

Kindness towards Others in Great Expectations

Saed Jamil Shahwan

Department of English, Faculty of Arts
Hail University, Saudi Arabia

Abstract

The novel, *Great Expectation* (1861) revolves around the universal theme of love and conflict, which influences the protagonist, Pip. Many critics have commented on the plot and background of the novel. The main aim of this study is to reveal various instances projecting kindness and sympathy in between the social conflict and social tension at the background of the novel “*Great Expectation*”. The study will focus on the concept of kindness towards others which has been incorporated throughout the story of the novel between the narrator and the characters. Charles Dickens (1812- 1870) has shed light upon the theme of social mobility, manners, social injustice and prospect towards tangible reality. This study answers the question whether Dickens could be able to reflect the concept of kindness in the novel or not? Moreover, it will search whether the concept of kindness has been explored well in the story of the novel that it contains probable educational contents of kindness for research. To prove that, the article will explore various aspects of kindness, which has been observed during the course of the novel. The study would be based on qualitative research method from secondary resources. The aspect of kindness would be analyzed and highlighted through multiple scenes from the novel. The study would be concluded on the point where Dickens stresses on the dialect for up gradation of social status in Pip in order to establish himself as a desired partner of Estella despite having a social difference of class during the Victorian period.

Keywords: Charles Dickens, dialect, expectations, kindness, mobility, social injustice, social tension

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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

It depends on the narrative pattern of an author, which reflects the concept of kindness in the roles of the characters. The inclusion of a simple and humble boy of the marginalized section at Victorian age in England represents an intellectual goal, an emulation of desirable moral and social values indicating the ideological shift in the creation of English identity in Dickens's novels. The nature of gentleness and compassion survives in the protagonist of the novel, who takes the challenge of the society in every aspect to bring stability in his personal life. The concept of kindness, love and conflict and injustice mainly seems in the incidents present in the story. As stated by Szyner et al, (2017), the incorporation of the idea of social mobility and kindness work hand-in-hand at the bottom of the story as drawn by Dickens. In addition, some critics believe that the progress of the boy justifies the class mobility of the mid-Victorian era of "great expectations", which tries to demonstrate the struggle for existence in such a society. As opined by Petrunina, Gredina & Pilyukova (2017), it considers the fact that, the behavior of the narrator and the others and to the society is influential.

On the other hand, most of the novels written by Charles Dickens usually based on the concept of class mobility or social mobility and gentleness or kindness as stated by Runnells, (2017). Moreover, the other concept, which symbolizes within kindness, is the mobility of notion and lot of expectations dominantly present in the plot. However, it is the author's contribution that has been skillfully prearranged keeping the mid-Victorian period at the backdrop intermingled with a complicated love story, which is not easy to achieve by any other writers.

1.2 Background

Dickens's effort behind the story is to offer the readers a leaning towards the characters and the social circumstances that is spoken about. In fact, the author has clearly tried to make sure about the concept of kindness and thoughtfulness to be fulfilled even within the complexity of social tension during the period of mid-Victorian 1850 – 1899. Moreover, the author has also given importance to the fact that although the novel was published in the mid-Nineteenth Century, which was popularly known as a mid-Victorian age in history, should be valued as an educational masterpiece for many students. It is the art and skill of storytelling of the novelist, that binds the novel together by connecting with kindness and social conflict that is identified well in the core of the story (May 2017). Therefore, the kindness of love, affection, and the social conflict that are recognized in the novel, actually is translated into education. The boundary breaks between the author and the story in a point where all the extremes of kindness are enclosed.

1.3 Problem statement

The concept of kindness has not been openly discussed or subjugated in the storyline of the novel. Rather, Dickens has thrown an insight upon the concept in some of the incidents of the novel. In addition, the author touches the concept completely, when the boundary breaks between the narrator and the character itself. Therefore, the research and analysis of the novel will eventually identify the places, which focus on kindness, gentleness and the ground of sympathy played by the

characters. However, much of the reflection of kindness and sympathetic nature of the narrator has been portrayed in the opening scene of the novel, where readers study the graves of both his parents and all five of his brothers.

1.4 Research aim

The main aim of this study is to reveal various instances showing kindness and sympathy in between the social conflict and social tension at the background of the novel “Great Expectation.” The study and research will evidently provide appropriate information about the topic with justification.

1.5 Research questions

- Did the author Charles Dickens tries to focus on the concept of kindness and sympathy well in the novel?
- What are some of the evidence, which highlights the circumstances related to the above question?
- Do the social conflict and social mobility still remain when other roles are not in place?

1.6 Justification

The article will try to make probable findings based on the research made by secondary resources studied by others about the concept of kindness towards others in the novel “Great Expectation.” Throughout the article, there will be some review of a few instances, which will discuss kindness towards others in the novel. Moreover, the author will bring forward the concept of kindness towards others with clarity, as he is one of the graceful writers of his age. However, the article ensures that not a least of instances related to kindness laid back that can justify the concept of kindness presented in the novel.

2. Literature review

Great Expectations features some of Dickens’s best characters and the tone of his complex art of plot. Throughout the novel, the tune of generosity is felt and is reflected by the protagonist Pip and other characters as well. Dickens paints different shades of generosity and kindness with the help of various psychological and emotional aspects of his characters. At one place he states genuine kindness but at another place the meaning of it changes with a different understanding of it (Lopez, Pedrotti & Snyder, 2018).

The novel, with the vast presentation of the life of the boy named Pip, gradually depicts the transformation of his status, his expectation towards life, and his emotions towards people. Being a protagonist of the novel, Pip carries the responsibilities to shape up the main tunes of the novel. Among the main tunes of the novel, generosity may claim to be one of the most reflected tunes as it defines Pip’s character with its way (Clarke 2018). Throughout the novel, Pip shows his care for others even when he is seen to be cruel towards his brother-in-law and his second wife. Throughout the novel, the journey of Pip in both spiritual and emotional aspect is depicted thoroughly.

If the story is thoroughly followed, a series of incidents will come out that refers the kindness and generosity towards others (Barr, 2018).

The incident where Pip is seen to bring Magwitch a bottle of brandy and a generous assortment of food, consisting of mincemeat, meat-bone, bread, cheese, and pork pie, can claim to play an important role to carry the tone of kindness (Panou, 2018). Though Pip is acting out of terror, but he also feels pity for the wretched man who seems to starve for days. He shows how fear wins over kindness when he decides to serve the wretched man ignoring all his fear. He can easily ignore that person out of his safety as he is completely-unknown and suspicious too, but he did not, and thus, so tenderly, he paves the path of kindness in the novel (Lopez, Pedrotti & Snyder, 2018).

In book 1, chapter 19, Pip is seen to be sympathetic towards the poor fellows while passing the church and he promises himself that he would do something for them one day and would form a plan for a dinner of roast beef and plum pudding, a pint of ale, and a gallon of condescension upon everybody in the village (Clarke 2018).

The relationship between Pip and his friend Herbert is also essential to be mentioned here in this respect. The way Pip contributes to his friend's career growth secretly, his friend too, is seen to help him continuously through his entire struggle (Lopez, Pedrotti & Snyder, 2018).

Moreover, Pip's love affection for Estella is also important to discuss here, as it is one of the products of his kindness for a human. Estella's behavior towards Pip at very first interaction is noticeable. Under the surface of courtesy, she literally ignores him out of her proud nature as well as social status (Panou, 2018). Not only that, she continued her ignorance throughout the novel. However, that does not stop Pip to love her. Even after achieving the social and economic transformation, he nourishes that feeling for her and it takes the ultimate form when he accepts her by marrying Widow Estella (Clarke, 2018).

Pip's kindness again appears when he forgives Miss Havisham in spite of receiving many cruel approaches from her. She is even seen to plot against him full of evil plans, and she does not leave any scope to humiliate him (Barr, 2018). However, towards the end of the novel, Miss Havisham repents on what she did and comes to him with a full heart expectation to get forgiveness and Pip, with his kind heart, is seen to give her so. It should be mention here that revelation of the truth behind Estella's birth that her father is none other than Magwitch himself, somehow motivates him to do so (Lopez, Pedrotti & Snyder, 2018).

In addition, it can be stated as the example of kindness that the orphan children like Pip, Estella and Biddy are found to be fortunate enough to have people around them to care for. Pip gets kind and affectionate assistance from his brother-in-law Joe (Panou, 2018). On the other hand, Estella, in spite of being orphan gets a lavish life with reflects her mother's passionate love and kindness for her. Then comes the example of Biddy getting social growth after her marriage with Joe (Lopez, Pedrotti & Snyder, 2018).

Though the examples that are stated above shows the kindness in the vein of the novel, it is also undeniable that Dickens represents several understandings of service among the characters

(Clarke 2018). Pip's first kindness for the convict can be stated as the product of his fear, where Provis's understanding of generosity is to devote his life for Pip's future entirely. Again, Mr. Joe and uncle Pumblechook, though being kind, are fonder of being type than being acting kindly. For them, generosity is a status maker (Lopez, Pedrotti & Snyder, 2018).

However, with the course of time and the flow of the novel Pip's maturity develops and approaches to getting a concrete shape and his early ingratitude towards Joe and Provis evolves into deep appreciation. Not only that these two men inspire him as well and he is seen to devote himself to Provis in part III (Clarke, 2018).

It would not be justified if another most important character that depicts kindness in a completely selfless manner would not be mentioned here. Magwitch, one of the aspects of Dickens's *Great expectation*, having a different upbringing, makes so many bad choices in his life (Lopez, Pedrotti & Snyder, 2018). He has severe criminal records as well and almost in half of the entire novel, he is seen to be imprisoned. Later he realized his errors in life and devoted himself to Pip's life unconditionally at the time of need.

3. Methodology

The article is based on the study and analysis of the secondary source of data collected from internet, journals, articles, and books. A qualitative method of approach has been followed during the research and study of the topic. Therefore, it includes various arguments and perspectives of authors collected from other researchers that have been analyzed and utilized with innovation in the article.

4. Research findings

The research clearly depicts the very concept of kindness at the beginning of the novel itself. Dickens's is all conscious about kind behavior showing love and sympathy towards others in the novel. Kindness is evidently present in the chance encounter of Pip with the convict Magwitch at the beginning of the novel. The moment, when the convict puts up with a question of the family details in a rough way was still answered truthfully and respectfully by the young Pip. In addition, Pip seems to have revealed some good spirit and manners with kindness in his nature that gains the readers' attention. Moreover, on his second meeting with the convict, Pip offers food to the convict and the convict accepts the food showing gracious thanks to Pip. Later, the convict protects Pip by filing himself for stealing the food. Such kindness and affection towards a childlike Pip shown by the convict Magwitch gains respect in the eyes of the readers (Seal, 2015).

In fact, during the course of the novel, when Dickens brings a change in the nature of Pip and reveals him as a Gentleman figure in the society, it once again wins the heart of the readers despite being born and brought up within the hardships of life. It was Pip's loyalty and sincerity towards Magwitch that has created compassion for Magwitch and rekindled the love for his lost daughter at the end of the novel. Moreover, Pip has learned to appreciate Magwitch's humanity as well as he feels ashamed of showing thanklessness towards Joe and Biddy before. Therefore, the novel ends with not only showing kindness in the relationship between Pip and Convict and his final reconciliation with Joe and Biddy, but also kindness and love have been revealed at the end

from Estella towards Pip after her painful suffering in her conjugal life with her brutal husband. In addition, Pip forgiving Miss Havisham, after a span of long years shows respect for the sake of his love Estella, finds a great social stature as a Gentleman in the society.

The novel runs with the functions of Bildungsroman by using many tropes of gothic romance invoking ambiguity and saddened love in the story. Dickens has criticized the educational system and the legal system of Britain during the time of the Victorian period that has been juxtaposed in the underlying theme of the novel. A typical Victorian sympathy lies in the tone of the novel. The father of modernized novels ensures that Dickens use of theory and style of writing goes in the same manner as reflected in the novel itself. The author's use of the concept of kindness effectively in the relation of the protagonist with the other characters finely justifies Dickens's use of theories.

5. Discussion

Pip is the central character of the novel despite his several mistakes committed in the course of action placed in the novel. It is the characteristics and significant changes in his psychology after being encountered with various incidents and reality of life has won the heart of the readers at the end as stated by Hammond, (2016). Pip and the Convict Magwitch and Estella are the three main characters around whom the novel revolves on and they show kindness in the novel. From the conversation of Pip with Magwitch reveals out the fact that he has sympathy and kindness towards the poor class of the society. In fact, it was Pip who realizes the pain of the convict itself and another similar fate as himself. That was the reason why Pip could empathize with the pain and suffering of Magwitch.

On the other hand, as per Clarke, (2018), it was Pip's crave for getting education and knowledge that enables him to see the status difference between him and Estella mainly due to Miss Havisham was rather a sense of revenge reflecting in Pip's nature in order to show social status in front of Estella. Although, Miss Havisham knew well that the subversive potential of education might bring a feeling of subjugation towards the lower class or might be even more dangerous. However, in the later part of the novel situations and reality made Pip learned some big lessons of gratitude and sympathy for all sections despite gathering education. Moreover, as per Lee, (2016), Pip believes the fact that kindness comes from the instinctive nature of a human being, not from social status. Therefore, such a sense of maturity has gained a lasting impression on the nature of Pip. Similarly, the readers gain a good intuition about Magwitch and Estella for her father and Pip. Dickens knew well about his endeavor of what he is going to show in the characters. Despite certain mistakes in Pip's life, the nature of kindness did not misplace in the novel. It was rightly placed through some significant changes in Pip, Magwitch, and Estella as well.

6. Conclusion

Charles Dickens does an implausible job in his novel giving us the opportunity to peep into the life of three main characters in the book. The theme of social injustice, mobility and kindness, and expectations to become successful has been well portrayed in the novel. There is no feeling of resentment seen in Pip and he accepts the society as the way it is, as he no longer stands as a

marginalized member and his new position as a colonial businessperson conforms to the English society in the East. For the time being, the novel loses its focus from kindness in the nature of Estella and Magwitch but later it brings back the concept with much equality among these three main characters. However, it states that the society is mobilizing and therefore, there is social mobility. Dickens captures the condition of society during the mid-Victorian period and looks into the lifestyle of the English society.

About the author

Dr. Saed Jamil Shahwan is an associate Professor of English Literature in the Department of English Language, Faculty of Arts of Hail University. He teaches many subjects in the field of English Literature. He published many articles in many international journals.

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