

Tribhuvan University

**Moral Decadence and the Undermining of Human Values in Dashiell Hammett's  
*The Maltese Falcon***

A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Degree of  
Master of Arts in English

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March 2011

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## **Acknowledgement**

I am very grateful to Mr. Mahesh Paudyal, lecturer at the Central Department of English, T.U. for his guideline and encouragement during this research work. His wide knowledge and study have led to many improvements in my work which helped me to give final shape to this thesis and have provided me knowledge.

I would like to extend my gratitude to Dr. Amma Raj Joshi, Head of the Central Department of English for granting me an opportunity to carry out this research. I am also thankful to Dr. Beerendra Pandey, Mr. Saroj Sharma Ghimire and all other lecturers of The Central Department of English for their valuable suggestions. I would like to thank those who supported and encouraged me directly or indirectly in this course, and finally I want to thank to Mr. Suresh Pradhan who imparted me technical help to bring this work in its present forms.

Mahasher Rai

April, 2011

## Abstract

Dashiell Hammett's novel *The Maltese Falcon* (1930) portrays a detective Sam Spade whose mission is to discover an invaluable "falcon". The quest is not however that easy, and the character has to struggle with many hurdles and difficulties. Yet, he does not find out the falcon. This bears metaphorical and allegorical meaning. Other characters are pulled in to assist in the quest, and when ordinary searches betray, characters go for immoral and ethically decadent ways. This decadence and moral denigration on the part of the characters is fostered by the time of depression and confusion that effects the world after the World War I. The search of the falcon and the characters' resorting to immoral ways allegorize the will of human beings that drives them toward the path of immorality if the coveted wealth is not easily at their disposal. On such occasions, characters fall in immoral affairs, defiling human values, justice, rule of law, code of conduct and human norms and values, corrupting them with will power and selfishness that become an obligation to the characters to do sinful work and crime. Unlike the classical assumption that one plays the role of a hero or a heroine on the basis of traditional heroic values is badly tampered with in this novel. There emerges a confusion, ambiguity, uncertainty and falsity in the role of characters of this novel and the real facts prove and verify the world of depression, ambiguity ,uncertainty and confusion.

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## I. Introduction

Dashiell Hammett is a well-known American novelist. He was born in 1894 in Saint Mary's country, Maryland. Hammett grew up in Philadelphia and later on in Baltimore. He attended the Baltimore Polytechnic Institute. Hammett dropped his education at the age of fourteen to help his family financially because his mother was seriously sick of Tuberculosis and his brother and sister were too young to shoulder the family affairs. The family was not able to maintain its financial needs. These predicaments led Hammett to hold a series of positions including store clerk, news boy, machine operator and stevedore.

Dashiell Hammett dropped his high school after one semester, and when he was twenty one, joined the Pinkerton's National Detective Service, one of the most professional detective bureaus in the world. He joined the army in 1918. During the World War I he contracted Spanish influenza. That year, he was serving as an ambulance clerk. Soon after, he became a tubercular himself and this affected his health. He required hospitalization. Then Hammett was more or less disabled for the next seven years.

A few years later, he fell in love with nurse at a US public health service hospital in Tacoma, Washington and after she became pregnant, they married in July 1921. Their daughter Mary was born in October. He required more money to maintain/ fulfill his financial needs. Then his income was only his disability payment which made him turn to writing short stories for earning money. He managed some of his time for the detective agency as a part-time employee.

All these circumstances seem to have inspired Hammett to go for fictions that treat life as troublesome experience. His characters, as this research shall show **later**, as an example case in *The Maltese Falcon* (1990), are dangling between difficult circumstances not able to

carve for themselves a safe-landing in life. They stand face to face with the decadent time that foists hardship after hardship upon their already battered life.

The novel *The Maltese Falcon* is influenced by real-life experiences of the author to a great extent. It was adapted in 1941 into an Oscar nominated film starring Humphrey Bogart. It is a novel about a group of crooks in search of a sixteenth century falcon. The novel begins when a beautiful woman named Miss Wonderly comes across Samuel Spade and Miles Archer, two detectives. She wants to have her younger sister Rhea Gutman married to Floyd Thursby. She asks for help with Sam Spade and Miles Archer. At this affair, interest and objective of Miss Wonderly is to grab the jeweled falcon from Floyd Thursby whom, Miss Wonderly had seen in Hong Kong. He had taken that falcon from here. Therefore, she tries to grab it and she makes Sam Spade and Miles Archer follow Floyd Thursby for this coveted falcon.

When the intriguing Miss Wonderly appears in his office and asks him to tell a fellow named Floyd Thursby, Spade puts his partner, Miles Archer, on the case. In short order, Thursby and Archer turn up dead, and the beautiful woman is back in his office, this time telling him her real name, Brigid O'Shaughnessy, and imploring him, in a dramatic plea, to help her. Spade replies, "You won't need much of anybody's help. You're good. You're very good. It's chiefly your eyes, I think, and that throb you get into your voice when you say things like 'Be generous, Mr. Spade'" [p. 35]. Spade relents, though not before extracting a hefty retainer--almost all her money. Then a "small-boned man" named Joel Cairo calls on Spade. He has his own special interest in Thursby, and to Thursby's relationship to a missing statuette of a black bird. Cairo makes the mistake of pulling a gun on Spade, who easily knocks him out. The encounter leads the detective, all the while clumsily trailed by the young gungel Wilmer, to the third main character, Casper Gutman. The fat man reveals the value of the Maltese falcon, and the treasure hunt is on.

This greedy and ruthless trio of characters bent on finding the statuette meet their match in Sam Spade. The plot, characters, and dialogue in *The Maltese Falcon* are perfectly controlled by Hammett, incorporating a vigor and style that became the paradigm for hard-boiled crime fiction.

At one time, Mile Archer is shot and killed at dark Alley. At the time of Archer's death, Thursby too is killed by shot from Wilmer Cook, who is the secretary of Casper Gutman. After killing Thursby she becomes successful in grabbing the valuable falcon. Sam Spade is investigated by police about the death of Archer but he does not want to tell the truth. Knowing that Brigid has shot Miles Archer, he betrays Iva Archer, the wife of Mile Archer, before killing the husband. He loves Iva Archer. After her husband's death he does not want to keep in touch with her and wants to be away with her. Such role of Spade in the novel hints on his morally insipid and decadent character.

This dissertation takes up the question of Sam Spade's morality. He physically looks like a blond Satan. He occupies a central position in the novel as many of the incidents that make up the plot of the narrative revolve around him, particularly on the type of relations he keeps with other characters, and the type of behavior and demeanor he professes with them. His actions are at times so intricately deceptive that it becomes difficult to judge them as good or bad. He has logical justification for most of them, and hence they do not appear vile on a superficial examination. But the harm they bring to other characters in the story qualifies his actions to the rank of crime. This dissertation therefore seeks to make an objective judgment of his character on moral ground, testing if he is worthy to be called a hero, or a villain, relying on the conventional idea that a hero goes with good deeds, and a villain with bad.

The answer of the question whether Sam Spade is as hero or a villain draws on moral considerations. It entails moral issues, and proportionally evaluates his character against what

is normally taken as decadence. The traditional heroic values too will be drawn upon. The theoretical modality to move ahead with this dissertation will be dealt in, a little change.

Human values, when considered in relation with this novel, seem to have been at state, mainly due to selfishness, intrigue, and disobedient of law. There are ample cases within the novel to argue that those laws are in crisis, and are followed only for formality by. Corrupt characters like Sam Spade and Miss Wonderly have been wholly corrupted by selfishness and greed. The much sought of 'falcon' is a metaphor or a rare ambition, for which, man gets ready to fall even to the nadir of moral corruption, that may even be at the cost of many innocent people's life. The novel amply addresses dissectors and corrupts. The paradox, however is that, these morally insipid characters are successful in their missions. They are not punished by law being though they are criminals and the detective agencies and guardians of peace have enough information and evidences about their moral corruption. They commit crimes but do not admit and there is no proof. Truth and evidences are so smartly hidden or destroyed that they always appear innocent in the eyes of the law. This in a way is an obligation on their part, for no criminal likes to be nabbed and every breaker of the law tries to evade legal trial by eliminating all possible evidences of his or her crime.

In the case of Sam Spade, his criminal advances appear to have been supported by the chaotic time that followed the World War I, and was undergoing the great depression of the twenties.

The major claim of this dissertation therefore is that Sam Spade's criminality is inspired by the chaotic time around him, marked by the devastation brought by the World War, and a state of global confusion and dilemma created by the great depression. This dissertation also alternatively claims that Sam Spade's success in his criminal designs are less because of his skills, and more because of the gradual decline of human values and ethics in the post-war period.

When *The Maltese Falcon* was first published, Dashiell Hammett was little known outside of the small, specific world of the crime fiction. This is the book that changed and brought his name to the attention of reviewers of literary works. This novel *The Maltese Falcon* has received wide range of appreciation and criticism ever since it was published in 1930. Its quick adaptable into a film was another reason why it was quite popular. Many critics have analyzed the novel from different perspectives. But, one thing common to most of the review is that they center on Sam Spade and try to relate his behavior with the contemporary milieu and time, in the light of the World War I, and the great depression. Robert Edenbaum looks upon Sam Spade as "simply one of Hammett's daemonic though guys, as moral and immoral as his antagonist" (81). William Marling sees Sam Spade as an elusive and indefinable character: "[O]ne who shares the archetypal qualities of such mythical heroes as Odysseus, Samuel and Jesus who yet seems to lack discernable motive for his action" (74).

**Walter Blair** however, offers a reading divergent from these two views. He argues that honor to Sam Spade was "conformity to a code of roles which he himself invented, a means of demonstrating his own worth against the world" (236).

Where Walter Blair sees Sam Spade as a moral figure of courage, Robert Edenbaum sees him as cruel and immortal. William Kenney's statement on the novel may suggest some reason for such variance of critical estimates. In saying that *The Maltese Falcon* is one of major works in the history and development of the modern detective novel, Kenney says:

Like Dorothy says in her late novel and Anthony Berkeley in the novel signed Francis Iles, in '*The Maltese Falcon* reduces the deuterium element to so minor a role that one hesitates to speak of it as a detective novel at all. It seems rather a novel about a detective, quite another thing. (11)

Kenney's point is well taken, even though he believes his perception to be an evidence of a weakness in the novel. What it more probably indicates, however, is that Hammett may be doing something other than trying to write a traditional detective study.

Hammett's novel is full of lies, fake stories and fake identities. **Carl D. Malmgren** comments on the feature of Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* in his "The Crime of the Sign: Dashiell Hammett's detective fiction". Malmgren calls the lying 'role-playing' or 'metamorphosis' and he speaks about 'ontological confusion.'

Most of the reviews discussed above have concentrated their focus the immoral part of Sam Spade and Miss Wonderly, dwelling basically on how the source of their moral corruption is within them and their motives. But in reality, the world outside their personalities is as much as guilty as they are in shaping their behavior that way. Indeed, they take advantage of the weakening moral standards. This dissertation, therefore seeks to supplement the aforesaid reviews by relocating the discussion in the cases outside the characters, and by linking how those factors have inspired the characters to take immortal courses of action.

Parameters to judge the conduct of the characters on moral grounds have been drawn from various polemics and theoretical projections on moral theories. Although moral theory is not an academically stable field of epistemology, it has been in vogue ever since Greek Philosophers started concentrating on good and bad conduct of human beings. Of late, revival of moral theories appears more imminent than ever, at a time when human values are at stake at almost every place.

The term "morality" can be used either descriptively to refer to a code of conduct put forward by a society or, some other group, such as a religion, or accepted by an individual for her own behavior or normatively to refer to a code of conduct that, given specified conditions, would be put forward by all rational persons.

Morality formulates ethical theories. In fact, the normative understand of the word morality presupposes that the different specifications of the conditions under which all rational people would project a code of conduct gives rise to moral theories.

Closely moving with morality is etiquette. It is narrower than morality and applies synonymously with good manner. Hobbes expresses the standard view when he discusses manners:

By manners I mean not here decency of behavior, as how one man should salute another, or how a man should wash his mouth or pick his teeth before company, and such other points of small morals, but those qualities of mankind that concern their living together in peace and unity. (*Leviathan*, Chapter XI, par 1)

What closely monitor people's conduct, beside morality and etiquette are law and religion. Law or a legal system is distinguished from morality or a moral system by having explicit written rules, penalties, and officials who interpret the laws and apply the penalties. Although there is often considerable overlap in the conduct governed by morality and that governed by law, laws are often evaluated on moral grounds. Moral criticism is often used to support a change in the law. Some have even maintained that the interpretation of law must make use of morality

Religion differs from morality or a moral system in that it includes stories, usually about supernatural beings, that are used to explain or justify the behavior that it prohibits or requires. There is often a considerable overlap in the conduct prohibited or required by religion and that prohibited or required by morality, but religions always prohibit or require more than is prohibited or required by guides to behavior that are explicitly labeled as moral guides. Sometimes morality is regarded as the code of conduct that is put forward by religion, but even when this is not the case, morality is thought by many to need some religious

justification. However, just as with law, some religious practices and precepts are criticized on moral grounds, e.g., discrimination on the basis of race, gender, or sexual orientation. Morality is only a guide to conduct, whereas religion is always more than this. R.M. Hare, in his earlier books *The Language of Morals*, *Freedom and Reason* regarded moral judgments as those judgments that override all no moral judgments and that the person would universalize. This account of moral judgments naturally leads to a view of morality as being concerned with behavior that a person regards as most important and wants everyone to adopt.

When “morality” is used in this descriptive sense, moralities can differ from each other quite extensively in their content and in the foundation that members of the society claim their morality to have. A society might have a morality that is primarily concerned with practices not related to whether other persons are harmed, but rather with what they regard as necessary for purity or sanctity. They may take as morally most important that certain rituals be performed or that certain sexual practices, e.g., homosexuality, are prohibited.

A society might have a morality that takes accepting the traditions and customs of the society, including accepting authority and emphasizing loyalty to the group, as more important than avoiding and preventing harm. In addition to conflicts concerning homosexuality, this account of morality might not allow any behavior that shows loyalty to the preferred group to count as immoral behavior. This kind of account is what seems to allow some comparative and evolutionary psychologists to regard non-human animals as acting in ways very similar to ways of acting that are regarded as moral.

Although most philosophers do not use “morality” in any of these descriptive senses, some philosophers do. Ethical relativists are interested in these different moralities and claim that they are the only kind of morality. When “morality” refers to the codes of conduct of different societies, the features that are essential, in addition to some element related to

avoiding and preventing harm, are that morality is a code of conduct that is put forward by a society and that members of that society use it as their guide to behavior. In this descriptive sense, “morality” can refer to codes of conduct of different societies with widely differing content, and still be used unambiguously in the same way that “law” is used unambiguously even though different societies have laws with widely differing content. However, there are now other descriptive senses of “morality.” In the sense most closely related to the original descriptive sense, “morality” refers to a guide to behavior put forward by some group other than a society, for example, a religious group. When the guide to conduct put forward by a religious group conflicts with the guide to conduct put forward by a society, it is not clear whether to say that there are conflicting moralities, conflicting elements within morality, or that the code of the religious group conflicts with morality. Members of the society that are also members of a religious group may regard both guides as elements of morality and differ with regard to which of the conflicting elements of the moral guide they regard as most important. There are likely to be significant moral disputes between those who regard different elements as more important.

The original descriptive sense of “morality,” parallel to the descriptive senses of “etiquette” and “law,” had two essential features: that morality is a code of conduct that is put forward by a society and that members of that society accept it as a guide for their behavior. This reveals an ambiguity that was not recognized because of the concentration on small homogeneous societies.

Following Aristotle, “ethics” is sometimes taken as referring to a more general guide to behavior that an individual adopts as his own guide to life, as long as it is a guide that one views as a proper guide for others. When a general guide to behavior that endorses self-interest as primary is put forward for all to follow because acting in one's self interest is taken as fostering the interests of all, then ethical egoism can be taken as a moral theory. There are

some who deviate from this definition and adopt a slightly different view. Sidgwick, for example, in here *Methods of Ethics* regards rational rules of conduct as moral rules that may have been the primary source of the current philosophical practice that includes “ethical egoism” as an ethical theory.

The differences in content among the philosophers who use “morality” to refer to a universal guide that all rational persons would put forward for governing the behavior of all moral agents are less significant than their similarities. For all of these philosophers, such as Kurt Baier, Philippa Foot, and Geoffrey Warnock, morality prohibits actions such as killing, causing pain, deceiving, and breaking promises. For some, morality also requires charitable actions, but it does not require a justification for not being charitable on every possible occasion in the same way that it requires a justification for any act of killing, causing pain, deceiving, and breaking promises. Both Kant and Mill mark this distinction by talking of duties of perfect obligation and duties of imperfect obligation. For others, morality only encourages charitable actions, and no justification is ever needed for not being charitable. Rather, being charitable is encouraged but not required; it is always morally good to be charitable, but it is not immoral not to be charitable. Hobbes, who is in the natural law tradition, accepts all of the standard moral virtues, but complains that “the writers of moral philosophy, though they acknowledge the same virtues and vices, yet not seeing wherein consisted their goodness, nor that they come to be praised as the means of peaceable, sociable, comfortable living, place them in the mediocrity of the passions.” (*Leviathan*, Chapter 15, par 40).

What moral theories fundamentally assume is that man is a rational being and his needs are to be fulfilled in relation with those of the other so that an individual’s conduct doesn’t encroach into the territory of his fellow beings rights and discretions. This requires that everything man does in life should be rationally guided by reason. Whether consciously or

unconsciously, everything man does has a mission that is justified by a rational mind in relation with set standards unanimously accepted by the social and legal codes. This requires a judgment: what is right, and what is wrong. Moral theories try to postulate probable answer to this very question.

'Moral theory' is a loose idea that entrails so many other related theories. Since with communities moral values and ethical codes vary, it is impossible to take into consideration all those volumes of discussions, given the limitation of the scope of this dissertation. This research derives its methodology from five major areas that constitute the overall morality of a human being. These five areas are: Religious Virtue Ethics, Utilitarianism, Relativism, Egoism and Existentialism. The limitation of this dissertation, vis-à-vis these theories might be stated here. We do not consider these theories in their entirety, but take into account only those assumptions that have something to do with moral aspect of human conduct.

Religious value ethics once again poses a question of multiplicity and diverse considerations. For a novel set in the Christian west, this research therefore limits itself to the postulates of Christian Virtue Ethics as judgmental parameters.

Christian Virtue Ethics allude to the Bible, placing God at the centre and His gospel as the channel between the world and the divinity. Paul W. Lewis, an ethics professor at Xian University explains Christian Virtue Ethics in the following way:

A pneumatological approach to virtue ethics finds the origins of the virtues in God. If the virtues are based upon God himself and if we are in relationship with God, then we have access to the virtues. Being a "child of God," permits us to do "child of God" activities and have "child of God" goals. Further, it is the Holy Spirit who leads us into all truth. (John 14:26, 16:13)

The pure moral theory requires the consideration of vices and virtues as the Bible, or any other religious text for that matter underscores. However, in a practical, day-to-day context, moral theory deserves a connection with a utilitarian consideration, thereby making the requirements of the utilitarian moral theory. According to this theory, an individual must consider an option that would provide maximum benefit to the largest number of people. Jeremy Bentham explains:

The principle of utility states that an action is "right if it produces as much or more of an increase in happiness of all affected by it than any alternative action, and wrong if it does not". Its basis is the idea that pleasure and happiness are intrinsically valuable, that pain and suffering are intrinsically disvaluable, and that anything else has value only in its causing happiness or preventing suffering.

To distinguish it from intrinsic value, this latter kind of value is given the name "instrumental" (or, less commonly, "extrinsic") value, and represents value (usefulness) *as means to an end* - that end being intrinsic value. (1)

Utilitarian moral theory that supplements the pure moral theory has its own limitation. It doesn't for example define what the common human good is, and hence definitions are open to be interpreted according to one's advantage. Therefore, relativism has to be taken into consideration for a more wholes some consideration of moral issues.

Relativism is a theory of choices in relation with the society or other individuals. It requires that that the right or moral choice is to choose whatever is acceptable to the individual or to the society in which the individual resides. The following definition from a website on relativism discusses the theory as follows:

[R]elativism is the position that all points of view are equally valid and that all truth is relative to the individual and his or her environment. All ethical, religious, political and aesthetic beliefs are truths that are relative to the cultural identity of the individual. (1)

Relativism too has its own limitations. It doesn't set strict mores to decide what is right or what is wrong. Rightness or wrongness of a conduct is relative, and often fleeting. Therefore, it requires a supplement, and hence, this discussion considers egoism. Egoism, as discussed by [Dr. Alex Mosely](#) is as follows:

Ethical egoism is the theory that the promotion of one's own good is in accordance with morality. In the strong version it is held that it is always moral to promote one's own good and it is never moral not to promote it.(1)

The post-modern theory of existentialism is a further addition to all the theories discussed above. The predominant supposition in existentialism is that there is no spiritual realm. Also, a supposition is that there is no such thing as “right” and “wrong”, and even speaking in those terms is absurd. Here is an excerpt from Sartre’s *Existentialism and Human Emotion*:

The Existentialist conceptions of freedom and value arise from their view of the individual. Since we are all ultimately alone, isolated islands of subjectivity in an objective world, we have absolute freedom over our internal nature, and the source of our value can only be internal. (1)

The development of moral reasoning, therefore, is a collective output of the explanations all these theories put forth. A cumulative of all these theories was developed by the American psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg. He developed a theory that conceptualizes the structures and processes underlying the development of moral reasoning. He assumes that moral development of an individual occurs through a series of cumulative stages that vary in complexity. Kohlberg emphasizes that his assertions apply only to the structures of moral reasoning whereas the specific contents of moral decision-making may vary both from person to person and from culture to culture.

Using all these theories, the behaviors of Sam Spade and Miss Wonderly – two of the major characters of the novel have been analyzed in this dissertation.

## **II. Moral Decadence and Undermining of Human Values in *The Maltese Falcon***

Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* is a detective novel that involves a lot of crime and intrigue, particularly on the two of its main characters: Sam Spade and Miss Wonderly. Both are vicious characters, judged on the basis of moral values and ethics, and are driven by reckless ambitions. This discussion basically focuses on Sam Spade, and draws on Miss Wonderly at times as required.

The story unfolds this way. A lady by the name Miss Wonderly hires private detectives Sam Spade and Miles Archer to follow Floyd Thursby, an Englishman who has allegedly run away with Wonderly's sister. Openly attracted to Wonderly, Archer volunteers to follow Thursby but, during his meeting with Wonderly that night, Archer is shot and killed. Detective Tom Polhaus informs Sam that Archer was killed with an English gun. Later that night, Thursby is shot dead. Detective Dundy suspects Sam of killing Thursby. Sam refuses to tell them Wonderly's name.

The detective Sam Spade and his accomplice Miles Archers, whom Miss Wonderly has assigned the task to find the falcon out, are visited by the woman, and further asked to follow Floyd Thursby, an Englishman, who has allegedly fled away with his sister. Wonderly, who claims her name to be Brigid O'Shaughnessy, feigns to be quite innocent, seemingly uninformed about many of the intriguing realities that compass this falcon episode. Sam and Archer are obliged to accept the assignment, more out of attraction for the lady and for falcon, than out of the sense of professionalism. Spade shows more sympathetic looks towards the lady, and acknowledges she is seemingly in a great distress.

The quick turns of events that follow this assignment and acceptance bring many doubtful questions to the limelight. A detective, by the name Tom Polhaus calls Sam Spade and breaks the news that Archer, his fellow detective, has been killed while still in his mission to track down Thursby, who is allegedly running away with the coveted falcon, and a

girl. Sam is in a terrible situation, but is smart enough to change the tide of incidents to his advantage. He calls his secretary Effie, and breaks certain news about the murder; still maintain the position that he knows nothing. He also asks Effie to watch out for Iva, the wife of Archer Miles. Not long after, Sam is visited in his apartment by two officers, and is questioned on various issues related to the unfortunate crime. Sam feigns innocence, and throws counter-question upon the policemen, asking what point they wanted to make by visiting his home in the middle of the night and troubling his with questions that did not directly concern him. The policemen tell him that the night Archer was killed, Thursby too was murdered and there were doubts that Sam had his hand in the crime. Sam tries to dissuade them by arguing that probably, Archer and Thursby killed one another in a combat about the falcon.

The events that follow unfold other criminal and immoral tendencies. Archer's wife is apparently in love with Sam. When he knows that her husband has been killed and the police are around, he visits Sam and asks about the details, proposing that if the news of the murder of her husband is true, she could marry Sam and they could enjoy together. But Sam dismisses the pleas, and asks her to leave. He entrusts his secretary Effie to remove from their office everything that belonged to Archer so that all evidences of his involvement in the crime might be deleted.

The author, at this moment in the novel, introduces another character Cairo, who offers Sam some five thousand dollars for the falcon that he might have retrieved, or should retrieve. Similar had been the offers Brigid O'Shaughnessy had made to him. This makes Sam suspect that Cairo and Brigid O'Shaughnessy has a relation, and were working together in this mission.

Brigid O'Shaughnessy is quite clever in the sense that she does not forget to offer her sympathies for the death of Archer, a close friend and associate of Sam. She turns to pinhead

of suspicion towards Thursby, who in an encounter could have killed Archer. In the course of their conversation, Sam reveals that he has been contacted by Cairo, and has been offered a lot of money, should he find the falcon. This information comes to the lady as a thunderbolt, and she says that she should immediately meet the man by the name Cairo. During their meeting, they allude to strange and incomprehensible things and Sam cannot understand what much of that talk refers to. The only thing Sam can make out of this conversation is that Cairo is all ready to pay for the falcon.

The conversation between Brigid O'Shaughnessy and Cairo is important, because it reveals many things about their nature. At one point Cairo reveals in the presence of Sam that the lady was using her body to get whatever she wants. This establishes Brigid O'Shaughnessy as a morally corrupted lady, and adulterous.

The police, investigating into the murder case of Archer, once again walk in and allege to Sam that he has most probably murdered Archer because he was in love with the latter's wife. Sam can do nothing but turn the allegation down by naming it absurd. He claims that he had no reason to kill both Archer and Thursby, whatever be the business among them.

As the story progresses Spade is invited to by Cairo to meet at Hotel Belvedere to discuss on a very important affair. Sam goes, and it happens to be one Cairo, and informs to be a man of his boss "G", whom Lady O'Shaughnessy too knows to some extent. Not quite later, Casper Gutman seeks a meeting with Sam and offers a good payment for the black bird, should he find it for him. Spade claims that he has no idea about it, and asks Gutman to explain so that he could help him find the same. Gutman refuses to tell, and Sam, angry with Gutman, pretends to move out of the hotel. As soon as he reaches his office district attorney gives him a call. Sam immediately visits the attorney, where they discuss the murder of Archer. Sam claims that he has some hints and some suspicions, but he needed more time to come up with concrete findings before making blatant guesses. During his conversation with

the attorney, many times, Sam's guilt is plainly revealed, though the attorney does not quite conspicuously notice it.

In Sam's second meeting with Gutman, it is revealed that the falcon was a gift from the Island of Matla to the King of Spain. It was lost a hundred years ago while being shipped to Spain. Gutman further reveals that it is covered with precious jewels, though black enamel has been smeared on its surface to conceal its brilliance. Gutman tells that he had set Cairo, Thursby and Brigid O'Shaughnessy to find out where the falcon is. He suspects that the three have got this, but are reluctant to give it away, as it is highly precious.

In the quickly following dramatic episodes, Sam receives a parcel from a badly injured man Wilmer Cook, who delivers the parcel and dies. Sam finds it to be *the Maltese Falcon*, and to avoid suspicions, sends it to himself in his own official mail address. This way Sam gets hold of the coveted thing.

The story of moral decadence sets at the beginning of the novel. Sam's acceptance of Wonderly's request to run after Thursby is itself guided by unethical motifs. This has two ambitions; both are vicious, judged on the basis of moral parameters. Neither the Christian ethical codes, nor any other religious ethical or moral codes as discussed in chapter I above approve of these actions as legal, nor do any theories like relativism or ethical egoism endorse these. The actions of Sam Spade demand scrutiny from more than one point of view. First, he is doing it in spite of the fact that he is a detective, acting on a hired basis on payment. It is morally low on his part to play foul with the clients on whose service his profession as a detective rests. Like of any detective, it is expected of him that he must side with the law and ethics, and bring the guilty to justice. But he does the opposite. There are many reasons for this. First, he has some partial attraction for Wonderly – partial in the sense that his close friend Miles too is after her attractiveness – and second, he is himself interested in the falcon, and is all set to possess the same, even by bringing harm to lady Wonderly.

A type of irony unfolds at the very beginning of the novel as far as Sam Spade's character is concerned. First, he is after a falcon that doesn't exist. Second, he possesses a counterfeit falcon and sells it. Third he brings harm to the people he is expected to bring justice too. He knows the details and yet, opts to keep silent. He, who is expected to unveil all truths concerning the falcon, chooses to conceal them himself.

Sam Spade's character deserves a deeper attention from the very beginning. He is not like a traditionally acknowledged detective heroes. Normally, a detective sides with the wronged characters that need assistance. A detective is ordinarily a guardian of law and order, and sides with the protagonist, or is himself the protagonist. But here, Sam Spade becomes a villain, though he is expected to assist all, for he is legally authorized to help those in need.

What drives Sam Spade to assume a villainous demeanor deserves an analytical attention here. Spade is driven more by selfishness and obsession with power and wealth, than by the sense of morality and dutifulness. He is a representative, a type, bent on cashing the air of chaos and indecisiveness following the nihilist outcome of the world wars, and the great spell of depression that followed. What this suggests is that people are encouraged to be immoral not by their internal drives alone. They are also impelled to do so by the external factors – by the niches of the milieu and time they live in.

This dissertation primarily centers on Sam Spade's character though there are other characters that vindicate the deterioration of morality. This is because, the motif of all actions in the novel centers on the quest for the lost falcon, and Sam has assumed the primary responsibility to do this. All other characters, therefore revolve around Sam, and are eventually brought to harm because Sam seems nothing save profit on his way.

A look into the falcon as a metaphor of so many things seems to be in order here. As the story progresses, readers are told that a falcon – a metallic bird – has been lost. It is

thought be highly valuable, and would sell in terms of millions. Lady Wonderly reports Sam Spade about the loss, and entrusts him with the responsibility to retrieve the falcon that has been allegedly taken away by her sister, who has run away with an English fiancé.

In reality, the falcon is never retrieved. Sam, by the misuse of his power as a detective, and by killing Archer his friend, gets hold of a counterfeit falcon, and sells it in terms of thousand dollars. This very act of killing a friend for pelf established Sam as a wicked character, morally corrupted and vicious.

A test case for an individual's honesty arrives when he or she is questioned about a fact he or she knows for sure. Sam is questioned by the police in relation with the murder case of Archer. But Sam feigns innocence and claims that he has no information about the murder. This establishes Sam as a villainous character.

An examination of the web or relation Sam has with other character can help us explore his character further. Archer's widow Iva asks Sam if he killed Archer. Sam and Iva have been having an affair, which Sam now regrets. Sam orders his secretary Effie to remove Archer's desk from the office and rename the agency from Spade and Archer to Samuel Spade. There's no time for renovations like right after a funeral! This throws further light on Spade's ambiguous character. His multiple infatuations – with lady Wonderly, with Iva Archer and with the falcon – unfold his ambitiousness, and lay the exposition is that he shall be embarking on immoral ways. This is quite natural, because when multiple ambitions criss-cross an individual and he or she does not want to spare any, some foul play is in the offing for sure.

Wonderly has Sam come to her apartment and confesses that her real name is Brigid O'Shaughnessy and there is no sister that's run away with Thursby. She says she's in trouble and Thursby was supposed to protect her.

This inaugurates a tale of lies. Lady Wonderly needed a fake name to hide her sins. She needed to invent a story about her sister having been eloped way by an Englishmen together with the coveted falcon in a move to achieve the wealth by hook and by cross.

At his newly-renovated office, Sam is visited by flaming homosexual Joel Cairo, who keeps putting his phallic cane in his mouth. Piqued by news reports over a link between Archer's and Thursby's deaths, Cairo offers Sam 5,000 dollars for the falcon.

As Sam goes to visit Brigid, he notices he's being followed but shakes his tail easily. He's attracted to Brigid, and they suck face. But she won't confide in him until she can talk to Cairo. During a meeting with Cairo, Brigid says Thursby hid the falcon but she'll have it in a week. Sam questions Brigid again, but she's coy and flirtatious with him.

These overt sexual behaviours are manifestly occasional, but deeper down they suggest the lecherousness of the characters, and is directed towards some profit motif. Further down the story line, the same man who was tailing Sam earlier follows him to Cairo's hotel but Sam exposes the tail to the hotel detective. At the office, Sam gets a message from Gutman, the tail's boss. Sam tells Gutman he's representing himself, not Brigid or Cairo, and he knows where the falcon is. Sam wants Gutman to tell him what the falcon is. Gutman refuses and Sam fakes a violent outburst. Sam leaves as Cairo is on his way to visit Gutman. Later, Gutman's man Wilmer brings Sam to Gutman. Gutman tells Sam the legend of the falcon. More importantly to Gutman and the viewer, the falcon is made of gold and jewels. Gutman offers Sam 50,000 dollars in exchange for the falcon. Sam passes out after having a drugged drink.

Sam awakens alone in Gutman's apartment and finds a newspaper with an item about a ship arriving in San Francisco from Hong Kong. La Paloma, the ship is torched. As his secretary Effie is patching up Sam in his office, a man staggers in, drops a bundle wrapped in newspaper and dies from his multiple bullet wounds. The man is Captain Jacobi from the La

Paloma. Sam gets an urgent call for help from Brigid but he deposits the bundle in a bus station locker before cabling it to her rescue. There he finds a deserted building.

At home Sam finds Gutman, Cairo, Wilmer and Brigid waiting. Sam wants to trade the falcon for money and a fall guy for the three murders. Gutman says Wilmer killed Thursby to scare Brigid into dealing with them because Thursby was loyal to Brigid. Wilmer torched the La Paloma and shot Jacobi who had been carrying the falcon for Brigid but Jacobi got to Sam before dying. Gutman and company made Brigid fake the call for help to Sam to lure Sam away before Jacobi got to him but were unsuccessful.

Sam has Effie retrieve the falcon and deliver it to his apartment. Gutman discovers that the falcon is fake and sets off with Cairo to Istanbul to try and get the real thing. Sam sends the cops after Wilmer for Thursby's and Jacobi's murders, and Gutman and Cairo for campy acting.

Sam accuses Brigid of killing Archer and trying to play Archer and Thursby against each other, hoping one would kill the other and then get the rap. The plan failed when Thursby refused to kill Archer, so she killed Archer herself. Brigid wanted to scare Thursby out of his share of the profits when they turned the falcon over to Gutman. Brigid says she loves Sam. Sam says he may be in love with her but since she killed his partner, he has no choice. He turns her over to the cops for Archer's murder.

Sam Spade, a detective by profession pretends to join the gangsters but he is not really sure whether he should have turned back to the right side. Finally, he renders the criminal to police but we can follow his doubtful thoughts. Spade's roughness and determination to take the law in his own hands is something that fundamentally makes him vicious. Spade gets into struggle with cops mainly because of his violent temper. When he talks to the District Attorney, he reveals to be too self-confident, and even rude: "My guess might be excellent, or

it might be crummy, but Mrs. Spade didn't raise any children dippy enough to make guesses in front of a district attorney, an assistant district attorney, and a stenographer" (141).

As the story develops, it can be discovered that Spade has a lover, Iva Archer, who is his partner's wife. Moreover, he gets involved with his client, Ms O` Shaughnessy. Actually, they become lovers: "Spade's arms went around her, holding her to him, muscles bulging his blue sleeves, a hand cradling her head, its fingers half lost among red hair, a hand moving groping fingers over her slim back" (86).

The way Sam Spade gets into the falcon story is another indicative of his immoral and decadent undertaking. As the story unfolds, it becomes plain that the falcon in the second half of the novel and, still, the true motivation and story of Spade's client is not revealed. Brigid O` Shaughnessy lies from the beginning to the end of the novel. The falcon reveals to be a counterfeit at the end. Moreover, Spade himself lies to his enemies and pretends to be their friend. The metamorphosis can be followed in the character of Brigid O` Shaughnessy as she is introduced as a client, a young innocent girl, perhaps as a victim:

She was tall and plainly slender, without angularity anywhere. Her body was erected and high-breasted, her legs long, her hands and feet narrow. She wore two shades of blue that had been selected because of her eyes. The hair curling from under her blue hat was darkly red, her full lips more brightly red. White teeth glistened in the crescent her timid smile made. (2)

Finally, Brigid reveals to be a murderer. Hammett uses more than one name for Brigid to distinguish the changes in her character. Therefore the role played by Sam Spade in the novel is ambiguous and contradicts the norms of moral law, and his role makes the readers doubtful of his actual drives. Such dubious role of Spade in the novel raises questions toward the character Sam Spade "who is Sam Spade?" At the end of the novel *Maltese falcon* the readers can find out that he Sam Spade is not the person that he has pretended to be all along.

He proves to be a man driven by a sense of honor. Sam Spade seems to be a complex, interesting man trying to hold onto a simple uninteresting life, even as he stands in the middle of a hurricane of love and intrigue in the novel.

Sam Spade is investigated by police about the death of Mile Archer and Floyd Thursday but in spite of knowing the fact of the event, he does not tell anything. Sam Spade also has an affair with Iva Archer, wife of his friend. An episode of their make-believe love affair is presented herewith:

Iva came quickly to him, raising her sad face for his kiss. Her arms were around him before his held her. When they kissed he made a little movement as it's to release her but she pressed her face to his chest and began sobbing at the desk. (21)

Here morality of Spade has been fallen in crisis which has lost due to fake love and sex.

Mile Archer, s partner of Sapde is shot and Floyd Thursby is also shot dead and killed by shooting secretly. William of Gutman and Mile Archer are killed and shot dead by Brigid O Shaughnessy and Spade, but they try to blame the dead men Mile Archer and Floyd Thursby for their own murder. Their death takes place five minutes sooner and later.

All of the characters of the novel want to grab the statuette of falcon. How much each of the characters craves for the same is perhaps best shown by this sentence from the novel: "Joel Cairo is ready to pay five thousand dollars for the black bird/ falcon" (47). Brigid O Shaughness gives a task to detective Mile Archer and Sam Spade changing her name to Miss Wonderly to follow and find her younger sister Rhea and Floyd Thursby. This event dashes Mile Archer to death. But it was not her objective. Her objective, in fact, was to grab the valuable falcon. She intrigues. Gutsman, father of Miss Wontedly visits many part of the continent all over the world in search of the falcon. This means that interest and will-power of men drive them to the hurdles and difficulties of life.

Sam Spade does not open up any reality and truth toward death of his partner at first due to love affair with Brigid O' Shanaghnessy or Miss Wonderly but in the end of the novel he tells the police about the truth and he says about the falcon and murderer of his partner to the police.

Hello, is Sergeant Polhaus there? Will you call him please? This is Samuel Spade, he stared into space, watching. Hello Tom I have got something for you. Here it is: Thursby and Jacobi were shot by a kid named Wilmer Cook.  
(206)

When the wood bell rings, Spade leaves arm from around Brigid O' Shaughnessy and open the corridor door. Police Lieutenant Dandy, Detective sergeant Tom Palhaus and two other detectives are there.

Spade betrays his lover Miss Wonderly opening secrecy and hidden crime done by her. Spade makes Miss Wonderly take off all her cloths in the bathroom in the name of love. In the bath room Brigid O' Shaughnessy found words. She puts her hand up flat on Spade's chest and her face up close to his and whispers:

I don't think you did, he said, but "I have got to know take your clothes off" "You won't take my word for it?" "No. Take your clothes off."

She came to close to him and put her hands on his chest again. I am not ashamed to be naked before you but cannot you see? .....

He sat on the side of the bath tub watching her and open door. (196)

Such Spade's dealing with Miss Wonderly highlights on his moral decadence. Miss Wonderly changes her name in chapter one Miss Wonderly, in chapter four, Miss. Loblance (28) and other Brigid O' Shaughnessy (29). It shows her guilt and faultiness and she wants to be run away from her sin which she tries to hide changing her name.

Besides engaging itself with this discussion on the morality of this character, this dissertation also seeks to unveil some incidents to show how human values have been undermined. Whatever Sam Spade plays role of villain in the novel but he has a sense of what is right and wrong and regardless of his personal feelings.

Spade tries to hide the fact that he is acting morally preferring to move his business. It is an obligation and duty, refers to professionalism. Sam Spade himself talks about morality and human values with Gutsman that “ten thousand dollars is less price of falcon but actual money is worth more than talk” (174).

In the end spade sends Bridged O Shaughnessy of Jail reporting details of her crimes, which apply loyal and humanity. When a man partners is killed. He is supposed to do something about it so he is doing so with loyalty and human values.

Sam Spade drives his business carefully showing love his secretary a making love with his business partners and client with Briged O Shourghnessy that is humanity.

After dying Mile Archer, Iva Archer the wife of Mile proposes him to marry but he does not want to marry (99) because he must be thought about his partner morally.

Sam Spade is curious to know about the reality from the beginning of the novel to the end. He tries to find out Rhea Gutman (Sister of Miss Wonderly) and he tries to know about murderer of his partner and he wants to know about the matter falcon and other he checks lawyer that they work within law or not. At this context Sam Spade knows about morality and wants to follow morality and humanity. He is curious to know human values.

Samuel Spade plays vital role which features him as a protagonist one. He is a detective by profession. He is having an affairs with his friend Mile Archer’s wife Iva Archer until his friend’s death, who Mile Archer is killed by shooting (8) but who has shut him? Why is shut him? And what is killed him for? At the first stage of the novel, this all remains illusion, confusion, Brigid O Shaughnessy who she gives her introduction changing her name Miss

Wonderly, which is also false and she gives a task to Sam Spade and Mile Archer to find out her young sister who she has run away with a man but it is not in actually her objective, is to have stealing falcon. That falcon was stolen by Floyd Thursby, she turns to Sam Spade for the protection telling him more and more about value of falcon when she sees chance to attain the falcon without his help. But in the end, Spade finds out that Brigid Oshaughnessy killed Mile Archer. Sam Spade has known murderer of Archer and valuable thing about the falcon but he does not give any answer of police's question or asked by police.

Another episode that exposes the nadir of the characters' moral decadence is that Spade and Brigid O Shaughnessy both kill Mile Archer for their selfish design. Moreover, Iva the wife of Mile Archer is herself a fraud and in spite of having her own husband, she is having an affair with Sam Spade, a blonde Satan. This is a concrete example of moral decadence and immoral behavior. There is no feeling of humanity, and human values are corrupted by personal benefits, inhumanity and individual selfishness. There is controversy, confusion, ambiguity and corruption of human values and it never becomes overt as to who is the real murderer of Archer – Spade or Brigid. The controversy that comes up is related more to the exploration of an ambiguity in the text rather than investigation of human values.

Brigid O Shaughnessy gives a test to Sam Spade and Mile Archer to follow her sister Rhae Gutsman who has allegedly run away with Floyd Thursby. The incident is introduced like this:

Spade said Mile Archer: Miss Wonderly's sister ran away from New York with a fellow named Floyd Thursby. They are here. Miss Wonderly has seen Thursby and has a date with him tonight. May be he'll bring sister with him. The chances are he won't. Miss Wonderly wants us to find the sister and

get her away from him and back home. He looked at Miss Wonderly. Right?

“Yes” She said indistinctly. (5)

But getting her sister back was not at all the aim of Wonderly's move. In reality, a character called Rhae Gutsman does not exist. It is nothing but a fanciful invention of her mind in order to grab the precious falcon, which she believes, will bring a change in her fortune. For this she makes this intrigue. Gutsman, the father of Miss Wonderly visits many part of the world particularly Europe in search of the falcon. He gets the falcon at last from the hand of Spade and gives Sam Spade "ten thousand dollars" for the falcon (104). Another character Mr. Joel Cairo wants to pay five thousand dollars for the falcon and says: “I am prepared to pay on behalf of the figures rightful owner the sum of five thousand dollars for its recovery” (40).

In this context all of characters have an only one goal to perceive valuable falcon. This is their will of life, and this indicates unlimited will and high ambition of humankind in the modern age.

Chaos, corruption, greed, depression, loss of human values and decadence in the human morality, confusion, ambiguity, uncertainty and controversy are the result of falling faith in human values, and increasing depression both of economy and of faith in the time following the World Wars. The revelation that moral and religious dictates that rules humanity for long promising to deliver it from all catastrophes and calamities, in fact, failed to save human beings from what can be terms as the deadliest of human-invented calamity during the World Wars. Eventually, rightness or wrongness of a thing and action became a subjective issue, and there no authority remained to judge its truth. Individual decision started making anything moral or immoral, legal or illegal, right or wrong, and as relativist moralist claim, religious morality no longer remained valid as the ultimate parameter to judge human action. Relativism that validates an action as long as it justifies its mission in relation with some

immediately connected people, inspired people to set their own standards for action, and like Sam Spade, took law and conduct into their own hands. This can be seen as a ebb of moral decadence.

Such decadence are most overtly detected when the society, and the world at large is For this at the first stage society becomes seriously infected due to those kind of transitional period and transitional period is period of lack of morality, human values which those should be determined by social system, which that period should not be taken absolute form of social system. In this context, Dashiell Hammett has presented characters like Sam Spade whose characterization or role in the novel is vital and role of other characters of the novel is also enriched this novel as an extraordinary detective novel. According to transitional period of modernism, Sam Spade has played the role of an anti-hero. To be a protagonist one has to responds to every situation by examining what he himself stands to gain from it, without losing the general estimation of the audience or the reader. Sam Spade, unlike a traditional hero as classically understood, is willing to betray his friend and he has an affair with his friend or business partner's wife. He does not work within law but checks in with his lawyer regularly to see how far outside of the law he can operate. He is an untrusting lover because he is accusing his lover Brigid O Shaughnessy of duplicity the moment the falcon is discovered to be fake.

In the last part of the novel, Spade explains to Brigid O Shaughnessy that his seemingly amoral behavior is just a ruse that he uses to draw criminals to him which is good for detective business. He behaves heroically, forsaking the money and the girl who is begging for his support in favor of a higher ideal. Paradoxically however, he himself falls into the trap of selfishness, and ultimately sees the falcon as his own coveted prize, rather than that of Lady Wonderly. It is here where Sam Spade qualifies to the rank of a morally decadent character, driven more by selfishness than by a heroic mission as a detective. He

misuses his legal disposition for his personal benefit, and hence exemplifies corruption; simultaneously enforcing chaos and indecisiveness. The novel successfully mocks traditional heroic values.

Judged against the incidents and episodes discussed above, this research can draw the conclusion that the novel *The Maltese Falcon* is a mysterious novel that dwells on corruption, quackery, lecherousness and in short, moral decadence. It is carefully constructed and deserves more attention. The theme of the novel provides multiple meaning or multi-layer meanings. Due to this ambiguity of presentation and meaning, there is illusion in the role played by the major characters, who in the retrospect are victimized from murdering case or crime. The crime and intrigue they undertake to profess or are subjected, metaphorically exposes the undermining of human values and the tradition of ethics. Justice and morality appear to be at their nadir given that rampant corruption for selfish motifs rules every character, be it major or minor. Abated by the transitional modern period badly battered by the hangover of the World War and the deadly economic depression that swept the whole world, classical standards for faith and ethics have fallen into disuses, much to the advantage of characters like Sam Spade who is not at the least hesitant to profess his criminal activities. Spade, a hero and blond Satan, is bestowed with a detective and heroic task falls into the abyss of corruption himself, and ends up as criminal. His loyalty of his assignments as a detective proves meek, given that the allurements offered by the foul play like murder is far more attractive. Consequently, he responds to his satanic drives than to his humanist qualities. He is apparently dutiful to his duty and his profession, but he also becomes a liar and a betrayer in the end of the novel to his lovers Brigid, Iva Archer and others who become his victims. He knows everything about his partner's death. He is asked questions by police; he is investigated about the death of Archer, but he rejects to reply upon the question of the police and he keeps in touch with Miss Wonderly, showing love

simultaneously to his with his lover Miss Wonderly, and secretary Effie Perine. In this context he has lost morality and he opens secrecy betraying and deceiving his lovers. Such a role of the characters more and more enforce the assertion that the novel *The Maltese Falcon* is more about moral corruption than about thrilling with detective plots.

Normally in the crime fictions, the crime is prime element of detective novel or literature. Crime here destroys justice, humanity, rule of the law and assertion of human values, and the main detective, who is most often the protagonist comes as a guardian of law and order, and aspires to restore peace by finding the criminals out. In *The Maltese Falcon*, however, the murders and murderers largely remain unrevealed, and the detectives, instead of investigating the cases, are themselves pulled into immoral practices.

When crime takes place it is obvious that morality is lost and human values are undermined. The rule of law is mocked at, injustice becomes rampant, and the people suffer. Sam Spade in *The Maltese Falcon* allegorizes frail bases of human morality that can be shaken so easily that its fall into immoral abyss becomes imminent. This fall is inspired by two factors: first, Sam Spade is himself vile from within, and is not faithful to his job, and second the time of transition marked by chaos and confusion everywhere has pushed human values to such a low state that crimes become not only natural, but also quite easy to practice. Attack upon humanity and morality marked by crisis, sin, murder, crime, betrayal, envy, ego, greed, and hate are major tools of the novel *The Maltese Falcon*. Suspicion and doubt come and attack the truth but the truth does not find its way out. Normally, a detective is expected to know, or to find out the realities clouding a particular incident, and to restore normalcy by bringing justice to the victim, and by punishing the guilty. But in this novel, Sam Spade, in spite of knowing the details about the falcon, does not reveal the reality, and tries to cash it in his own personal favour, for which, he does not hesitate to murder the potential threats. He does not talk about his friend Mile Archer; he keeps it secret and opts to

betray his lover too. His wife still living, he makes love with his partner's wife and at last he betrays all.

At this point, the antihero, Spade misses morality and ethics. His role turns to be that of an antihero on the basis of traditional heroic value that has fallen down in the novel. Human values have been deliberately undermined. As a detective fiction, the novel requires that the detective protagonist Sam Spade should stand for morality and ethics, and guardian of peace. Paradoxically, however, he proves to the vilest of all characters. Not only Sam Spade, there is a whole squad of corrupt characters –Miss Wonderly, Joel Cairo, Iva Archer, Gutman, Effie Perine – all dwelling on the world of crime. They are not one another's accomplices as we find in other detective novels. They play down upon one another, betray and kill one another. Their will is selfish and drives them to the hellish world and are obliged to forget the moral values in their lives.

The falcon has mentioned and described in the novel, carries metaphorical and allegorical meaning. It stands for a supposed value, a benefit, an ambition and a wealth, for which, corrupt human mind is ready to fall to any extend of decadence. In fact, the falcon is an non-existence invention, a thing of fancy, but is made so centrally vital for the glory of the characters that they are ready to do anything to achieve the same. They make the falcon a bone of contention – a reason to test their esteem and worth with. Mr. Joel Cairo is ready to pay five thousand dollars for the black figure of bird and he says “I am prepared to pay, on the behalf of the figure's sightful owner, the sum of five thousand dollars for its recovery” (40). Gutsman passed his much of his time visiting many part of the world in search of falcon and at last he buys falcon with Spade in ten thousand dollars. This however, turns out be a counterfeit of the true falcon. Mis Wonderly , the daughter of Gutsman aims to receive falcon and she first reaches at the detective office of Spade and Archer in the beginning of the novel. She give the task of finding it out work to Spade and Archer by following her sister

who has allegedly fled away with Floyd Thursby. Eventually, she kills Archer and Thursby. Spade receives falcon and sells it for ten thousand dollars. This all proves that almost all the characters in the novel are selfish, morally corrupted and vicious, and are ready defile the law by taking it in their own hands, and by undermining human values and ethics to any degree they like.

#### IV: Conclusion

Dashiell Hammett's novel *The Maltese Falcon* is a detective novel where characters are mysterious, and show confusing behavior, mainly because they are driven by motifs of profit and benefit. For this, they are ready to undertake any immoral activity, and take the law into their own hands. They defile morality and ethics, and undermine human values for personal benefit.

Based on traditional human values, the character that plays a detective in a crime and detective novel is expected to be the savior of peace and guardian of justice. He unveils the mysteries surrounding a crime, and brings the stakeholders to justice. This reestablishes human values and moral standards, and enforces the rule of law and justice. But in *The Maltese Falcon*, the opposite is true. Sam Spade, the main detective of the novel is himself drawn into the abyss of intrigue and crime. As a detective his client lady Wonderley assigns him the task of discovering as falcon that his sister has taken away while eloping with the Englishman. Sam Spade, during his operation, retrieves the falcon, but kills the potential proof so that he himself can claim ownership of the falcon.

When morality falls in crisis human values are also corrupted and boundary of human values is broken. This is what this research in the novel establishes.

On the analytical level, the novel *The Maltese Falcon* is a complex and mysterious novel with confusing role of character. The role played by Spade in the novel engenders many questions on his morality. Is he hero or blond Satan? Answer to this question is that he is a villain or antihero from the traditional heroic perspectives. He does not give a thought toward morality and humanity, and what he does for the sake of money and girl undermines all human values and tradition of ethics.

The research establishes that *The Maltese Falcon* is about rampant human ambition that drives men in wrong direction. Spade breaks law; he does not reply questions asked by police

on the death of Mile Archer and Floyd Thursby. He falls in love with Archer's wife, client Miss Wontedly and his secretary Effie Perine but he does not want to marry them. Such characteristics of Spade show how low he has fallen from the plane of morality. Spade make Iva Archer, Miss Wonderly and Wilmer Cook fall ruin in the end opening secrecy about the death of Archer and Floyd Thursby. It is might be good for his detective business and his profession, but he deceives them. Such roles of Spade are gradually perceived one after another, which makes Spade an anti hero/ a nasty villain in the novel. Thought of humanity has been lost. Human values are rejected and neglected in the process of business. Business, driven by sheer profit motifs, makes man blind, cruel, and it has no eye of justice and humanity.

In the light of the judgments made above,*The Maltese Falcon* is a classic as far as the genre of crime detective novel is concerned. It qualifies well to the rank of mystery, for much of the story revolves around the mysterious disappearance of a falcon, and its retrieval. Sam Spade is an unconventional character for a detective, because he is not like the protagonist of a commonplace detective fiction. He embodies more vices than virtues, and is morally so weak that he cannot raise above the plane of selfishness to profess his professional obligations as a detective.

The Private Eye Sam Spade is normally expected to be a quintessential American hero. But he fails to be so, simply because of his strongly selfish motifs, and low moral conducts. Still, as far as the structure of the narrative is concerned, *The Maltese Falcon* is a classic detective film. The way the author characterize Brigid O'Shaughnessy as a woman in distress hiring detective Sam Spade to follow a man named Floyd Thursby – adds critical judgment, more and more nearing the conclusion that crime, intrigue and moral corruption driven by selfish, personal motifs forms the core of the novel's theme. Lady O' Shaughnessy, who is alter discovered to be a character as fraud as Sam himself triggers the conclusion that

pervasive moral decadence, and undermining of all sorts of human values make up the core of *The Maltese Falcon*.

As observed in the analysis earlier, Sam's partner, Miles Archer, is murdered almost immediately as soon as he is introduced, and with him, another character Thursby is killed too for no apparent reason, that can be legally verified. Both the cases of murders come up to Spade to investigate and solve, but during the course of his investigation, his integrity sways away, and the pinhead of suspicion turn towards himself. The fact that Sam himself is suspected in the murder of Archer and Thursby, is supported by the proofs furnished by O'Shaughnessy, leading to the conclusion that like Sam Sapde, O'Shaughnessy is a wicked character, that cannot be relied upon at any cost. Even among close associates, there is no air of trust and belief. Anyone is bent on letting the other down with least of consideration about the harm it might bring, or the question it might raise about one's moral integrity. Crime, betrayal, and intrigue therefore mark every bit of incident that makes up the plot of the novel.

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