

# A CLASS STRUGGLE IN THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION ERA IN NINETEETH CENTURY OF CHARLES DICKENS'S NOVEL "OUR MUTUAL FRIENDS"

**Suswanto Ismadi Megah**

Dosen Tetap Progam Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris  
FKIP Universitas Riau Kepulauan Batam

## **Abstract**

*This novel tells the poor condition during the industrial revolution due to the power new industrialist who sweep the small scale enterprenours. Dickens himslef views his society as the bad condition because the power only owned by the rich group only. He criticizes poverty in his society and class struggle by using his writing in his novels. In "Our Mutual Friend" told that everyone needs money to survive as the money is the power to do something in the greatly-different class. Eventually, Dickens tells that the upper and the lower class need each others and live harmoniously as he expects.*

*Keywords : industrial revolution, class struggle, harmoniously*

## **1. Introduction**

Every human being will convey their ideas by using many media either verbal or non-verbal communication. Novel is one of the literary works which explain the message by using word by words, or sentence by sentnce. The literary work is an expression from a real social life in a community or society. Henry (1987:105) states that literature is not only the effect of the social couuses but also the cause of social effects. Hence, the literary work will influence social life or another words can be said that the literary works are pictures of the real life in a society.

Novel is one of the literary works which explain the real condition or imagination of the real society or life of authors. The authors here will convey their ideas by using texts. They will tell real condition either praise or criticize his or her society.

Charles Dickens is one of the famous authors from England who was so active to criticize his own poor society. He was born in 1912. He lived in the industrial revolution which had been experinces mostly in European Countries. He Drew his society by using novel as his medium. In industrial revolution had created new greatly-different classes. This was noticable that the revolution had made two great gap, namely the working class and the owners of the capital. The working class could be mentioned as lower class, and the other sides were the upper class. Those classes were knownly as the opressor or the bourguise group for the upper class while the lower class mentioned as the opressed.

## **1. Literature Review of the Industrial Revolution Era**

Thus, the situation in the early nineteenth century was a great change in the society, Dickens explains in his novel how the upper class has strong power to dictate lower class. Klerer (1999:95) states that the texts are analyzed as experiment of economical, sociological and political factors. Hence, the authors will convey their ideas vehemently in order to make the readers understand what the authors want. On the other hand, Hogard quoted by Teeuw (1984:237) that literary work creates sense of life and interpret as they do in life that we live in ourselves.

The historical change that had been shown in Dickens's novel was a picture of the real life in the Industrial revolution had made great gap between the owners of the capital and the labours. The owners forced the labours to work hard while most the benefit was for the owner. This condition had created more poor people while the have was only a few group of the people. Slaughter (1980:3) explains that on October 1917 had changed greatly in the arts and literary works during 1923-1926. This era was called as the literary revolution. On the other hand, the literary revolution was regarded as literary critic.

### **a. Social Condition of the English Society**

England was one of the European countries which were able to advance its industries. It was also successfully-big country in the nineteenth century. England had started its Industries since eighteenth century. In 1780, England was the world trade centre; England had widened its industries into its colonies from European to Asian continent. As the biggest imperialist country, its colonies needed goods, so, it was great change to spread its product to its colonies. This made England became greatly-Industrial country. In contrast, the developing marketing caused decreasing of the product sharply. The English Business cooperated with the engineers to develop the mechanical system industry. The mechanical device had been invented and applied in many industries to fulfill the order of the product.

Because of the Industrial development, the big industries needed to add devices and machines. These were used to increase the number of the product. on the other side, it was also to gain new mechanization. The developing of the mechanization in the giant industries had ruined the small

and home industries. These had created new class. This class jumped down to be working class or the lower class.

During 1742 to 1820 many small industries had closed its activities. Because of the reason above, urbanization could not be avoided. The flow of the people movement had increased rapidly. It caused the growing of the city population rapidly. This made new classes.

### **b. Social Class of the English Society**

European society had undergone the great change; this also changed the strata of its social class. The great transformation during the century and a half was followed by starting of industrialization. The differences between two gaps reflected a real life in England. All social classes would arise their levels of consumption, thus, a competition couldnot be avoided. In 1800 English society had a higher desire to fulfill earning and consumption power than was not relatively common. The middle classes had motivation for change. There were also some aristocracies lending peasant or tenant farmers, and carpenter who shared to have interest. For most dominant in society was the primary care. The new wealth had some experience to stimulate many groups to seek steady improvement in its life standard. According to Stearn (1967:399) for economic growth, this affected most social groups.

The great cahnge in social class had involved nobility, thus, in this period middle class endeavored in its activity. It was to increase its position, and many groups came to force mobility too. The government then took part in the development by spreading educational facilities to support a growing interest in the social mobility.

Thus, the older social class began to reduce rapidly, and this situation required new oraganizational- social classes. A form of new organizations were more massive than any developed before. The new oragnization then had foorced competitive supply and demand.

From those exaplantion previously, the social classes in England can be mainly devided into three great classes. Those are upper , middle and lower class. According to Crampton that social class as follows;

....” We may speak of a ‘class’ when (1) number of people have in common of specific social component of their life chances, in so far as (2) this component is repeated exclusively by economic interest in the possession of goods and opportunities for income,

and (3) is repeated under the condition of the commodity or labor market (Crampton, 1993:181)

Based on the statement of Crampton above, the different classes can be identified from the social interest, economic background, and condition of labour. Hence, the aristocratic family had the highest social level in the English society. This was normally mentioned as the upper-level class. While the professional workers had second position, or normally mentioned middle-level class. The poorest condition was the unskilled workers; they dropped down into lowest-level class. Magnis (1999:113) classifies the capitalist society into three levels, those are wage-labour, capitalists, and landowner.

Those classes can be divided into distinctively-different classes. Those levels can be divided into two classes, namely the working class or upper class and the owning class or lower class. Those can also be called as the oppressor for the upper class, while the oppressed for the lower. The three great classes can be stated as follows:

1. Upper Class

The Upper class might exploit the lower classes by using the capital in the industry. The upper class could be called as the bourgeoisie. This was caused by the bourgeoisie was the owner of the capital who forced the labours to fulfill the product. Joyce (1999:21) states that the capitalist was usually a call for modern capitalist. This was caused that the capitalist was very important element in industry as they owned the capital.

2. Middle Class

The middle class was quite difficult to classify because this class also was part of the working class. Stern (1967:387) comments that the most dynamic elements of the middle class were increasingly managerial, professional, and mechanical employee.

The middle class was good position for working class because they came from educational or skillful workers. So, they had good position in working due to they could command the unskilled-workers. They still could oppress the lower level class.

3. Lower Class

The lower class was the working class who worked just to fulfill the higher level class. This due to them didn't have enough skill in industry. This class was the poorest class because they worked under pressure from the upper and middle class. The lower class was

normally called as the oppressed or more commonly called as the proletariat. This was a call for modern wage-labour.

From the great above can be divided into two great classes. Those are the oppressor and the oppressed. Thus, two classes needed each other although they had different levels. This gap caused alienation in their society because the different class would make their own community in the social intercourse.

## **2. Methodology**

This research uses library research by using restrictively qualitative research. In collecting data, the researcher mostly did in the library to find the references which support his research.

Firstly, the researcher sought the novel of Charles Dickens's "Our Mutual Friends". He then read many times to understand the content and meaning of the novel.

Secondly, the researcher read the English History, especially when the novel was written. To support in analyzing the data, the researcher also read some novels of Dickens, such as *Hard Times* and *Pride and Prejudice*. This was meant to understand the style of Dickens's writing.

The last, the researcher made classification of the content of the novel to make easier to be analyzed based on the characteristic and the class strata of the main characters in the novel.

## **3. Analysis of the Research**

In "Our Mutual Friends", Dickens shows that two distinctively-different classes have made conflict in the society. This was very noticeable how Dickens describes his novel the different class struggle to reach the higher position.

In production factor, the capitalist and the proletariat had not good relationship but they needed each others. This research will analyze the class struggle of the Dickens's novel "Our Mutual Friends" based on the class stratification, class oppression, class struggle, and resolution of the class struggle. "Our Mutual Friends" will be shorted with "OMF".

### **a. The class stratification**

In this novel, the upper class shows the good quality of life. Dickens draws the upper class is the character of Mr. Veneering. To understand the quality of the upper class life can be seen as follows:

*All furniture was new, all their friends were new, all their servants were new, all their place were new, all their carriage was new... (OMF, pg.6).*

The word 'new' shows that Mr. Veneering is the one who is able to buy everything which were new even he can replace new servant because his power. In addition, he was easy to get new friends because of his wealth and power because the friends need his money. Thus, the upper class tends to be more oppressive while the lower class tended to be oppressed.

### **b. The Class Oppression**

In the oppression of the class can be viewed from economical background.

In OMF Deckens profounds how the power of money can buy someone to open the door of justice, to get a prestigious class in society, even they will get spouse as what they want.

*"well' observed R. Wilfer cheerfully, 'money and goods are certainly the best of references'. (OMF, pg.39)*

R. Wilfer shows his weaknesses due to his poor condition as clerk, he says that money and goods are the best references. Here 'references' can be classified as economical background, so it has power to oppress anyone.

### **c. The Class Struggle**

Dickens writes in OMF by using a conflict between greatly-different class. This conflict creates new gap between the upper and the lower class. Dickens emerges how lower class tries to release its position. Whereas the upper class still preserves its number of preveleged class. The class struggle happens because of the capitalist's exploitation to the labour. The exploitation has occurred many things, so it makes labour agitator to break a system of the capitalist that has sucked the employee. This will be shown as in folowing sentence *Boffin I want the room cleaned (OMF, pg.785)*

Dickens draws how the conflict in the Boffin's room. Mr. Venus asks Mr. Boffin to clean his room. Here Mr. Venus has authority to command Mr. Boffin.

## **4. Resolution of the Class Struggle**

In this session, the conflict between two different class solved. The resolution of the novel how the author sends a message to the readers. Actually Dickens has devoted his alll skills to create

the good creation. He expounds the lower class struggle. Eventually, all classes need each others because there is no employee without employer vice versa.

## REFERENCES

- Crampton, Rosemary. 1993. *Class and Stratification*. Cambridge: Politic Press.
- Dickens, Charles. 2000. *Our Mutual Friends*. London: David Campell Published Ltd.
- Joyce, Mc. Chael. 1999. *Class*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Magnis, Frans. 1999. *Sosiolalisme Utopis ke Perselisihan Revosionism*. Jakarta: PT. Gramedia.
- Stearn, Peter. 1967. *European Society in Literature*. London: Collier-Mac Millan.
- Slaughter, Cliff. 1980. *Ideology and Literary*. London: The macmillan Press Ltd.
- Tarner, Margaret. 1993. *Charles Dickens: Our Mutual Friend*. Jakarta: PT. Dian Rakyat.
- Teeuw, A. 1984. *Sastra dan Ilmu Sastra: Pengantar Teori Sastra*. Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya