

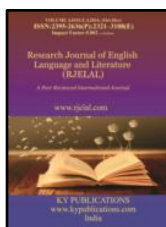


A STUDY ON MARXISM IN CHARLES DICKENS'S *THE GREAT EXPECTATIONS & HARD TIMES*

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ABSTRACT

The present study is an attempt to deal with the class division in British society during the Victorian period tackling Charles Dickens's novel *Hard Times* as a case-study. It comes to show the differences and the inequalities between the three social classes which existed in that period, the upper, the middle, and the lower classes. Also, its goal to show that *Hard Times* portrays the reality of social injustice in the Victorian period of Britain history. The study analysis will be done through comparing the realities of the Victorian period or Victorian time with the realities that described in Charles Dickens's novel *Hard Times*. Another novel of Charles Dickens's *Great Expectation* is the history of the village boy who puts himself up in the social life by because of one exceptional event.

Key Words: Social Class, Differences, Literature, Marxism, Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* and *Great Expectations*.

INTRODUCTION

Literature is commonly classified as two major forms, as fiction and non-fiction and two major techniques, as poetry and prose. It may consist of texts based on factual information, such as polemical works as well as autobiography and reflective easy as well as bellas-letters. According to historical periods Literature can be classified into genres and political influences. The concept of genres, which was earlier limited, has been broadened over the centuries.

British Literature is literature in the language of English from the United Kingdom, Isles of Man, and Island's Channel. Anglo-Saxon literature is included, and there is some discussion of Anglo-Norman and Latin literature, where literatures in these languages relate to the early development of the English Language and English Literature. There is some brief discussion of major figures that was

writes in Scots, but the main discussion is in the various Scottish Literature articles.

Novel means "A Novel is a long, fictional narrative which describes intimate human experiences. The novel in the modern era usually makes use of a literary prose style, and the development of the prose novel at this time was encouraged by innovations of cheap paper, in the fifteenth century". A novel is any relatively long, and it has been written work of narrative fiction, normally in prose, and typically published as a book in English Language.

The Genre have been describing as "a continuous and comprehensive history of about two thousand years," with its origins in classical Rome and Greece, in medieval and its early modern romance, and in the tradition of the novella. *Hard Times* tells about Dickens' increased interest in class issues and social commentary. In contrast to the earlier work, and it's like the more "playful" novel,

Hard Times has been seen by critics as being more in line with the novels that were published immediately before it. While *Hard Times* does not have the epic proportions of Dickens's some other work, the concern for the plight of the poor and the hypocrisy of the free time class is more explicit than it had been previously.

Dickens's great *Expectations* depict in this novel a lot of social injustice over and above the individual injustices found in several persons. All his property was forfeited to the crown showing that social justice was conspicuous by its absence. Dickens does not suggest any solution to be sure. It is for social reformers to formulate and implement.

MARXISM IN CHARLES DICKENS'S *HARD TIMES* AND *GREAT EXPECTATIONS*

A system of economic, social political philosophy based on ideas that view social change in terms of economic factors. A central tenet is that the means of production is the economic base that influences or determines the political life. Under the theory of Marxism, outdated class structure were supposed to be overthrown with the force of revolution instead of being replaced through patient modification. It is held that as Capitalism has succeeded feudalism, it will be replaced by a dictatorship of his workers proletariat called socialism, followed quickly and inevitably by a class society which governs itself without a governing class or structure.

The new economic and political structure of the world it seems to be moving as far away from the ones outlined by Marxism. It is a form of socio-economic analysis which analyses relations of class and society conflict by using a materialist interpretation of historical development and a view of dialectical social transformation.

THE MEANING OF THE TITLE

Hard Times is a novel with a distinct social purpose. The expression "*Hard Times*" generally means a period of slump or depression when food is scanty, when wages are low, and when unemployment is widespread. However, Dickens has not used this phrase in that sense. What Dickens means by this phrase is a general state of affairs in which the lives of people are inhibited or restricted and in which people are prevented from giving a free and spontaneous outlet to their natural feelings

and sentiments. The phrase implies a kind of bondage to routine and calculation which result from mechanisation and industrialism.

THE OTHER SOCIAL PURPOSE

The second social purpose of *Hard Times* is more difficult to define. It seems to be concerned with a radical criticism of the very structure of society. Dickens is opposed to the oppression of the poor and of the workers by the rich. But this attitude is partly obscured by his wish to attack, simultaneously, a particular school of economic thinkers, so that his conclusions in that direction remain indistinct. Besides, other elements interfere with the clarity and pungency with which social ideas are expressed in this novel.

A KIND OF SOCIALISM

Handicapped by his distrust of workers' union, Dickens did not succeed in putting forward a clear and coherent thesis. His attitude can be defined as a kind of sentimental socialism. He was conscious of the existence of a problem, but it was one that acted on his emotions rather than on his intelligence. The solutions that he perhaps contemplated were of the benevolent, patronizing kind. He placed his trust in the kindness of enlightened employers to secure for the workers the decent life to which they had a right.

THE SOCIAL PURPOSE BEHIND '*HARD TIMES*'

This novel was Dickens's first story of outright social protest. Earlier works had contained sections of social criticism, but this was the first motivated entirely by the writer's feelings about contemporary British culture. The novel, appropriately dedicated to Thomas Carlyle, another critic of nineteenth-century British society, was based upon personal observations of life in Manchester, one of England's great manufacturing towns and the original for Dickens' *Coke town*. The story is loaded with the bitter sincerity of Dickens's dislike for the industrial conditions he found in his homeland.

Unfortunately for the value of the novel as a social document, Dickens overdrew his portraits of the industrialists became sheer grotesques and monster.

ATTACK ON TWO SIDES OF VICTORIAN CULTURE

Two aspects of the mid-nineteenth century England are chosen for attack in *Hard Times*. In *Bounder* by he has drawn the picture of the capitalist employer who seeks shelter in laissez-faire economic doctrines to fill his own pockets at the expense of the poor. Thomas Gradgrind presents a system of education that stresses only facts and figures and so-called scientific theories to the complete exclusion of the gentler and nobler impulses of the heart. A combination of both, the economic system of *Bounderby* and the educational system of Gradgrind turns England into a heap of rubbish inhabited mostly by unimaginative slaves. *Hard Times*, rightly in the words of G.K. Chesterton, is the expression of a righteous indignation which cannot even condescend to pathos.

HARD TIMES

Thus, *Hard Times* is a criticism of the contemporary industrial conditions, British culture of utilitarian's and their economic principle based on Facts and Figures, of the prevailing divorce laws that favoured only the rich and could be used by those who had money and ignored the poor. It was influenced by Carlyle's economic faith. Dickens felt that a dependence upon capitalistic practicality without reference to sympathy and brotherly understanding causes continued difficulties in relations of capital of the educational system, the caste system, and divorce laws.

Yet all this does not mean that *Hard Times* is a piece of propaganda. In Fact, the novel should be judged on its artistic merits: it should not be underestimated because of narrative insufficiency, nor overestimated because its thesis appeals to the reader who is concerned with weakness in the capitalistic system. Dickens condemns *Laissez Faire* capitalism. Dickens utters a prophetic warning to utilitarian economists, skeletons of school masters, commissionaires of Fact' and calls upon them to cultivate in the poor "the utmost graces of the fancies and affections to adorn their lives so much in need of ornament" because otherwise "Reality" will turn "Wolfish" and take its revenge. Only through a cultivation of art, human feelings, and the imaginative faculty it is possible to counter the

monstrous cruelty of the industrial system which nourishes only materialism and the lust for money.

THE CORRUPTING POWER OF MONEY- THE MAIN THEME

A reading of the novel *Great Expectations* shows that Dickens has dealt with a number of themes. Critics have accordingly pointed out many themes which they find embodied in the story. Some of the these theme are: crime and its punishment; the poor orphan making good in life; justice and the law; the dignity of labour; the relationship between the instincts and the affections: the power of money and class-consciousness. But the governing theme of this book may be regarded as the greed for money and class-consciousness and the corrupting influence which they produce upon human beings in a materialistic society.

SOCIAL INJUSTICE

There is a lot of injustice, too, depicted in this novel: not only the injustice which individual exerted by money-values and otherwise, but also the injustice done by society collectively towards different individuals. The manner in which the constables investigate the murderous assault on Mrs. Gargery is described by Dickens in a satirical manner. The description of conditions in English prisons during the Victorian age also reveals the injustice of society as a whole to human beings. When Pip has paid a visit to Newgate prison, he carries a sense of shame on him, and he tells us: 'He beat the prison dust off his feet as Mrs. Gargery sauntered to and fro, and He shook it out of his dress, and He exhaled its air from my lungs''. At the time, they are told, jails were much ignored, and the period of reaction against public wrong-doing which was still far off. The treatment meted out to prisoners was most callous.

The same criticism of the kind of legal justice that prevailed in the Victorian age is to be found in the manner in which a description is given of convicts being sentenced at the sessions. Pip gives us a shocking account of the manner in which thirty-two men and women were sentenced to death: "some defiant, some stricken with terror, some sobbing and weeping, some covering their faces, some staring gloomily about''. The picture of

the judge reading out his judgment against Magwitch is quite depressing. In fact, at this stage they begin to sympathize with Magwitch deeply in spite of the fact that he has a criminal past. Magwitch's account of his criminal career shows that society was partly to blame for his criminality and in the concluding chapters they again find that society is responsible for the excessive punishment given to a criminal even when he is repentant and reformed.

In short, the over-all impression that they have of Magwitch is that of a man more sinned against than sinning. In this context, Jagger's account of the dangers to which children were exposed also fills us with a sense of outrage against society: Jagger saved Molly's child to protect it from those dangers which he describes to Pip. Each of the chief characters in this novel seeks an identity of the self within a society which is riddled with injustice, greed and cruelty. Each of the chief characters is in isolation, yet entangled with others in a common guilt. Each is forced to face the mystery of evil, passion and pain. Reconciliation and forgiveness and understandings: that the true identity and escape from isolation are reached in humility and compassion. It is symbolized in Pip's feelings towards Magwitch after his capture towards the end of the novel: "For now my repugnance to him had all melted away".

CRITICAL OBSERVATION OF THE SOCIETY

The Evils of his contemporary society have been critically observed and satirically criticised by Dickens in almost all of his novels. In *Great Expectations* the class distinctions and how they breed unrest and discontent have been somewhat alluded to. Pip hailed from the low class and he was helped by another member of his class who became rich to become a "gentleman" and therefore one akin to the moneyed gentry. He was able to avert the grosser dangers of an unlimited affluence. The labour of the depressed and exploited masses goes a long way to build the mansions and magnificent edifices of the few rich.

Pip himself became indebted to the patronage of a socially degraded criminal in regard to the gentility he was able to acquire. Viewed from a socialistic point of view the respectable society

itself owes everything, all the advantages it acquires, to the working class. But is the society grateful to them when the truth is revealed to them? Pip becomes annoyed when the source was revealed to him. Orlick is painted as the representative of the immoral element among the working classes. When the question of morality comes, Dickens defends it with all the vehemence he can command. All his criticism of money and its corrupting influence becomes secondary when the question of morality crops up.

SUMMATION

It is now revealed that the mysterious old woman is Bounderby's own mother whom he had deserted. Rachael's worry about Stephen grows more and more at this time as Stephen is looked upon by everybody as something sinister. One day while walking along the moor with Sissy, Rachael finds the old hat been killed by the real criminal. But Sissy is more composed and calm. She comes closer to the old Hill Shaft and speculates that Stephen could have fallen into it. She goes quickly for help. Stephen is pulled out of the pit. He is a broken man but alive yet. He sends for Rachael and informs her that in his anxiety to clear himself he walked through the night and fell into the pit. He calls Gradgrind to his side and asks him to clear his name. Tom knows everything and he will be able to tell the real truth. Stephen has cleared his account with the world. He now takes Rachael's hands in his and is taken to the doctor's place. But on his way he dies with his hand still in Rachael's. Stephen and Rachael cherish for each other love which may be said to be hopeless. But it is marked by a remarkable depth and tenderness in the face of the ironies of life.

Charles Dickens is a social critic, who presented the social conflicts in his novels. In *Great Expectations* he presents the picture of the society suffers from many evils. He observed the society with its cruelty, greed and injustice. In fact he was a realist who wanted to expose the corruption of society. Thus the novel *Hard Times* is a piece of social criticism. It is a mild attack on capitalism, industrialism, marriage and divorce laws, hypocrisy and false pride of the upper classes, trade unionism, utilitarianism and laissez faire.

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