E. Scott. Fitzgerald is famous for his depictions of jazz Age. He lived a glamorous life of parties and money-spending. It is the pursuit of material wealth that corrupts man. Through his novel he puts across the idea that the American dream has been corrupted by the desire for materialism. The American dream has increasingly focused on material items as an indication of attaining success. The hot and mad pursuit of the materialistic goals, the prevailing obsession with amassing wealth through fair means or foul, seems to have engulfed the ideal America.

The American society was enjoying hither-to-unknown levels of prosperity during the 1920s. The economic state of America in 1920s brought about a change in the lifestyle of the Americans. The American society turned from a production-oriented to a consumer-oriented society. In The Great Gatsby, Fitzgerald demonstrates that how a dream can change a life of man whose main focus is on acquiring wealth, power and expensive things. In the words of Stephen Matterson, “The Great Gatsby is about the closing of American society, and about 20th century developments which contradict and destroy the old American dream”.

Through their characters Fitzgerald brings to fore the inner conflict which results in their excessive lust for money.

In the novel, Nick Carraway, is shown to belong to a well-to-do family. He comes to New York with a view to increase material wealth but he has an unstable lust for money. He rents a house next to Gatsby’s grand residence that has all the ostentations, who holds lavish parties. Nick meets to Jordan Baker, an attractive young golfer, with whom he begins a romantic relationship. Jordan Baker’s plans are also depressingly impacted by the immoral qualities of wealth.

We get a number of hints from the novel that how Gatsby got the fabulous wealth. For the sake of this wealth he is lowered himself to an abject position of having been a bootlegger, owner of drugs and even a murderer and yet he has no friend. The kind of society in which he lives is draws its rapidness for life in earning fabulous wealth. Nick realizes that Gatsby is involved in many secret business dealings and his aim is to achieve material wealth but he is good at heart. Nick now also learns that Gatsby is in love with Daisy and she is Nick’s cousin. But Daisy who’s intimacy with Gatsby does not end up in marriage because at that time Gatsby had a very little money and she married to Tom Buchanan. Tom won her over not with the depth and intensity of the passion of love but with a string of pearls. Tom and Daisy’s marriage is a proof of the end of the American dream. Gatsby’s weak judgment is in not realizing that Daisy represents both the passion of love and ostentation symbolizing the Jazz Age. The Jazz Age gets reflected in the parties that capture the mood of self-confidence and gaudiness but it remains an undeniable fact that deep down in this mood lie boredom, fear and unavoidable crack-up. The action of the novel takes place in some important and lavish parties given by the different characters in the novel. The novel explores the American dream as it exists at a time in which a spiritual part of it has been wiped out and the material part has become the only means recognized as a way to achieve it.

The Great Gatsby reflects the mood of glamour and wild ecstasy of the times of the 1920s in the American society up to a level which apparently, will never be realized again. The hot pursuit of materialistic goals the prevailing obsession with amassing wealth through fair means or foul seems to have engulfed the ideal America. The American society was enjoying hither-to-unknown levels of prosperity during the 1920s. The economic state of America in 1920s brought about a change in the lifestyle of the Americans. The American society turned from a production-oriented to a consumer-oriented society. In The Great Gatsby, Fitzgerald demonstrates that how a dream can change a life of man whose main focus is on acquiring wealth, power and expensive things. In the words of Stephen Matterson, “The Great Gatsby is about the closing of American society, and about 20th century developments which contradict and destroy the old American dream”.

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The Great Gatsby is a kind of novel which brings into focus the image of American dream and materialism. Fitzgerald’s novel is a misrepresentation of the traditional American dream as a result of the East. “The lure of the East represents a profound displacement of the American dream, a turning back upon itself of the historic pilgrimage towards the frontier which had, in fact, created and sustained that dream” 3. His novel may appear to be just a superficial novel about the jazz and parties, which he experienced in the early twentieth century. The Great Gatsby shows the corrupt and disillusioning effects that materialism can have on members of American society. All the characters in the novel are one way or another, are trying to achieve a status of happiness in their lives following their own understanding of the dream and they have lost in touch with morality. They are suffering from the misery and waste created by their passion for material wealth. The Jazz Age is a description of American dream which included having an excess of money and material possessions, such as an expensive car and an extravagant house,
with no regard for how the wealth is obtained. Fitzgerald thus exposes the hollowness of the American rich who failed to illuminate their minds through their riches and who could not acquire a certain taste for living. They only tried to establish their superiority through violence, hypocrisy and snobbery. He thoroughly records the influence of materialism and American dream on human psyche, for he himself has been a victim of money and material.

REFERENCE