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OBSERVATIONS ON SCARLET PLAGUE: LITERATURE AND FEAR OF PANDEMIC

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Abstract

Our world is facing such a challenging situation that is Novel Corona Virus or Covid -19. The nations are in a state of chaos because they can't rely upon a strategy due to the changes in the society. This paper is trying to make an analysis on how the literature in the older times treated such plagues and diseases through writings. I had chosen The Scarlet Plague and observations.

Keywords: Fear, similarity, plague, society, relevance.

Introduction:

The novel named the scarlet plague has a similarity in the present scenario. The fear of novel corona virus can be seen everywhere now –a – days. Through this presentation I would like to share my observations about how the novel named Scarlet Plague is relevant in the present time. The U.S writer Jack London, has given a detailed description about the plague which has taken many lives. In the novel scarlet plague –its victims became red-faced before dying—it is recalled sixty years later, in the year 2073, by the only living

pandemic survivor, a professor of English literature. This novel expertly explains the different aspects of human behavior. The people were isolated during that time and there were not any mass madness at the grocery store. Everyone tried to be remaining in the houses.

The observations on The Scarlet Plague:

The novel differed greatly from earlier writings related to plague because it reflected deeply the contemporary scientific discoveries. In scarlet plague London investigated many traditional issues of plague, like morality, justice to the contagion, etc. the author focuses on the behavioral responses to the pandemic and also it shows fear, irrationality, in a civilized society. In the early 20th centuries plague were not considered as a divine punishments or supernatural elements. In the early 19th c the doctors said that it was caused by germs that infect humans, public health experts and the world as a whole. No preventive measures will be there. So, it can be considered as a general fear throughout the world.

RESEARCH ARTICLE

In the beginning of the novel we could see that the people were not to be alarmed because they were sure that the dermatologists will find some remedies in order to cure this epidemic. Public trust in science was high in the 20th c, described by London. But the people were soon frightened by the epidemic. Many had died within a short span of time....some lasted for long, but what happens is that the number of the infected increases day by day .London has thus made his novel a realistic one. London wrote about the rapid decompositions of corpses, that quickly released billions of germs, that increases the speed of germs and diseases and causing problems for the medical practitioners. That is what we can see now in our society. The scientists are trying very hard in order to sort it out. But we could see that within a short span of time this disease has taken many lives. In between a serum against the epidemic has been discovered , it was too late to save the lives of the people.

London has given a detailed description insight into the human reactions to the spread in the population. The story teller in the novel Granser , who is telling the story of plague has given a vivid description and how they started to run away from the place in order to protect themselves. But there was no escape. Germs were spreading, quickly and uncontrollable. The world was thus facing a state of sheer panic which has never experienced before.

The novel actually represents the present scenario which the people are facing now. The people behaved in such a way that some has been isolated themselves, while others roam here and there and had the opinion that doctors will do everything.

The survivors had to struggle hard in order to survive. Like Darwin theory says survivors exist. When we taken into consideration about London's opinion, capitalism led to the rise in population and to excess overcrowding, led to plague. He has presented capitalism as the main cause of the pandemic and thus he criticizes it in a harsh manner.

London described this situation as the end of the world. The earth was being devastated by fires and conflagrations. The cities were being destroyed by fire, the people were fleeing in fear. The immense fear increases the panic situation, which results in isolation, and it results in the breaking of relations and happiness in the families. The entire system has gone upside down.

The brutality of the plague London presents is greater than that represented in the previous works. The apocalyptic scenario illustrates a common fear of epidemics. When we compare this novel with the present situation, the scientists are aware about the risk of uncontrollable

RESEARCH ARTICLE

pandemics. London's novel foresaw the first and severe plague in history, The Spanish influenza of 1918-1920, which had a spread of 6 years after the publication of The Scarlet Plague and caused the death of twenty million people worldwide.

Through his novel he tries to give us the idea that pandemics can bring forth deeply rooted fears and modify human behavior a lot. The social settings changed, the people were adjusted to the new way of living. In another aspect we could see that the countries united again in order to wash away this disease. It breaks the barriers among class in the society, there were no religion based issues, no social hierarchy and so on.

When the people were isolated, the revenue of the countries reduced and what happens later marked the change in the society. When the authorities has given the permission to go out people were uncontrollable and it marks in the increase in the number of the infected persons. It results in the negative remarks towards the government and they were criticized by media and public. The authorities have become greedy because the lack of the needy things and thus it results in the spread of negativity among the people. The wide spread of this pandemic can't be controlled even now. The medical team is trying their best to overcome the risk. They are giving instructions to save us. But some are not ready to accept the facts that the government

is giving. Always sanitize and keep distancing is the best way to get rid of the situation. But people are avoiding everything intentionally. They are not at all afraid of this.

Conclusion

In my observation, as in London's times, the study illustrated that the public placed trust mainly in scientists rather than in political authorities and states , which were thought to be partly ineffective. In other ways media, and other medical practitioners etc, make use of this situation. London's work inspires reflection on the role of media during pandemics. In London's novel, newspapers, wires, and phone calls were the only tools for obtaining information on epidemic spread. Today, the main sources of information on pandemics are widely available and include the mass media, such as television, radio, newspapers, mails, etc. sometimes it can be trustworthy sometimes not.

As in London's novel, the media can be useful resource in controlling fear, enabling a bridge to be created between governments etc. Even though it was published a century ago, The Scarlet Plague represents the same concerns which we face today.

The literature has taken everything as such and records everything as a part of evidence. London describes everything through Granser , the person who survives

RESEARCH ARTICLE

the plague. It is a kind of warning to the upcoming generations revealing the positives and negatives of the pandemic. In English language literature, *The Last Man* (1826) by English novelist Mary Shelley was one of the first apocalyptic novel, telling of a future world that had been ravaged by a plague. The same thing London has described through his novel. Each story gives us some messages that we have to learn. Some are signs for the future. Learn from experience. The evidences from the past pave the way for a better tomorrow. So think and act accordingly. Stay safe and be safe.

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