

## Chapter – I

### Introduction

Today the American literature is at the zenith, and has acquired most prominent place in the world literature. Scholars, belonging to different branches of study have taken keen interest in American Literature. The U.S. Civil war (1861-1865), between north and south on the issue of slavery is very important in U.S. history. The effects of war started to shade its casts on contemporary society. The contemporary and post war novelists handled themes such as alienation, effects of industrialization on slum area, effects of war, poverty, economical and social condition of contemporary society. And all related themes.

The creative imaginative and naturalist Stephen Crane used such themes in his novels "*Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*" (1893, 1896), "*The Red Badge of Courage*" (1895) and many short stories and poems. The present dissertation aims at the study of "**The Novels of Stephen Crane: A Thematic Study**". This dissertation has been divided into five chapters as follows.

#### Chapter -I- Introduction

- A) A brief survey of 19<sup>th</sup> century American literature.
- B) A Brief account of Stephen Crane's life and works.

#### Chapter- II - *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*.

A Thematic Study.

### **Chapter -III- *The Red Badge of Courage.***

A Thematic study.

### **Chapter -IV- *The Monster.***

A Thematic study

### **Chapter -V- *Conclusion.***

A critical statement of findings

### **Selected Bibliography.**

The Literature of any nation is the invention of its poets, novelists and other authors who have written about the land and its people, their dreams and their real life. Geography and culture played an important role, in the development of literature of a nation. Many American authors imitated English writers, in early period of development of literature.<sup>1</sup>

Today America is rich, in all fields such as science, Agriculture, Political, Economic and so in literature as well. Nowadays everyone reads American books, novels, short stories, essays, critics, plays, songs, poems etc. Today American authors win Nobel Prize; American literature is widely studied in all over the world. It is translated in many other languages. In American literature, from beginning to till the 21<sup>st</sup> century, almost all kinds of subjects are handled by the authors.

Generally American literature is classified in following ways.<sup>2</sup>

1. 1607-1763 The Colonial period literature.
2. 1763-1810 The Revolutionary period.
3. 1800-1850 First national period
4. 1840-1890 Second national period.
5. 1890- up-to date -Modern American literature.

In colonial period almost all writers imitated English literature. In revolutionary period various types of literature are produced including prose and poetry. In the period of Romantic Movement, such writing was developed which was against the nationalism. It was the writing about the optimistic young America and inner life of the self. The writers Poe, Melville and Whitman played an important role in first national period. In the period from 1800-1850, the difference between the American literature and European is expressed. So the period from about 1850 to 1900 is necessary to study in the point of view of the present dissertation. As the Stephen Crane (1871-1900) born and worked at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. So we must through light on contemporary American literature.<sup>3</sup>

#### **A) A brief survey of 19<sup>th</sup> century American literature:**

American literature after 1850 has been enriched by great novelists, poets, dramatists, short story writers and critics. At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, American writers handled some quite different themes, styles, plots, structures and imaginations. They focused on social as well as individual problems. In this period the novelists from Mark Twain (1835-1910) to Earnest Hemingway (1898-1961) played a prominent role. In the field of poetry, this

period was dominated by Walt Whitman, H.W. Longfellow, James Lowell and Emily Dickinson. Poetry, in this period was dominated by moral and metaphysical imagination.

The period from 1840-1899 is the most important, in the literary history of America. It was the period of pure literature. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century romantic literature lays an emphasis on emotionalism, individualism and nature. American novels from Cooper to Hemingway presents, the sense of loss and loneliness, failures and frustration. There is a realistic imagination in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in American novels. There is social reality in the novels of Dickinson and Thackeray, but in the novels of Stephen Crane, we find realism, naturalism and imagination. There is search of identity in American novels. The main writers, after the 1860 are Nathaniel Hawthorne, Melville, Walt Whitman, H.W. Longfellow, James Lowell, Emily Dickinson, Mark Twain, Robert frost, Ezra Pond, Henry James and Stephen Crane etc. All writers contributed to enrich the American Literature.

American literature starts its journey in the real sense of the term with Ann Bradstreet (1612-1672) and in 19<sup>th</sup> Century emerged the transcendentalists. The most popular figure in his time was the Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882). His essays and poems gave him popularity. Then in 1954 Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) wrote '*Walden*' or '*Life in the Woods*'. In 1855 Walt Whitman (1819-1892) wrote '*Leaves of Grass*'. It was an epic. Then he wrote '*Democratic Vistas*' (1871) the most important work.

The Brahmin poets such as H. W. Longfellow (1807-1882), James Lowell (1819-1891) etc. gave great contribution to enrich the American Poetry. Longfellow wrote '*Evengaline*' (1847) and

Lowell wrote '*A Gable for Critics*' (1848). Then Emily Dickinson (1830-1886), one of the most successful poets emerged in American literary world who wrote 1775 poems. She was widely read. Then Nathaniel Hawthorne, (1804-1864) wrote his famous work '*The Scarlet Letter*' (1850) which became the classical portrayal of puritan America. '*The House of Seven Gables*' (1851) presents history of New England and '*The Marble Faun*' (1860) also. Herman Melville (1819-1891) wrote '*Typee*' which was based on his time spent among the cannibalistic but hospitable tribe of the Taipis in the Marguesas Islands of the South Pacific. '*Moby Dick*' was Melville's Masterpiece. It was an epic story of the whaling Ship pequod and captain Ahab.<sup>4</sup>

Mark Twain (1855-1910) was praised by the well-known American novelist Earnest Hemingway that.

“All of American literature comes from one great book, Twain's adventures of Huckleberry Finn”.<sup>5</sup>

His books '*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*' (1876) and '*Life on the Mississippi*' (1883) and all other his books took him to the top in American literature. So in 1907 he was honoured with the degree of the Doctor of letters. Then the Realist William Dean Howells (1837-1920) wrote '*A Modern Instance*' (1882), '*Rise of Silas Laphan*' (1885) and '*Hazards of New Fortunes*' (1890). Henry James (1843-1916) was an American Goethe called Rene Wellek. He wrote '*The American*' (1877), '*Daisy Miller*' (1879) and a Master piece '*The Portrait of a Lady*' (1881).

Robert Frost (1874-1963) was a poet who wrote more than three hundred poems. He published '*A Boy's will*' (1931) '*North of*

*Boston*' (1914) *West Running Book*' (1928). He was awarded with Pulitzer Prize.

Probably the last novelist of late 19<sup>th</sup> century was Stephen Crane (1871-1900). The present dissertation attempts to examine the thematic study of novels of Stephen crane. So it is necessary to us to know about the life and works of the Stephen Crane.

### **B) A brief account of Stephen Crane's life and works:**

The most prolific American writer and journalist of his time, Stephen Crane was born on 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1871 in New York New Jersey, to a Methodist minister, Jonathan Townley Crane and Mary Helen peck crane. He was fourteenth and last child, who emerged as a novelist in American literary field, with the publication of his well-known novel *'The Red Badge of Courage'* in 1895.

Being a son of Methodist Minister he spent his early childhood in hymn singing and Bible reading, when he was a kid of thirteen or about. He used to visit the church and prayer meetings.

On February 16<sup>th</sup> 1880 his father Jonathan Townley Crane died. His Mother started to earn money to support family after his father, by writing Methodist Journals to New York Tribune and Philadelphia press. Stephen Crane helped his mother in writing journals.

Crane's family was interested in literary activities and Crane grew up. He was surrounded by books and writings. In 1890 he entered at Lafayette College as engineering student. But in Sept 1890 he had to leave the college because of academic delinquencies and he joined Syracuse University in 1891. He

became a famous student there and started to write sketches and stories. He served for the New York Tribune. He made a baseball team, before, the death of his mother by Cancer in December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1891. He left the college after attending the Hamlin Garland's Lecture on realism and decided to establish himself in New York City. He lived with his brother Edmund and some of his artist friends in New York.

As a student of Syracuse, he wrote his first novel "*Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*" in two nights before Christmas. Maggie is a novel which portrays a life of brutality and degradation in the New York slum. Under the pseudo name Johnston Smith, Crane published first edition of the '*Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*' in March 1893. He published it at his own expense. He was twenty two years old then. Initially this novel was rejected by many publishers. Finally in 1896, it was published by D. Appleton and Company.

With the publication of this novel, crane got a prominent place in the American literary world. On the recommendation of Hamlin Garland who had read the book first, the William Dean Howells admired and invited Crane to tea. Though the Maggie failed to attract too many readers in those days, it proved and established Crane as new author in realistic and naturalistic school of writing. The novel revealed the imagination of the Stephen Crane about the slum area and skill of handling it as a background of the novel.

So Edwin H. Cady in his book "*Stephen Crane*" wrote the following words about crane.

“In short, the Crane who learned what he had to know before he could write. The Red Badge was multivalent. He had a dead of realism which had supplanted but not suppressed a boyish ideal of romance. And he had at last immitigably a self which couldn't be contained in either camp. Which has always successfully eluded categorization, and which broke out in unpremeditated, starting verse at the first peak of his creative powers.” 7

In 1894, he started to write stories, poems, and second novel *'The Red Badge of Courage'*. In 1895 he published his first successful novel *'The Red Badge of Courage'*. It was an episode on a civil war. He also published short stories like *'The Black Riders'* on May 11<sup>th</sup>, 1895 and started to write *'The Third Violet'* which published later in 1897.

He got many offers to write for news papers after the publication of the novel *'The Red Badge of Courage'*. He served as war correspondent in Turkish war and Spanish-American war. He worked as correspondent to Cuban insurrection. He used in experience in his famous short story *'The open Boat'* in 1898.

In 1896 he published *'Georges Mother'* and in December he published *'The Little Regiment'* and other episode of the American Civil war. He published short story-cum-novel *'The Monster'* in 1898 in Harpers Magazine. It was fine example of pathetic table. In the same year of 1898 he published his second book of verse *'War is Kind'* as well as published posthumously the war sketches in *'Wounds in the Rain.'*



He published *'The Open Boat'* in June 1897 and wrote *'The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky,' 'Death and the Child'* and *'The Blue Hotel'*. He traveled to the west, to Mexico and to Greece, during his last years. He tried to be the viewer of the Greco - Turkish war. He closely observed the Spanish-American war at Cuba. He died unexpectedly in 1900 when he was of 29<sup>th</sup> years old by the tuberculosis in Baden, Germany. He died because he had neglected his health.

In the small span of his twenty nine years Stephen Crane wrote more than one hundred works. The work of Stephen Crane may be classified into three major groups.

- 1] Novels
- 2] Short stories and sketches
- 3] Poetry

### **1] NOVELS**

In this group following works are especially mentioned.

- 1) *Maggie : A Girl of the Streets*
- 2) *The Red Badge of Courage*
- 3) *The Monster*
- 4) *Georges Mother*
- 5) *The Third Violet*

These are short novels which are the creation of Crane's imagination and high thinking power. *'Maggie: A Girl of the Streets'* published privately in 1893 and later revised in 1896.

Three years later, in 1895 he published *The Red Badge of Courage*. It is considered that something is more than the war story that is psychological study of cowardice. His third novel *The Monster* is published in 1898. It is a novella about sacrifice, rescue, guilt and isolation. *George's Mother* is about New York's Bowery and its effects on a young working man fresh from the country and *The Third Violet* is the story of a bohemian artist's country romance.

## **2] Short stories and sketches and Journalism.**

Crane wrote many short stories including some of his Masterpieces.

**1) *The open Boat***

**2) *The Blue Hotel***

**3) *The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky***

In his short stories he wrote *The Whilom Ville Stories* of children and childhood in small towns of America. He wrote many sketches and journalism on Cuba and American civil war.

## **3] Poetry:**

Crane wrote two books of verses

**1) *The Black Riders and Other Lives (1895)***

**2) *War is Kind (1899)***

**3) *Uncollected Poems.***

Crane used unforgettable imagery in his poetry. There are some traits of naturalistic sense and reality. 6



not explored deeply yet. Some critics have made attempt to explore the themes but have not been studied completely.

Crane is a major novelist of late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Very little attention is paid to his novels and short stories by the critics. Nobody has carried out a special thematic study of his novels. However some critics have mentioned the themes in their books. As I have mentioned earlier the present study examines thematic study of Cranes novels. There is no aim to examine the technical and chronological study of his novels. This dissertation aims to do the thematic study of his novels.

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