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Probing *Great Expectations*: A Re-analysis

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Abstract

Charles Dickens, a prolific, literary figure of Victorian era- reelects through and exquisite picture of whole Victorian England society. He is a writer of humanitarian novels and turns the light of knowledge upon a great Variety of English scene and characters, especially upon workhouses, debtors, prisons shops hovels of the poor, law offices, dark sheets and dark alleys the England haunts and hiding places of vice, crime pain. He knew his people best and gave them what they wanted. In his novel *Great Expectations*, Dickens explored some significant issues regarding high- and lower-class system of Victorian society.

Keywords: Humanitarian, Realism, Workhouses, Lower-Class System, High Class Sensibility

In Victorian society, Charles Dickens become very popular because he harnessed his pen for

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the amelioration of the suffering and pathetic conditions of the port factory workers, little children groaning under the whips of tyrannical school masters and litigants moving about law courts without getting any justice. Dickens tried to arouse public consciousness to these evils. Dickens, a prolific, literary figure of Victorian era- reelects through and exquisite picture of whole Victorian England society. He is a writer of humanitarian novels and turns the light of knowledge upon a great Variety of English scene and characters, especially upon workhouses, debtors, prisons shops hovels of the poor, law offices dark sheets and dark alleys the England haunts and hiding places of vice, crime pain. He knew his people best and gave them what they wanted. Dickens never wrote down to his public. He was a part of his public. His books were not made, they were born.

Dickens was essentially the novelist of England life. It was within his range of portray England streets, lamps, courts and middle-class life. The changes brought by the industrial revolution found the echo in the novels of dickens. He knew from painful experience of life of the workshop. The office and terrible life of the street. At eleven years age he went to work in the cellar of a blacking factory. He worked from dawn to dusk for a few pennies. We can see in the sources that intimate knowledge of the hearts of the poor and outcast which was to be reflected in his novels. His experiences of his childhood from the warp and woof of his novels are presented with his acute sensibility and plastic imagination to enlist the sympathy of reader for the suffering humanity. Dickens was too much of his age. Like the Victorian public he was himself a sentimentalist. He failed to bring about any substantial social changes since he more or less agreed to the contemporary social institutions. He was not a revolutionary like Shelley or Shaw. This may lead the Marxist to claim that he disfigures reality and is a bourgeois artist. But this is the thing that makes him so thoroughly a Victorian. His novels are pen portraits of the Victorian scene. They coloured in the sentimentalism because the Victorian living in an age of doubts and disputes saw everything through a coloured glass. To present the coloured vogue in a hazy Victorian atmosphere, Dickens disclosed his own vision. His novels always reflect the Victorian society.

Great Expectations is one of the Dickens' noted novels. Victorian era basically presents some features such as virtue, strength, thrift, manners, cleanliness, honesty and chastity. These are the morals that Victorian people used to hold with high esteem. In this novel, Dickens has created some Victorian characters that we have seen both in good working way or not at all. Here in this novel Dickens was concerned about the educational system in Victorian era where the lower-class people get less opportunities of getting proper education. From the beginning to the end of the novel, Dickens explored some significant issues regarding high- and lower-class system of Victorian society which did fluctuate from the greatest woeful criminal named a Magwitch to the needy people of the swamp country, where Joe and Biddy were the symbols of the regime.

A little orphaned boy named Philippe Pirip is the hero of this book. It's simplified to Pip. He resides with the well-built sister and the caring blacksmith, Joe Gargory, her partner. In a forest, there is the first scene of the book. Pip encounters a convicted man, Magwitch,

who has fled from the prison ship and brought on his leg a long iron cord. The prisoner convinces Pip to get him some food and a file; which he does, while the Christmas night is spent by his relatives and his mates. Miss Havisham's house is the next scene of the plot. This is a lady that is utterly eccentric. Her husband prevents her on the day of her reception, sacrificing all her life's aspirations to move back. In her home, Pip loves young Estella who, despite the encouragement of Miss Havisham, does not return his affection. Later, Pip will be told that, on behalf of a mysterious one, he should go to London to be learned and a gentleman. He assumes Miss Havisham is the benefactor. Pip returns to the village to attend his sister's funeral, who is struck with a hammer on the head. Now he's just beginning to glance at the living. Herbert Pocket is one of these. Miss Havisham's relative and the other one is Bentley Drummle, admiring Estella. The old prisoner Magwitch again emerges in Pip's life and connects Pip's misguided conviction. He claims he's the benefactor of Pip. He served in Australia and was lucky enough to teach Pip in London. Pip believes he's still in danger. He would be hanged for interring England unlawfully if Magwitch is discovered. Save the benefactor and aid him run back to Australia, Pip allows his best attempt. Pip learned several terrible details in a fearful and confusing environment, which made him lose his hopes. The latter returned to England, Compeyson, the other Marshes inmate, and Magwitch's first adversary learns all these. Pip is going to risk his life attempting to import Magwitch from England. Compeyson leads them in a police boat as he rams Magwitch out of a large cargo ferry. Compeyson sacrifices his livelihood, and, in the midst of the consecutive adverse incidents, Magwitch gets hurt, but he regains his health. He's nursed by Joe his old buddy and guardian. The novel concludes with Jones and Biddy's marriage: Miss Havisham died, and Estella's and Pip's well-doing in India lost their riches and their homelands. The last pages say of a meeting in Miss Havisham's home, where they met first, between Pip and Estella in the very yard. They go forever, hopefully.

An attitude of cruelty is obvious in the manner in which Pip as a child is treated by those, with the exception of Joe and Biddy, with whom he comes into contact. Pip's own sister, Mrs. Margery, who has brought him up "by hand", is a very hard-hearted woman who treats Pip most roughly, completely disregarding the effect of her ill-treatment on an impressionable mind. Mrs. Margery is constantly scolding Pip, coming down heavily on him for minor lapses or for no lapses at all. She constantly reminds Pip of the great sacrifices which she has made in order to bring him up and rear him. She takes pleasure in cataloguing in his presence the illnesses though which she has tended him and ordeals which she believes herself to have gone through in the performance of her duties as Pip's foster-mother. She has been making a frequent use of "Tickler", the name which she has given to the cane with which she often chastises Pip. Mrs. Margery's treatment of her husband Joe is equally inconsiderate and callous. Joe feels utterly helpless in the face of the ill-temper of his wife, and has reconciled himself to her shrewish behavior. He tells Pip that this woman is "given to government", that she treats both of them as if she were a mogul, that when she is "on the rampage", which is very often, she is a "Buster", Pip tells us that he was treated by his sister "as if had insisted on being born, in opposition to the dictates of reason,

religion, and morality, and against the dissuading arguments of my best friends.” Pip says that even when he was taken to have a new suit of clothes, the tailor had orders to make like a kind of reformatory, and on no account to him have the free use of hislimbs. And it is not only Mrs. Gargery who treats Pip thus. Pumblechook, Wopsle, and the Hubbles aid and abet her in this ill-treatment of the growing boy. Pip develops a strong hatred for all these persons because they all ride rough-shod over his feeling. Pumblechook is constantly urging Pip never to forget the favour that Mrs. Gargery has done to him by bringing him up. “Hold up you hear, boy, and be forever grateful to them which so did do”, (39) says Pumblechook to Pip with reference to those who have brought up the boy. Pumblechook sits always “supervising Pip with a depreciatory eye”, (43) especially after he has introduced Pip to Miss Havisham. Pumblechook now speaks to Pip in most patronizing tone as if he were “the architect of Pip’s fortunes” (62). Wopsle tries to humiliate Pip by comparing him with a swine and pointing him out as an example of the gluttony of a pig. Mrs. Hubble looks at Pip “with a mournful pre sentiment that he will come to no good”, and Mr. Hubble describes the boy as “naturally vicious”. (81)

Nor is Pip as a boy treated any better by Miss Havisham and Estella. Estella is frankly haughty towards Pip; she calls him “coarse and common”; she is contemptuous of his manners; she is proud and insulting in her treatment of him. When she gives him something to eat and drink on the occasion of his first visit, she behaves as insolently as if he were “a dog in disgrace”, and Pip tells us that he was “humiliated, hurt, spurned, offended”. On the occasion on of his second visit, she given him a slap cutting him a “Blue coarse monster”, Nor does Pip receive much kindness from Miss Havisham who repeatedly asks Estella to “beggar” him, and instigates her to exercise all her charms upon the boy in order to bewitch him “Break their hearts, break their hearts, and have no mercy”, says Miss Havisham to Estella. And Estella really grows into a merciless breaker of hearts, feeling absolutely no affection and love for anyone, not even for Miss Havisham, Even Mr. Jaggars speaks to Pip, when Pip first happens to meet him at miss Havisham’s house, in an admonitory tone, making most emphatic use of his forefinger.

The manner in which Miss Havisham brings up Estella is another striking example of the cruelty that human beings are capable of. Miss Havisham has herself been treated cruelly and unjustly by her lover who deserted her at the last moment after robbing her of a considerable amount of money. Miss Havisham has become an embittered woman carrying a deep scene of wrong. She hardens Estella’s heart and makes it impossible for Estella to respond to others. She brings up Estella in the candle-lit darkness and decay of Estella’s house, and destroys Estella’s capacity to live in the daylight of natural affections, Estella knows that as Drummle’s wife, she will be no blessing to her husband, and this is what she tells Pip in advance because she is fully aware of Miss Havisham’s success in having stolen her heart away and having put ice in its place. Other cases of cruelty which reinforce the picture presented above are the attitude of Miss Havisham’s half-brother, Arthur, towards her and his machinations against her: Molly’s committing a murder because of her jealousy of the other woman, Orlick’s murderous assault on Mrs. Gargery and his attempt to kill

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Pip; the merciless beating which Joe's father used to give to Joe's mother in a state of drunkenness. Nor can ignore the callousness which Pip himself shows towards his best friends and well-wishers, Joe and Biddy, in his days of prosperity.

Most of the characters in the novel show hankering after the money. On the occasion of his second visit to Miss Havisham's house, Pip sees a number of her relative whom he rightly describes as "toadies and Humbugs", These relative are jealous of Pip, and yet, in his day of prosperity, they "Fawn upon him with the basest meanness". Herbert-himself an excellent man though he is, not totally free from greed. Early in the story, we see Herbert prowling about Miss Havisham's house in the hope that the rich old woman might favor him with her patronage. Otherwise too, Herbert keeps speaking of his big plans to make money and accumulate capital, thus reflecting the general Victorian domination of money over the minds of people. Jaggers, a skillful and able lawyer shows not a trace of telling in his heart he would not proceed with a case, till he has made sure that full amount of his fee has been deposited. Pumblechook becomes utterly and abjectly servile towards Pip when Pip is in prosperous circumstances and lapses into his old domineering ways when Pip's prosperity ends.

There is a lot of injustice, too, depicted in this novel. Not only the injustice which individual human beings do towards one another under the influences 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 being. When Pip has paid a visit to Negates prison he carries a sense of shame on him, and he tells us: "I beat the prison dust off my feel as I sauntered to and fro and I shook it out of my dress, and exhaled its air from my lungs" (131). At that time, we are told, jails were neglected and the period of reaction against public wrong –doing was still lay 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 to be found in the manner in which a desecration 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 face some staring gloomily about" (132). The picture of the judge reading out his judgment against Magwitch is quite depressing. In fact, at this stage, we begin to sympathize with Magwitch deeply in spite of the fact that he has a criminal past. Magwitch's account of criminal career shows that society was partly blame for his criminality and in the concluding chapters we 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 we have of Magwitch, is that of a man more sinned against than sinning.

The tragedy of the novel is to claim that all men through their humanity are corrected to the first offense: the human race, according to Christian mythology, is the product of Adam and Eve's first violation. Crime is also in the blood of man. One such irony is that of

Estella. Whereas the story tells us that she is the child of the father who was condemned and (Magwitch), and a murdering mother (Molly), she considered herself supervised by village people and criminals. Dickens portrayed Pip and Estella are two equivalent imagery people peculiar, both adopted: Pip's was a prisoner fled and Estella's is a half-wrong lady. The two adopters share one thing: their adoptive kids seek to defend themselves from hostility and the best of intentions. Trying to see the promising potential of them that they had been robbed of. By his love for Magwitch, the occasional prisoner, and his forgiveness for mistreatment; Pip thinks he is the gentleman he wanted to be. He considered his life full of caring people after Magwitch passed. He's always loyal to Joe and Biddy. When he fed the convict one day, he feels he was right. Most of the pictures are scenic and the writer uses them softly. The future evil that is before Magwitch landed, depicts intense rain and storm for days. Dickens cleverly utilizes the idea of bonds to stress the fraudulent aspect and to stress the subject of human interconnection. He has relations with the convict he once served, and the convict remains until he became the adopter of Pip. "The wretched man had sacrificed his life to come to me and I had held him in my garb there, despite filling me with his gold and silver chains for years. (318) Like ties, as a symbol of following, Dicken uses paws. Pip typically shakes hands as a gesture of following or a show of affection, but Jaggers' clerk shakes his hands with his delinquent clients only when ordered to hang the next day. Jaggers washes his hands with bleach, and then, like Lady Macbeth, he can strip all pollution. Her "hand" reveals the hardness of Pip's sibling, who is challenging and harsh.

Before Dickens, no novelist had treated the lower middle classes so widely or so frankly. He tests them on their own occasions rather than as a detached superior form examined. An instinctive brotherhood impregnates his research, a welcoming and immediate group of experiences. The mediumistic life he reflects on is the stone of a pathos or the stone of satire, to gain the integrity of literature. This is his realism's enduring base. Underneath, though, the readers sense the tingling vision of the conscience that reduces oppression or humiliates oppression in the inner reaches of their mind. One deciding factor in the development of his identity is the incredible experience of his childhood in the blacking industry. Overall, *Great Expectations* received near universal acclaim. Not all reviews were favorable. Critics in the 19th and 20th centuries hailed it as one of Dickens's greatest successes.

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