

Naturalism in Jack London's "To Build a Fire"

K.Ravi^a, M.Gayathri^b, R.Gowtham^c

^aAsst Professor of English, Annai Fathima College of arts and science.

Thiumangalam, Madurai, India

^b^cI-M.A.,English literature, Annai Fathima College of arts and science.

Thiumangalam, Madurai, India

Corresponding Author: K.Ravi

Abstract

This paper focuses on naturalism, struggling and victimization of man. Jack Griffith London was a novelist, journalist and social activist of America. Jack London's short story "To Build a Fire" describes about the man who is unaware about the nature and he ignore the warning of the old man, he want for a hiking alone in extreme cold along with wolf dog. He caught in the snow and at last he dies and the dog alone went back to the camp where the food and fire available. Nature is most powerful one it has a power of destroy anything. Nature that has a universal law and life granter to the world. In the short story, the underestimate the power of the nature so he find difficult to survive and died.

KEYNOTES: naturalism, struggling, victimization and survive.

Introduction:

Naturalism was started as a movement in America. Naturalism mainly concern about the victimization of an individual and struggle of a man by nature. It mostly relate about the nature of law. Naturalism was started in late nineteen century and its writing mostly covered the environment that determines the character of the human being in the world of nature. Naturalism is considered to be the part of extreme realism. Jack London was a novelist and short story writer in America and he was famous for his works like 'call of the wild' and 'the sea wolf'. This short story has two version one was published in 1902 and another version was in 1908 but the later only gained famous. In Jack London's "To build a fire" a man is a protagonist who suffered due to his brutal fate in the wilderness of nature. In this short story fire take a main place and it's a life giver in the story. "To Build a Fire" describes about naturalism and in which a man wouldn't understand the power of a nature in these deterministic world. In these short story a men along with a dog went for hiking and died in extreme cold in the end. The man who was suffered by the environment domination. Naturalism that shapes the life of the character through nature.

Critical Analysis:

Jack London's "To build a fire" describes about a man and his survive tactics in the extreme cold. This short story is a one of the best example for naturalism. The story begin with a man had returned from the Yukon main trail. That day it was a Gray morning and there was extreme cold. There is no sun in the sky and it was a clear sky. It doesn't affect the man and the disappearance of the sun doesn't made him worried. Even his saliva was frozen before it hit the ground there was that much cold. The

Yukon was situated a mile broad and it was concealed under three feet of ice. The ice was a very thin dark layer of white colour. He planned to arrive ten o'clock to the camp where his other friends are waiting. There is no sun and the snow has fallen on the Yukon area. Fifty degrees below zero that means 80 degrees of frost. He underestimated the nature of a cold and the weakness of the man in general that human beings are not able to survive in extreme cold. A man couldn't know the temperature of cold. The others who came to the camp by came across the mountain of Indian sulphur creek. He planned to travel from the island of Yukon of creek down the river but it is too cold to travel. He thought that he would be arriving at the camp to meet the others at six o'clock at evening. The old timer warned him of the danger of the extreme cold in sulphur creek but he ignored it. He was followed by a wolf-dog. It was a companion of the man and it sensed the danger of the cold and worried about the extreme cold. It has a knowledge about the fire and only fire can save it so it wanted a fire. He continued to travel through the forest for several miles. He was travelling four miles an hour and he believed that the journey quite good when the time was ten o'clock. He again started to travel forward. The dog followed him at his heels, he decided to eat lunch at stream and went to the camp at six o'clock. At the extreme cold also he did not care about the cold and the danger here he did not understand the nature. His cheeks started to frost but he did not take it as serious. He started walking by rubbing his face and nose it was very cold. His face and nose began to numb it was frost. The stream in the creek was covered by a thin sheet of ice. The snow ice in the creek started breaking and his feet were wet it made to only delay him so he built a fire to dry his feet and clothes. It shows that the fire is the life saver. After drying next two hours after he came to meet a several similar danger so he forced the dog to move ahead and make sure that if it is safe. After that he was nervous about the cold. At twelve o'clock there is no sun in the sky. He pleased by his progress. He believed that he could soon go to camp at six o'clock at the dinner but in reality he simply cheered himself that there is nothing to worry. He decided to take some rest and eat lunch. His fingers were numb he could not hold a biscuit. He came to know the situation now and he forgot to build a fire for warmth. He thinks about that old man who had spoken about the danger of the cold and warned him but he laughed at him. He realized now that the saying of the old timer was true. The situation he overcame through in the extreme cold made him to realize the truth. He built a fire carefully and melted the ice in his face. Next he warmed himself and ate his lunch. The dog also comforted itself in the fire. He again begins to walk. The fire here also acts as a life giver. The fire re-imposed his confidence again but the dog wanted to stay with the fire. He started the journey again but soon his face froze. He soothed himself with the false sense that the fire would secure him and he was not aware of his surroundings and hidden water pool under the snow. He remembers about the advice of the old timer but the temperature started to freeze him. His feet were numb and he managed to build a fire again. He felt that even though he met many accidents he saved himself from death by fire. He thought that any man can travel along a path in this extreme cold. He had more confidence and built a fire but it was dry off. As soon as his face and nose started to freeze faster. He built a fire under the pine tree it was covered with a weighted snow on the branches. The snow fell on the fire to dry off. He once again thought about the old timer and realized that if he came with the companion it would be helpful. At first at first he ignored the advice of the old timer but he indulged himself in to the danger and realized the danger of the cold. It is a nature a human being but nature treats everyone equal. He began to build fire again but his fingers did not obey him because his fingers were frostbitten. His fingers were nearly dead could neither touch or hold. He collected the large

branches to make a fire and finishes of the fire. He could not able to pick the matches with his fingers so he used his teeth to rip the match out of the pack and drew it against his leg. He did it twenty times before lightning successfully. As it flamed the smoke get into his nostrils and cause him to cough. He use entire pack if match to light the wood but it burns his flesh. Finally the match fell down in the snow but the tree bark was burning. He treats the flame carefully because it's only a life saver and it's a last chance for him to live. His fingers couldn't obey him so his attempt to keep the fire was failed and each stick smokes for little time and dry off. Now he decide to kill the dog and shelter himself inside the dead body and want to put the finger in to the dog's body to relieve form numbness. The dog sense something strange in the man and danger so its move away. His hands were frozen he could not able to hold the knife and killed the dog so he freed the dog. At first he had hope that he could reach the camp now he lost all his hope. Here he was became the victim to the nature and he has no freewill. He was only under the control of nature. He sense the death and start to run he decide to reach the camp by running due to lack of strength he fall down. The run with him all the time but he crumbles and fall down. The dog curled tail over its feet and set in front of the man. It angered him and he cursed the dog for it warmth. The dog runs more but he couldn't able to run after a few yards. Now his mind went for the thought of the old timer of sulphur creek and murmured that "you were right, old fellow. You were right" the dog stay with him but it sensed the death in the man then it turned and run in to the camp were food and fire available. Thus these paper concludes that nature show everything equal whether the mercy or cruel. The man first doesn't listen the warning and later he underestimate the nature, these all things lead him to die. Nature has the both capacity to save the man and made him to die. At last he was victimized in the hand of the nature and struggled lot and died.

REFERENCE:

Jack London,2009, "To build a fire", published by create space independent publishing platform.

London, Jack.1986, To build a fire, and other stories. Published by Bantam classics.