PREFACE

During the early years of the Republic, America’s youth had little choice to find a living as they reached physical maturity. When the country prospered with the maturation of industrialism, allowing the middle class to encroach upon the leisure-ground, traditionally reserved for the elite, youth gained education. People had also begun to enjoy themselves before seeking the sober responsibilities of family life. F.Scott Fitzgerald was certainly the best-known writer to monitor this trend in American culture and capitalize it in his fiction.

When the researcher discussed with his supervisor American literature in general and fiction in particular, he suggested some areas and authors. After many sittings the researcher suggested to read one of the novels of F.Scott Fitzgerald. The researcher started with The Great Gatsby. It is an experience and as a tragic predicament of humanity as a whole. Once T.S.Eliot wrote to F.Scott Fitzgerald that he had read The Great Gatsby three times and it has excited him more than any new novel for a number of years. He added: “In fact it seems to be the first step that American fiction has taken since Henry James” (The Crack-Up 310).

Fitzgerald’s greatest contribution was his protagonist’s discovery of the tragic ambiguities imbedded in ordinary, everyday American bourgeois experience. Moreover, he is interested in the rich only in their relationship to the middle class and he wrote about them invariably from a middle-class point of view. In his fiction, prestige, money, success and popularity became a stage for heroic action and tragic destines. The central faith is the belief that anyone
can rise in the world and become rich, successful and happy if he uses his wits and is self-reliant. The protagonists in his fiction are self-made men.

Fitzgerald’s youth believes in individual responsibility, romantic idealism and heightened sensitivity to the promises of life. But later he recognizes its shabby aesthetic standards, its habit of confusing social and moral values and its deadening materialism. He was so profoundly involved in the moral life of the society and his judgement of it was tempered by sympathy as well as understanding. Unlike his contemporaries like William Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway, he saw the involvement as a tragic experience. So, all his men were believed to be the pathetic victims of forces beyond control, specifically the economic, sociological and psychological forces.

Viewing F.Scott Fitzgerald’s work holistically, one can observe an ultimate unity of theme, the protagonist’s quest for high romantic aspiration and a sense of moral destiny. Above all, it gives a vivid picture of the evolution of the protagonist formulating a metaphysical attitude towards the conditions of life. From this point of view, the present study attempts to analyse Fitzgerald’s four novels and one unfinished novel. In his first novel This Side of Paradise (1920), the principal concern is the protagonist’s quest for self-hood. The contradiction rises from Amory’s failure to see that selfhood cannot be achieved without the harmonious balance of disparate elements within the human being. The Beautiful and Damned (1922) is an ambitious attempt to explore the social and personal pressures that contribute to the disintegration of the human being. The theme of The Great Gatsby (1924) is the protagonist’s concern and indifference towards the raison d’etre of things, which leads to moral failure. In his ambitious novel Tender Is the Night (1934), the tragedy is
caused by the inner conflicts of the idealist and the compromises forced upon
him by circumstances. The Last Tycoon (1940) deals with the decline of the
power of the Hollywood superstar. Thus Fitzgerald traces in his fiction the
combination of good and evil in the protagonist as well his education through
experience.