover Daisy.

Gatsby fails to materialise his dream for Daisy refuses to accept his demands. She is rather to ready to stay back with her husband Tom Buchanan and he is the member of established rich.

Daisy's refusal is turning point of the novel. Because Gatsby's dream is completely disintegrated after this event. Gatsby's failure to secure his golden girl is interpreted as the failure of his dream and in general the failure of American dream. In fact there were other reasons other than Daisy's refusal. Gatsby has built his dream on the material foundations like money and physical beauty. It has no spiritual base to sustain. Moreover his love for a married woman is nothing but infatuation or obsession. Gatsby's expectations went down because the emotional matters like love and relationship could not be bought and sold like market materials.

Gatsby is the tight character of this story who represents every American young man.

The Americans have the wrong notion of earning love through money, beauty and materials. This wrong notion has taught them a lesson that all things cannot be acquired only through money. The novel also presents the beautiful American life which has serious loopholes inside. The American life is like a grand advertisement post which is empty and unreal. Fitzgerald presents beautifully the bright and seamy aspects of American life. In fact he is the critic of his age.

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