

Humanism as Prominent Issue Reflected in Graham Greene's The Confidential Agent

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Abstract

The present paper is about Humanism as a prominent issue presented in Graham Greene's The Confidential Agent. It utilizes Humanism as a study point. It has great scope in human life, because it saves us from destructions. The paper presented the turmoil and conflict spread on a global level and it was increasing continuously to inevitability. This was the right kind of background for Greene describes suffering which is an integral part of human life.

The paper will full textual analysis. It proves the human values and its need in our life. MLA 8th edition has been used to cite references and conclude findings.

KEYWORDS – Materialistic attitude, exploitations, betrays, deceptions, social discriminations, morality. Etc.

The present research paper deals with the sensitive issue in human life, and which changed human life completely. Humanism plays significant role in human life. Unless and until if there is human values everything will be changed in to progress. The researcher has chosen British writer Graham Greene's novel The Confidential Agent for the analysis.

The Confidential Agent was written by the British Author Graham Greene. It is a thriller novel. Graham Greene emphasizes the horror of modern war, particularly the physical and mental effects of bombing on civilian population. It was written within six weeks in 1939. It has a hallucinatory quality and it reminds readers of Kafka. The central character of the novel stumbles from one trap into another. He is terribly thwarted at each turn. His mission of getting a coal contract for his nation is seemingly almost deemed. Most of the characters experience terrible fears. Each scene proves to be risky and dangerous. D., the protagonist is finally given a death punishment. His novels are concerned with various forms of injustice – the injustice inherent in the patriarchal order in which men enjoy a natural precedence and power over women, who are seen as mere objects. The major focus is given on themes like, male domination, violence against women, deception, and exploitation of children, double dealing, betrayal and cruelty.

In the Present research paper the researcher has focused on the prominent issues which was reflected in The Confidential Agent. The researcher has chosen for his analysis and illustrated novel, Graham Greene's The Confidential Agent. Greene's novels are united by the themes of commitment- political, social, moral and emotional in the face of oppressive realities. The present novel probes into the problems of good and evil, the strange misery in man's life and the complexities of human actions.

The agent of the title is referred to throughout the novel simply as D., where as his opponent is named as L. These two men are on different sides, but they understand one another. Greene has named them as D. and L. because he didn't wish to localize their conflict. The novel clearly displays the contemporary social and political situations and entertains the readers. It contains an unhappy situation of shootings, scrapes, chases and confrontations. The novel contains political-terrorism, ideological and suicide bombers. The researcher has analyzed and explained the social, political, cultural, materialistic situations existing during the World War II. After the devastations of the First World War, striking changes took place in England. The changes include social, cultural, psychological, political, decline of belief, loss of innocence etc. All these changes helped Fascist cause, as well as an economic empire which become unscrupulous. Consequently, it gave birth to conspiracies, distrust and betrayal at the national as well as international levels. The contrast between the bliss of prewar, social, political and cultural situations and the distastes presented by Greene has been explicitly explained by the researcher. The Second World War, the coal deal, the two parties which stand to be beneficial played significant in this novel. England as a powerful nation could exercise influence on the course of war, manipulation, conspiracy, suspicion, fear, deception, suspense, panic etc. are the striking features of *The Confidential Agent*. Cruel deaths of innocent citizens and helpless children, the murder of Else, the BBC's sensational news, use of dead man's passport, L.'s intrigues, espionages, the gangster's threat of exploding the bomb, the politics of the coal contract, imperial attitude of the British government, materialistic tendency are equally striking characteristics of *The Confidential Agent*. All these features have been explicitly analyzed and explained in the present research paper.

Human being is a social animal. He cannot live alone. It has been proved through generations together. Human beings in an ancient period were scattered. They were in the company of nature, different kinds of animals, birds, creatures etc. Some of them were harmless, whereas others proved to be harmful. They must have applied their thinking faculty to decide from whom they should be aware of and be fearless from others. Evolutionary changes from the biological point of view went on taking place from the very beginning. Human being must have applied his mind to find out and utilize various sources available around him to make his life comfortable. For example: Shelter to protect himself from the natural assaults like storm, thundering, lightning, extreme heat, extreme cold, extreme rain etc.

An idea of living in group must be an outcome to protect themselves from various kinds of dangers caused by various hostile factors. Through evolutionary changes, they must have established themselves comfortably in comparison to animals, birds and creatures. After establishing themselves comfortably, man must have thought of superiority- complex to prove himself superior to others. It is inbuilt in case of human being to tolerate certain things or to be submissive or to have withdrawing attitude in adversities. Once, some of them established themselves economically, socially, politically they aspire to rule others, to exercise power on others. This attitude leads human being towards conflict. Another kind of conflict, unless it is appropriately and in the time controlled, it gives birth to another conflict. Conflict among individuals gives birth to a group conflict and it goes on widening accordingly.

Epics like *The Paradise Lost*, *The Ramayana*, *The Mahabharata*, *The Odyssey*

have explicitly explained various kinds of conflicts amongst individuals as well as the conflicts (war) among the groups or nations. We label them as the conflicts (wars) between the positive-minded people and negative-minded people. It means, positive as well as negative elements are very much there in human personality. In other words, the conflict between 'good' and 'evil' is an age-old factor in case of mankind in human history. William Golding, a twentieth century novelist, in his illustrated novel entitled, *The Lord of the Flies* written on the background of the World War II is based on some innate evil in human nature. Through this renowned novel, Golding tries to teach and warn readers of the evil nature of mankind. He believed that the horrors of the World War II can be based on innate evil. Through this illustrated novel, William Golding presents that laws and rules are definitely necessary to keep the darker side of human nature within limitations. When all elements of civilization disappear, human beings revert to a more primitive part of their nature and they turn into savages. Anarchy replaces democracy. Society holds human beings together, and without civilization and rules human being's ideals, values, basic ideas of what is right and wrong are forgotten, and the evils of human nature emerge, and they cause negative action likewar.

At the very beginning of the novel, *The Confidential Agent*, Graham Greene presents the existing situation of human society. D., the central character of the novel experiences class distinction when he gets into the English ship at Dover. The narrator tells:

The little wooden gate with a placard: 'First-Class Passengers Only.' There had been a time when the class distinction would have read like an insult, but now the class divisions were too subdivided to mean anything at all. (Greene, *The Confidential Agent*, 4)

His voyage in the ship is stormy because discrimination, harassment and mental disturbances. It reveals that the class distinction is necessarily observed everywhere and at all time. In- depth study of Graham Greene's *England Made Me* (1935), *The Confidential Agent* (1939) and *The Ministry of Fears* (1943) makes us understand that bombs were falling on London. It was in flames. Graham Greene had seen it at first hand, as an air-raid warden in Bloomsbury area. After the devastations of the First World War, striking changes took place in England. These changes include social, cultural, psychological, political, loss of confidence, the slow decline of belief in ideas, increasing domination of the elite group, questioning of an education and moral system, loss of innocence etc. These changes became social, political and existential realities. During that period, Greene was hailed as a Catholic novelist. George Woodcock in his renowned book entitled, *The Writer and Politics* comments on the social and political aspects of Greene's work. Hewrites:

Greene's novels form---- one of the most comprehensive surveys of modern social violence that has yet been in European fiction. They show clearly the nature of the class struggle in modern society, and also go beyond the Marxist to a realization of that even more fundamental struggle, in progress, throughout the world today, between the individual and the collective, the common man and the State." (Woodcock G.,143)

The idea of internationalism as a social, political and economic concept necessarily underlines Woodcock's comments. All these changes helped the Fascist cause as well as an economic empire which slowly became unscrupulous. Consequently, it gave

birth to conspiracies, deceptions, distrust and betrayal. Woodcock further observes that Graham Greene recreated the journey to extend and sharpen the references of threat and reality. His novels explicitly bring out a changing world order that cuts across national frontiers to reveal a world of international secret agreement in war, finance and business. Greene's later novels explore the polarization of power and hegemonic confrontation that has become the reality of modern life.

During the Second World War, the city of London was threatened and later on devastated by war. The Confidential Agent rightly illustrates the contrast between the bliss of prewar social, cultural, political situations and the distastes of the present. D. a Spanish Republican agent and the central character of this novel, a middle aged and middle class professor of Romance literature with romantic and passionate attitudes becomes revolutionary. He tries his level best to get the coal contract for his nation. He is a man who believes and honors human values but his idealism acquires overtones of irony, cynicism and despair. In his introduction to *The Confidential Agent*, Greenewrites:

I had vague ambition to create something legendary out of a contemporary thriller: the hunted man who becomes in turn a hunter, the peaceful man who turns at bay, the man who has learnt to love justice by suffering injustice. A legend for modern times.

(Greene, *The Confidential Agent*, 25)

Element of Humanism in *The Confidential Agent*-

Rose Cullen's humanness represents culture and civilization. She is the daughter of Lord Benditch, one of the miners of coal. She abandons wealth and socially dignified position for human commitment and returns to ideals. Rose Cullen and D. happen to coincidentally meet in connection with coal contract. She thinks that, D. is a man respecting human values and trustworthy. She feels extremely happy in D's association and falls in love with him. She proves to be helpful to D. on various occasions as well as in critical situations. D. treats Rose Cullen with great respect. His love for Rose Cullen is genuine and selfless. She feels sick when D. was beaten and inhumanly insulted by Chauffeur, L's driver. She tells D:

'I just wished I could help you, that's all'-
After they'd beaten you up last night I
was sick.

(Greene, *The Confidential Agent*, 70-71)

Here, the researcher, asserts that, Rose Cullen's above-cited expression is an example of her sensitive, well- cultured and civilized attitude towards human life. D., Rose Cullen, Else, Terence Hillman etc. in *The Confidential Agent* represent Graham Greene's humanism. Rose Cullen tries her level best to help D. in getting the coal contract. She is aware of the materialistic attitude of the miners and she advises D. accordingly. She firmly believes in the present situations. She tries her level best to make D. aware of the impending danger. She visualizes that D. will die soon. At the end of the novel, readers experience a genuine bond between D. and Rose Cullen. She talks to D:

'Oh, I know you're faithful – but I've told you I shan't go on loving a dead Man. --- When you are dead, She can have you. I can't compete then, and we'll all be dead a long, long time- you'll be dead very soon: you needn't tell me that, but now...'

(Greene, *The Confidential Agent*, 247)

All these expressions expressed by Rose Cullen towards D. actually touch in readers heart to heart. She has accurately visualized the existing situations. She knows the commercial, materialistic and insensitive attitude of the miners. She realizes that the authority has decided to give death punishment to D. Therefore she tells D. 'You 'll be dead soon.' Another example of humanism in *The Confidential Agent* is the relationship between D. and Else. They co-incidentally meet in the hotel. Else is a fourteen years girl. She works as a maid in the hotel. Else is sincere, innocent and trustworthy. Soon, a bond of genuine love takes place between D. and Else. D. showers love on Else as his daughter. She realizes his fatherly love for her and starts taking maximum care of D. She is willing to do anything for D. She tells D.,

I won't let you down. You're gentleman –I'd do anything that girl I'll do - I don't mind their killing me.' (Greene, *The Confidential Agent*, 79).

It was the best example of how the humanism was reflected in the work, *The Confidential Agent*. False news was spread that a hotel-maid has committed suicide. D. was greatly shocked to get this false news. He firmly believes that Else will never do like this. He believes that the evil-minded the manageress and Mr. K. are involved in Else's murder. He decides to take revenge on Mr. K. for Else's murder and he does it. D. entrusts his secret papers to Else. The loving bond between D. and Else represents human civilization in true sense of terms. One more illustration of humanness presented in *The Confidential Agent* is related to Dr. Bellows and his idealism. Dr. Bellows is the director of Entrenationo School. He firmly believes in human values and tries his level best to preserve the human values. Through his Language School, he wants to establish communication with the entire world. He believes that conflicts, fighting, wars etc. are harmful to human civilization. He believes that some good will come of all the anguish. He states, 'Then some good may come of all the anguish.' (Greene, *The Confidential Agent*, 157)

Dr. Bellows 'Entrenationo School' is Graham Greene's imaginative creation. Throughout his life, Greene advocated human values. He firmly believed that crisis, conflicts, wars etc. are the outcomes of the lack of human values like culture, civilization, morality, honesty, etc. He feels that positive dialogues, communication among individuals, social groups and nations will be the solution to crisis, conflicts and wars. Accordingly, he makes his philosopher character, Dr. Bellows to establish 'Entrenationo School' to have communication related to respect the human values among the individuals, social groups and nations. He believes that some kind of good will come which will be helpful to bring change in the present distorted situation.

Finally, to conclude, the researcher deeply realized the significance of the Human values like humanism. In the changing scenarios of social, cultural, economic, and political. The humanism is necessary and it plays significant role in human life in particular. So, this research paper is an attempt to study and analysis the significance of humanism in Graham Greene's *The Confidential Agent*. In this way, the researcher has specifically concentrated on issues like Humanism.

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