The Diamond As Big As The Ritz Essay, Research Paper

Faces of the Diamond – Essay on The Diamond as big as the Ritz

"Diamond ? was designed utterly for my own amusement. I was in a mood characterized by a perfect craving for luxury, and the story began as an attempt to feed that craving on imaginary foods." Craving is a strong, urgent and persistent desire. According to Buddhist teachings, desire is the root to all the sufferings and injustices in the world. If it were the goal of mankind to abandon their desires for excessive needs, the world would be a peaceful and harmonious place. Throughout history, there had also been great prophets such as Isaiah and other outstanding preachers who made daring attempts to convert and lead mankind back to the Lord, our God. However, their words of wisdom fell upon deaf ears for evilness can be very seductive. With a similar task to those of the prophets and preachers, the author F. Scott Fitzgerald, also known as the poet of the Jazz Age, criticizes the American society in a different approach. By stressing and emphasizing on the society?s worst features, the faults of its members will be greatly magnified and clearly defined. This literary genre of satire is employed by Fitzgerald in his novelette, "the Diamond as Big as the Ritz" to ridicule the American society on the terms of the corruption of the American dream, the maltreatment of human life and the limits to the power of wealth.

Before the dawning of the Jazz Age, the American dream stood for hard work, honesty, virtue, and morality, as any individual of the society is able to achieve success and rise to a higher level of material living regardless of one?s origin. As time proceeded, Americans began to strive for their goal through underhanded tactics thus corrupting the main principles of the utopian dream. Hence, the American dream has now become a satirical term that is known for crime, deceit, stealing, and killing. "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz" features Braddock Tarleton Washington, the richest man on Earth, as one who rises to ultimate power without having to work for it. Born a direct descendent of George Washington, Braddock only takes care to protect his prized possession, the world?s biggest diamond rivaling in size with the Ritz-Carlton Hotel. His task is easily accomplished by simply killing and imprisoning those who accidentally stumble upon his property and learn of his secret possession. In life, Braddock never encounters any obstacles or problems, all were provided for him at birth and he doesn?t know what it means to lose. "This is a golf course", he continued, as they strolled along the velvet winter grass. "It?s all green, you see ? no fairway, no rough, no hazards." Braddock has an exacting personality ? utterly uninterested in any ideas or opinions except his own, he enjoys playing games where he makes his own rules. For anyone who opposes him would be killed in cold blood. The megalomaniac also has little regards for human life, the sailors that he captured for intrusion were unjustly condemned to life sentence by him; his slaves would be tortured or murdered if they shall disobey him in any way. "There go fifty thousand dollars? worth of slaves," cried Kismine, "at prewar prices. So few Americans have any respect for property."

Another aspect of the American dream believed that all men were created equal and that all were given the freedom to aspire. The idea of introducing slavery into the system directly contradicts the belief of justice and freedom. Slavery gives power to the enforcers while eliminating the rights of the enslaved. Fitz-Norman Culpepper Washington, Braddock?s father, read his slaves a proclamation that he had composed which announced that the shattered Southern armies were reorganized from the remains of the Civil War and they defeated the North in a one pitched battle, his slaves believed him implicitly. Through this satirical event, Fitzgerald expresses his idea to the readers that many forms of slavery still exist today. After all, it is human?s innate desire to covet material goods and power. Slavery may also exist in other forms besides the possession of human individuals. For example, all of those who crave for luxury are slaves to materials and money. "The simple piety prevalent in Hades has the earnest worship of and respect for riches as the first article of its creed ? had John felt other wise than radiantly humble before them, his parents would have turned away in horror at the blasphemy." Human lives should be cherished and people should not be considered as personal property. However, through the eyes of those who possess great power in the hierarchy of society, they view human lives as objects that could be suspended for whatever the purpose. "We?ve got half a dozen anti-aircraft guns and we?ve arranged it so far ? but there?ve been a few deaths and a great many prisoners. Not that we mind that, you know, father and I?"

"The Diamond as Big as the Ritz" may be objectionably satiric about wealth, but it speaks the truths regarding the absurdity that exists within the bounds of civilization. Individuals are no longer judged by who they are, but rather by what they have. "The richer a fella is, the better I like him." John T. Unger, the eighteen year old protagonist of the story, originated from a small town called Hades, which is named after the Greek mythological underworld where the spirits of the dead dwelled. John and his family belonged to the richer class of the society and they strictly believed in the concepts of materialism. John recognizes the evils in Braddock?s work but he did not despise it until he learns that his life was in grave danger, just as those that knew of the world?s largest diamond?s existence. In a materialistic world, money is an ultimate source of power because most people are vulnerable to the temptations of material wealth. Braddock Washington, the world?s most powerful individual possessing absolute power, brought about absolute destruction upon himself when he failed to control his power properly. On the verge of losing everything he owned, Braddock had no other alternatives but to turn to the religious sentiment; not by the means of praying and hoping, but by attempting to bribe God with diamonds. "There was no one else with whom he had ever needed to treat or bargain." One must be extremely conceited and ignorant to even dream of bribing God with materials and offerings, but after all, miracles and prayers are the last refuges of the scoundrel. Braddock was forced to pay for his crimes with all of his possessions, including his own life. The mountain, which his palace rested upon, was completely consumed by the blast of an explosion, sending a positive message to the readers stating that eventually the morally corrupted bring destruction upon themselves.

As a result, the corruption of the American dream, the maltreatment of human life and the limits to the power of wealth are the terms that were ridiculed by Fitzgerald in his novelette "the Diamond as Big as the Ritz" to criticize the evils of the American society. Satire, a literary device, was employed by the author to stress and emphasize upon the sins committed by the members of the society. Although Fitzgerald has taken a different approach of defending truth and justice, his task is similar to the works of the great prophets and preachers of the ancient times. Nevertheless, if mankind were to stop busing their methods of achieving their desire for excessive needs, there will be minimal sufferings and injustices in the world, thus evilness will cease to exist.