

CHAPTER THREE

CONCLUSION

We have seen how Jack London was a reformist writer. But we cannot conclude our discussion unless we go a little further.

Jack London was a destitute child. He suffered a stage in childhood - a fatherless child. Jack London felt no child should have this unhappy and miserable childhood that he experienced.

Jack London being a man who invented himself had basic humanistic ideas for the whole humanity. He carved himself a special niche in the annals of American literature. London pulled himself out of poverty and psychic and physical ruin by writing, and by the time of his death in 1916 was the highest paid writer of his time. By his own creation he was a public figure preaching socialism because he thought poor people would benefit only by its initiation.

His reputation as a man and writer eroded after his death. He had to be alive to speak through his words. His image was as mighty as his pen,

if not mightier. Jack always complained that he had little imagination, so that he could take his plots from his own experiences or the newspapers.

The materials out of which Jack constructed his life were rich - if largely tormenting. He was born out of wedlock to Flora Wellman on January 12, 1876. Nine months after Jack's birth she married John London, so that her child could bear his name. Little Jack moved throughout California with the family. The little boy did not have good schooling and did not have even new clothes to wear nor new toys.

But at an early age he helped his family to earn a living. He sold newspapers, ice-cream and what not. He became an oyster pirate at the age of seventeen and left that occupation and several other trades and jobs that he did. He was arrested on a false charge of vagrancy in Pennsylvania's Eric County Penitentiary for one month. In the jail Jack saw the depth of human degradation, a society of degenerates and misfits tyrannized by a few trustees and hallmen. And

he decided to educate himself on his return to his mother's home in Oakland.

So, Jack London began to educate himself. He attended free library at Oakland and virtually poured himself over books. Together with the reading materials and his own experiences he wrote small pieces of literature and sent them to newspapers. They were again rejected. It took quite sometime for Jack London to become a settled author or writer.

But Jack London did not write for pleasure. He wanted to change the society. So he wrote in such a fashion or such a style that would help change the social machinery.

To quote the words of Jack London, "I was born in the working class. Early I discovered enthusiasm, ambition and ideals".

Jack thought it essential to rise to the top-most rung of the social ladder, because then only would the society respect him, respect his ideals and also his ambitions.

Above the towered colossal edifice of

society, and to my mind the only way out was up.
Into ^{this} edifice I early resolved to climb.

Jack London climbed up the tall ladder by becoming a reformist writer. He toiled hard and put all his ideals into his writings. And thus were born his socialistic writings.

Jack London's socialist writings took America by storm. It created furore in the minds of the American public. And people began to think of the conditions of the poor with a pitifilled heart.

Jack London not only wrote about socialism. He also preached it. He lectured all over the place. He toured the whole of the United States of America to preach his gospel of socialism, of equality and of the superiority of the proletariat.

Jack thought that one day the Proletariat or the labour would triumph. And would throw away the capitalist class. It was his idealism. And he lived for it. He saw that democratically the capitalist institutions could not be eliminated.

Because inspite of defeat at the polls the capitalists would use force to prevent the proletariats to gain power. This proved very true because in the 1904 polls the socialists mead a great headway into the American politics. Many of the socialist candidates had won seats in the Senate. Some had won as Mayors of Municipalities. But the capitalist class saw this as a threat to their very existence and rigged the polls. Thus power - political power could not be achieved by the socialists. But they won the human power. They won the hearts and minds of millions of Americans.

During this period there were some 10 million American citizens who faced severe food shortages. And the American government could do nothing to restore the prime necessities to its citizens. There was not only food shortage but there was also scarcity of clothing. There was no proper shelter. And there lived 'white' Americans in squalid filthy shackles called dwellings.

Jack's life and writings were strangely influenced by materialism and also spiritualism. He was a scientific thinker and a firm follower

of the materialist ideology of Marxism or socialism. It was his Marxian ideology which made him to write the Iron Heel, Martin Eden. It was his reformist, as well as spsiritual idealism which made him to write John Barleycorn and The People of the Abyss.

No man can be both at the same time. No one can be a democrat and a socialist at one and the same time. So also no individual could be a Marxian or a Marxist on the one hand and a spiritualist on the other.

The hard core principle of Marxist principle and the simple delicate Gospels of Bible went hand in hand with London. He had also been influenced by Abraham Lincoln. And it was here that we find answer to his belief in spiritualism as well.

Whatever it may be. We have studied the man - Jack London. We have also read his reformist writings - namely, the Iron Heel, The People of the Abyss, John Barleycorn and Martin Eden. They are living monuments of his literary genius that he left behind.

There cannot be any social and political equality anywhere and in any nation, country or whatsoever. There will be always struggles between the haves and the have nots. But man's efforts continue to bring about a working equality among its individuals - an equality based on equal rights and equal duties and equal privileges. It is also against the rule of God to have a hungry and homeless humanity survive under the dark shadow of a cruel and selfish humanity.

Social reformers through the ages have taken great pains to see that all the human beings live in brotherhood and mankind. There have been political, social reformers and also saints and seers.

Jack London meant to reform the society. His idealism was Marxist in outlook but had the tender heart of Jesus Christ. He therefore, did not plunge directly into the revolutionary agitation. On the contrary he penned his idealism and created ideal and revolutionary heroes. Thus Jack London was a reformist writer.

Jack London remains one of America's most

significant writers because he concerns himself with the vital problems of his age. Of working class origin, he was the first American writer to portray his class sympathetically and one of the few to use literature for building the foundations of a future society. He was not educated in a formal sense, but his comprehension was so great that he rose above educated men in ability and power to portray in his writings the fundamental issues of our times.

In April, 1917 the International Socialist Review carried a tribute to Jack London in the following lines:

*Our Jack is dead!
He who rose from us
And voiced our wrongs;
Who sang our hopes,
And bade us stand alone,
Nor compromise, nor pause;
Who made us dare
Reach out and take the world
In our strong hands.
Comrade! Friend!
Who let the sunshine in
Upon dark places.
Great ones may not understand,*

*Nor grant you now
The measure of your mede;
But in the days to come,
All men shall see.
Father of Martin Eden
And the Iron Heel -
Yes, men shall know
When we arise
And fight to victory!*

Thus the spirit of the common people of America, heroic, fiery and adventurous, will live forever in the pages of his rebel stories, novels and essays.