

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

It is interesting to analyze Charles Dicken's *A Christmas Carol* because the novel brings about the description of English society in Victorian era. Through the story of Christmas moment, the novel intends to reveal what happened in England in the late 18th century. Therefore, in order to conduct the study appropriately, it is necessary to recognize a glimpse description about the Victorian era as well as what happened during that time and to review the criticism used to analyze the novel.

2.1. The Victorian Era

The Victorian era was characterized by rapid change and development in almost every sphere: scientific and technological knowledge, economic changes and social movements. It was an era consisting of several periods within the long-lasting reign of the Queen Victoria (1837-1901). It was in this era that the advanced progress of the Great Britain happened; that the nation had a very important contribution for the development of the world by its influence.

It was in this era that scientific and technological inventions participated in shifting a traditional way of life into modernity. The inventions of machineries provided a foundation for industries and factories to grow. The improvements of transportation and communication

links such as canals, steam ships, railways, photography, cinema, telegraph, telephones, cars, and aircrafts had their root in Victorian era.⁶

The progress in science and technology had an effect on the British economic condition as well. Since more factories and industries were available, more people were employed and since the wages in this new opportunity were better, people started to shift their jobs from traditional farming into modern factories. This shift was known as Industrial Revolution.⁷

The success of the Industrial Revolution apparently only lasted a half way. Industries indeed provided employments and goods for the society that was likely to elevate the social condition. However, it did not seem to last forever since there were too many people to find jobs in cities while the opportunities were considerably limited. The business owner started to show their egoism by controlling the employers for the sake of efficiency. As a result, the socio-economic conditions of the British society started to fall: unemployment rose and unequal distribution of wealth was broadened. This created the social stratification within the society consisting of the rich and the poor. Sentiment against the rich was high while the upper class was likely to neglect the lower class.⁸

The industrialization evidently resulted in class structure with the poor were far more numerous compared to the rich due to the need of so

⁶ [Http://www.victorianweb.org/technology/technolog.html](http://www.victorianweb.org/technology/technolog.html).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ [Http://www.english.uwosh.edu/roth/VictorianEngland.htm](http://www.english.uwosh.edu/roth/VictorianEngland.htm).

many industrial workers, which, in turn, led to a wider gap between classes.

Industrialization changed the class structure dramatically in the late 18th century. Hostility was created between the upper and lower classes. As a result of industrialization, there was a huge boost of the middle and working class. As the Industrial Revolution progressed there was further social division. Capitalists, for example, employed industrial workers, who were one component of the working classes (each class included a wide range of occupations of varying status and income; there was a large gap, for example, between skilled and unskilled labor), but beneath the industrial workers was a submerged “underclass” sometimes referred to as the “sunken people,” which lived in poverty. The under class were more susceptible to exploitation and were therefore exploited.⁹

The lower class, which had been hired or employed by the upper class, was an object of labor exploitation. Those who were included in the lower class were forced to work hard with very low wages. Hence, the broader class distinction was likely to be unavoidable.

Apparently, the rich had the advantages of surplus population in the cities as the industrialization attracted rural people to migrate into towns and cities that increased the demand of products and the availability of labors.

The rise in population changed Britain. It led to overcrowding and poor living conditions in most cities. These cities grew rapidly; by 1900 most British people lived in cities. The increased population also caused changes in the British economy. More people meant more demand for food and other goods. Farmers and manufacturers made big profits. More people also meant more workers, so farmers and manufacturers could find plenty of labor without having to pay high wages.¹⁰

⁹ [Http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victorian_era](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victorian_era).

¹⁰ Child, 1995, *Heineman History Britain 1750-1900*, Oxford, Heineman Educational Publishers, p. 9.

Such a 'surplus value' in labor meant effectivity, efficiency, productivity and profits for the upper class, while it also meant exploitation, sufferings and poverty for the lower class. In fact, the use of women and children labors to suppress expenses as they cost cheaper than men labors was considerably ordinary.

Working conditions in the towns also changed. Factories meant many workers under one roof. For the workers, factories meant a loss of independence. Cottage workers had worked long hours, but they had decided when and how long to work. This gave them some control over their income. Factory owners demanded long and regular hours and set the levels of pay... Factory owners also employed women and children instead of men if possible. Women were paid half and children one third of a man's wage.¹¹

Such a working condition was much a burden for the poor.

However, because there was lack of vacancies, they had no other option but to accept their low-but-important income to support their family.

There were many people who profited from the growth of towns and factories. They included builders, landlords, water carriers, refuse companies and factory owners. They tended to argue against change to protect their rights. Even some workers argued against shorter hours and less child labor to protect their incomes.¹²

In fact, the workers even refused the policy of reducing working hours and child labor in order to keep their income steady. Reduced working hours and prohibited child labor meant less income for the poor. Thus, no matter how hard living in poverty, to survive with minimal wages was much better than to be unemployed.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 44.

¹² Ibid, p. 47.

While the rich lived in excessive wealth, the poor found it more difficult to earn a living as things become worse. The price of bread rose, even too high for the poor to afford since the bad harvest occurs.

In general, the price of bread was too high; as a result even the farmers suffered as people had less money to spend on other foods. When a bad harvest then sent the price soaring higher, foreign corn was suddenly imported in such large quantities that the price fell sharply, creating more problems for the farmer.¹³

The rising price of primary food became a shock to the market, especially the poor and the farmers because most people could not afford it and British agricultural products were non-profitable. Such a condition created economical problems for all levels in the England society. Parties concerned much for the sake of their own interests.

There were important questions at issue in the Corn Laws debate than technical fiddling with prices and duties. Everyone wanted *stable* prices, but the landowners, who still dominated Parliament, wanted stable *high* prices. The factory owners and businessmen wanted stable *low* prices. They were wage-payers, and if the price of bread was high they had to pay higher wages.¹⁴

It was evident that the landowners expected a stable high price in order to get much profit for themselves while the factory owners and businessmen looked forward to a stable low price in order to avoid increasing wages of their workers. Both of them were subjects of their personal interests regardless the fact that there was a larger portion of the society who needed care and attention. This had been the cause of

¹³ Grant, 1977, *History of Britain from the Stone Age to the Present Day*, London, The Hamlyn Publishing Group Limited, p. 228-229

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 229.

confrontation between the rich and the poor within the British society in Victorian era.

2.2. Sociological Criticism

It is already said that the novel analyzed in this study is considerably the author's response on the social condition in the Victorian era. Therefore, it is suitable to use the sociological criticism to examine the novel because it concerns with art as having an important relationship to society and that the artist is bound with the social sphere through the art:

Sociological approach is criticism that starts with a conviction that art's relations to society are vitally important. The sociological critic therefore is interested in understanding the social milieu and the extent to which and manner in which the artist responds to it. What the best sociological critics do place the work of art in the social atmosphere, and define that relationship.¹⁵

Sociological criticism is known as a study that has a very broad understanding because it takes account many other studies such as culture and history. Thus, there are many ways to involve in this approach. The one that is used in this study is the historical method because this study concerns with the history of England at the Victorian Era. This socio-historical method considers the events, processes, and institutions of a society.

The historical method calls for a study of events, processes, and institutions of past civilizations, for the purpose of finding the

¹⁵ Scoot Wilbur S., 1969, *Five Approaches of Literary Criticism*, New York: Collier MacMillan Publisher. Scoot, p. 1.

origins or antecedents of contemporary social life and thus of understanding its nature and workings.¹⁶

Because sociological study concerns about social milieu, the social system in a community is considerably important because every element in the social system depends on each other and forms interactive responses among them. Individuals are essential actors of such a system. Their actions become the key and determining factor of how the social system would be. The process of how actors are locked into the social system is termed *complementarity*.

Once a social system is established, Parsons viewed actors as locked into the system via a process termed, *complementarity*. In any integral social system roles are interlocked such that the rights of one position are the obligation of another. For example, if it is the right of a child to receive support, it is the obligation of parents to provide it. (Rights would otherwise be meaningless). Complementarity occurs when actors are willing and able to comply with the expectation, or obligations, associated with their roles. As a result of socialization process, their compliance is congruent with their internalized standards. Therefore, “inner voices” reward them for meeting the expectations of persons in complementary positions. At the same time, the other persons expect and value their compliance and reward it with their own positive responses.¹⁷

The rights of each actor’s position in the social system are obligations of another and complementarity occurs when actors are willing and able to fulfill their obligations associated with their roles in the society. For example, an employee must be willing to work hard to earn a

¹⁶ Koenig, Samuel, 1957, *Man Society, The Basic Teachings of Sociology*, New York, Barnes and Nobel, Inc., p. 6.

¹⁷ Scoot, Wilbur S., 1969, *Five Approaches of Literary Criticism*, New York, Collier MacMillan Publisher, p. 52.

living, and it is an obligation for an employer to pay the wages of the workers.

Complementarity is a form of a social interaction. It is considered as a process within the society in which every element and individual of the society bear a relationship one another:

Indeed, sociologists assume that much of each person's individuality arises from one's interplay with the social environment; for, in the absence of social relations, the human infant would develop into a dumb brute with little self-awareness.

Thus, for micro sociologists, interaction among human beings is the fundamental social process. Interaction is the process by which we influence one another.¹⁸

It suggests that social interaction is the main feature of the social process for the society to develop. Through interaction, one influences another in order to achieve social order. In addition, Kimball Young suggests that social interaction is the main factor of all social life since without social interaction there would be no togetherness in life.¹⁹

Such a process occurs within the society in many ways. The most likely example can be found on the so-called social institution. The interaction takes place in every social institution having its own objectives but in the end, it is projected to fulfill the basic needs of the society to survive and to develop.

Sociologists recognize that social roles, groups, and activities are not randomly arranged within societies, but tend to be clustered. Moreover, each of these clusters makes fairly specific contributions to the overall welfare of a society by satisfying basic needs required for the society to exist. For example, children must be

¹⁸ Stark, Rodney, 1987, *Sociology*, Belmont, Wadsworth Publishing Company, p. 67.

¹⁹ Kimball Young-Raymond, W. Mack, 1959, *Sociology and Social Life*, New York, American Book Company, p. 137.

born and prepared to replace adults, or else the group will die out. Arrangements must also exist to produce and distribute goods and services among members of a society; without food, shelter, and clothing, humans cannot live.

Relatively permanent patterns, or clusters, of specified role, groups, organizations, customs, and activities devoted to meeting fundamental social needs are called social institutions.²⁰

Any social institution has the contribution to the member of the society by producing and distributing goods and services like food, shelter and clothing as the fundamental individual as well as social needs. Hence, the interaction among individuals, groups, activities, etc. is unavoidable.

Social stratification is considered to be one of the characteristics of a civilization. It is automatically produced within the society due to the unequal distribution of any kind with the specialty of human basic needs as described by Sorokin below:

Social stratification means the differentiation of a given population into hierarchically superposed classes. It is manifested in the existence of upper and lower layers. Its basis and very essence consist in an unequal distribution of rights and privileges, duties and responsibilities, social values and privations, social power and influences among the members of a society.²¹

Social stratification exists in varied different ways. However, there are three most popular strata consisted of economic, political and occupational classes. Yet, these classes are interconnected with each other, as the members of a society included in the upper/lower group of one subject are usually also included in the upper/lower group of the other two.

Concrete forms of social stratification are numerous. The majority of them may, however, be reduced three principal classes: the

²⁰ Ibid, p. 94.

²¹ Sorokin, Pitirim A., 1959, *Social Mobility, in Social and Cultural Mobility*, Glencoe, The Free Press, p. 11.

economic, the political and occupational stratification. Also general rule, these forms are closely intercorrelated with each other. Usually, those who occupy the upper strata in one respect, happen to be the upper strata also in other respects, and vice versa. The men who dwell in the upper economic layers happen also to be in the upper political and occupational strata. The poor, as a rule, are politically disfranchised and dwell in the lowest strata of the occupational hierarchy.²²

The unequal distribution of wealth, goods and services, power, privileges, etc. often become the source of dissatisfaction of the unfortunate group that produces sentiment upon the more fortunate group. This may lead to a class conflict.

2.3. Marx Theory

Karl Marx believes that class conflict occurs because a certain group within the society tries to maintain and to increase its own benefits by creating social stratification for its own importance.

Karl Marx (1818 – 1883) was an early conflict theorist. He argued that social structures were created by the most powerful members of a society, the ruling class. He wrote that “the ruling ideas of any age are the ideas of its ruling class.” He further argued that the ruling class constructs social structures that best serve its own interest and, conversely, that the social structure determines who will be the ruling class. Thus Marx based the origins of social structures to class conflicts.²³

Marx suggests that social stratification is automatically formed by the existence of the members of a society who have the most powerful force called the ruling class. The ruling class hence takes advantages of its power to rule the society and to drive it accordingly to its own interest. As

²² Ibid, p. 12.

²³ Kimball Young-Raymond, W. Mack, 1959, *Sociology and Social Life*, New York, American Book Company, p. 100.

a result, the difference between classes of the ruling one and the ruled one leads to the social conflicts.

Further, Marx also describes how the social classes are determined. The difference between who can be the ruling class and who can be included in the ruled class is due to the economic dimensions.

The most important feature of Marx's definition of class is that it is determined only by the economic dimensions. Property ownership is the only factor for ranking people, and then they are divided into only two groups: those who own the means of production and those who do not.²⁴

It means that the economic condition of each member of the society determines whether they are included in the ruling class or the ruled class because according to Marx, who controls the economy, controls the society.

The social structure is based on the individual's financial condition. If they have more money, people tend to achieve a higher position or a greater opportunity in jobs, education and politics. Based on the economical process, Karl Marx categorizes the society into two major groups: the bourgeoisie (capital owners) and the proletariat (the labors).

Marx saw the distinction between landowners and business owners as declining in importance in the more highly developed capitalistic nations. The two groups were in the process, he wrote, of becoming parts of a single class, the bourgeoisie. The distinguishing characteristic of this class is its ownership of capital, or productive wealth in the form of machines, land, factories, and the like. Profits or interests or rents generally accrue to the owners of capital when labor is added to their capital; for example, people are hired to work the machines. This introduces the second class (both chronologically and symbolically), the proletariat. These are

²⁴ Ibid, p. 230 – 231.

the people who have only their labor to sell: the machine operators, clerks, tenant farmers, and so on.²⁵

Despite of any other distinctive characteristics, Marx puts landowners and business owners in the bourgeoisie, while people like the machine operators, clerks, tenant farmers, and so on are included in the proletariat. It suggests that financial condition determines which group are people to be classified into. People with great capital or wealth who have much money, machines, lands, factories, and employ many workers belong to one group and people with only their labor to sell and less capital belong to the other. It means, there is a distinction within the community between the rich (the bourgeoisie) and the poor (the proletariat).

Such a distinction may have been ordinary in any social system and the complementarity occurs likewise. Since, as the actors of the social system contribute most to the development of a society, the system may become imbalance if one part or more of the society does not fairly fulfill the obligations toward the others. This is Marx's concern that in the capitalistic societies, the rich take advantages of the poor with inappropriate wages.

In a capitalistic society, however, Marx argued that increased productivity would not lead to an increase in real wages. Those who owned the means of production would tend to pay labor only that minimal wage that was necessary for its sheer survival. The result, therefore, was more "surplus value" for capitalists; that is, a

²⁵ Abrahamson, 1981, *Sociological Theory*, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, Inc, p. 110-111.

greater difference between the value of produced commodities and their cost of production, especially labor costs.²⁶

Marx argues that the capitalists, referring to the rich, tend to increase productivity of the workers with minimal cost. As a result, the labors are forced to work harder with considerably as low wages as possible. Such a process means that there are more profits for the rich and fewer opportunities for the poor. The distinction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, especially in economy or financial condition, is greater. Thus, the complementarity of the social system goes imbalance.

The distinction and unequal distribution between the rich and the poor have contributed to the emerge of class struggle from the lower class in order not to be part of the upper class but to have a fair opportunity to all social strata. Marx argues that the proletariat is considerably a revolutionary class to generate such a movement. Beginning from individual worker, this struggle has spread over the entire England as a mark of sentiment against the bourgeoisie and above all, survival of their existence:

The proletariat goes through various stages of development. With its birth begins its struggle with the bourgeoisie. At first the contest is carried on by individual laborers; then by the workpeople of a factory; then by the operatives of one trade, in one locality, against the individual bourgeois who directly exploits them. They direct their attacks, not against the bourgeois conditions of production, but against the instruments of production themselves; they destroy imported wares that compete with their labor, they smash machinery to pieces, they set factories ablaze, they seek to restore by force the vanished status of the workman of the Middle Ages.²⁷

²⁶ Ibid, p. 111.

²⁷ Marx, Karl in Eva Etzioni and Amitai Etzioni (ed.), 1964, *Social Change: Sources, Patterns, and Consequences*, New York, Basic Books, Inc., p. 36.