

(Eng. Hons.) Doctor Faustus (2nd Sem)

Q. Conflict is the essence of drama. Illustrate this dictum with reference to 'Doctor Faustus'.

Ans. Conflict is the essence of every drama but this conflict is of two kinds - outer conflict and ~~an~~ inner conflict. Now outer conflict occurs between the hero and his outer circumstances which may be unfavourable or hostile to him. Inner conflict means the conflict in the hero's own mind. This inner conflict takes place because the hero finds himself pulled in opposite directions or torn between two possible alternatives, one of which he must choose.

In 'Doctor Faustus' there is practically no outer conflict, because Faustus does not come into clash with any hostile individuals or any hostile circumstances. But Faustus experiences an inner conflict which occurs at various stages in the course of his career. When we meet Faustus first, he is debating the merits and demerits of various branches of study. He promptly dismisses logic, medicine, law and divinity and decides in favour of magic which seems to offer him — 'a world of profit and delight'. From this utterance we get the feeling that he is already pre-disposed towards magic, and ~~that~~ that he has now merely rationalised his preference.

The very next moment, the Good Angel and the Evil Angel appear to represent two contrary impulses in Faustus. The Good Angel, symbolising Faustus's conscience, tries to dissuade him from the practice of magic, but the Evil Angel, symbolising the evil instinct that exists in every human being. In the course of the play when Faustus goes into a grove at night to conjure, he feels just a momentary hesitation but quickly recovers his composure and says — 'Then fear not, Faustus, but be resolute' and for the next time in a soliloquy he says that, if he had as many souls as there are stars, he would give them all for Mephistophilis. Good Angel asks him to think of heaven and heavenly things, while the Evil Angel urges him to think of honour and of wealth and Faustus proceeds to write the bond. But Faustus can write no more because his blood congeals and another warning comes in the words — 'Homo fuge'. Faustus recovers his mental conflict and the bond is accordingly signed. After signing the bond Faustus interrogates Mephistophilis regarding astronomy but gets a disappointing reply. This is a moment of crisis in Faustus's career and an old man appears to awaken Faustus's conscience and Faustus's his inner conflict

re-appears in an even more ~~or~~ acute and agonising form and the old man stops him to commit suicide.

In the last soliloquy, his mental agony is again expressed clearly. —

“ Ah, Faustus.

Now hast thou but one bare hour to live,
And then thou must be damned perpetually!”

Faustus sees a vision of Christ's blood in the sky and begs for — one drop or half a drop which can save his soul. All the means — to be a beast or to be a water drop, to escape — are in vain. Friends come to take the tormented soul of Faustus and the heart-rending cry of horror comes from him —
“ Ah, mephistophilis!”

— R. D.