CHAPTER - I

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Literature, by and large, reflects the special class and social urges of the period. A writer is disposed to write according to his own urges, feelings, impressions and experiences. An individual is a product of environment, in which he has led his formative years i.e. his basic urges, his reaction to environment, the impressions he accumulates, the influences of other writers, thinkers, individuals - all these constitute his psychic personality, which finds reflections in his writings.

Most historians of literature fail to appreciate the intricate processes of interactions between an author and his environment and lack historical perspective, because of their predilections and prejudices.

In modern times, writers have begun to realize the incalculable influences of heredity, environment, tradition and background. Now-a-days, it has become a well-accepted principle of literary appreciation and judgement that literature is a product of a particular ethos or time-spirit and its success and failure must be determined in
relation to its locale and background.

To judge Jack London's works, one must appreciate the environmental forces, which shaped his life and work. Probably more than any other writer of his generation, he was profoundly and consciously affected by his times. To understand Jack London then, one must look at his age and conversely some picture of the era is reflected in his fiction. According to Pattee, "No other American writer, has had a career more representative of his time, none certainly has had one that is more remarkable." Foner remarks, "No American writer was a more articulate and splendid spokesman of his time. For it was Jack London, more than any other writer of his day, who broke the ice, that was congealing American letters and brought life and literature into a meaningful relation to each other."

Irving Shepard advises the readers to study his experiences in early life, "Jack London was the product of his times. Only by studying the forces that moulded his character, can we fully appreciate the works of this extra-ordinary man. Look then to the formative years, for a clue to the life and works of Jack London. There you will see the birth of that indomitable spirit, which could eventually lead him to the philosophy of
individualism. There you will see, the hunger and want, that drove him to become a socialist.

In any consideration of Jack London's works, it would be unfair to him, if one forgets his main biographical details and his general background. For understanding his achievement as a writer, it is necessary to acquire a sympathetic and perceptive comprehension of his life - the circumstances under which he worked and developed as an artist. We must know about the various writers, individuals and factors which influenced him in his formative years. According to Ronald Gower, "The reason, London's life must be considered in any estimate of his work is his egocentricity, the fact that he lived much of his fiction, so much so, that fact and literature are often difficult to separate. The two - life and work - are impossible to separate completely in any examination of a writer, but they are more inextricably tangled in London, than in most authors. His viewpoint is strongly influenced by that initial struggle, to rise from the abyss of poverty and ignorance, and become a lord of high places."

London fought with in his background and environment. He successfully mastered the difficulties in his way through self-education. He won the battle of recognition and became famous. There
are three major sources which must be considered in order to understand an author's life-view: the era, the intellectual currents and most important the author's own experiences. This approach - through biography, history and personal study - should give a fairly complete picture of the potential writer.

John Griffith London, popularly known as Jack London, was born on January 12, 1876 in San Francisco, California, U.S.A. Jack London was the illegitimate son of W.H. Chaney, 53 and Flora Wellman, 31 who had lived together, without marriage, at 314, Bushstreet, San Francisco, from June, 1874 to June, 1875. When Flora was pregnant, Chaney asked her to get rid of the child. She refused. Chaney rejected fatherhood and deserted her. Jack never saw his father. Jack's paternity was a closely guarded secret, until Mr. Irving Stone, published for the first time, the main facts about Jack London's birth and death - his illegitimacy and the real circumstances of his death.

It is certain that his illegitimate birth affected his outlook on life. He took it as a stigma. Later, when he was a student at the University, he wrote to Professor W.H. Chaney, but he declined his fatherhood. Jack was shocked. The
knowledge of his illegitimacy, weighed heavily on him and was one of the most important factors, in shaping his personality. Some critics feel that under the influence of his mother's racist bias, he could boast later that he was blond boast Anglo-Saxon, thus substituting, pride of racial lineage, for the shame, of illegitimacy.

Jack's wet nurse mother was Mrs. Jenny Prentiss, a Negro woman, later known as Mammy Jenny. Eight months after Jack's birth, his mother married Mr. John London on September 7, 1876. Jack's step-father, was a farmer and a working man. Several years later, the boy took his step-father's name.

When Jack was four years old, the family was living on a truck farm in Almeda. When he was seven, they were living at San Mateo, and a year later, on a truck farm at Livermore. At San Mateo School, Jack read Horatio Alger's famous biography, of President Farfield, 'From canal boy to President.' According to Lynn, "from that book London had acquired a literal belief in the old myths, which were the heritage of the American boy." Washington Irving's 'The Alhambra', and Paul du Chaillus 'Travels', a series of travelogues, which fired in him a desire for travel, and Ouidas 'Signa',
were also read by him. Jack was thrilled and set dreaming by the opening sentence of Guida's 'Sigur', "It was only a little lad who had dreams of becoming a great musician and having all Europe at his feet." The book made a great impression on him.

It awakened ambition in him, for success, overcoming all obstacles. In a letter to Marion Humble, dated December 11, 1914, London wrote, "It (Sigur) put in me ambition to get beyond skylines, of my narrow California Valley, in fact, it became my star, to which I had hitched my child's wagons."

When Jack was ten, the family returned back to Oakland, after their rural farm failure. Jack London attended the Garfield School and the public library. He read every thing, but was mostly interested in stories of action, romance and adventure, hazardous sea-voyages, accounts of travels, in far off places. He read Prescott's 'Conquest of Peru', and Smollet's 'Adventures of Peregrine Pickle'.

Jack London was an omnivorous reader from his childhood. According to his own statement in his novel, John Barleycorn, "I read mornings, afternoons and nights. I read in bed. I read at table. I read as I walked to and from school and I read at recess while other boys were playing."
The Head Librarian of Oakland Public Library, Miss Ina Coolbrith, poet laureate of California, helped and guided him. She acquainted him with novelists like Melville, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky. Miss Coolbrith was the early mentor of Jack London. He was convinced that the short-cut way to gain knowledge, was via books.

Jack had to support his family, when he was eleven, by doing odd jobs, as setting up pins, in bowling alley, assisting on the ice-wagons, sweeping out saloons, and selling newspapers. Jack London's boyhood was mostly of work and poverty. He was very often tired, hungry and resentful. He bitterly recalled those years at Oakland, in a similar vein, as Charles Dickens did for his childhood misery.

"I had been poor, Jack London wrote, poor I had lived. My first memories of life were pinched by poverty." This feeling left a scar which seemed to extend itself, into the majority of Jack London's writings.

Jack London worked in Hickmott's Salon Cannery in West Oakland for ten hours a day. He frequently saw that his companions lost their fingers, when their attention flagged, towards the end of a strenuous day, at the machines. Jack London
has made fictionalized use of this incident in his novel, 'Iron Heel'. But his romantic adventurous spirit rebelled against this drudgery of a work-beast. He had become a skilful sailors, by sailing his small boat, in the Oakland estuary. He borrowed three hundred dollars from Mammy Jenny, his foster mother, and purchased a sloop, 'Razzle-dazzle' from a notorious pirate, named French Frank. Thus at the age of sixteen, he had become an oyster pirate. By his skill, dare-devil fearlessness and adventurous exploits, he soon became the 'Prince of oyster pirates.' While purchasing the sloop he had obtained a mistress—-one Miss Mammy, who became the 'Queen of oyster pirates'—-in the bargain. She made love to him. Jack London's name became a legend on the water front.

Before becoming an oyster pirate Jack London was poor, thrifty and a miser. He now made a decision to spend money recklessly for the sake of comradeship. According to Geismar, "It was a crucial point in London's life, the ostensible, if not the actual moment of his fall." In one night, Jack London spent $50 dollars on drinks alone. He had no regrets. He was proud of himself. This attitude, can be regarded, as a reaction, to his
childhood's meagerness and excessive toil. As oyster pirate, he spent a life considered by him, as raw, wild and free.

He became a heavy drunkard, a chain smoker and a tobacco chewing vagabond. Among strong men, he was proving himself stronger. He took great delight in this dangerous life. He says in John Barleycorn, "Better to reign among booze fighters, a prince, than toil for ten cents an hour." Probably this sentence was prompted to him by Milton's famous lines, "Better to rule in hell, than serve in heaven." Even during these hectic days, he read at night, books like Zola's 'Germinal', Kipling's 'The Light that failed', and Melville's 'Typee'. His oyster pirate career would have ended in his death, because once after heavy drinking he swam out to sea, was about to be drowned, but was luckily rescued and saved by a Greek fisherman. His thrilling experiences as an oyster pirate have been described by Jack London in his juvenile, 'The cruise of the dazzler', 1902.

For some time, Jack London served as a deputy patrolman, in San Francisco bay, working on the side of law. He has described his adventurous experiences as a long shoreman, in his
juvenile, "Tales of the Fish patrol", 1905. Then for a few days, he became a road-kid or juvenile delinquent. He has described this experience in the first chapter, 'Gay-cats and Road-kids', in his book, 'The Road', 1907.

On January 20, 1893 he became a boat puller, of the harpooner, Peter Holt, on 'Sophie Sutherland', a eighty ton sealing schooner, bound for Japan and Siberia. After twelve years, she became celebrated as a background of his novel, 'The Sea Wolf', 1904, identified as the schooner, 'Ghost' bound seal-hunting, to Japan and Siberian coast. On the seven month's cruise Jack London proved himself an able seaman, gentle, if not superior to other experienced sailors.

Once in Japan he jumped into the sea boldly and swam up to the schooner, when he was pursued by police, after a drinking brawl, on the shore. He became famous as a daring adventurer. This cruise, the seal hunting experience, the men on board, gave him a realistic background and local colour, for his stirring sea-adventure novel, 'The Sea Wolf'.

During this sea-voyage he had witnessed a typhoon. He described the same in his first published work, 'Typhoon off the coast of Japan'.
published in *Morning Call*, a San Francisco newspaper on November 12, 1893. He received the first prize of twenty-five dollars in the contest for the best descriptive article. The editor of the paper commented, "The article showed a steady force, indicating the birth of a literary artist." This initial success, seriously turned his thoughts to writing.

After his sea-experience, Jack London returned to San Francisco in September, 1893 and worked in a Jute Mill for twelve hours a day. Later, he became a coal passer, doing the work of two men for a meagre thirty dollars per month. Each day he found himself completely exhausted by the hard manual labour. He left this job too. Then with a sudden impulse, he joined Kelly's army, the western detachment, of General Coxey's army of the unemployed, which marched on Washington in 1894. He deserted the army and went to his mother's sister, Mary Everhard at Michigan. One of his cousins, was named Ernest Everhard. Jack London used this name for the hero of his novel, *Iron Heel*, 1907.

He became a hobo or a tramp, wandering all over United States of America. At Niagara falls, he was arrested, for vagrancy and
had to undergo thirty days of imprisonment in Erie County Jail. He witnessed horrors and brutal treatment to the prisoners. He has made use of this experience, in describing prison conditions, in his fantastic novel, 'The Star Rover', 1914. His experiences as a hobo, on the road brought him in contact with a variety of men. As a keen observer, he scrutinized these men. This provided him with material, as a background, for many of his stories. As a news-boy, mill-worker, sailor and hobo, he came to know about the life of the underdog and felt that injustice was done to them. He became class-conscious. He began to feel sympathy for the have-nots and the down-trodden. So far, he had himself led the life of a blond beast individualist, but now he gained social consciousness. During his wanderings, he had also read, 'The Communist Manifesto'. He found himself as a socialist. He also came to the conclusion that the only way to fight his way out of a life of destitution and aimlessness, was to get an education. Jack London's personal experience in Kelly's army and as a tramp or hobo, is described in his book, "The Road", 1907.

Earle Labor, has summed this hobo experience nicely. He says, "London's experience on the road produced three important results,(1) It
sharpened his story-telling ability, (ii) it tempered his naively individualistic attitude, and started his questioning of the American Socio-economic system. (iii) His resolve to use his brain, rather than his brawn. This realization made his return to California to open the books. page 31.

At the age of nineteen, he enrolled himself as a freshman, in the Oakland High School. He worked as an assistant janitor, sweeping floors, and cleaning laboratories. He started writing articles and stories, for the school magazine, 'Aegis'.

At this time, Jack London became acquainted with Bess Maddern, who later became his wife, and the Applegarth family. Jack London fell in love with Miss Applegarth. He became interested in music and poetry through Miss Mabel Applegarth and her mother. They also taught him table manners, etiquette, hygiene and courtesies. His favourite poets were Swinburne, Browning, Henley and Bergson. We find references to them and other poets in his writings. His taste in music was fastidious. He joined Henry Club debating society and discussed art and poetry in home clubs.

Jack London appeared for the Entrance
examination of the University of California, after studying nineteen hours, a day for three months and cramming incredible amount of information. He passed the examination and joined the University at Berkeley campus. After completing the first half of freshman's year, he left the university in February, 1897. During preceding two years, he had done prodigious reading. His grammar was improved. For career he had four preferences, music, poetry, writing of philosophic, economic and political essays and fiction writing. He made feverish efforts to become a writer. He wrote essays, short stories, light verse, epic tragedies in verse, but none were accepted by editors. For a time, he worked in a steam laundry attached to Belmont Academy on thirty dollars a month and board.

Suddenly he decided to join the gold rush to Klondike, Alaska and try his luck. He left on July 25, 1897 for the north. On October 9, 1897 they made a camp on upper island being halted on their way to Dawson, by the onset of winter. Jack London stored memories of that Arctic winter. The landscape impressed his imagination. Here the battle for survival, in the pitiless environment, was witnessed. In Yukon he saw life, as struggle for existence, where only the strong could survive. The impressions
of sounds and sights were recorded in his mind. Dyea, Chilkoot, Lake Lebarge, Bonanza creeks, panning and sluicing, Sourdough and Chechako and other names and terminology of the north, later found its way in Jack London's novels and short stories. He was weaving a legend, creating a Klondike, which existed in his imagination.

He had brought books with him. He read Darwin's 'Origin of Species', Spencer's 'Philosophy of Style', a translation of Marx's 'Das Capital' and Kipling's 'Seven Seas'.

He became acquainted with a Greek dancer, Freda Maloof. She is portrayed as Freda, who was saved by Elam Harnish, the hero of his novel, 'Burning Day-light', and as Lucile, a character in his novel, 'Daughter of the Snows'. Jack London was attached with scurvy and was lucky to survive. He returned back in an open boat, by making a 1900 mile journey, down the Yukon.

Jack London returned back from Klondike in the summer of 1898, without any gold but rich in Klondike experience, which fetched him gold later, through his writing about Klondike. His step-father had died in his absence, so Jack London
had to look after his family. In the day time, Jack London did odd jobs of physical work like mowing lawns, trimming hedges and at night, he began reading and writing. He also appeared for a civil service examination for mail carriers and passed with credit. He worked for nineteen hours a day and established the routine of writing a thousand words a day, six days a week. Manuscript was written in long hand and then type-written. His writing was rejected and returned back. His three possessions, a bicycle, a decent suit of dark cloth and mackintosh went to Pawn-shop due to lack of money, for stamp and paper. An analysis of Jack London's notes, shows that his works were rejected by the American publishers for six hundred forty four times.

Jack London did not join the job of the mail carrier, of sixty five dollars per month because he was confident that he would succeed as a writer. He was on the point of exasperation and frustration by the repeated rejection of his writing. However, by December, 1899, his articles and stories began to appear in magazines and within a few years, Jack London became a famous and much publicized author. His
reaction to his success is expressed in 'John
Barnes', "Some are born to fortune, some
have fortune thrust upon them. In his case, he
was clubbed in to fortune and bitter necessity,
yielded the club," p.237-38. We are reminded of
Shakespeare's famous lines, 'Some are born great.'

Jack London had an unquenchable
desire for success and all its rewards and one
must admire the pluck, the perseverance that brought
his final success. No one ever succeeded against
heavier odds and no one with more toil. A great
deal of his intellectual pride, stemmed from the
fact, that his knowledge was self-acquired.

There is no doubt that Jack London
had done a wide and indiscriminate reading. He had
read the works of Darwin, Huxley, Spencer along with
his interpreters like Fiske and Saleeby; Karl Marx,
Engels and Nietzsche. He had also read the Greek
philosophers and the later philosophers from Kant
to Spinoza and Hegel to Leibnitz. He had read
Gibbon's 'Decline and fall', of the Roman empire,
history of Europe during the middle ages and the
protestant reformation. He had studied biology,
sociology and anthropology.

Now let us take a rapid survey
of the political, economical, social and literary
situation, when Jack London began to write.

Politically America's confidence in its manifest destiny had reached its acme. America's prospects were bright. There was a general feeling of buoyancy and ebullience. On the other hand, the end of the nineteenth century found America in a state of great social and political unrest. It found expression in the rise of the labour movement, conflict between the capital and the labour, political conflict between the farmers, small business men and workers on the one hand, and the powerful monopolies, on the other.

The easy going days of an economy dominated by agriculture were being replaced by the world of machine, the financial tycoons and the robber barons. This was a period of ferment, of change from frontier to civilization both in physical fact and in national thought.

Commager, has described this transitional period in the following passage, "On one side lies an America still in the making, physically and socially, an America on the whole self-confident, self-contained, self-reliant and conscious of its unique character, and of a unique destiny. On the other, lies the modern America,
predominantly urban and industrial, inextricably involved in world-economy and politics, experiencing profound changes in population, social institution, economy and technology, trying to accommodate the traditional, with the new and alien."

The literature up to 1890 failed to reflect the upward surge in the national life, the coming of industrial age and the growth of cities and the momentous changes in the preceding decade. By 1900, the pioneers of the new literature forged ahead, breaking the outworn tradition of gentility and began to display the vigorous portrayal of modern American life. It was a time of literary change, affected by European realists and naturalists.

Jack London's advent as a writer was timely. His talent coincided with an objective situation, which made his success a foregone conclusion. Within a few years America became a land of phenomenal book and periodical sales. Harper's, Scribner's, Century and Atlantic monthlies were dominating in the beginning, but soon new men like A. Hunsay, J.B. Walker and S.S. McClure, appeared on the scene.

It was a period torn by contradictory views of man and his society, a time in
which the traditional philosophies clashed with Darwinism and social evolutionists. According to O Connor, "The hunger, the passion, the aspiration and contradictions of Jack London were deeply rooted in the troubled times that produced him."

Jack London lived in and played active role in the period of trust busters and muckrakers. Jack London is one of the most significant American writers, to use literature for building the foundation of a better and a more enlightened society. He portrayed in his writing the fundamental issues of his times. Jack London gave to the literature of United States of America, the spirit of social and scientific problems, which excited his contemporaries. Many problems which at that time troubled philosophers, naturalists and sociologists were reflected in Jack London's works. Jack London absorbed from all levels of society, proletarian to intellectual and tried to portray all of them. London characterized and even exaggerated his period's good and bad points.

He showed frank admiration for heroic individualism and at the same time, actively propagated for promotion of equalitarian social measures. His works show him to be a product and
reflector of his period. Jack London succeeded in mirroring the conflicting forces of his times, the tumultuous America at the end of the nineteenth century.

According to Walker, "London combined a love of adventure based largely on personal experience with an inquiring mind that constantly puzzled over the nature of man, and his relations to his environment." The philosophy of gusto became also Jack London's solution to the problems he faced. To all complexities and conflicts of the age, there seemed one answer, to do battle, to win over, to live strenuously. It is significant that the red blooded hero popularized by Jack London and his contemporaries, was the model and self image of an age when America's confidence was at its zenith.

How Jack London brought a change in the nineteenth century literature is brought out by Lynn, "Into the literary hot house, Jack entered as a bracing draft of Arctic air and it decisively changed the course of American fiction."

Now let us examine the various influences on Jack London during his formative
years. Austin Lewis, Frank Strawn Hamilton, George Speed and N.L. Greist influenced Jack London in his socialism. Tom Booth and Jim Whittaker, fellow socialists, created interest in Jack London, for physical exercise and boxing. The theory and practice of Marx was explained to him by Austin Lewis. Hamilton created in him enthusiasm for Spencer and Nietzsche. The name Hamilton appears in his novel, 'Martin Eden' 1909, as one of the radical intellectuals, but it was Russ Brissenden, a character in the same novel, who embodied the best of F.S. Hamilton. Greists are mentioned as Kreis in 'Martin Eden'.

Austin Lewis, who was convinced that Jack London was uncommonly talented, became Jack London's critic, mentor and friend. Frederic Lon Bamford, librarian, and later professor of English, also advised and assisted Jack London. He was impressed and influenced by Conrad's sea-stories. Many of his sea-tales were inspired by him. He was also influenced by H.G. Wells. The phrase, 'People of the abyss', was taken from H.G. Wells and used as a title of one of his social works and as a title of a chapter in the novel, 'Iron Heel'. He was indebted to the
following works of Wells, 'Anticipations', 'The Sleeper Awakens', and an article 'Misery of boots' published in 1907 in Independent Review, for a number of ideas for his novel, 'Iyon Heel'. The word 'samurai' was taken from Modern Utopia. Captain West, a character in his novel, 'Matiny of Elsinore' is described as a samurai, as the superior breed of men, who know things and are masters of life and their fellow men. We find influence of Frank Norris in Jack London's novel, 'Sea Wolf'. Jack London was fascinated by psycho-analysis by reading the works of Freud, Prince and Jung. We detect a Freudian approach in Jack London's novel, 'A Little lady of the big house'.

Kipling, Bret Harte, Gogol, O'Henry, Stevenson, Browning, all have influenced him in one way or other. He used them for ideas and methods in his writings. He became an advocate of Nordic and Anglo-saxon racial supremacy, red-blooded action, brutality and physical force, through Kipling. What Bret Harte did for California, Jack London did for Alaska. Gogol influenced him in violence and gruesomeness. He was influenced by O'Henry
and Stevenson in his short stories.

On April 7, 1900 he married Bess Maddern in a simple ceremony. Two women influenced Jack London at this time. Jane Roulston, a revolutionist, who appears as a character in his novel, 'Iron Heel', and Anna Strunsky, a nineteen year old Russian Jewess. She was a woman of personal charm and magnetism. She was the sterling example of the new woman. Jack London was inspired to cast a new virile heroine, in his novels and short stories modelled on her. They fell in love. It was a Platonic friendship. It was an affair of intellectual passion. The result of their friendship was the book, called 'Kempton-Wace letters' published in 1903. In this joint venture, Jack London took the scientific-intellectual point of view and Anna stood for a romantic-aesthetic approach. The theme of their correspondence was love. They are not exactly love-letters, but letters about the nature of love and what part romantic love plays and what part it ought to play, in the modern life.

In the 'Kempton-Wace letters' 1903 the influence of Anna Strunsky was foremost but we find the influence of Pre-Raphaelites and
the German romanticists also. On January 15, 1901 a female child was born. Bess Maddern became 'mother-woman' and he himself became 'Daddy-boy'.

He was badly defeated in Mayoral elections in the spring of the same year. In December, 1901 he was lucky to receive an offer from Mr. Bret of Macmillans, because 43 out of his 50 books were published by Mac-Millans.

Jack London reached London on August 6, 1902. He studied the miserable conditions of the east end of London, capital of England, by actual personal experience. This provided material for his book, 'The people of the abyss'. 'The call of the wild' published in 1903 was an immediate success and became the best-seller.

At this stage, Charmian Kittredge, and George Sterling became frequent visitors at the London home. Jack London called Sterling as Greek, who became his 'man comrade'. Morally, his influence on Jack London was harmful. Charmian was breaker of traditions. She loved music and played on piano. She liked riding and dancing. Like Anna Strumsky, she was the fore-runner of
the new virile, independent American woman. Many of Jack London's female characters are modelled on Charmian Kittredge. Some critics feel that even his style was influenced by Charmian's style. Jack London deserted Bess Maddern in July, 1903 having fallen in love with Charmian, whom he married later on Nov. 20, 1905, making her, his 'mate-woman'.

Jack London's career as a socialist speaker, was a success. He carefully composed and wrote down his speeches which became nucleus of the socialist essays published in a book form as 'The war of the classes' and 'The Revolution'. In January, 1904 he left for Japan, as a war-correspondent for reporting Russo-Japanese War. He was fond of boxing. He attended prize fights and sometimes reported them for the local press. He even introduced boxing into his work. He published two novels with prize fighters as heroes namely 'The Game', 1905 and the 'Abysmal Brute', 1913, suggested by Dress pugilist written by Sinclair Lewis. Two short stories, 'The Mexican' and 'A piece of steak' also deal with the subject of boxing. The hero of his novel, 'Valley of the Moon', Billy Roberts was a part time prize-fighter.

The earthquake and the devasting
fire of April 18, 1906 in San Francisco has been described with telling effect in his science-fiction, 'The Scarlet Plague', but he first used them in 'Iron Heel', 1907 effectively. The 'Iron Heel' described by London as a homage to Karl Marx was inspired by the 1905 Russian revolution, his Marxian studies and the I.W.W. In writing his pre-historic novel, 'Before Adam', 1907 as a homage to Spencer, Jack London was influenced by the Germ plasm theory of heredity, formulated by the German biologist, August Weismann.

Jack London had read Joshua Slocum's 'Sailing alone around the World'. He was inspired by it to build a boat of his own and cruise round the world. The name Snark, borrowed from Lewis Carroll, was given to the forty five feet long, expensive yacht, costing more than three thousand dollars. He visited Hawaii, Tahiti, Solomon islands in his Snark. This experience, provided him with material for his South sea-stories and novels. After the twenty seven month's cruise, Jack London returned to San Francisco, sad, ill and weary.
For the first time he became aware that he was not indestructible. It was a severe blow, for a man who gloried in his physical strength. Jack London has described this sea-voyage in his juvenile, *The Cruise of the Snark*, 1911. He had a wander-lust up to the end of his life.

Darwin, Huxley, Spencer, Karl Marx, Engels and Nietzsche - these have been the sources mostly influencing Jack London's philosophy. He absorbed the works of Spencer, whose doctrine of the survival of the fittest and the theory of Atavism, were the philosophical foundations of most of his stories about men contending against Nature and each other. It was Spencer's work, which persuaded him to adopt 'The struggle for existence' as his principle theme. According to Walcutt, "Jack London lived (1876-1916) at a time when dramatically new set of ideas, growing out of the theory of evolution, was changing the course of man's thinking. These ideas stimulated, frustrated and tantalized Jack London all his adult years. Darwin and Spencer, messiahs of new creed, became his intellectual mentors, along with Nietzsche and Marx."
Walker comments, "The Social Darwinism which emerged, was to form one of the most persistent and interesting strains in London's writing, the inconsistencies and contradictions of his social Darwinism were to appear boldly in his fiction, there to reflect the inconsistencies and contradictions of the period in which he wrote."

The doctrine of the origin of species by Darwin and the political economy of Karl Marx contributed to Jack London's evolution of a materialistic ideology. According to Geismar, "Jack had become a Marxian materialist, a disciple of evolutionary thought, in its most literary aspects and above all, an advocate of a scientific approach to life, society and art."

Taylor called Jack London, "A scientific materialist, for deriving from Darwin, Huxley and Spencer, his interpretation of life as a process of evolution, governed by the struggle for existence."

Jack London was a confessed Spencerian evolutionist and a Marxian Socialist. Karl Marx was his political lodestar. He also got guidance from the works of Marxian disciples
and followers. Though he had read the 'Communist Manifesto', the principal source of his ideas emanated from Benjamin Kidd's 'Social Evolution', 1894 and 'Principles of Western Civilization'. From the Communist Manifesto he drew the doctrine of class warfare, revolution and the ultimate triumph of the working class over the capitalists.

According to Graham, "He professed to be a socialist, I think in reality, he believed more in life itself than in theories. He wanted his sisters and brothers to have more life." Alfred Kazin says, "He was a socialist by instinct, but he was also a Nietzschean and follower of Spencer, by instinct."

From his youth, Jack London had regarded himself as a superior creature, one born to dominate his fellows, because he was stronger and wiser. He was attracted by the vocabulary and slogans of Nietzsche, like the blond beasts, the superman, live dangerously etc. His mind rejected the Nietzschean doctrine of the superman, but his temperament accepted it with deeper logic.

"I am as you know," Jack London wrote to George P. Brett, the then President of Macmillan Co., "am in the opposite intellectual camp
from that of Nietzsche. Yet no man, in my
camp, stirs me as does Nietzsche." To Mary
Austin, he wrote, "he envisioned the "Sea-
Wolf" and his "Martin Eden" as attacks on the
superman philosophy of Nietzsche."

According to Shepard, "In his
heart and sympathies Jack was a socialist, he
could not forget the sufferings of his past.
But in mind and action, he was an individualist,
he could not forget his achievements. Through-
out his life, he struggled valiantly to recon-
cile those conflicting philosophies."

Irving Stone writes, "All his
life he remained an individualist and a socialist,
he wanted individualism for himself, because he
could conquer and socialism for the masses, who
needed protection."

Margaret Pope feels, "the bias
given by birth and experience as a member of the
proletariat was opposed by his temperamental
egoism and individualism."

Fried comments, "Darwin and Niet-
zsche on one hand and Marx and Engels on the
other, London was to feel attraction of these opposites, all his life and all his life, he continued to play with their fascinating parallels - parallels that moved like warring armies to diametrically opposed conclusions."

Jack London was pre-occupied with the social implications of evolution and through his fiction he popularized the ideas and attitudes of Darwin, Spencer, Nietzsche, Karl Marx and other evolutionary thinkers. According to J.O. Nielsen, "The person who happened to convey the new radical ideas to the masses was Jack London, who besides being a naturalist was also a socialist, Marxist, Nietzschean, evolutionist, exotic and a romantic generally. Ideas were not his strong point and he had no sense of consistency in questions dealing with philosophy. But he had a unique ability of giving life and force to the idea with which he was momentarily possessed and this combined with the innate narrative talent made him one of his era's most widely read authors."

Martin feels that "London was a philosophical rather than literary fictionist."
Margaret Pope sums up Jack London's philosophical position, "In Jack, it is more difficult than Norris to distinguish a coherent approach to life and in confusion of his ideas, in his inability to make theoretical and real coincide, he is more representative of his age. Finding the outlook intolerable, he sought to avoid it in two ways: one by reform propaganda and two, by escape."

Wagenknecht remarks, "Theoretically he was a materialist, socialist, Darwinian and Nietzschean - all in one."

As Carlson puts it, "London concurrently made an emotional, if not rational acceptance of all the four thinkers."

The contradictions of his life and work, are the product of the era which shaped him and his ideas.

According to Whipple, "London manifests with particular clarity, the contradiction, the duality or two facedness which runs through all naturalistic writers and which is presumably an expression of the basic contradiction
in society from which they came. On one hand, they are extremely social, on the other, highly individualistic."

One feels Jack London was a split personality who preached one thing and practised another. Some critics thought he was like two different people. George Sterling once said, "Jack was really two people, one is a mixer, a go-getter, the other is hungry for an ivory tower where he can be an artist."

According to Ruth Franchere, "London was like two different people. One was warm-hearted person, who wrote articles, without thought of payment, in which he advocated socialism, but the other person, was the highest paid writer in America, who lived in grand style, in his ranch apart from the world and wondered why he was lonely."

Lloyd Harris comments, "There occurred a conflict between social ideals and personal ambition which he was never able to resolve. It left a deep fissure in his moral nature and produced a startling inconsistency
in his life and his writing."

37 Walker feels that "London could mix with enthusiasm the manifest destiny of Kipling, the belief in free will and eventual cosmic justice of Browning, the materialism of Ernest Haeckel, the social Darwinism of Spencer, the economic determinism of Marx and rugged individualism of Nietzsche."

33 Simpson concludes that "this paradoxical man is neither proletarian nor plutocrat." London thought of himself as a thinker first, and then a writer. He says in his novel, "

"Paradise of Elsinore" "Paradoxes! I admit it. All deep thinkers are drowned in the sea of contradictions. I don't know what I know, nor what I think, I think."

There is no doubt that ambivalences and contradictions do exist in London, and no amount of manipulations will make London a consistent thinker.

40 McChintock says, "In his excitement with his own intellectual and artistic growth and in haste to communicate his new found strong truths, ambivalence necessarily resulted, ambiva-
- 36 -

-lence between ideals and actuality. Later London recognized the lack of logical consistency in him."

Contradictions are due to his habit of dramatizing anything and every thing, including the philosophical ideas. Conflict between those ideas lend dramatic interest to his work. According to Walcutt, "What amounts to London's immense and continued popularity is his ideas. Ideas distinguish his novels and stories from the thousands of action stories that so regularly appear and disappear. His ideas have the same appeal today that they had to London's contemporaries."

Jack London was proud of his powerful and attractive personality. Young, strong and good looking, he made a fine impression. Whipple calls him a precocious wonder-boy, with an excellent physique and excellent mind. He could be called a nihilist, egoist and Narcissist. On his Wednesday night dinners, he was lionized and praised. The flattery, especially of women, aroused in him egotism and personal vanity. Joseph Noel brands him as a sexual anar-
- 37 -

-ehist. In the carmel circle of his friends, he became famous as a stallion. He had earned a reputation as a libertine, a notably free spirit in his Bohemian circle of the Piedmont hills. As a hedonist, he believed that resisting temptation was a waste of will power.

There was glamour, courage and excitement in Jack London. The first and baffling thing in the study of his life is his immense versatility and many-sidedness. Jack London knew the value of publicity. In fact, he courted popularity. He believed that one must be written about, talked about, outside the literary circles to acquire a general readership.

Jack displayed, both restlessness and impatience with the established institutions and conventions. By nature and training he was an extreme idealist and revolutionist. He was impulsive, tempestuous and flambouyant. He was at times intemperate, intolerant and mercurial. He was a rebel and stormy petrel. According to Pattee, "Like an unheralded comet, he shocked, horrified and thrilled the American people from 1900 to 1916. He was the startling
figure in that loud-voiced Kipling-awayed
decade before the war." Upton Sinc'Fair was
of the opinion that Jack London was always a
bit childish and he was forever being carried
away by new ideas.

Jack London had a prophetic
vision. He was the first man to anticipate
Fascism and Nazism through his novel, 'The
Iron Heel'. He had anticipated the inventions
of nuclear power and inter-continental ballis-
tic missiles. He had also faith in man's ulti-
mate conquest of outer space. We get a glimpse
of his attitude towards man and his future in
the following poem of Jack London.

"Of man of future! who is able to describe him?
Perhaps he breaks our globe into fragments
In a time of warlike games.
Perhaps he hurls death through the firmament,
Man of the future! He is able to aim at the stars,
To harness the comets,
And to travel in space, among the planets."

In spite of his avowed faith in
materialism, we discern traces of spiritualism as
exemplified in his novel, 'The Star-Rover'. 
Jack London was a materialist, who believed that all matter was composed of the same fabric. Jack London was a colourful and thought-making mixture of materialistic intellectualism and sentimental intellectual emotionalism. Thus in 1914 Jack London wrote, "I am a hopeless materialist. I believe that with my death I am just as much obliterated, as the last mosquito, you and I smashed."

Jack London was a man of extravagance and exuberance plunged into every thing with super-charged energy. Jack London was forced to be a fighter from his boyhood. His was a turbulent spirit, conceiving and living a dynamic and challenging life. He had a lust of life.

London was a tremendous worker, he was a dynamo of unguessable power. According to Jesperson, "London lived with an intensity not likely ever to be topped. Even Hemingway can not match London in his lust for adventure, hectic living and drinking. Jack was emotional by nature and could never stay with any routine project. Every thing he undertook, assumed exaggerated proportions. He was in debt although he earned fantastic sums..."
as an author."

He was a humanist. Always open-handed he gave to every needy person, who asked for help and took great pains to help budding writers. According to Walker, "He was in the purest sense of the term a humanist. He was at heart one, who believed strongly in fellowmen."

Jack London was a realist as well as a romanticist. According to Rothberg, "Jack is an American myth, a combination of personal myths, he created about himself and a national myth, he represented in his life and work. London is the Horatio Alger myth of the poor boy. He is also the revolutionary myth of the rebel. London not only showed the inherent virtues of the American character - our energy, love of action, strenuous life, our generosity, courage and concern for social justice - he also portrayed our most pernicious vices - our contentiousness, violence, recklessness, materialism and our love of change for its own sake."

According to Evans, "Jack London was a strange mixture of contradictions." A heavy
drinker, he denied that he was an alcoholic, a socialist himself, he had faith in the right of the Anglo-saxon to dominate the coloured people and he possessed landed estate. Generous to a fault, he lacked the art of evoking gratitude. Hospitable, he delighted in playing unpleasant practical jokes on his guests."

Erbentraut comments, "Jack himself was surely protean. He could be tough and gentle, optimist or pessimist, sullen or kind, misanthrope or altruist, individualist or a militant socialist or a combination of all."

According to Labor, "his nature was contradictory and his mood extreme, big hearted and generous to the verge of bankruptcy, he had a talent for petty squabbles and invective, a humanitarian with profound compassion for the underdog, regardless of colour or class, he believed in Anglo-saxon racial supremacy, he was the manliest of man, yet he never outgrew his weakness for childish fun, games, practical jokes and candy, despite his love for outdoor and his reputation as a superman, his medical history is an appalling record of debilitating ailments, a tough fighter
and relentless, when his ego was challenged, he was a warm sensitive friend and a sentimental lover despite his reputation as a crude red blooded naturalist, his fictional treatment of sex was embarrassingly genteel, self-educated, he considered himself a great thinker, yet could accommodate the disparate philosophical attitudes of Nietzsche, Marx, Spencer, Haeckel and Kidd."

His favourite animal was wolf. According to Ann Upton, "He signed his letters as wolf, he built wolf-house, he had a grey wolf as yet, wolf head adorned his book marks, wolves appear as character in his novels and short stories, the word wolf appears in the title of many; he himself liked to be called wolf. We find archetypal image of wolf as both preserver and destroyer in his works."

Jack London had acquired an estate of 1500 acres in Sonoma Valley. He had planted numerous Eucalyptus trees. He was earning more than 75,000 dollars, but he was spending much more than that. His last years were unhappy. On August 22, 1913, wolf-house on which he had spent more than 80,000 dollars was gutted with sudden
fire, the real cause of which was never known.
Due to heavy drinking, he was suffering from
Uremia. He had become fat and unshapely. Writing
was a drudgery, but he had to do it. His 'Authors
League of America', secured the copy-right law
for the writers. He failed miserably as a busi-
nessman. His ambition to make his ranch self-
sufficient was a fiasco. In March, 1914, London
went to Veracruz as a war correspondent for report-
ing the Mexican War. His views startled his fellow socialists. He wanted American intervention in
Mexico. He was for the allied cause in the first
great world war, and wanted total annihilation of
Germany. He resigned from the socialist party in
1916.

Jack London and Charmian returned
to Glen Ellen in August, 1916. On November 21, 1916
at night, he deliberately took a fatal dose of nar-
cotic morphine, possibly to avoid intense pain and
suffering. He died at 7.45 p.m. on Nov.22, 1916.

Jack London had died at the age
of forty, but had packed into his life, experience
sufficient for a hundred other men. According to
Erbentraut, "In forty years he lived more life
than forty lesser men in forty years."
According to Irving Stone, "Jack died at the young age of 40, yet he is one of the few men of our times, about whom it can be said, he got all of his life lived."

Jack London had written about the way of life he would like to lead, "I would rather be a superb meteor, every atom of me in magnificent glow, than a sleepy and permanent planet. The proper function of man is to live, not to exist. I shall not waste my days, in trying to prolong them. I shall use my time."

His life was a fulfilment of his desire. Everybody who reads the life and works of Jack London will agree with Robin Lampson, when he wrote in his poem, 'Jack London'.

"He is not dead! upon the written page, His greatness stands a thing indelible. Which shall, like wine, gain flavour with its age."

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