

**TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY**

*David Copperfield: A Study of the Impact of Capitalism*

A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in English

By

Kiran Thapa

Central Department of English

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

December 2007

**Tribhuvan University**  
**Faculty of Humanities and Social Science**

This thesis entitled **David Copperfield: A Study of the Impact of Capitalism** submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by **Ms. Kiran Thapa** has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

Members of the Research Committee

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Internal Examiner

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

External Examiner

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Head

Central Department of English

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Acknowledgements**

I express my sincere gratitude to my teacher and adviser Mr. Bijay K Rauniyar, Lecturer, T.U., for his invaluable suggestions and guidance, without whose constant supervision and advice, my thesis would never have come to this form. I am equally grateful to Mr. Sadan Adhikari, who guided me in course of writing my proposal of this thesis. I am also indebted to all my teachers and staff of the Central Department of English and to the staffs of Central Library of T.U who directly or indirectly supported me in course of doing my thesis.

I cannot forget to thank my friends: Lekhraj Basnet, Subhadra Gurung, Devaki Thapa, my sisters Kumud Kaucha, Rupa Kaucha, Kajal Thapa, Kusum Thapa and my brothers Bikash and Prakash Burathoki who helped me to bring the present dissertation in this form. Likewise, I offer my heartfelt thanks to my principal of Little Angels' School Mrs. Bidhya Limbu, my incharge Mrs. Milan M. Pradhan and to my colleagues for providing me all their support during these last few months.

Last but not the least, I am very much grateful and indebted to my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Tul Bdr. Thapa for their continuous support and encouragement for accomplishing this thesis.

December 2007

Kiran Thapa

## **Abstract**

*David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens is a result of author's keen observation and bitter experiences of capitalism. It features child labour, prostitution, poverty, hunger, unemployment as well as the miseries of lower working class people. Its cruel impacts can be seen on the life of David, the protagonist and the other characters – Agnes, Mr. and Mrs. Micawber, Uriah Heep, etc. Everyone is under the heavy influence of capitalism and is the root cause of everyone's unhappiness and degradation. David, since his birth, experiences hardship in life and struggles his whole life to keep things in a perfect balance and so do the other characters. Everyone represents a different mode of life. Through the variable picture of life of working class people, *David Copperfield* demonstrates the evil impact of capitalism. Everyone in the novel is trapped in the whirlpool of capitalism and is fighting hard for their survival in it but never once trying to break out of it.

## Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	iv
I. Capitalism and its impact	1-16
II. Marx on capitalism	17-25
III. <i>David Copperfield</i> - The Capitalist Impact	26-40
IV. Conclusion	41-43
Works Cited	

## I. Capitalism and Its Impact

Capitalism generally refers to “a political economic system in which the means of production are privately owned and operated for profit” (*World Book* 144). Capitalism is also known as free enterprise or laissez faire because it allows people to carry out their economic activities largely free from government control. In this system, individuals and companies own and direct most of the resources used to produce goods and services. Such resources include land and other natural resources, labour and capital. Capital includes factories, equipment and money used in business activities. The term capitalism comes from capital.

Capitalism stresses private economic choices. People are free to decide how they will earn and spend their income. Companies may choose which goods and services to produce and how much to charge for them. They also compete with one another to sell products. Major economies which are based on capitalism include United States, Australia, United Kingdom, France, Canada, Germany, and Japan. Capitalist economic practices became institutionalized in Europe between the 16th and 19th centuries, although some features of capitalist organization existed in the ancient world. It has emerged as the western world’s dominant economic system since the breakup of feudalism. It gradually spread from Europe, particularly from Britain with the growth of the English Cloth Industry during the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries.

The Scottish economist Adam Smith first stated the principles of the capitalism system in the 1700’s. Smith believed that governments should not interfere in most business affair. He said “the desire of business people to earn a profit, when

regulated by competition, would work almost like an ‘invisible hand’ to produce what consumers want” (*Americana* 498).

Adam Smith (1723-90) is regarded as the founder of modern economics. Smith’s major book was *An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations*. Published in 1776, it was the first complete work on political economy. The book dealt with the basic problem of how social order and human progress can be possible in a society where individuals follow their own self interest. Smith believed that free trade and a self regulating economy would result in social progress. He criticized the British government’s tariffs and other limits on individual freedom in trade. He said that “government need only preserve law and order, enforce justice, defend the nation and provide for a few social needs that could not be met through the markets”(Americana 498). Smith’s argument for a “hands off” government policy toward business and his analysis of economic forces formed the basic ideas of capitalism.

### **History of Capitalism**

In its most general sense, the term capitalism can be used for any economic system in which capital may be privately owned and used by the owner as he wishes. So it is obvious that capitalism is not of recent origin and this particular type of economic system may be traced to early historical periods. Even in the hunting and fishing stage, physical capital (crude weapons and tools) and financial capital (primitive money) were individually owned and used. The capitalistic developments continued through the agricultural stages and into the age of metals. In the period between the late 15th century and 18th century the system of private property was brought into existence. Since the decline of feudalism much of Europe underwent a thoroughgoing economic transformation associated with the rise of capitalism.

## **Mercantilism**

The earliest stage of capitalism, arising in the period between the 16th and 18th centuries, is commonly described as merchant capitalism or mercantilism. It's a merchant overseas traders oriented system which started especially from England, Germany, France and other major trading nations with the geographic discovery of America. Under this system, a nation's government strictly regulated economic affairs to enrich its treasury especially by ensuring that exports exceeded imports.

Mercantilism was based on two beliefs. First, mercantilists judged a nation's wealth by its stock of gold, silver and other precious metals rather than by standards of living or other measurements. Second, the mercantilists believed that the world had a limited supply of wealth and so one country could grow rich only at the expense of another.

According to the mercantilists, a nation that didn't have gold, silver and other precious metal mines had to rely on foreign trade to become rich. They emphasized on excess of exports than imports. At that time gold had become universally accepted means of settling debts. If exports exceeded imports, the balance would have to be paid by the importing nation in gold or silver. This would increase a nation's treasure.

To maintain a favorable balance in export and import, mercantilist government imposed high tariffs and other restrictions on imported goods to make them cost more at home. The government encouraged the growth of domestic industries and even gave financial aid to local farms and domestic industries so they could lower the prices of their products. Industry that produced goods for export was encouraged because its product brought gold and silver into the nation. Industry that produced goods otherwise imported were encouraged because it decreased the outward flow of



gold and silver. Import tariffs and quotas were imposed to protect the position and the existence of such domestic industry.

Mercantilism also emphasized on colonization. If a state could not supply its own raw materials, according to the mercantilists, it should acquire colonies from which they could be extracted. Such overseas colonies served as markets for finished products and as sources of cheap raw materials. Mercantilist governments also encouraged population growth because a large population provided a supply of labor and a market for industrial products. Some nations prohibited the sale of gold and other precious metals to foreigners.

### **Industrial Capitalism**

Mercantilism declined in Great Britain in the mid 18th century, when a new group of economic theorist led by Adam Smith challenged the mercantilist's belief that the amount of the world's wealth remained constant and that a state could only increase its wealth at the expense of another state.

The mid 18<sup>th</sup> century gave rise to industrial capitalism, made possible by the investment in machinery. Industrial Capitalism started with the development of the factory system of manufacturing, characterized by a complex division of labor between and within work process and routinization of work tasks. The industrialists replaced the merchants and people like peasants and farmers drifted to urban centers in greater numbers than could be easily absorbed into industrial jobs particularly at a time when machine power was replacing manpower in many lines of production. The relatively large supply of labor available during much of the industrial revolution period in capitalist nations led to extremely low wages, long hours and poor working conditions for men, women and children.

During the days of industrialism, a doctrine of economic liberalism was developed by a group of French thinkers known as ‘physiocrats’ who believed that “restrictions upon individual behavior and interest are hindrance to the growth of trade” (*Americana* 564). This philosophy of liberalism is known as the doctrine of Laissez Faire. Laissez Faire is “a theory of economic policy which states that government generally should not interfere with decisions made in an open competitive market” (*Americana* 564). These decisions include setting prices and wages and making other choices that affect the sale of goods and services. According to laissez faire a nation’s economy functions most efficiently when people can pursue their private economic interest in freedom.

Laissez Faire is a French phrase meaning, “leave it (economic system) alone” (*Americana* 564). It supports a “hands off” policy on the part of government. It was first made popular by physiocrats between the 1750’s and 1780’s. At that time, the governments of many European countries practiced mercantilism. Mercantilism involved strict regulation of agriculture, industry and trade. Its chief goal was to ensure that exports exceeded imports. The physiocrats insisted that the imposition of such restrictions actually hindered the growth of trade and that the individuals are motivated by self interest. According to them people serve their own interests best when they provide the goods and services most wanted by others. Individual who operate in an open, competitive market automatically promote prosperity for all.

Thus, the government should have little to do with regulating the economy.

### **Modern Capitalism**

The theory of Laissez Faire greatly influenced economic thought and action during the early and mid 1800’s. Later however Laissez Faire failed to solve many economic and social problems like unemployment, low wages, high prices, low living

standards, monopolies in business etc. In the mid 18th century the control and direction of large areas of industry came into the hands of financiers who established monopolies in business and through many unfair competition and laws made the survival of small businesses difficult. So during this phrase many small businesses closed down letting the large industries rule over the market. This monopoly over the market by the large industries brought unfair competition and unreasonable high prices in the markets. So to stop this gradually the government of industrial nations started to regulate economic activities more closely. They found it necessary to pass antitrust legislation to protect the public from monopolistic exploitation. They also passed laws aimed at relieving major social problems such as poverty and unemployment. Hence once again the government of capitalist nations with the guidance of industrialist started making laws for the business enterprises to protect the right of buyers and the industries.

### **The Capitalist Economy**

Every day millions of men and women in capitalist countries work on farms and in factories and offices. They produce a vast wealth of goods and services. The governments do not tell the people where to work or what should be grown on the farms or where most of the factories should be built. Nor do the governments dictate what prices will be charged for most goods and services. Yet the work is done, the prices are set and many people get the products they need. For the most part, a capitalist economy runs by itself. That is, people act as consumers, workers and managers. Individuals and private businesses, along with other institutions, make their own economic decisions. These decisions shape and are shaped by such economic forces as supply and demand, profits, markets, prices, competition and distribution of income (*World Book* 62).

**Consumers**

Consumers are people who use goods and services. In a capitalist system, consumers jointly influence production by the things they choose to buy. For example thousands of people begin to buy a new compact disk (CD). Record shops must order more copies of this CD from the company that makes it. The company produces a larger supply of CD's because people have increased their demand for them.

**Business and Profits**

Many kinds of businesses produce the things consumers want. The main goal of most businesses is to earn profits. Profits are earnings of a business over and above all costs. The cost of producing a suit includes the cost of cloth, the wages of the workers who make the suit, the expense of buying tools and machinery, the cost of advertising the suit and so on. The price of the suit must include all these costs as well as a profit for the company. The profit motive influences owners to organize and operate their firms efficiently. By reducing waste of time or raw materials, a firm can lower its production costs. Lower costs mean higher profits.

**Markets, Prices and Competition**

Whenever goods and services are bought and sold, a market is created. A market may be a small local shop or a worldwide stock market. In a capitalist economy, market prices rise and fall as demand and supply increases and decreases. Suppose that 100,000 families want to buy new cars, but only 90,000 cars have been produced. The quantity demanded is greater than the quantity supplied. Sellers might guess that many families would be willing to pay more for one of the limited number of cars. As a result, the sellers would raise the prices of cars. At the same time, manufacturers would begin to produce more cars in order to sell more and increase

profits. Eventually, as more cars were produced, the quantity supplied would begin to catch up with the quantity demanded.

In the capitalist economy, businesses that provide similar products compete with one another for buyers. As a result, businesses have to charge reasonable prices and keep the quality high. For example, if a shop raises its price for a bag of sugar, its customers may choose to buy from a shop that offers the same amount of sugar at a lower price. Similarly, a business that offers consumers products of low quality may lose customers who prefer to buy products of higher quality from somewhere else. Competition is so important in many capitalist economies that the governments have passed many laws to enforce it. These laws prohibit agreements among sellers that interfere with competitions.

### **Distribution of Incomes**

Under capitalism, the amount of goods and services people can afford depends mainly on the size of the income they receive. People earn income in a variety of ways. Most people receive income as wages or as salaries in exchange for their work. Businesses receive income in the form of profits, which belong to the owners. Owners of land and buildings receive rent. Owners of bonds and saving accounts receive interest. Many people benefit from government programmes, such as social security and pension payments. Under capitalism, people earn income by producing the goods and services that consumers demand. The forces of supply and demand also influence the size of a person's income. For example, a firm would probably pay factory managers more money than it would pay unskilled laborers. The firm pays managers more because the sales and profits of the firm depend to a large extent on the quality of the decisions the managers make. Managers are in shorter supply, so employers have to offer more money to attract such people. In a capitalist system "how fast shall

the economy grow?” depends greatly on how much consumers and business companies save and invest.

### **Government and the Capitalist Economy**

Even under capitalism, the government takes part in many important economic activities. Capitalist governments usually have three major roles. These governments (1) establish and enforce laws that affect economic activity (2) set up public service industries (3) provide goods and services for the public (*World Book* 63).

### **Laws**

Under capitalism, the people depend on the government to pass laws that ensure economic fair play. These laws aim at preventing individuals and companies from taking unfair advantage of each other, but do not always work very well.

In capitalist economics, many of the most important laws concern business competition. Other laws ban harmful or misleading advertising. Still others set standards for proper working conditions, set minimum wages and prohibit employers from refusing to hire people or lend money to them because of their race, sex or age. In the 1970's and 1980's, many capitalist countries in Western Europe, for example, introduced regulations to protect the environment from further damage.

### **Public Utilities**

Public utilities are companies that provide services essential to the public. These services often include electric power, water, gas, sewage and telephone services. In many public utility businesses, competition would be wasteful. Governments grant legal monopolies to public utility companies so they may operate without competition. But the prices and standard of service of most public utilities are usually strictly regulated by governments.

## **Public Services**

Central and local governments provide many services that could not be furnished as well by private companies. These services include police and fire protection, schools, national defense and roads. Governments also offer medical services, public housing, and other economic aid to needy people. All the goods and services provided by government make up the public sector of the economy. Governments pay for most of the services that they provide with money they collect in taxes. There are many kinds of taxes. Individuals and corporations pay income taxes on their earnings. Consumers pay sales or value added taxes on many items they buy.

## **How Capitalism Works**

A number of factors influence economic decisions under capitalism. The most important factors are (1) individuals (2) businesses (3) the market (4) income and (5) the government (*World Book* 144).

## **Individuals**

Individuals influence the economy as consumers, workers and investors. For example, if consumers show by their purchases that they prefer small cars to large cars, dealers will order more small cars and fewer large ones. Manufacturers, in turn, will step up production of small cars and cut production of large cars. As workers, individuals may decide which jobs to prepare for and where to try to find a job. As investors, they decide how much of their income to save and how to invest their savings. Private investors provide much of the money that businesses need to grow.

## **Businesses**

Businesses decide what to produce and where to conduct their activities. They also buy the necessary equipment and hire workers. Businesses try to influence what consumers buy through advertising and by creating new and improved products.

The driving force of a capitalist economy is the desire for profits. Profits are a firm's earnings after it has paid all its expenses. The desire for profits, called the profit motive, ensures that companies produce the goods and services that consumers are willing and able to buy. To succeed, businesses must sell enough of their products at a price high enough to yield a profit. A firm may lose money instead of earn a profit if sales fall too low or costs run too high. The profit motive also encourages firms to operate efficiently. By saving time, energy and materials, a firm can cut its production costs. Lower production costs can lead to greater sales and profits. Business plays a large role in determining how fast a capitalist economy grows. An economy grows when it increases its production of goods and services. Growth requires investment in buildings, equipment and other resources used to increase production. In a capitalist nation, businesses decide for themselves when and how much to invest for this purpose.

## **The Market**

The market is a term used by economist for places and situations in which people buy and sell goods and services. In a capitalist economy where an economy is tightly controlled by government, the prices of goods and services are determined mainly by such market conditions as supply and demand and competition. Supply is the amount of a good or service offered for sale. Demand is the amount that people are willing and able to buy. Prices tend to change when supply and demand are



unequal. Generally, the market forces prices to fall when supply exceeds demand and to rise when demand exceeds supply.

Competition exists when many producers try to sell the same kinds of products to the same buyers. Capitalist economies depend on competition to discourage companies from charging unreasonable prices. A firm that charges lower prices or improves the quality of its products can take buyers away from its competitors.

### **Income**

Income in a capitalist economy depends chiefly on the supply of and demands for skills that society values most. People who have skills that are in scarce supply and worth a lot in the market can attract high incomes. For example, professional footballers often attract huge salaries. Their managers, on the other hand, earn comparatively little because their contribution to the team's earnings are not seen to be very great.

Competition among employers for workers and among workers for jobs also helps set wage rates. Businesses need to pay wages high enough to attract the workers that they need. When jobs are scarce, however, workers may accept lower wages than they would when jobs are plentiful.

Trade unions and the government also influence wages in many capitalist countries. Unions bargain with employers to establish wage scales and working conditions acceptable to their members. Some governments have established minimum wages for workers. Government agencies also enforce safety standards.

### **The Government**

The government in a capitalist nation allows individuals to use their property largely as they wish and to work where they please. The government generally permits companies to set wages for their workers and prices for their products. The

government also performs a number of important economic functions. For example, it issues money, supervises public utilities and enforces business contracts. Laws protect competition and forbid unfair business practices.

Government agencies regulate standards of service in such industries as airlines, pharmacies, radio and television broadcasting. The government also finances a wide variety of programmes and may regulate the flow of credit and money in the country. In addition, the government can use its powers to fight such problems as unemployment.

### **Impacts of Capitalism**

Capitalism with it brought lots of money and luxuries for many people. But it also created problems. These problems include (1) population growth (2) urbanization and migration (3) child labour (4) environmental pollution.

### **Population Growth**

The population of European people rose sharply during the 18th and 19th centuries. Between 1700 and 1800 the population of Europe increased from 105 to 180 million, and during the 19th century it more than doubled to 390 million (Bentley and Ziegler 852). The rapid population growth in Europe was the result of high birth rates and low child mortality. As more infants survived to adulthood the population of early industrializing societies grew rapidly. By the late 19th century, better diets and improved sanitation led to declining levels of adult as well as child mortality so population of industrial societies expanded ever faster.

Britain and Germany the most active sites of early industrialization, experienced especially fast population growth. Between 1800 and 1900 the British population increased from 10.5 million to 37.5 million while German numbers rose from 18 million to 14 million (Bentley and Ziegler 845).

## **Urbanization and Migration**

Industrialization and population growth strongly encouraged migration and urbanization. Within industrial societies migrants flocked from the countryside to urban centers in search of work. Industrial Britain led the world in urbanization. In 1800 about one-fifth of the British population lived in towns and cities of 10000 or more inhabitants. During the 19th century a largely rural society became predominantly urban, with three-quarters of the population working and living in cities. This pattern repeated itself in continental Europe, the United States, Japan and the rest of the world. By 1900 at least 50 percent of the population in industrialized lands lived in towns with population of 2000 or more. The increasing size of cities reflected this internal migration. In 1800 there were barely twenty cities in Europe with populations as high as 100,000, and there were none in the western hemisphere. By 1900 there were more than 150 large cities in Europe and North America combined. With a population of 6.5 million, London was the largest city in the world, followed by New York with 4.2 million, Paris with 3.3 million, and Berlin with 2.7 million (Bentley and Ziegler 854).

## **Environmental Pollution**

With urbanization came environmental pollution. The cities started getting dirty and it stank everywhere. Along with the land, water and air pollution also started appearing. The widespread burning of wood and coal fouled the air with great quantities of chemicals and other harmful gases. Such air pollution led to typical occupational diseases among some trades like chimney sweeps contracted lung cancer from hydrocarbon deposits found in chimney soot. The factory owners started disposing the waters of factories into river which caused severe water pollution. Thousands of city people drank those polluted water and fell ill and hundreds of

among them even lost their life or their loved ones. Day by day the cities were getting crowded and as there wasn't any proper system of drainage or sanitation system people started throwing things here or there and played a vital role in making their own city stinky and dirty. Erection of unplanned and improper houses also added more to the problem.

Though the rapid appearance of unplanned houses solved to some extent the problem of housing, it immensely created environmental pollution. Poor water supplies and unsanitary living conditions in such unplanned houses led to periodic epidemics of cholera, dysentery and tuberculosis etc and claimed the lives of many urban people.

### **Poverty**

It is true that capitalism brought money with it but it was limited between few people only. More than half of the population of a country was poor and throughout their life remained poor though from morning to night they worked nonstop and did back-breaking works in extremely filthy and dangerous factories. These poor people were the factory workers who were dominated by the factory owners. In the early 19th century almost all the factories were equipped with machineries and these machineries were capable of doing much better and faster works than an ordinary human being can. So during those days most of the factory workers were replaced by machineries and those who were left were offered very low wages. There was a vast difference between the income of the upper and lower class people.

The upper class people were mostly the factory owners and the lower class people were the workers in the factories of upper class people. The owners pocketed most of the profit made through the production of the products in the factory and gave minimum wages to the workers who were the makers of those finished products.

Indirectly they were the hands behind the richness of the factory owners but they themselves remained poor.

### **Child Labour**

It was the result of cruelties of capitalism on the poor and hungry people. The scenario of children aged six and seven working in a factory was very common. It was the poverty which pushed the young children into early labor and made them the victims of capitalism. Their working hours were long and hard just like of any grown up worker but their wages were the lowest. Not only they were poorly paid but were also forced to do most of the dangerous and unhealthy works like cleaning the chimneys, dragging heavy cart full of coals through a narrow underground tunnel etc. Young children were forced to work fourteen hours a day and were often wiped during their works in order to keep them awake and make them work faster. They were made to sit or work mostly in same one position which often resulted into deformity later on when they grow up. Capitalism took away their childhood and happiness with them and instead gave them long and hard working hours in return of few shillings a week and immense cruelties

## II. Marx on Capitalism

By 18th century England was no more a primitive England. It had thoroughly gone under a drastic change and emerged as an Industrial England. It was a new face of England. It all started with the growth of cotton industry in England. In order to compete with the cheap Oriental Cotton textiles in the world markets, the Cotton industry of England started the use of machinery. The first two machineries used by cotton industry were 'Fly Shuttle' and 'Jenny', invented by John Kay and James Hargreaves respectively. John Kay a combination of a skilled weaver and a good mechanic, invented 'Fly Shuttle' made it possible for one person to weave wide cloth whereas earlier two persons were needed to weave wide cloth. James Hargreaves, a weaver and carpenter, spinning 'Jenny' was a multiple spinning wheel operating several spindles and provided a mechanical carriage for drawing the threads. This spinning Jenny was the practical solution of the problem- the scarcity of yarn which was an important cause for weavers' unemployment. After Kay and Hargreaves, the next outstanding figure in the history of textile machinery was Richard Arkwright though a barber and wig maker by profession. Arkwright's 'Water Frame' was powered by water and he is also regarded as the founder of the factory system since it was he, who established factories in which his machineries were used and made a huge fortune as a successful cotton manufacturer. From the establishment of Arkwright's water -powered cotton mill in 1771, industrial capital rather than trading capital became more significant (Johnson 65-7).

The 18<sup>th</sup> century was an age of invention. Numerous new discoveries and inventions were made during those days and many of them proved to be of great use. Such as James Watt's steam engine, Henry Maudsley's improved metal etc. Not only in science, the field of agriculture also underwent a complementary development. The

people abandoned their medieval agricultural methods and embraced new and improved farming tools and methods. And this embracement resulted in better production which meant more extra money and a path leading to richness and happiness. Science, nature and human being became an obedient servant of capitalism who promised them a better life and brighter future.

Better life and brighter future is what people got during the reign of capitalism but such people were the minority of the society as the social results of new industrialism were not all happy and good. As promised the industrial revolution had brought all the material comforts of modern life and many more new forms of art and beauty. But industrialism with miserable factories, clouds of smoke and filthy tenements was actually extremely ugly and ruthless. 'Capitalism' as Dudley Dillard phrased 'was champion without a challenger' (263).

According to Stuart Chase the ideals of competitive capitalism were: "Buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest market so that the profit may be at a maximum" (78). The industrialists in order to earn more profit bought the required raw materials from the cheapest market but sold the finished products at the highest price in the markets. Hence encouraging high prices and making each and everything beyond a poor people's reach.

"Let every capitalist strive to outdo every other capitalist, in order that the weak may fall and the strong survive, and so keep the most vigorous and the most efficient at the top" (79). Capitalism gave the industrialists the freedom of doing anything to stay at the top. Both by hook or crook they wanted to outdo the other industrialists and these competitive and deceptive feelings among the stronger and richer industrialists made the survival of smaller and weaker industrialists almost impossible and helped the winner establish monopoly over the whole market.

“Encourage individualism” (79). The common people who were day and night working for their survival started distinguishing between mine and yours. Capitalism compelled them to think about themselves only as after hard work and longer working hours they had no time, enthusiasm or money left to do or think about anyone else. Slowly without their knowledge, everyone started leading a secluded life.

“Let profit be the motive for every industrial action” (79). Capitalism made the industrialists money minded and behind their every action and decision the only motive was money.

“Tolerate no interference from labor, work it as hard as possible, and pay it not more than a survival wage” (79). The industrialists started having no feelings towards their workers. They were just paid workers for them and no more. They made them work as long and hard as possible and paid them minimum wages and any sign of rebel from their side means loosing their job, the only source of their income.

With these ideologies capitalism was trying to win over the hearts of the whole world but it was not long before there arose sharp criticisms from learned and intellectual persons such as Karl Marx, a brilliant doctor of philosophy from the university of Jena and Friedrich Engels, a businessman residing in England.

Karl Marx (1818-1883) was born in Germany to Jewish parents who converted to Lutheranism. A very scholarly man, Marx studied literature and philosophy, ultimately earning a doctorate at the University of Jena. He turned to journalism and at the age of twenty four became an editor of a radical paper which was soon suppressed. In 1843, shortly after his marriage to Jenny Von Westphalen, of noble family, the young couple went to Paris where Marx became the editor of the Franco- German Year Books. The aim of these books, he declared was the fearless criticism of all the existing institutions. It contained an article by Engels which



condemned capitalist economy as unjust. In 1845, he was forced to leave Paris for Brussels. After several more forced moves, he settled in London where in poverty, he spent the rest of his life studying, writing and meeting with other opponents of capitalism. It was here that he prepared his monumental work, *Das Kapital (Capital)* (1867) and *The Communist Manifesto* (1848).

Marx believed that social problems of the 19th century were inevitable results of a capitalist economy. Capitalism had divided people into two main classes, each with its own economic interests and social status: The capitalist bourgeois, who owned industrial machinery and factories and the proletariat, consisting of wage workers who had only labour to sell.

The capitalist bourgeois society had emerged from the ruins of feudal society and replaced the lords, knights. Industrialism had established the world market and helped commerce, navigation, railways expand. With this expansion, the bourgeois society too expanded, increased their capital and ruthlessly exploited the working class people, the proletariat. With the expansion of their wealth and factory, the bourgeois class gave birth to the proletariat class who worked for them for wages. Intense competition between the capitalists trying to earn more profit resulted in ruthless exploitation of the working class. To make matter worse, the government and its institutions, such as police force and court of law, were agencies of the capitalist ruling class. Their function was to maintain capitalist in power and enable them to continue their exploitation of the proletariat. Even music, art, literature, and religion served the purposes of capitalists, since they amused the working classes and diverted attention from their misery. It encouraged workers to focus on a hypothetical realm of existence beyond this world rather than trying to improve their lot in society so Marx once referred to religion as “the opiate of the masses” (861).

In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx said, “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles” (545). Every present form of a society is the result of a struggle between an oppressor and oppressed class. The working class, proletariat to which the capitalism gave birth was the grave digger of capitalism as it led to monopolies and poverty which resulted in revolution from the sufferers. The capitalist system failed because there were huge differences between the bourgeois and proletariat class. The constantly growing and thoroughly exploited proletariat class revolted against the bourgeois class because it was the only alternative available to them and a revolution from their side brought an end to the capitalist system and created a fair and just society where everyone was equal and no one was exploited. Marx too supported such revolution and urged workers “to seize control of the state, confiscate the means of production and distribute wealth equitably throughout society” (28).

Marx strongly believed that sooner or later a revolution will erupt from the proletariats side and they will definitely overthrow the ruling class bourgeois and elect a government of communist thought. So in *The Communist Manifesto* he created a picture of perfect society in which there’s no class struggle and no poverty. Everywhere there’s equal division of wealth and labour. In his suggested society, there will be: “Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes” (557). Every piece of land will be owned and governed by the government. The lands will be rented instead of owned by the people and the collected rents will be used for the betterment of public.

“A heavy progressive or graduated income tax” (557). After abolishing the ownership of any kind of property the government will start collecting taxes from the people for their own good as from those collected taxes the government will look after

the basic necessary things of a nation like schools, hospitals and roads etc. The government will make a budget for everything and will implement new and modern ideas for their improvements and better uses.

“Abolition of all right of inheritance” (557). No more anyone will be born rich or poor. Everyone has to make his own future by his own hard work. No one will be rewarded for his forefathers’ hard works or good deeds.

“Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rich people” (557). During industrialization many outsiders settled into the country in order to make money and by the exploitation of the country people they made huge fortune. So such property will be seized back from them and will be distributed among the true owners. The government will also end the gap between the rich and poor by seizing the property of rich and equally distributing those properties among the poor people who had actually worked for it.

“Centralization of credit in the hands of the State, by means of a national bank with State capital and an exclusive monopoly” (557). There will be no longer any monopoly by the industrialist but instead the government will regulate and monitor the State’s income.

“Centralization of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the State” (557). Earlier the uses of transport and communication tools were only for the rich people. The poor people were charged heavily on their use but after the revolution the means of communication and transport will become public property and everyone can use it then without paying much.

“Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the State; the bringing into cultivation of waste lands, and the improvement of the soil generally in accordance with a common plan” (557). The government will establish and operate

more factories equipped with more machineries to provide employment to every unemployed and skilled labor as well as try to cultivate the bare and unfertile lands by attracting more people towards farming.

“Equal liability of all to labour” (557). The government will provide work to every person according to his/her knowledge and capability. Every person will get a job according to his/her skill and will be paid according to their work and working hours. There won't be any biasness between the workers. The wages will be according to their work. And the government will see to it that everyone gets a job and that too according to his/her interest and skill.

“Combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries: gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country, by a more equable distribution of the population over the country” (557). Earlier most of the raw materials for the factory production were imported and the lands were left uncultivated and neglected as every peasant or farmers were attracted towards the industries so the government will implement new measures of attracting people back towards farming and try to produce as much as possible raw materials in their own country hence making the country a self dependent one. The government will also take steps towards the improvement of the country side and as much as possible try to control the inflow of people into the town causing huge crowd everywhere.

“Free education for all children in public school. Abolition of children's factory labor in its present form. Combination of education with industrial production” (557). The government will takeover all the private educational organization and will open the gates of such organization for everyone and that too free of cost so the parents need not to worry about their expenses. Also there won't be anyone rich or poor in the schools. Everyone will get equal opportunity in a school

under same one roof. Earlier due to the poor economic status many parents were forced to send their children to the factories at an early age of four. So the government will take major steps towards stopping child labour and securing their rights by creating a healthy and happy atmosphere for them. The government will also make sure that before starting any profession, the youngsters get all the information and trainings regarding their chosen professions.

With these main ideas of Marx a new doctrine came to be known as Marxism in the middle of the 19th century. Marxism founded by Karl Marx consisted originally three interrelated ideas: 1.the general laws or principles of dialectics; 2. the economic interpretation of history; 3. the economic analysis of capitalism. The most important feature of Marx's Marxism was the economic interpretation of history and the idea of the class struggle. Marx wrote "In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations . . . which constitute the economic structure of society- the real foundation on which rise legal and political superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The modes of production in material life determine the general character of the social, political and spiritual process of life" (118).

The economic institutions play a vital role in determining human affairs. The actions or decisions made by human are determined by social condition and class. And the class of a man is determined by his source of income or the property. Everything depends on the economic condition of a man. A poor man never dares to dream big and a rich man never thinks anything smaller than his status or class. There always have been the differences between the economic conditions of people which sooner or later transforms into a struggle between the economic classes and these struggles were the fundamental process of determining the shape and occurrence of

other event. And that's why Marx said "Economy is behind everything and is the only motive behind every human action" (31).

### III. *David Copperfield* – The Capitalist Impact

The novel was first published in 20 monthly installments from May 1849 to Nov. 1850, issued by Bradbury & Evans. The last issue was a double number. Each installment was written to fit thirty two closely printed large pages. Dickens kept each of his subplots moving along each month, never leaving an important character offstage for too long. He also ended each installment on a note of suspense or surprise. It was an instant hit among the people. Everyone loved it. Once Churchill wrote “It is easy to criticize *David Copperfield*, but almost impossible not to enjoy it; like *A Christmas Carol* and *A Tale of Two Cities*, it is one of those books we first read in childhood, and the spell so easily cast upon us can never, even if we wished it, be fully shaken off”(133). Even the author Charles Dickens claims this work of his as his favourite. “Of all my books, I like this the best [ . . . ] like many fond parents, I have in my heart of hearts a favourite child. And his name is *David Copperfield*” (II).

He has, in it, most splendidly merged his autobiography i.e. personal history, his childhood misery, adventures and experience, into art. David, the protagonist, is no doubt, Dickens’ most favourite child he ever created in his works as he portrays his own personality in him. This is the review of the journey of his life.

Readers of his own time too assumed that *David Copperfield* was a thinly disguised autobiography. After all it was written in the first person and even David’s initials are Dickens’ in reverse. Like Dickens, David is a novelist who started out as a political reporter. And not just his readers, there were many critics who too believed so. “ *David Copperfield* is certainly the most autobiographical . . . It is known that Dora was based on Dickens’ idealistic memories of his first love, Maria Beadnell ” (Churchill 132). Even his best friend John Forster wrote “It is well known that the elder Dickens furnished suggestions for the character of Mr. Micawber” (200).

However he also added “After the early chapters, *David Copperfield* cannot be called an autobiographical novel; David, grown up, is certainly not ‘the hero of his own story,’ in the sense, for example, that *Barry Lyndon* is, or *Jane Eyre*” (205). Dickens had changed the facts a great deal to write *David Copperfield*. In *David Copperfield*, Dickens had told his own life story more directly and more completely than in any other novel. And yet he created a fictional character in *David Copperfield*. It is the novel seen through the eyes of David Copperfield.

David Copperfield is raised by his pretty young mother, widowed before he was born, and their loyal servant, Clara Peggotty. His happy childhood is interrupted when black-whiskered Mr. Murdstone and his mother have married. Mr. Murdstone intimidates David’s mother and terrorizes David. One day he bites Mr. Murdstone’s hand in a rebellious rage and as punishment, he is sent to Salem House, a boarding school near London, where he is miserable.

His schooldays are interrupted by the news that his mother and her new born baby have died. After their funeral, he is not sent back to Salem House but instead Mr. Murdstone found a job for David in London at a warehouse. David, who is only ten, begins to work several hours a day, six days a week, with the uneducated boys, for only six shillings a week. After several months there David decides to run away to his Aunt Betsey, whom he has never met. On foot, penniless, he makes the journey to Aunt Betsey’s cottage in Dover. Once under his Aunt’s guidance, he again settles happily into a new circle of friends: simpleminded Mr. Dick, who lives at Betsey’s; Betsey’s lawyer Mr. Wickfield, his sweet daughter Agnes and his law clerk Uriah Heep; the master of David’s new school, Dr. Strong, his young wife Annie and her flirtatious cousin Jack Maldon. Here he grows to young manhood and once he has finished school, his aunt sends him to London as a trainee in the law firm of Spewlow



and Jorkins. David meets Mr. Spenlow's pretty daughter Dora and falls madly in love. Aunt Betsey arrives in London with the news that she has lost all her money and is moving in to live with David on a tiny income. So to make the both ends meet he takes on a second job as secretary to his old schoolmaster, Dr. Strong, who has now moved to London. David also learns shorthand and begins working as a reporter covering parliamentary debates and marries Dora and they move into a cottage across the street from Aunt Betsey. He begins to win some fame as a fiction writer. Meanwhile, after a stillbirth, Dora has fallen gravely ill and she finally dies. Numb with grief, David goes to Switzerland for several months to recover from his grief. Eventually he writes a novel about his experiences. He also thinks a lot about Agnes Wickfield, realizes that he has always been in love with her and regrets that she has shown only sisterly feelings toward him. Returning to England, he finally confesses his feelings to Agnes and learns that she has always loved him too. They marry, have children and live happily ever after.

It is a tale of ups and downs, joy and sorrow. Starting out life as the trusting, vulnerable sort, David encounters a variety of loving and evil faces on the road to maturity, and he sometimes has a difficult time distinguishing between them.

"Dickens is the greatest genius in English literature" (Churchill 119). Dickens was an immensely popular writer. As a child and youth, he had personally observed the squalor and degradation in which many of his fellow men lived and these early impressions never faded. From *Sketches by Boz* to *Edwin Drood*, he dwelt repeatedly upon the darker aspects of social life. Dickens had closely observed the daily life of rapidly industrializing London. He was fully aware of the dramatic change that had occurred in the life of people and appalling poverty and destitution resulted from the industrialization. The flocking of country people towards the town in search of better

job opportunity in the newly established industries quickly resulted in overcrowding of town slums, lack of domestic sanitation, public sewerage, contamination and rapid spreading of contagious diseases such as typhoid, cholera, dysentery and other horrific epidemics. The overflow of job seekers resulted in unemployment and poverty which served as fertile grounds for criminal activities. Dickens, who was sincerely worried over such situation, brilliantly expressed his sense of horror and indignation through his literary works.

Dickens had not only seen poverty but had experienced himself. He had felt the pang of starvation and destitution; therefore, his concern about the growing misery of lower class people is genuine. Dickens, who was true to people, always brought out their misery through his works. He possessed the strong feeling of brotherhood and always loved lower class people and was equally loved by them. "Dickens", as Edger Johnson writes, "opened the floodgates of his sympathy for all the neglected, unloved and misused, all the innocent and suffering victims of society, all the prisoners of injustice and pain. Their cause became his cause" (260).

Dickens was a great artist with inborn creative energy. He possessed profound passion for art and was endowed with extraordinary imaginative power; however, his novels were not entirely the products of them. They were the products of his time. They were like social history in literary form as they were the novels of social criticism. Dickens had depicted the real life situation in his novels and had exposed and severely criticized the contemporary social abuses. Shaw wrote about Dickens that "If Dickens' day as a sentimental romancer is over, his day as a social prophet and social critic is only dawning." He added that "the England of Thackeray and Trollope had gone but Dickens' England is the real England we live in" (166).

*David Copperfield* has successfully depicted the public evil and corruption during early Victorian period. It exposes the cruelties of the industrialization and its severe impact on the people. In *David Copperfield*, Dickens presents the panoramic view of English life of 1850s. Dickens was a great realist and *David Copperfield* reflects reality embellished with artistic hands. The world of *David Copperfield* is the world of poverty, corruption, ignorance and ugliness.

*David Copperfield* is basically focused on the following socio-economic problems of the author's contemporary society.

### **Child Labour**

Child labour was one of the most serious problems of industrial England. The children were compelled to work in an unacceptable condition notoriously harmful to their health. Young children both boys and girls had to work for long hours despite every chances of injuring their health. As there was no restriction of wage and working hours, children were made to work long hours for very low wage. They had to work more than 12 hours everyday for the wage of a shilling or so a week. As the state remained indifferent to all these problems and protected the interest of the industrialist class which it represents, the exploitation became inevitable. In *David Copperfield*, David the protagonist was forced to work as a child labour in Murdstone and Grinby's warehouse at the age of ten. He had to work there hard from morning to night and as his lunch break he used to get only half an hour a day. Despite his long and hard working hours David used to get only seven shillings a week as his wage and because of such small wage many a times he had to go without any food in order to manage to live on with his small amount of money for a whole week until it's the pay time again:

“My own exclusive breakfast of a penny loaf, and a pennyworth of milk, I provided myself. I kept another small loaf, and a modicum of cheese, on a particular shelf of a particular cupboard, to make my supper on when I came back at night. This made a hole in the six or seven shillings, I know well; and I was out at the warehouse all day, and had to support myself on that money all the week” (182).

“Often, in going to Murdstone and Grinby’s, of a morning, I could not resist the stale pastry put out for sale at half price at the pastry cooks’ doors, and spent in that, the money I should have kept for my dinner. Then, I went without my dinner” (182).

“When I had money enough, I used to get half a pint of ready made coffee and a slice of bread and butter. When I had none, I used to look at a venison shop in Fleet Street; or I have strolled, at such a time, as far as Covent Garden Market, and stared at pine apples” (183).

These lines of David show how miserable his life was as a child labour. Even after his long and hard work he wasn’t getting enough money to buy enough and healthy food. He was forced to starve and kill his desires. He was denied from his right to education, proper food etc. Many a times he was unhappy with his position as a child labour in a warehouse:

“No words can express the secret agony of my soul as I sunk into this companionship; and felt my hopes of growing up to be a learned and distinguished man crushed in my bosom. The deep remembrance of the sense I had, of being utterly without hope now; of the shame I felt in my position; of the misery it was to my young heart to believe that day by day what I had learned, and thought, and delighted in, and raised

my fancy and my emulation up by, would pass away from me, little by little, never to be brought back any more; cannot be written. As often as Mick Walker went away in the course of that forenoon; I mingled my tears with the water in which I was washing the bottles; and sobbed as if there were a flaw in my own breast, and it were in danger of bursting” (176-77)

These above lines of David’s clearly shows how much he had wanted to be a learned and a respected man but his poverty had crushed those dreams and had instead brought him to a warehouse as a poor and dirty labor. David’s life was made unhappy by forcing him to work as a labor in an early age of ten. When he should be playing, growing and eating healthy food, he was working as a bull in a warehouse just to earn a small loaf of bread at the end of each day. Not only unhappy he was, he was also working in an extremely filthy area. The following lines from *David Copperfield* can reveal the condition of the warehouse where David was working nonstop from morning to night:

“Murdstone and Grinby’s warehouse was at the waterside. It was down in Blackfriars. Modern improvements have altered the place; but it was the last house at the bottom of a narrow street, curving down hill to the river, with some stairs at the end, where people took boat. It was a crazy old house with a wharf of its own, abutting on the water when the tide was in, and on the mud when the tide was out, and literally overrun with rats. Its paneled rooms, discoloured with the dirt and smoke of a hundred years, I dare say; its decaying floors and staircase; the squeaking and scuffling of the old grey rats down in the cellars;

and the dirt and rottenness of the place; are things, not of many years ago, in my mind, but of the present instant” (175).

Such episodes of horror, hunger, unhappiness and hard work had almost become a part of every child of a poor class in the 19th century. It was very usual for a child to get apprenticed to some work at the very young age. Pushing young children to hardship was a gift to the English society from Industrialization.

### **Poverty**

A word meant only for the working class people, was like a curse on them. Industrialization had driven thousands of people to poverty. People were starving and dying from hunger, cold and sickness caused especially by poverty. All human relation was converted into money relations and wealth became the only object everyone desired to obtain. The gap between the classes widened causing direct effect upon the life of working class people. The social and economic life of the whole nation underwent a great change. In *David Copperfield*, Dickens displays the touching picture of the crisis in the life of urban people. It is not only painful but equally faithful to reality. Through the family of Mr. and Mrs. Micawber, he has pictured the unspeakable misery of a poor and hungry family. David had made friends with Mr. and Mrs. Micawber during his stay at London as a child labour. Though Mr. Micawber was David's landlord, his economic condition was poorer than David's as Mr. Micawber was unemployed. And to meet his expenses he had borrowed money from his friends and relatives and hence becoming more poorer with each passing day. His wife, Mrs. Micawber even pawned their precious household articles just to feed their hungry children. And when Mr. Micawber was unable to pay all his debts back, he was imprisoned in the debtor's prison. In *David Copperfield*, Mr. and Mrs. Micawber's family was not the only poor family, there were others too. Mr. Peggotty

and David himself. His life was no better than a pauper's life. He was living on an earning of seven shilling a week and was often starved. Same was the story of Mr. Peggotty. The only difference was that Mr. Peggotty was earning just enough money for food. But he was unable to provide proper lodging, clothing and schooling to his niece, Emily and his nephew, Ham. Both the children were left ignorant as they can't attend school and have proper education. Martha's story was worse than anyone's. Her poverty forced her to sell herself as a prostitute. Such misery and agony was general among the working class at the time Dickens wrote *David Copperfield*. Many people who moved to the industrial centres in search of job remained unemployed. Even those who got such opportunities were not earning enough. They were paid very low wages and were compelled to live in filthy slums. Men, women and children all were made to work very hard for long hours. Such long hours of hard work, starvation and dirt was taking them towards their early grave.

Early grave was not the only destination. Many poverty stricken people walked on the path of crime and corruption. The poor hungry people were willing to do anything to earn some money. David too encountered such fate in his life. He was robbed by a long- legged young man and Uriah Heep's activities too justify the above statement. He lied and cheated his own master Mr. Wickfield to become rich. The only motive behind the long- legged young man's and Uriah Heep's activities is the desire to leave their miserable poor life behind and live a happy and comfortable life just like the rich people. Money was the soul reason behind every corruption and criminal activities. Everyone was affected by it and was well aware of its power. Even rich were not untouched by it. The rich were exploiting the poor people by making them work longer hours at lowest wage and selling the finished products at high rates

and earning maximum profits. Such exploitation by the rich people only pushed the poor people more deep into the pit of poverty.

### **Prostitution**

Beginning in the late 1840s, young women became increasingly interested in prostitution, which came to be known as “The Great Social Evil”. It was not the pleasure of having sex but the need of money which forced many young women to choose prostitution. With the emerge of Industrialization thousands of people with their family poured into the cities in hope of finding better jobs and life. But it only brought unemployment and poverty and gave them hunger and early deaths as its gift. And in order to survive in such harsh condition the women and young girls were forced to sell themselves to earn some more bread for their beloved family members. Thousands of such prostitutes, many of them under thirteen, walked the streets at night; thousands more worked in brothels, from the fashionable establishments in St. James’s to the rat infested hovels down by the docks. And similar was the fate of Martha Endell in *David Copperfield*. She being an orphan came to London for better job and life but fell into the trap of prostitution. The way she was living her life was not of her choice but she can’t even change it. Her only hope of coming out of it was after her death. Dickens had clearly captured the misery of a prostitute and her desire to end up her life.

“Oh, the river!” she cried passionately.

“Oh, the river!”

“Hush, Hush!” said I. “Calm yourself.”

But she still repeated the same words, continually exclaiming, “Oh, the river!” over and over again.” I know it’s like me!” she exclaimed. “I know that I belong to it. I know that it’s the natural company of such as



I am! It comes from country places, where there was once no harm in it - and it creeps through the dismal streets, defiled and miserable-and it goes away, like my life, to a great sea, that is always troubled - and I feel that I must go with it!" I have never known what despair was, except in the tone of those words. "I can't keep away from it.

I can't forget it. It haunts me day and night. It's the only thing in all the world that I am fit for, or that's fit for me. Oh, the dreadful river!"

(775-76).

Such was the misery of Martha, a prostitute who represented every prostitutes of mid nineteenth century London. She was so much depressed and unhappy that she wanted to end her life by drowning herself in a river. The thought of ending her life was always there in her mind and she compared her life with a river. The river which was pure and clear before entering into a city became dirty and polluted after touching the grounds of a city and the same thing happened with her life too. She was innocent and happy while living in her village but the city and its cruelties took away her innocence, happiness and purity from her.

According to the police, there were 8,600 prostitutes in London only. This number alone suggests how unhappy and miserable the poor people were with the rise and invention of new machines and industries.

### **Over Population**

London which was the city of opportunity and money slowly with the emerge of industrial revolution started changing its form. It changed into the city of crowd, unemployment, poverty and death. All this was the result of non stop flow of population into the city of opportunity and richness, London. Everyday London saw more and more people coming to it and getting them trapped in the world of

unemployment, corruption, poverty and dirt with the dream of richness and paradise in their eyes. In *David Copperfield* too, David came to London in search of better job and life. He left his hometown and came to London so that he can earn more money and live a luxurious life in a city. David's Aunt Betsey too, after losing all her money and property came to London thinking she can find a way out of her miseries and has a happy life here. The effect of over population can be seen on the life of Mr. Peggotty's family too. Over population had caused the shortage of accommodations and this shortage made the rental price of a house and a room very expensive and that's why Mr. Peggotty with his three other family members was living in an old boat as he can't afford a proper house to live in with his very small income. By the end of 1860's the flood of population was so great that there were 40 people living in a house and probably eight in each room in average. In every room of a crumbling house there was a separate tenant and every tenant had a family. In one small wretched hovel, whose broken windows were patched with rags and paper, there might be found a sweetmeat manufacturer in the cellar, a barber and a vendor in the front parlour and a cobbler in the back, a bird fancier on the first floor, three families on the second, and starvation in the attics. Irishmen in the passage, a musician in the front kitchen and a charwoman and five hungry children in the back one, filth everywhere, a gutter before the house and a drain behind. Each new person coming to London brought with him the problem of unemployment, lack of shelter, sanitary problems, starvation, disease, corruption, crime and early death. Such problems can be seen clearly in *David Copperfield*. David while working as a child labour was offered only seven shillings a week and was forced to work longer hours in a filthy warehouse. As his wage was very less and the prices of goods were very high, he often remained hungry and craved for better and enough food. Martha due to unemployment entered into

prostitution and Uriah Heep chose the path of crime and corruption to escape from his eternal poverty. And all this was happening because of huge migration of people from countryside to the industrial towns which created a number of insoluble problems. Such problems like unemployment, lack of shelter proved a jackpot for the rich people. The discovery of machines had already greatly reduced the demand of the laborers and the uncontrolled migration of the people made the situation of the workers more worse. The factory owners started offering low wages and longer working hours to their laborers. There were no law that determined the rate of wages, working hours and other benefits of the laborers. And due to the absence of such law and uncontrolled migration of laborers, workers were forced to accept low wages, long working hours and live in filthy overcrowded areas. Even the landowners, shopkeepers started taking advantages of such situation. They knew that the supply of food, clothes and accommodation were short and were in high demand so they also mercilessly increased the rates of every item available in the market and played a vital role in degrading the life and the living standards of laborers. With each passing day the crowd was growing bigger and bigger and the vacancy was getting short and as the need of money, food and shelter was immediate, the laborers with no other option left, had to accept whatever offered to them. Such urgent need of money made the people more corrupt, barbaric and laid the foundation of all the criminal activities in the industrial towns.

### **Poor Sanitation**

Sanitary and public health problems were not in less serious condition at the time Dickens wrote *David Copperfield*. Extreme poverty and lack of awareness had made the situation more worse. The overflow of population to the industrial towns and cities from the countryside was the main reason of sanitary problems which

resulted on many disastrous epidemics. The flood of population was so immense that it was entirely impossible to maintain the sanitation. The situation went out of control.

There was no proper system of street cleansing and disposing the sewerage in many places. As the consequence, the streets were filled with heaps of rubbish and the whole environment was contaminated. The situation was appalling in the slum areas where the working class lived. People living in the slum areas had no water supply but had a common sewer stagnating under their windows full of dead fish, cats and dogs. In many places like St. Giles, the lower tenants of the decaying houses were sometimes flooded with their own sewage. Death and diseases sprang and spread horrifically. Dirt and contamination brought cholera epidemics in 1832, then again in 1848 and 1867 and claimed the life of thousands of Londoners. Many people lost their beloved ones and suffered a great deal. And among those suffered ones, there were mostly the poor people who had no other choice but to continue living at those filthy slums. In *David Copperfield*, Dickens had clearly captured the appalling environmental condition of the London where the poorest class of people lived. The description of the riverbank by Dickens clearly shows the appalling sanitary problems faced by the poor working class people:

“The neighborhood was a dreary one at that time; as oppressive, sad, and solitary by night, as any about London. There were neither wharves nor houses on the melancholy waste of road near the great blank prison. A sluggish ditch deposited its mud at the prison walls. Coarse grass and rank weeds straggled over all the marshy land in the vicinity. In one part, carcasses of houses, inauspiciously begun and never finished, rotted away. In another, the ground was cumbered with rusty iron monsters of stem boilers, wheels, cranks, pipes, furnaces,

paddles, anchors, diving bells, windmill sails, and I know not what strange objects, accumulated by some spectator, and groveling in the dust, underneath which – having sunk into the soil of their own weight in wet weather – they had the appearance of vainly trying to hide themselves. The clash and glare of sundry fiery works upon the river side arose by night to disturb everything except the heavy and unbroken smoke that poured out of their chimneys” (774).

Such was London at the time Dickens wrote *David Copperfield*. Everywhere there were filth and disease and in every house there was someone dying or dead from a disease caused by such filth. It was a very common scene of London and everyone had seen and lived in it. From early morning to late night, they were living in dirt. It never let them alone. Wherever they went they would find dirt and only dirt welcoming them and ready to devour their health and life. Not only their houses even their working areas were extremely filthy. The factory owners paid no attention towards sanitary system and simply forced their laborers to work in filthy and unhealthy condition. David’s lines in *David Copperfield* too justify this statement:

“Murdstone and Grinby’s warehouse was at the waterside . . . and literally overrun with rats. Its paneled rooms, discoloured with the dirt and smoke of a hundred years, I dare say; its decaying floors and staircase; the squeaking and scuffling of the old grey rats down in the cellars; and the dirt and rottenness of the place; are things, not of many years ago, in my mind, but of the present instant” (175).

Through his writing, Dickens had perfectly portrayed the filthy London in *David Copperfield* and pointed at the need of bringing complete change in the filthy condition of London.

#### IV. Conclusion

The social and economic problems raised by Dickens in *David Copperfield* were the real problems faced by the English people. Dickens was a great critic of social abuses, he was a great reformist and *David Copperfield* is a socio- historical document in artistic form. It is the combination of Dickens's creative imagination and his experience of the prevailing socio- economic and political situation. It also helps to understand the social situation through the life and career of the various characters in it.

*David Copperfield* fully justifies Marx's belief that the social problems of the 19th century were inevitable results of a capitalist economy. Dickens' characters though they were imaginary clearly depicted the social life and conditions of English people during the 19th century. Every character and their actions were influenced by the capitalist economy. Dickens' characters brought us face to face with the miseries and pains of the 19th century English people. And told us many unheard and unseen evil facts of capitalist economy. *David Copperfield* is fully based on the real historical situation and the general social tension of the 19th century capitalist society. It has a close association with the contemporary society and its people. It has done full justice to the author's attempt to paint the true picture of his contemporary society. There's a touch of reality in every page of *David Copperfield*.

Though Dickens has exposed the misery of the general working class people sincerely in *David Copperfield*, he has not suggested any way out of those miseries. He has only interpreted their misery but never directed them towards revolution as Marxism does. His writings has shown the true conditions of his contemporary people and made everyone aware that such condition and people live with us in our own society but after showing so much to us, he fails to suggest a suitable way out of it. He leaves everything in the hands of fate. His characters that represent the real life people do not

fight against their fate or with their oppressor. They will either simply accept it as their fate or run away from it but they will never revolt against their oppressors.

David, the protagonist, who was exploited as a child labor and had lived his life as a pauper too opted to run away from his miseries and take shelter under the roof of his rich Aunt Betsey. The other characters of *David Copperfield* too did the same.

Everyone in the end found happiness by surrendering themselves in front of the bourgeois class. He suggested that a poor man can find happiness only through the sympathy and love of a bourgeois class family. His writings suggest that happiness will find its way into a poor man's house only when a rich man will take pity on him and decides to help him and that will happen only when the poor man bows down on his knees. And this is where Marx's and Dickens' thoughts conflict with each other. Marx strongly believes that by throwing the bourgeois class away, the poor people can find happiness whereas Dickens' believes that by accepting the supremacy of bourgeois class, one can live happily and can climb the steps of achievement. Marx suggests that one should uproot the problems completely and should never compromise with them as the only solution of every problems but Dickens' thinks differently. The actions of his novel's characters suggest that compromising is the only solution of every problem. He never gives any hint of revolt or negative thinking towards the bourgeois class.

He is a reformist but not a Marxist. In *David Copperfield* he has successfully portrayed the evil side of capitalist economy during the 19th century and strongly criticized it too. He was among one of those writers who voiced against the evil impacts of capitalism on society and tried to improve the condition and situation of England during the 19th century by making the people aware of poor social and economic conditions of the general working class people. He too wanted to eradicate the evil impacts of capitalism but not the Marxist way. He believes through the harmony between the bourgeois and proletariat class the evil impacts of capitalism

can be erased from the society. He asks the bourgeois society to be more sympathetic towards the proletariat class and the proletariat class to endure their sufferings silently and work faithfully for their masters. He never encourages the working class to struggle against the oppressors instead he suggests them to surrender themselves to their kindness.

Kindness and charity as demanded by Dickens can never be the solution to the problems created by capitalism. His suggested solution may give relief to a few but not to all. It can't solve the uncontrolled barbarism of the capitalist economy. A few charitable institutions and individuals may never give justice to all. In *David Copperfield* among many suffered people only David and Mr. Micawber got benefited from domestic charity. All the other characters like warehouse children, Uriah Heep continued to suffer. The characters on which Dickens lavishes his goodness do not actually belong to working class. David and Mr. Micawber were both born to the rich class. David suffers during his childhood mainly because his stepfather Mr. Murdstone was a cruel man and wanted to confiscate his mother's property and Mr. Micawber suffers because he is unable to handle his finances efficiently. The other working class characters who belong to it by birth rarely got any kindness showed towards them by any rich class people. Uriah Heep is a good example of this statement. By birth he belonged to the poor class and by the end of the novel he got more degraded and no one showed any love or kindness towards him. He was born miserable and left to die miserably. Dickens displays the picture of defeated and agonized proletariat entirely broken by the cruelty of capitalism. *David Copperfield* is a portrayed picture of cruel capitalism by Dickens which is full of tears, miseries and poverty. There's not a single shade of happiness in it.



## Works Cited

- Bentley, Jerry H. and Herbert F. Ziegler. *Traditions and Encounters*. Vol. II. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2003. 841-69.
- Blau, Joseph L., et al. *Chapters in Western Civilization*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol II. New York: Columbia University Press, 1948.
- Chester, G K. *Charles Dickens*. 23<sup>rd</sup> ed. London: Methuen & Co., 1956.
- Churchill, R.C. *From Dickens to Hardy*. Ed. Boris Ford. Vol. VI. Britain: Hazell Watson and Viney Ltd, 1963. 119-40.
- Cox, C B. *In Defence of Dickens*. London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd, 1958.
- Crotch, W Walter. *The Social Teaching of England's Great Novelist*. London: Chapman & Hall, 1913.
- Dickens, Charles. *The Personal History of David Copperfield*. London: Oxford University Press, 1966.
- The Encyclopedia Americana International*. 2 Vols. Danbury: n.p, 1996.
- Forster, John. *The Life of Dickens: The Works of Charles Dickens*. Ed. George Gissing. 20 vol. London: Cassell, 1950.
- Gay, Peter, and John A. Garraty. *A History of the World*. Vol. III. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1959.
- Johnson, Edger. *Charles Dickens: His Tragedy & Triumph*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1953.
- Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. *The Communist Manifesto*. Comp. and ed. Shreedhar P. Lohani, Rameshwor P. Adhikary, and Abhi N. Subedi. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 1996. 20-33.
- Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Ed. John L. Beatly, and Oliver A. Johnson. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1958. 544-59.

Tomlin, E.W.F., ed. *Charles Dickens 1813-1870*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1969.

*The World Book Encyclopedia*. 3 Vols. London: World Book International, 1996.