

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

Set in Christmas Day, Charles Dicken's *A Christmas Carol* portrays the life of British people in the Victorian era who live in either wealth or poverty. The gap between the upper class and the lower class is proven to be the source of disharmonious relationship between both sides. A thorough study of this condition reflected in the novel using socio-historical criticism is conducted to reveal the facts. The analysis consists of three parts, which are the life of the rich, the life of the poor, and the conflicts between the rich and the poor.

4.1. The Life of the Rich

It may be difficult to say that people are rich by mentioning their exact amount of money, but it would be easier to mention what they can afford. For example, a family dinner on Christmas Eve is enough for most people, but some people like Mr. Fezziwig is eager to invite other people to celebrate the day.

In came a fiddler with a music-book, and went up to the lofty desk, and made an orchestra of it, and tuned like fifty stomach-aches. In came Mrs. Fezziwig, one vast substantial smile. In came the three Miss Fezziwigs, beaming and lovable. In came the six young followers whose hearts they broke. In came all the young men and women employed in the business. In came the housemaid, with her cousin, the baker. In came the cook, with her brother's particular friend, the milkman. In came the boy from over the way, who was suspected of not having board enough from his master; trying to hide himself behind the girl from next door but one, who was proved to have had her ears pulled by her Mistress. In they all came, one after another; some shyly, some boldly, some gracefully,

some awkwardly, some pushing, some pulling; in they all came, anyhow and everyhow.²⁹

Mr. Fezziwig invites many people like the employees of his shop, the housemaid and the baker, the cook and the milkman, and other people from the neighborhood to celebrate Christmas in his place. In addition, he also hires a violinist in order to entertain the guests during the celebration with his musical performance. This is certainly more than merely a gala dinner. This is a party. Mr. Fezziwig holds the party not because he has to, but because he is eager to and can afford it. There are not so many individuals who can celebrate Christmas in such a way. It is only the wealthy ones who are able to.

Inviting many people to a celebration is not the only indicator of wealth. Considering the individuals who come into the party, which are included all his employees, it is obvious that Mr. Fezziwig is a rich man. He has so many employees to run the shop for him. He can afford to pay a housemaid, a baker and a cook to serve at his house. He is also able to hire a fiddler to cheer up the party.

To set up a successful celebration, there should be a large amount of money to prepare. This is necessary because a party is not merely a gathering of a group of people in a certain place. It needs supporting materials to please the guests. Entertainment is only one of a numerous instances.

²⁹ Dickens, 1990, *A Christmas Carol*, New York, Tom Doherty Associates Book, p. 40-41.

There were more dances, and there were forfeits, and more dances, and there was cake, and there was negus, and there was a great piece of Cold Roast, and there was a great piece of Cold Boiled, and there were mince-pies, and plenty of beer. But the great effect of the evening came after the Roast and Boiled, when the fiddler (an artful dog, mind! The sort of man who knew his business better than you or I could have told it him!) struck up ``Sir Roger de Coverley." Then old Fezziwig stood out to dance with Mrs. Fezziwig.³⁰

The fiddler plays music during the party that the guests are encouraged to dance in harmony. The music as well as the dance becomes a sort of amusement for the crowd. However, the celebration is not complete without food and drink. Therefore, the host already prepares many kinds of food, cakes, and pies and drink to serve all his visitors. Mr. Fezziwig is evidently rich for providing sufficient dinner for everyone. It requires a lot of money to fund the celebration and only the rich can afford it.

However, even though the rich have the resources to hold such a party, not all of them are eager to invite people for dinner to celebrate a special occasion because the celebration is considered to be unnecessary or unimportant. Scrooge, for example, has a different point of view about Christmas day. He thinks that Christmas is not a special day because holiday only costs him much rather than gaining profit.

“What else can I be,” returned the uncle, “when I live in such a world of fools as this Merry Christmas! Out upon merry Christmas! What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, but not an hour richer; a time for balancing your books and having every item in ‘em through a round dozen of months presented dead

³⁰ Ibid., p. 41-42.

against you? If I could work my will,” said Scrooge indignantly, “every idiot who goes about with ‘Merry Christmas’ on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should!”³¹

For Scrooge, Christmas Day is just another ordinary day without income but there are still bills to pay. It is the day when he should count the profit he gets or whether he is richer than before or not. For this certain kind of the rich, earning more money is important in every other day. It seems that it is not necessary to spend some money for the importance of celebrating a special occasion like Christmas because the celebration does not make them richer. This indicates how worry the rich are about their money that they are very careful in spending some amount of their profit for unnecessary things.

So worry they are that the more money they can keep, the better for them. It means every amount of money is worthy for the rich. Therefore, Scrooge considers not giving away any money for things that are not of his business, even though it is for charity to the poor.

“A few of us are endeavoring to raise a fund to buy the Poor some meat and drink, and means of warmth. We choose this time, because it is a time, of all others, when Want is keenly felt, and Abundance rejoices. What shall I put you down for?”

“Nothing!” Scrooge replied.

“You wish to be anonymous?”

“I wish to be left alone,” said Scrooge. “Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I don't make merry myself at Christmas and I can't afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the establishments I have mentioned: they cost enough: and those who are badly off must go there.”³²

³¹ Ibid., p. 5-6.

³² Ibid., p. 9-10.

Scrooge refuses to give any money for charity because he thinks that the poor do not deserve to get any money. He considers them do not work or do something to earn money. Instead, they rely on the pity of others. The poor are not his concern due to the fact that there is a social foundation that should be in charge of them. Scrooge, thus, does not care about others or the poor who need help. He only cares about himself. This is the portrait of the rich who always want to get richer and richer without paying attention to the others. They can help themselves to earn more profit, but are not willing to help others in need.

Earning profits means to get money as much as possible and to spend as less as it could be. The less money they spend, the more income they achieve. Scrooge always controls his expenses in order to keep it worthwhile. Scrooge finds it irritating if he knows that his money is not properly used.

“You'll want all day tomorrow, I suppose?” said Scrooge.

“If quite convenient, Sir.”

“It's not convenient,” said Scrooge, “and it's not fair. If I was to stop half-a-crown for it, you'd think yourself ill-used, I'll be bound?”

The clerk smiled faintly.

“And yet,” said Scrooge, “you don't think *me* ill-used, when I pay a day's wages for no work.”³³

Scrooge does not let his clerk, Bob Cratchit, to take a whole day off on Christmas because it means he has to spend a day wage for nothing. He considers that he should earn profit or at least benefit for his expenses, including urging his employee to work every day whether on the ordinary

³³ Ibid., p. 12.

days or on any special holiday. He feels that he has the rights to do so because he pays the wages.

The rich use the concept of efficiency and effectiveness to gain much profit. For them, to be efficient means to employ others to work as many hours a day with the lowest wage to pay while to be effective means to get as much money as possible. It implies that the rich do not care if others are inconvenient and unhappy with the situation. Their only concern is their own satisfaction and happiness.

The only thing that can make the rich happy is getting more money every day. It is likely that money is their interest of entertainment. Scrooge finds that he is very excited about being rich. In fact, money is the most important thing in life that he is obsessed with.

“Our contract is an old one. It was made when we were both poor and content to be so, until, in good season, we could improve our worldly fortune by our patient industry. You *are* changed. When it was made, you were another man.”

“I was a boy,” he said impatiently.

“Your own feeling tells you that you were not what you are,” she returned. “I am. That which promised happiness when we were one in heart, is fraught with misery now that we are two. How often and how keenly I have thought of this, I will not say. It is enough that I *have* thought of it, and can release you.”³⁴

Scrooge is very crazy about the money that eventually it influences his relationship with others. The closest persons to him are disappointed because he pays much more attention to his business and his money rather than any others, including other people and his relationships. As a result, they left Scrooge alone with his own world. Scrooge’s relationship with a

³⁴ Ibid., p. 45.

woman is over since he treats it badly. He finds his happiness with the money rather than with a romantic relationship.

This kind of the rich puts money as more important than others. Family, friends and love are less importance because relationships, friendships and romance do not provide more happiness than the money does. This illustrates how the rich consider business and money are the basis of life. Without relationships, they still can live happily with the money, but without money, they cannot survive even though they possess an intimate relationship with so many people.

It is the way of thinking by which the rich set the goal of life. They have to keep earning money no matter what happens or what the consequences are. Scrooge finds it difficult to spend a small amount of money for unnecessary things, but he finds it so easy to let go a person who is in an intimate relationship with him.

“It matters little,” she said, softly. “To you, very little. Another idol has displaced me; and if it can cheer and comfort you in time to come, as I would have tried to do, I have no just cause to grieve.”

“What Idol has displaced you?” he rejoined.

“A golden one.”

“This is the even-handed dealing of the world!” he said. “There is nothing on which it is so hard as poverty; and there is nothing it professes to condemn with such severity as the pursuit of wealth!”³⁵

It can be seen from the quotation above that the woman feels disappointed as she realizes that she is forgotten for money has displaced her in Scrooge’s mind and heart. He explains that there is nothing worst in

³⁵ Ibid., p. 44-45.

this world other than living in poverty as if love or any other kind of relationship is not important at all. He puts aside other necessities to set his personal goal of life: to be rich.

The rich think that poverty is the worst of all bad life they should avoid. Therefore, it is not strange to see the rich attempt to earn money in one way or another for the fear of being poor. This indicates that the rich set a kind of goal in their life that cannot be displaced by others, which is the pursuit of wealth.

The life of the rich presented in the novel illustrates the condition of the upper class of British people in the Victorian Era. It is the rich who are able to hold a party to celebrate an occasion. It is the rich who can afford to buy many kinds of food and drink to serve in the celebration. It is the rich who have a company or a business and hire other people to work for them. However, the rich are so selfish that they do not care for others especially the poor. The rich are worry about spending money without having profits or benefit in return that they feel to have the rights of having their employees to work many hours everyday. In short, money is the most important thing for them because it provides them the best happiness and satisfaction. The pursuit of wealth in any way is the sole objective of life that marginalizes the rich from the poor.

The description indicates how the rich are so obsessed with wealth that in their efforts, the concept of complementarity is forgotten. They forget that there are many people who provide more help for them to earn

the money. They do not care that the employees should receive a more sufficient wage in exchange of their labor.

From the economic dimension, the rich posses the means of production: factories, shop, or a business to run. They also hire employees to run the business and to produce more profit for them. Due to this fact, it is obvious that Scrooge represents the rich who occupy the upper class of the social stratification, the bourgeois.

4.2. The Life of the Poor

The poor have a very different life with the rich. In fact, their life is mostly contradictive to those who occupy the upper class. It is not hard to describe the poor because they simply do not possess the materials and comfortable life of the rich. One simple example can be drawn from the daily performance of Bob Cratchit's family.

There was nothing of high mark in this. They were not a handsome family; they were not well dressed; their shoes were far from being water-proof; their clothes were scanty; and Peter might have known, and very likely did, the inside of a pawnbroker's.³⁶

Because they do not have enough money, no wonder the Cratchits perform in simplicity, not a glamorous one. Their dress is far from good and the shoes are of the simply usable ones. Such a performance implies how they live a difficult life. They obviously cannot afford to improve their performance.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 68.

The Cratchits is a fair representation of the poor since there is nothing special or even good in their performance. They indicate the lack of money they have at least to spare a small amount for the need of clothing. The poor are very unlucky for having an uncomfortable life.

The family, in fact, is more miserable than what they look. It is not only their daily performance that is bad, but they also dress poorly on a special occasion like Christmas Day.

Then up rose Mrs. Cratchit, Cratchit's wife, dressed out but poorly in a twice-turned gown, but brave in ribbons, which are cheap and make a goodly show for sixpence; and she laid the cloth, assisted by Belinda Cratchit, second of her daughters, also brave in ribbons; while Master Peter Cratchit plunged a fork into the saucepan of potatoes, and getting the corners of his monstrous shirt collar (Bob's private property, conferred upon his son and heir in honor of the day) into his mouth, rejoiced to find himself so gallantly attired, and yearned to show his linen in the fashionable Parks.³⁷

On the family dinner to celebrate Christmas, the Cratchits, like any other religious families, wear their best dress as the expression of thankfulness to God. Mrs. Cratchit wears a twice-turned gown with ribbon while her second daughter, Belinda, dresses in a similar way. As for Peter, he wears a shirt with a monstrous collar. However, after all efforts of dressing out, the best clothes they have are merely the cheap ones. In fact, Peter's shirt is the heir from his father, Bob.

It is a pity to see a poor family trying their best to perform greatly during the celebration of Christmas Day. So poor they are that they cannot afford to buy new clothes, not even the cheap ones. It implicitly reveals the

³⁷ Ibid., p. 60-61.

condition of the poor people. It is certain that they have economic problems.

Despite their financial difficulty, the Cratchits seem to consider Christmas as an important day and worthy to celebrate. It can be inferred that, in some ways or another, they intend to honor the day by getting together with the whole family on Christmas Eve and having whatever dinner available.

There never was such a goose. Bob said he didn't believe there ever was such a goose cooked. Its tenderness and flavor, size and cheapness, were the themes of universal admiration. Eked out by apple-sauce and mashed potatoes, it was a sufficient dinner for the whole family; indeed, as Mrs. Cratchit said with great delight (surveying one small atom of a bone upon the dish), they hadn't ate it all at last!³⁸

To have a family dinner on Christmas Eve is likely a must for the family in spite of whatever the menu is. The Cratchits find it quite sufficient for the whole large family in getting a goose eked out by apple-sauce and mashed potatoes on the table. They are thankful for the feast because it tastes good and even better than any other ordinary days and that there is a sense of delight for having a left over on the plates. Even though the goose is cheap, it is likely a special dinner for the family.

For the large poor family like the Cratchits, having a sufficient dinner for the whole members on Christmas Eve is delightful due to the fact that they can only afford a goose for the celebration. Unlike turkey, a goose costs cheap. Therefore they are so grateful to have one instead of

³⁸ Ibid., p. 64.

nothing at all. It indicates that despite their economical matters, the poor are always thankful for whatever achievement they get.

The Cratchits also represents the poor who consider family gathering on Christmas Eve is important. It means, family is very important for them whether in good or bad times. To have a fancy dinner is not necessary, but to have the whole family gathered is much more important. This shows how the poor care for each other, especially for all members of the family.

The Cratchits is lucky because the family can get together and have dinner at home. There are so many others who are parted with their families and cannot afford at all to buy food.

And at the same time there emerged from scores of bye-streets, lanes, and nameless turnings, innumerable people, carrying their dinners to the baker' shops.³⁹

There are a large number of people, the poor ones, who live on the streets because they do not have a home to shelter in. These unfortunate people have to struggle for their meal or to die of famine. They do not have money to buy food or even to have a fancy dinner to celebrate Christmas Day. The homeless get the dinner from the left over of the bakers shop or any other food stores or, with any luck, from the pity of the richer.

The Cratchits and the homeless represent the life of the poor in the Victorian Era. They show how the lower class people live in a miserable

³⁹ Ibid., p. 58.

condition. The poor do not have much money to support their family or even to establish a business. They cannot afford to buy good clothes or fancy dinner. There are so many of them who are homeless and unemployed. The lucky ones are paid very low for their labor. The poor are forgotten. The poor are the victim of the capitalism by the rich.

4.3. The Disharmony between the Rich and the Poor

The contradictive conditions between the rich and the poor have an effect on the upper-lower class relationship. The rich disregard the poor because they think that poverty is government's concern and that it has nothing to do with them while the poor consider the rich as the source of poverty for taking advantage of them.

4.3.1. The Rich's Attitudes toward the Poor

Both the rich and the poor bear a kind of tensions among them. The rich often mock the poor for not having material possessions or other as Scrooge does to his own nephew.

“Christmas a humbug, uncle!” said Scrooge's nephew. “You don't mean that, I am sure?”

“I do,” said Scrooge. “Merry Christmas! What right have you to be merry? What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough.”⁴⁰

Scrooge mocks his nephew because of his excitement about Christmas Day. He thinks that there is no excuse for the nephew to

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 5.

be so happy because he is poor. In addition, Scrooge, who is rich, considers Christmas like any ordinary day in the year, which is not necessary to celebrate as it is only a waste of time and money. The only happiness for Scrooge is being rich and thus, the poor shall not feel such a feeling.

Disregarding the spirit of Christmas, it indicates how the rich live in happiness while the poor live in unhappiness. With such kind of happiness, the rich try their best efforts to become richer and far away from poverty. In doing so, they become so selfish and exclusive that they only concern about their own profit and disregard the others, especially the poor. This puts the rich firmly in the position of oppressing the lower-class people for the benefits of the upper-class people.

The rich are clearly worrying about their wealth. It can be seen from their concern about any suspicious efforts to pursue their money. Scrooge shows this mentality by having a bad thought about Christmas.

“A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December!” said Scrooge, buttoning his great-coat to the chin. “But I suppose you must have the whole day. Be here all the earlier next morning!”⁴¹

For Scrooge, Christmas is not a time for more love and compassion, but it is a tricky time. He believes that there are many people, including the poor and the social foundations, taking

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 12.

advantages of Christmas to earn money for the reason of love and charity. He also believes that it is the rich who become the ‘victim’ or target of the fund-raisers. This is why Scrooge suspects the poor to take his money away. Therefore, he does not trust the poor and is not willing to give any money for them.

Scrooge also thinks that the poor, like his clerk Bob, is likely to use Christmas as an excuse to take a day off. It means, the poor cause him losing one precious day that should be a perfect day to earn more money. Scrooge does not tolerate this and urges his employee to keep working on Christmas Day.

In a more sarcastic way, Scrooge expresses how he does not really care about the poor when he refuses to donate some of his money for charity.

“... I help to support the establishments I have mentioned – they cost enough; and those who are badly off must go there.”

“Many can’t go there; and many would rather die.”

“If they would rather die,” said Scrooge, “they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population. Besides – excuse me – I don’t know that.”

“But you might know it,” observed the gentleman.

“It’s not my business,” Scrooge returned.⁴²

Even though he is already informed that for some reason many poor people refuse to or cannot go to social institution, Scrooge still insists on his decision not to give any money for the poor since it is not his concern. In fact, he states clearly to let those

⁴² Ibid., p. 10.

people die to decrease poverty as well as over-population. This evidence obviously shows that the rich ignore the poor and does not care about the large amount of people dying because of poverty and starvation.

4.3.2. The Poor's Reaction against the Rich

The poor, considering the attitudes of the rich on them, reacts negatively. They find out that the rich exclude them from their glamorous life. They know that the rich avoid them. Therefore, it is useless to ask for help from the rich. It can be seen from how the others treat Scrooge.

Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, with gladsome looks, "My dear Scrooge, how are you. When will you come to see me?" No beggars implored him to bestow a trifle, no children asked him what it was o'clock, no man or woman ever once in all his life inquired the way to such and such a place, of Scrooge.⁴³

Nobody intends to approach him for one or other reasons, not even for merely trifles. Beggars do not dare to ask him for changes; children are afraid to ask him the time; people are not encouraged to ask ways and directions. They know exactly how he is. He will not spend any money for charity or use his precious time for unprofitable matters. They avoid him accordingly. They ignore him as if he does not exist.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 3.

Scrooge has become the least favorite person in the society.

The ways he thinks of himself and forgets the others make people not only avoid him, but also consider him as equal to a beast for that manner.

The brisk fire of questioning to which he was exposed, elicited from him that he was thinking of an animal, a live animal, rather a disagreeable animal, a savage animal, an animal that growled and grunted sometimes, and talked sometimes, and lived in London, and walked about the streets, and wasn't made a show of, and wasn't led by anybody, and didn't live in a menagerie, and was never killed in a market, and was not a horse, or an ass, or a cow, or a bull, or a tiger, or a dog, or a pig, or a cat, or a bear...

"I have found it out! I know what it is, Fred! I know what it is!"

"What is it?" cried Fred.

"It's your Uncle Scro-o-o-o-oge!"⁴⁴

In a game of riddle, something is described as a savage animal living among human that is unordinary, selfish and lonely and much worse than any wild animals. It is a description of Scrooge, upon which many people agree. People recognize him as an individual who has very bad attitudes, manners and way of thinking for treating others inhumanly.

Scrooge is a portrait of the rich who are likely to treat others, especially the poor, in a bad way. They ignore the poor and even unequally exploit them for personal benefits by giving low wages for their hardworking. It is this kind of treatment that makes

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 78.

the poor as the majority of the society to actually disregard them. Bad names are attached to that kind of people.

Scrooge clearly contributes sorrow to the Cratchits as they find themselves unhappy with his policy. It is not only because he pays the wage too low, but also because he does not tolerate their debt. There is nothing good he gives to the family. The only good thing for the Cratchits is, in fact, his death.

“To whom will our debt be transferred?”

“I don't know. But before that time we shall be ready with the money; and even though we were not, it would be a bad fortune indeed to find so merciless a creditor in his successor. We may sleep to-night with light hearts, Caroline!”

Yes. Soften it as they would, their hearts were lighter. The children's faces, hushed and clustered round to hear what they so little understood, were brighter; and it was a happier house for this man's death!⁴⁵

It is Scrooge's death that makes them feel better. It is his death that comforts them because they do not have to worry about the wages and the debts anymore. His death seems to open an opportunity to improve their life. They find it relieving to get away from his shadow.

It can be seen that the poor are longing for freedom from oppression. The death of Scrooge describes their wish upon injustice. It represents the demand of the employees to urge their employers and the companies to pay more attention to them. The rich treat the poor so bad that they cannot maintain a good mutual

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 96-97.

relationship. It causes the poor dissatisfied and, in return, the rich achieve less profits as well as becoming exiled from the society.

As the society always remembers all few good individuals, they also remember all few bad individuals. Scrooge's death does not remind people of what good he has done. On the contrary, people do not care for him. They leave him alone as he left them while he was alive.

He lay, in the dark empty house, with not a man, a woman, or a child, to say that he was kind to me in this or that, and for the memory of one kind word I will be kind to him. A cat was tearing at the door, and there was a sound of gnawing rats beneath the hearth-stone. What *they* wanted in the room of death, and why they were so restless and disturbed, Scrooge did not dare to think.⁴⁶

There is no one ever consider his kindness. There is nobody feeling sorry for his death because he was so good. It is likely that Scrooge offends everyone when he was alive. He lives wealthy yet is not kindly to others. Thus, he is condemned to be left alone and to be ignored even when he is dead. How unkind he is that people are relieved to see him dead.

It indicates that the poor do not actually care for the rich because they only concern about their wealth. It shows how rich people like Scrooge fail to establish a good relationship within the society, especially with the poor. They deny the necessities of mutual and complementary correlation among human. The rich

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 94-95.

disregards\ the help and support of the poor employees who run the business for them and thus make them rich. They do not give the employees a better payment they deserve in return. As a result, the relationship between the rich and the poor in Victorian Era as seen in the novel becomes disharmonious.

