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## HUMAN'S STRIVE TO COMBAT EVIL, READING *DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE* REPRESENTING A CRUSADE AGAINST SCIENCE

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### Abstract:

The paper entitled “Human's strive to combat evil, reading *Dr. Jekyll* and *Mr. Hyde* representing a crusade against Science” analyses the story of *Dr. Jekyll*, first appeared as a novel by R.L. Stevenson and the Victor Fleming's film of the same title. *Dr. Jekyll* and *Mr. Hyde* is a novel and film of horror focusing on events resulting from scientific experimentation. The novel contains elements of science fiction, a literary genre focusing on a fictional story of how scientific experiments, discoveries, and technologies affect human beings for better or worse.

### KEYWORDS:

Science, soul, scientific experiments, good and evil, thirst for knowledge and critical enquiry.

### INTRODUCTION

Science baffled the Western man living in the Dark Ages. It tickled the minds that wandered in the wilderness inquiring the phenomenon in the 'forbidden area'. The Western World chained for long by the dictates of the world of religion woke up with a confused mind when the first rays of science crossed the threshold. It was like as Matthew Arnold sung,

... on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Science ignited the dark realms of Faith that was misrepresented. While on one side the battle between the theocrats and scientists continues, on the other side a complete acceptance of science takes place. Then the question arises whether man taken afar from religious conviction will abscond from his moral obligation and surrender to evil, Satan. Eventually many literary works and films depict the fear of man falling prey to evil.

This is what history says. In the Eastern world scientific thought was part of life or rather path of life. Prof. R.V.G. Menon says in his book, *History and Philosophy of Life* that scientific inquiry started in India in time immemorial; maharishis were the scientists of the times who contributed much to the fields of astrology, mathematics, atomic theory, medicine etc. There were no persecutions in the name of science. But in Europe in 14<sup>th</sup> century when someone said earth is round, it revolves around the sun, it was blasphemy and he was persecuted. Church was the centre of life. The dictates of church were ultimate. But

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the spirit of scientific inquiry, discovery, invention and quest to unravel the mysterious and unknown took man forward. Observation and experimentation were chief gear of modern man. To quote Tennyson the Renaissance man holds high spirits as he sings,

How dull it is to pause, to make an end,  
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!  
As tho' to breathe were life! Life piled on life  
Were all too little, and of one to me  
Little remains: but every hour is saved  
From that eternal silence, something more,  
A bringer of new things; and vile it were  
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,  
And this gray spirit yearning in desire  
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,  
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought. (22-32)

With all vigour and zest man continued his journey into the uncharted regions of life. But this does not leave man bereft of fear of its other side. This zeitgeist was well represented by literature since the Victorian era to the present.

*Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is a Victorian novel and 20th century film of horror focusing on events resulting from scientific experimentation. The novel contains elements of science fiction, a literary genre focusing on a fictional story of how scientific experiments, discoveries, and technologies affect human beings for better or worse. R.L. Stevenson wrote the novel in 1886 and in 1931 it was made into a film by Rouben Mamoulian. Victor Fleming filmed it again in 1941. It is the story of a gentleman Dr. Jekyll who is well known for his good nature and virtue. Dr. Jekyll accomplishes his religious obligation and so believes in good and evil. The science in him kindled his human thought to look out for both in him as one, good, is obvious and the other, vice, hidden. This was a call for living life by the dictates of one's instincts. It could be regarded as one of the highlights of modern period as reflected in the writings of poets like Ted Hughes. The idea of guided by one's instincts started during the Victorian period itself. The Victorian zest was to "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield." (Ulysses 70). In *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, a young Victorian goes in search of knowledge; presenting the dialectical relationship between religion and science.

Dr. Henry Jekyll is a widely respected, successful, and a scholarly scientist. He believes that there is always a dominant presence of the other in an individual. He feels that everyone is just living a duplicate life while suppressing the other self. He is only excessively aware of the duplicity of the life that he leads, and of the evil that resides within him. Dr. Jekyll covertly gives utterance to the evil in his soul by various unspeakable acts, but is afraid of doing so openly because of the fear of social criticism. This shows the importance of religion and ethical values in a society that serve as a wall that prevents man from doing vice. Religion in its spiritual sense gives solace to mind. In the course of his experiments in his laboratory, he succeeds in producing a concoction that enables him to free this evil in him from the control of his good self, thus giving rise to Edward Hyde. Edward Hyde is pure evil and amoral. Not only is his psyche different from Dr. Jekyll but also his body which is ugly and monstrous. Thus, Dr. Jekyll thinks that he has liberated both selves in a single being. So that none of them can be hindered by the whims of the other. In fact it was only a metamorphosis of Dr. Jekyll into Mr. Hyde. Both of them cannot be present at a time. Only when Dr. Jekyll drinks the concoction that he himself transforms into the ugly looking villainous Mr. Hyde. Dr. Jekyll thought he separated the other self in him after drinking the portion which is the outcome of his scientific research and discovery.

Mr. Hyde when appears out from the lab to society evokes fear and repulsion among the people who happen to see him. Dr. Jekyll is found supportive and all time justifying the offensive deeds of Mr. Hyde to his friends. Because only Jekyll knows that Mr. Hyde is his own hidden self; hidden to the society and visible for him, as it is his own Id. He presents Mr. Hyde as his friend and declares him as successor to his wealth. But his friends, who love him, ask him to give up his friendship with this Edward Hyde. They thought Mr. Hyde is a vicious man. Edward Hyde gradually becomes more powerful than Jekyll his 'good' counterpart and ultimately leads Dr. Jekyll to his doom.

Religion basically, Semitic, prescribes a well ordered life; with utmost worship and service to God which in turn is service to humanity and the universe. It defines everything in terms of binaries such as good-evil, heaven-hell, reward-punishment etc. In the words of Albert Einstein,

The desire for guidance, love, and support prompts men to form the social or moral conception of God. This is the God of Providence, who protects, disposes, rewards, and punishes; the God who, according to the limits of the believer's outlook, loves and cherishes the life of the tribe or of the human race, or even or

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life itself; the comforter in sorrow and unsatisfied longing; he who preserves the souls of the dead. This is the social or moral conception of God. (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/aor/einstein/einisci.html> 5pm 29/01/14)

And the modern man's thirst for knowledge took him far even beyond the invisible world of which religion speaks. Dr. Jekyll was a gentle man. He was loved and respected for his virtues and prudence. But as at once he brought the Mr. Hyde in him out, the dominance of vicious Hyde gradually conquered the virtue in him. He drinks the portion that he prepared at his lab for the first time and felt happy at the metamorphosis. Eventually, found Mr. Hyde grew violent and deadly that he killed Sir Danvers Carew out in the street. It is Mr. Utterson who finds out the truth, untying the knot between Dr. Henry Jekyll and Mr. Hyde; as he finds the letter written by Jekyll before his death. The letter explains how Jekyll, in his endeavor to separate his good side from his darker impulses, discovered a way to transform himself gradually into a deformed monster free of conscience—Mr. Hyde.

He put the glass to his lips, and drank at one gulp. A cry followed; he reeled, staggered, clutched at the table and held on, staring with infected eyes, gasping with open mouth; and as I looked, there came, I thought, a change - he seemed to swell - his face became suddenly black, and the features seemed to melt and alter - and the next moment I had sprung to my feet and leaped back against the wall, my arm raised to shield me from that prodigy, my mind submerged in terror. (Stevenson 41)

Faith teaches man to listen to one's conscience which is divine. Eventually, he was turning into Hyde involuntarily in his sleep, even without taking the concoction. Though, Jekyll determines to stop becoming Hyde, he loses control over it. He became more helpless and trapped as the transformations increased in frequency and required even larger doses of potion in order to reverse themselves. He lost his ability to make the portion. The creative mind was captured slowly by evil and undone. Stevenson creates in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, two coexistent and eternally opposed components that make up a normal individual. Here, good and evil are not related but are two independent entities; individuals even, different in mental and physical attributes and constantly at war with each other.

Evil now does not require the existence of good to justify itself but it exists simply as itself, depicted as being the more powerful, the more enjoyable of the two, and in the end ultimately it is the one that leads to Dr. Jekyll's downfall and death. This is because Dr. Jekyll in the last phases of his lucidity recognizes the danger that Mr. Hyde poses to society and altruistically decides to do away with himself. (Shubh M. Singh and Subho Chakrabarti)

Victor Fleming's film of the same time is a faithful rendition of the novel. The basic drive of the novel and the film is the dialectics of science and religion in human life. In the film Dr. Jekyll, enacted by Spencer Tracy, is a handsome, wealthy, scholarly gentleman who is devoted to his profession. He conducts experiments to find a cure for madness. Madness, he thinks could be cured if the evil spirit in him, the other, could be separated. This is illustrated in the film in the opening scene. During the mass in a church one man suddenly becomes violent and starts shouting. He is taken away and his distressed wife follows him. She says that he becomes very frequently insane. Dr. Jekyll talks to the doctor who treats him about his findings. He says that it is the evil in him that makes him mad. So if that evil part in him is separated, he will remain sane all the time. He suggests "dividing the soul in two". But the other doctor refuses and it was refused by others as well.

The film version is slightly different as there is Ivy Pearson, his fiancée. He kills Ivy Pearson and Sir Charles, Dr. Jekyll's fiancée's father. This sequence in the film intensifies the horror element. Hyde is enacted by Spencer Tracy as more horrible and awful. He kills more people and so the police chase him at his home. When the police find him, the guilty Hyde starts to transform to Hyde. At the end of the film, Dr. Jekyll's best friend Dr. Lanyon shoots and kills Mr. Hyde, causing Jekyll to die as well. Poole, Dr. Jekyll's butler says a prayer for his late master. It is otherwise a prayer for humanity. The film version is a typical horror Hollywood block buster which magnified the importance of human relations, values and sustenance of peaceful life on earth. The spectacle of the film along with Spencer Tracy's performance is awesome. It also throws light on the English society of the Victorian period. It talks about the concept of good and evil that exists in all of us. At another level, it is a critique on the hypocrisy and double standards of the society. It can be seen as a remarkable study into human psychology.

*Dr. Jekyll and Hyde* as a science fiction truly pays justice to the term science in an era where science was a new born. It speaks about science and the challenges that the men had to face in the beginnings. After Renaissance, man went in to the unknown zones of knowledge with a critical perspective. In search of knowledge for humanity at large. It was preparing the ground for the age of Enlightenment. The death of Dr. Jekyll, crying, "I am Dr. Jekyll. I did not do anything" (Victor Fleming) could be regarded an instance for the persecution of the men of science in those days-the penalty that they had to pay. At the same time it is a check upon the miss use of science that leads to destruction. Dr. Jekyll in his search for cure for madness which he calls the evil in man, which could be separated, reaches the extent of violence. At the same time it

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also reflects the fear of man over the threats of scientific advancements. This aspect is very well reflected in the story of Frankenstein. In *Dr. Jekyll and Hyde* horror is instilled not with any monster or vampire but with the basic anxiety of human about his own deeds. It does not speak about life after death. It is rather tale of human life that falls between goodness and evil.

The story of *Dr. Jekyll and Hyde* is a conflict within the individual self and the larger self, the society. BBC annotates the story as a reading of the society.

*The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* considers the notion that humanity possesses an innate capacity both for good and evil, but that only by suppressing this dark side can we make pretence at civilised respectability. The two doors to Dr Jekyll's house represent his split character. The covert, concealed entrance used by Hyde is a marked contrast to the public door used by the respected doctor. The concept that morality is merely a public facade is played to extremes. Hyde is a monster, small and quickly able to conceal himself, as his name suggests. The violence and ugliness characterised by Hyde represent the dark underbelly of society. (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00mr8yj/profiles/robert-louis-stevenson>)

It is a struggle between science and religion. Religion asks man to wage a holy war against evil. It teaches that man is both angelic and devilish. Each human being is a mixture of good and evil. Unless a person suppresses his evil side, he runs the risk that the latter will dominate his good side and eventually bring him to ruin. Science has moral boundaries too. Jekyll crosses them when he experiments on a mentally sound and physically healthy human being, himself, without regard for the dangers he could pose to himself and others. As there was a dilemma in the Victorian age when Darwin spoke of the evolution of life, even today man is anxious of the next evolution; which is evident in the Hollywood films that narrate the story of newer species. For instance, terminators, machine ghosts, zombies etc. represent man's newer fears. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is a moral fable as Rick Woland says. The misuse of scientific advancement has been disastrous and so it is. Science is for the good of man and its exploitation is monstrous. It turns even the angelic into a devil. However, Jekyll and Hyde is as an allegorical portrayal of the goodness and evil that resides in equal measure within the soul of a man. On another level, it forestalled Freudian psychoanalysis which began with the publication of Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* in 1901. James Topham, in his review of the novel entitled "The Mysterious Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde' Review" views the novel for Freudian analysis. He says, under the constraints of a rigid but confused society, Jekyll learns to give into his inner desires (the instinctive forces Freud termed the Id) when he is transformed into Hyde. The rational, controlled, civilized part of Jekyll attempts to (like Freud's super-ego) repress the Id, and make Hyde controllable. Finally the book has served both as influence of science on man and man to science. It served as a basis of scientific analysis of human character too.

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