

Chapter-III

Maggie: A Girl of the Streets

Crane tried to establish himself as a novelist with the publication of this novel, "*Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*" in American literary world. Crane published his novel privately under the pseudonym. Johnston Smith at his own expense in 1893. Initially, his novel was rejected by many publishers. After the publication of his most successful novel "*The Red Badge of Courage*" and with the words of praise of literary critic William Dean Howells, Crane got the publisher in the form of D. Appleton and Company in 1896. There after Crane emerged on the surface of literary world as naturalist and realist, in late 19th century. It is a small novel of Twenty-Nine chapters. It is a unique statement on environmental determinism. The author tried to show the consequences of Industrialization and classes among the societies. Author revealed here the social and economical condition of people, luxury in upper class, low wages in the lower class, alcoholism and daily quarrels, daily visits to bars and orchestra and many other things.

Stephen Crane did so much in such a brief life of twenty – nine years (1871 – 1900) also he remained the "genius" of his generation and the 'Wonder Boy' of American literature. Maggie is of course the early work by Crane which has received the greatest critical attention from many critics. R.W. Stallman in his "*Stephen Crane*, *An Omnibus*" has attempted to describe Maggie as a novel of alternating moods. Edwin H. Cady in his "*Stephen Crane*" mentioned

“Whatever else it maybe in actuality, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* was clearly intended to be and was afterwards understood by Crane to be a work of realism”.²

Crane really painted the realistic view of the Bowery slum through the family problems, morality and its effects on the life of an individual.

Donald Gibson in the introduction of his “*Stephen Crane: The Red Badge of Courage*” said.

“The novel takes place in New York’s Bowery district and is about the life of a poverty stricken Young Irish woman whose empty and meaningless life. Causes her after being abandoned by her worthless, deceiving lover, to descent in to prostitution and finally suicide. The subject was forbidden. The characters were deemed inappropriate for literature and the language was condemned”.⁵

Crane uses some traits of irony, imagery, symbolism and many other devices in the novel. His act of characterization is realistic James Nagel in his “*Stephen Crane and literary impressionism*” wrote

“Maggie: A Girl of the Streets perhaps Cranes first significant piece of fiction is the most sardonic novel in American literature”. 6

Crane creates dismal environment in the novel which shapes and moulds the personality of each character. It is the wonderful piece which becomes the root of the literary naturalism in the next several years in America. Crane himself says that his intention in the novel is “to show that environment is tremendous thing in the world and frequently shapes lives regardless”. Crane’s naturalism is descriptive. Only Bowery is responsible for the tragedy of the girl so neither Pete nor her mother is villain but the Bowery is villain. Crane shows the Bowery life through Maggie. He describes those scenes realistically and wins the words of praise from great American critics William Dean Howells and Hamlin Garland. The well known author and Journalist Edward Marshall said in his interview with W.D. Howells, to Philadelphia press,

“He has written one novel so for Maggie. I think that as a study of East side life in New York Maggie is a wonderful book. There is so much realism of a certain kind in it that we might not like to have it lying on your parlor tables. But I hope it that the time will come when any book can safely tell the as completely as Maggie does”. 8

Crane is realistic novelist. His attitude to the Maggie is to show the dismal environment and its effects on the individual. He succeeds in the novel.

Crane has glorified the social subject in such way that one feels, it is a real story of an individual. The story is rich by the Bowery background, Crane's style, language, art of characterization, his symbols and imagery. Crane here creates characters as impressionist. All characters are free to think and act in the story. They think that they are correct. Maggie is more complex character. She is mentioned as "Blossomed in mud puddle". She is the central character. Crane's characterization is regarding to the reality and environment. He shows few details of Jimmie's fight with the neighbouring gang. A few sentences provide a description of, what Maggie sees on stage but her response to it is mingled with her feelings towards Pete reveals Crane's ironic depiction of the tension.

Crane uses here his ironic vision. His irony is more successful when rendered in large deliberate patterns. In Maggie, the irony is so all pervasive, ranging from the inversion of single word or phrase to the thematic idea itself. Crane uses the ironic inversion in many chapters. In Chapter IV when we read that Jimmie "Studied human nature in the gutter, and found it no worse than he thought he had reason to believe it". Where we would ordinarily expect "No better" Crane over reaches our expectations to emphasize not only Jimmie's cynicism but the inversion of his scale of values as well. In his world there is no concept of good and bad there is only bad or worse. Crane fuses irony and symbols to create brilliant effect in the novel. Malcolm Bradbury in "*The modern American Novel*" said that

“Crane is symbolist enough to want this, desiring, he said, a Hidden long logic’ in his stories, But his symbolism remains less than logic of experience discovered, turned into wisdom” 9

Crane uses many symbolic passages in the novel just as the next passage from the Chapter I.

“From a window of an apartment house that up reared its form from amid squat, ignorant stables, there leaned a curious women. Some laborers, unloading a scow at a dock at the river, paused for a moment and regarded the fight. The engineer of a passive tugboat hung lazily to a railing and watched over or the island, a worm of yellow convicts came from a shadow of a grey ominous building and crawled slowly along the river’s bank”. (3)

This passage first gives the view of dismal environment. It sounds a significant and pervasive theme of the novel. The scene in above passage focus the readers attention up on the worm of yellow convicts” and the ‘ominous’ prison in the distance. The inevitable destiny of a large number of these urchins that presides is characterized “ominous”

The irony involving the values belonging to character is more complex. In opening scene Jimmie, standing on a ‘heap of gravel’ and throwing stones at howling urchins is fighting for the “honor of Rum Alley”. It must be jimmies self serving assessment.

This immoral activity is not corresponding to the concept of honor. In this passage irony is between what is recorded as fact and what the characters comprehend as being real.

The ironic tone of the end of the novel is suitable to the narration. At the end, Mrs. Johnson is blind to her role. She clings to the religious traditional ideas then she cries.

“Oh, Yes, I’ll forgive her! I’ll forgive her!”

The structure of the novel is consisting number of episodes united by themes and characters. Through the descriptive passages narrator portrays the characters. Edwin Cady in his “*Stephen Crane*” has remarked about the character.

“The essence of his art was to give in his characters, persons with eyes And to set them in turn within perspectives which would let readers see both very sharply and complexly around them ...” 3

According to the James Nagel “*Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*” presents some of the most dramatic characters in American literature. Sedgwick thought that Crane’s characters resemble actual life. Crane is innovative not only in presenting figures but also in their conception. His characters are real to the life and enrich the story.

Crane used symbols also in the story. In chapter IV Jimmie becomes a truck driver. In this chapter, the fire engine may be regarded as a symbol of irresistible brutal force. In chapter III the mother drinks and her physical status is mentioned symbolically

half hypnotized between dead and fascinated. Another symbol of Maggie is the lambrequin and blue ribbons with which Maggie attempts to improve the appearance of her home. In this way so many symbols are used in the novel.

Imagery is the most important device used by Stephen Crane in his fiction. Imagery occurs frequently and produces variety of effects. Imagery describes the environment rich in a pulling social conditions, and brutalized human relations. There is too much imagery in the incident in which Jimmie goes to take revenge of Maggie's seduction imagery reveals as he snarls at Pete. "Like a wild animal" Pete glares back like a "panther" they bristle like "roosters" Jimmie moves like "cat" this fight is for honor and continues the level brutalized conflict that began the novel. The animal images portray the true nature of other roles.

Crane's imagery is determined by his narrative methods. His imagery is word picturing and ironic. It shows Crane's experimentation in fiction. His novel is rich by background irony imagery, symbol, and his special style. His ideas are innovative. Though the construction of the novel is rather loose his other devices helps to keep it unique.

Maggie is the central character who struggles to survive against the contemporary economical and social brutal life of slum area. Her family is abused by poverty and alcoholism. It is the story of an innocent girl who grows up under the pressure of drunkard father and mother. Maggie is under the fear of quarrel in her home. She is the most powerful character in the novel.

“The small frame of the ragged girl was quivering. Her features were haggard from weeping and her eyes gleamed from fear. She grasped the urchins aim in her little trembling hands and they huddled in a corner” (13)

Maggie tries to overcome on poverty, brutal life by working at sweatshop when she meets with Pete, a good looking bartender; she thinks that Pete is a man who can help her to overcome her problems. She accepts him as a boyfriend later falls in his love. Neighbour's and her mother's taunting force her to leave the home and go with Pete. Unfortunately Pete ruins and abandons her. Her family also rejects her. In this way, Maggie is forced to live on the streets as a prostitute, later she commits suicide. Maggie is not the story of an individual but it is the story of characters as type rather than individual. It is the story of every bowery girl who desires to live a good life and tries to overcome her problems like poverty and alcoholism.

The novel tells us, how Maggie leans towards her death and how she loses her morality and character in search of luxurious and good life.

In the first part of the novel, Maggie is the protagonist and she is mentioned frequently, but in the second part, Crane mentions only girl without her name when she leaves her home after she is abused and abandoned by Pete. Here, Crane shows that morality is the main reason to the downfall of Maggie, from an innocent girl to a street girl. Crane has thrown light upon various subjects in the novel. Some of them are major and others are minor. Poverty,

Alcoholism, Social and Economical Forces, Naturalism etc. are main themes and ignorance, brutality, realism and ideology of 20th century women are the minor themes.

POVERTY

Stephen Crane, in the novel creates the atmosphere of city slum area of New York. The novel opens with fighting scene. One child fights for honour of his team "Rum Alley" against the urchins of "Devil's Row". All men from the area watch but they do nothing. At last the boy is saved by the lad of sixteen years. Author depicts here a tenement apartment in which almost all people live poor social and economical life. The old beggar woman is the neighbour of the Johnson family in that society. The story is about the Johnson family and the downfall of Maggie. Both father and mother drink all the day. They don't earn enough money to live better life and fulfill their children's wishes. Initially, some chapters show the description of poverty through the dialogue. Children are in tattered dresses. The father, Mr. Johnson doesn't like his home. He mostly spends his time outside the home drinking and also calls his home as hell.

"My home reg'lar livin' hell! Domndes' place!
Reg'lar hell! Why do I come an' drin' whisk' here
thish Way? cause home reg'lar livin' hell!"(11)

The social status of family is not so good. All major problems create because of poverty. The old beggar woman is

their neighbour. Their economic status is also very poor. Children live in poor and miserable condition. Tommie, Little brother of Maggie and her father dies because of malnutrition. After the death of Mr. Johnson, Jimmie becomes truck driver and Maggie starts to work at the company of collars and cuffs. Both try to overcome their poverty but Jimmie forgets his duties and behaves like his father. Maggie really tries to improve social and economical condition of her home but on the other hand her mother and brother fail to perform their duties. Finally, Maggie leaves her thought to improve the economic condition of her family and decides to improve her individual life. But she can't expose herself in the home. Meanwhile, she meets with a boy, Pete and falls in his love. She is impressed by his style and high mannerism; Pete also shows her various dreams of luxurious life. She leaves her job and goes with Pete who later abandons her. Thus she is forced to suicide in the river.

She neither becomes successful to improve her family's social and economical status nor her. Her family was poor and remains poor. There are many scenes in the novel that shows the poverty. When her little brother Tommie died Maggie steals the flower and offers him.

“The babe, Tommie, died; He went away in a white, insignificant coffin, his small waxen hand catching a flower that the girl, Maggie had stolen from an Italian.”(13)

Not only the Johnson family is living in the poverty but all citizens who are the residents of Bowery live poor life. The old

woman who is beggar grabs the purse of the lady. Nellie keeps her relation ship with Pete because of his money. Maggie works at sweetshop only on five dollars wages per month.

In this way, Crane in the novel gives some quite different treatment to the subject and creates the real picture of the Bowery.

ALCOHOLISM

Alcoholism is another main subject that affects the life of poor people. Generally, it is supposed that, many people take drinks to forget their mental fatigue, tension, and sometimes to get rid of day to day problems. It is largely in city slum area where mostly ignorant people live. Generally, the elder ones of the family drink regular and so they become the main reason of quarrel in the family like Mr. and Mrs. Johnson in the novel. Alcoholism is dangerous and the most powerful problem in those families which are struggling for survival.

In the present novel, almost every character drinks. Alcoholism is the main cause for the tragedy of Johnson family. It is one of the major problems in slum areas. Crane observed it keenly and depicted realistically in the novel. We feel it as if it is real scene of the tenement. It shades its casts upon the youths, growing generations, workers, labours and others. In late 19th century it was fashion to visit Pubs, bar houses and liquor shops. Most people used to visit bars and enjoy themselves with orchestras. Almost every family in such society is generally disturbed, like Johnson family. Many factors are responsible for the alcoholism. People have no other form to enjoy themselves.

In the novel we get first impression of Mr. Johnson as a drunkard. He dies of alcoholism and malnutrition. He spends most of his time in bars. Marry Johnson is an alcoholic and violent woman. She doesn't perform her role as mother. She is always in drunken state and curses her children. She always fights with her husband. She acts as a villain in the novel. Crane mentions her as.

“Her face was inflamed and swollen from drinking. Her yellow brows shaded eye - lids that had grown blue. Her tangled hair tossed in waves over her forehead. Her mouth was set in the same lines of vindictive hatred that it had, perhaps, borne during the Fight. Her bare, red arms were thrown out above her head in positions of exhaustion, something, may nap, like those of a sated villain.”(12)

After the death of Mr. Johnson, Jimmie becomes the head of the family. He also starts to drink. So the atmosphere in the family remains stable. Maggie is now young attractive lady who wants to get rid of the problems. So she accepts the hand of Pete in expectation that he would help her to get rid of problems. Automatically, she attracts towards him and starts to go on date with him. Initially she has too much fancy ideas about him but all her hopes became vain when she is taken to the bar. Though she enjoyed orchestra and dance she becomes worry about her love. Finally she is abandoned by her bartender lover Pete. Maggie realized her mistake but it was too far for her to return.

An old woman who begs for survive is also drunkard. She gives small sum to Jimmie to bring beer out of her beg. Pete, the

boyfriend of Maggie also drinks. Actually he is a bartender. Jimmie fights with Pete in drunkard state.

In this way, almost all characters drink and become the responsible for their own tragedy in the story. Crane observed minutely in the society and depicted realistically. Crane mingles naturalistic and realistic scene in the novel and win the words of critics.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMICAL FORCES

Social and economic forces are essential and important to mould the personality of an individual. Economical and social forces play an important role to shape the character of Maggie, Jimmie, Pete and Mrs. Johnson. Social and economical condition of Johnson family is not so well. Almost all characters are drunkard and impatient. They live poor life.

Almost all characters are victimized by social and economical forces. Little Tommie died because of malnutrition. Jimmie is forced to become a truck driver. Mr. Johnson dies due to the malnutrition and drunkenness. Maggie is forced to work at the sweatshop. Mrs. Johnson always drinks in the novel. Pete is a bartender and is deceived by the Nellie, the women of brilliance and audacity only for fortune.

In the very first scene of the novel, we see the social and economical status of the society. In the novel, group quarrels are common in slum area and the novel begins with same scene.

“A very little boy stood upon a heap of gravel for the honor of Rum Alley. He was throwing stones

at howling urchins from devil's row who were circling madly about the heap and pelting at him". (3)

The protagonist of the novel, Maggie, is more fascinated by the luxurious life out side of the Bowery. To improve her and her family's life style she joins the sweatshop factory. She accepts handsome Pete as her boyfriend and wants to fulfill her wishes with the help of Pete. Pete instead of helping ruins and abandons her. Finally, her family rejects her. She lives miserable life and commits suicide in the river.

We come to know that social and economical forces are so cruel that one can't live. In the novel, no one understands each other but blames each other. It acts as character in the novel. It lays its deep impact on the society. In it one is affected by bundle of forces at once and one leads to its tragedy and Same thing happens with Maggie. Social and economical forces played major part in down fall of Maggie and Johnson family.

NATURALISM

Naturalism has a very long history and it found in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century movement. Originally, 'Naturalism' was used in ancient philosophy to denote Materialism. The term 'Naturalism' was imported from the fine arts into literary criticism by Zola in the preface to the second edition of *Therese Raquin* (1867). Naturalism came onto the literary scene already loaded with meanings derived from philosophy, the sciences and fine arts

In the U.S.A. Naturalism was even more closely linked to social and economic changes than in Europe. The Civil War ended in 1865 with the victory of the North over the South for the abolition of slavery. American Naturalism grew in direct response to there native social and economical problems. American Naturalism owes more to local factors than to outside influences. There was no single outside dominant influence in the U.S.A. literature. So writes including Hamlin Garland (1860-1940), Stephen Crane (1871-1900) and Frank Norris (1870-1902) tried to express Naturalism in their literature.

Stephen Crane is one of the naturalist writers of late 19th century. Crane's naturalism is quite different from others. It is classic example of naturalism. Charles child Walcutt in his "*American Literary Naturalism a Divided Stream*" mentioned.

"Crane is Christopher Marlowe of American Naturalism and we have had no Shakespeare and Crane's Naturalism is first found in his attitude towards received values....." 10

In *Maggie* he uses too much Naturalism. The scene in which Maggie drags her little brother to her home and her brother in bloody situation is really naturalistic. The situation in Maggie's home, quarrels between her father and mother, children's miserable condition in the corner of the home is really naturalistic. Critics said that in *Maggie*, the scene in twenties about naturalism is really unbelievable.

The condition of drunken mother, her description, activities, and Mr. Johnson's description is naturalistic. Crane's

ideas about the family are quite different, and here, he uses it without any hesitation. All people in the novel behave rudely and ruthlessly with each other. When Maggie returns back she faces the comments from neighbours and her own mother who curses her.

“Ha, ha, ha, bellowed the mother. “Dere she stands! Ain’ she purty? Look out her! Ain’ she sweet, deh beasts? Look out her! Ha, Ha, look out her!”(47)

Mrs. Johnson calls her beast and refuses to give shelter in her house. Maggie comes on road and many people gazes her. In the novel, Crane tries to show that environment is a tremendous thing in the world and frequently shapes lives regardless. His setting is classic example of naturalism particularly, slum setting and the theme of the overpowering effect of environment. The novel is about the effects of environment on human lives. Crane uses the technique of an intense verbal irony. He uses symbolism in the novel. The well know critic Donald Pizer in “*Stephen Crane and American Naturalism*” said that

“The opening sentence of Maggie is “A very little boy stood upon a heap of gravel for the honor of Rum Alley”. This sentence introduces both crane’s theme and his ironic technique. From the first sentence crane suggests that the idea of honour is in appropriate to the reality...” 7

Crane explores the idea and concept of slum area background through his principal characters. He uses two basic

images to depict the Bowery. It is a battlefield and it is a prison. The childhood of Maggie in which the responsible members of the family quarrels so it is battlefield and it lays deep impact on younger ones so it is a prison. Jimmie and Maggie grow in such atmosphere. After the death of Mr. Johnson, Jimmie assumes his position but the environment in the family remains unchanged. Both Maggie and Jimmie go to work. Both live very upset life. Though the Johnson family is poor, all members have moral values and middle class ethics. We see it in the opening scene. When father takes Jimmie to the home and Mother rejects to accept Maggie. The morality of the Bowery is very important. Crane makes the use of morality to set the scene in novel. When Pete washes his hands from responsibilities Maggie wins the sympathy of the readers and meets the final truth of life.

Because of the burden of the morality of Bowery “The girl Maggie blossomed in a mud puddle” refuses to return to Bowery and prefers to live the life of prostitute. Crane never blames her as an immoral through out the novel, even after the seduction by Pete. Crane uses another scene in which the woman of brilliance and audacity draws Maggie’s flashy boyfriend towards her and then leaves him alone. Maggie escapes from the prison like home but she couldn’t escape from the prison of morality and commits suicide. Thus Maggie is fine example of naturalistic fiction of America.

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