

Chapter 1

Characters' Superficiality in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*

This study is an attempt to explore hypocrisy and dualism prevalent in the characters in two major literary works of the Victorian era, namely Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Both works portray the description of the fundamental characteristics of Victorian people about their false outward show for respectability by hiding their inward lust. As this period had an inclination for social hypocrisy, Stevenson and Wilde, through their main characters, repeatedly ridicule Victorian traditions, pompous social customs, and the pursuit of dual identity to liberate themselves from the repressive norms of society. Therefore, the main argument of the study is that repressive societal norms and the hypocrisy of the late-Victorian society have led the major characters to the pursuit of double identities and false personalities as a means to maintain societal status.

Furthermore, this study explores in depth the practice of hypocrisy and dualism or dual identities led by the people in the late Victorian society. The study is primarily based on two literary works of that era - *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *The Importance of being earnest*. Stevenson uses the theme of duality to provide two contrast personalities of the single character in the novel and depicts the double standard of the society. Similarly, Wilde explores in depth what it means to have a dual identity and suggests that duplicity is an essential part of existence in late Victorian society. Based on these observations, it can be concluded that hypocrisy and dualism were widely prevalent in Victorian society.

The main reason why the main characters in the literary works under

discussion practiced hypocrisy and dualism is to escape the repressive norms and unrealistic expectations. By pursuing these negative traits of hypocrisy and dual personalities, the members of the society think they can achieve better societal status and gain more personal freedom. The constant quest of the Victorians toward liberty, better social status and escaping the suffocating societal norms not only made people practice dualism but also generated a hypocritical Victorian society.

The Victorian era is considered one of the most controversial periods in Britain's history. This period has been cautiously represented through multiple literary genres of that era. As portrayed in the literature works of that time, the members of the society were known for living double lives and practicing hypocrisy and dualism. In these two works, hypocrisy and dualism appear in many forms at every aspect of the Victorian society. Stevenson describes the characters and their surroundings in opposite ways, either good or bad while Wilde uses the main protagonists of the play to decipher the double lives led by the people as a means of existence in the Victorian society.

As seen in Wilde's work, the inherent personality pretenses and dualism led by the Victorian people not only reflect the repressive societal norms but also the hypocrisy behind the idea of living an earnest life. This study analyses the personalities of the main characters in these two literary works, one novel and another play, to draw the conclusions on hypocrisy and dualism or double identities.

Hypocrisy and dualism were widely prevalent in the Victorian society as can be suggested from the literary works of that time. Particularly, the novel *A Strange case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and the play *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde show the contrasting morality in the Victorian era. The writers reflect the Victorian society mostly in terms of social class, dual personalities and hypocrisy in

these works. Though the economic progress brought by the industrial revolution of that time was significant, the division in class and the prevalence of hypocrisy and dualism in the society were equally rising at the same time. The Victorian society was increasingly becoming shallower as the time passed by. Moreover, people became hypocritical and started practicing dualism with double identities with the aim of gaining better societal status and avoiding the strict norms and traditions of the society.

The general class of people in the Victorian society seemed to be okay with others having secrets if they kept their own secrecy. In that sense, Victorian society can be depicted as full of hypocrites and double standards. Additionally, hypocrites are the people who are more intentionally immoral than those who behave badly. However, the distinct feature of the Victorian society was getting into a different stage to gain better social status by practicing hypocrisy and dualism. That era was marked with abundant dual personalities, often the good and the evil, as a means to escape from the repressive social norms of that time. This practice led to moral decay of the Victorian people who believed in living an earnest life but secretly led their double personas to obtain their personal gains. Thus, hypocrisy and dualism were widely prevalent and often seen as a means of advancement to the elite status in the Victorian society.

A Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is a great example of the Victorian hypocrisy and dualism. The main character, Dr. Henry Jekyll is a respectable member of the Victorian society and he leads a secret double life. By means of a chemical experiment in the lab, Jekyll discovers a potion which is able to separate him into two distinct characters. On the one hand, the doctor remains his own self, but after drinking the potion, he becomes his other self. The other self, personified by Mr.

Hyde, allows Dr. Jekyll to satisfy his inappropriate desires free from the strict moral restrictions. The character, Dr. Henry Jekyll is a wealthy and respected Victorian gentleman who upholds high social standards. Though, this polite and well-mannered doctor is admired by society for his generosity, he hides a dark secret of his other side of the personality. Dr. Jekyll is afraid that if society finds about his deepest and darkest desires, it would ruin his reputation, so he had to hide the immoral side of his other self-made character.

In *The Importance of Being Earnest* play, Jack goes by the name of Jack in the country while he goes by the name of Ernest in the city. In the country, Jack makes up a story that he has a brother named Ernest, who lives in the city. These dual identities give Jack the freedom to escape the country in order to achieve his own personal needs and benefits in the city, in the pretense of his fictitious brother, Earnest. In this way, by inventing another personality, Jack can disappear whenever he wants to and live in two different places with different identities simultaneously. However, he gets himself in trouble because he wants to marry the woman, Gwendolen, who is fond of the name Ernest than of the person, Jack himself.

Similarly, in the play, the other main character, Algernon Moncrieff invents another personality to escape the traditional societal norms and enjoy more freedom. He seems to be fed up with the environment around him and he uses this Bunbury person to escape his own reality. In the play, when Jack goes to his aunt's house to stay with Gwendolen, he announces that his dear brother Ernest passed away the evening before. Likewise, Algernon plans to win Cecily, another attractive woman who is also obsessed with the name Earnest, over by pretending to be Jack's well-known brother Ernest. When Algernon shows up as Ernest, he presents an awkward circumstance because Jack has lied about his brother's passing. Thus, Algernon's

arrival ruins that plan for Jack. These main characters, Jack and Algernon, make up these double identities to invent other personas so that they can hide behind their fictitious characters. However, they tend to criticize other characters for having double lives, making themselves hypocrites.

The main problem that appeared in course of the study is why the major characters in these works of Stevenson's and Wilde's display hypocrisy and dualism and how they are successful in doing so. The major problem is what morality crisis has been bought about by such hypocrisy and dualism.

The major objective of the study is to identify the crisis in the major characters' images. To reach that goal, the research mainly focuses on the explanation of why these characters practise hypocrisy and dualism, and how they have been successful in dissembling themselves to some extent.

Hypocrisy and dualism are used as the tool of textual analysis. Examples of hypocrisy and dualism will be extracted from the texts in course of analysis.

Literature Review

The novel *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson has been referred numerous times by different authors to depict hypocrisy and dualism during the late Victorian era. For instance, Clausson argues in addition that the opposing social classes of Jekyll and Hyde add to the element of duality between the two characters. Jekyll was from the "respected upper class" whereas Hyde was from the "murderous lower class" (Clausson 343). Clausson also notes that "the lower class in late-Victorian society represented degeneration, devolution, and the 'criminal man'" (Clausson 343) to Victorian society. With Jekyll and Hyde really being one in Stevenson's novel society was shown that there really was not so much distinction between the classes of society and that everyone was capable of evil.

Likewise, Himmelfarb's ideas seem to agree with Clausson's perspectives. She states that "the idea of respectability and all the virtues connected with it were the means by which the middle class sought to dominate the working class" (Himmelfarb 229). She notes that "respectability was an instrument of 'social control'" (Himmelfarb 229). Jekyll's apparent social respectability meant nothing because he was also Hyde who was criminal in nature. The lines between the social classes were blurred because one man, Jekyll, fit into two social classes by transforming himself into Hyde.

Similarly, Foldy states that "'normal' and 'average' were socially desirable not only because 'normal' and 'average' represented the abstract ideal of what 'ought to be' and what everyone 'ought to be like', but also because the 'normal' was predictable and easier to manipulate and control" (Foldy 142). Jekyll and Hyde went against this social norm because they were unpredictable; eventually Jekyll couldn't even predict or control Hyde.

The play, *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde has also been cited numerous times by various authors to portray hypocrisy and dualism in the Victorian society. which start with the title. For illustration, Otto Reinert mentions that the action of the play is about the importance of being earnest. The play sheds light on the consequences of not being earnest, as Algernon calls it Bunburying. The meaning of Bunburying is to invent an imaginary character, who can serve as an excuse to escape a disappointing routine arranged by a repressive convention. Reinert adds, "Bunburying is simply the mechanism that sets in motion the preposterously elaborate plot of mistaken identities" (Reinert 17). For Algernon to be a Bunburyist is to live in a world free of the responsibilities and hypocritical conventions. The one who is serious about everything is not serious at all (Reinert 37).

Jack, on the other hand, creates Ernest to escape from the guardian's heavy duty (Moss 29). Joyce Moss explains how the two heroes in *The Importance of Being Earnest* elaborate double lives to avoid social norms and traditions. Algernon invents an imaginary friend whose name is Bunbury as an excuse to get rid of social obligations. While Jack's imaginary brother Ernest is a facet of himself that he wants to hide from Cecily, his young ward (Moss 57).

As depicted in other literary works, the Victorian era (1819-1901) is portrayed as the time of exciting period of socio-politics, religious activities and prosperity in arts.

During that time, the social classes were highly reforming in Britain, especially the rise of the middle class and its power driven by the expansion of industry and population growth (Adut 82; Beckson 133). The other aspects of the society like societal norms and thoughts were evolving as well. Fiona Gregory mentions that the growth in the middle-classes brought the growth of values like respectability, earnestness, and duty as well (Gregory 212). Despite the progress, the era suffered from poverty, injustice, and social discrimination among the working class. It was a complex and difficult time to endorse and create personal values based on stability, progress, and social reforms (Miller 63).

When Victoria became queen in 1837, London had past six million citizens till her death in 1901. Most of London's new people were middleclass, and for the first time in history the majority in a city were middleclass (Sale 46). The dominant note of the Victorian literary work was its seriousness. They say that "the Victorians have been called "earnest" and "eminent" (Inglis and Spear 103). So far, this does not mean that they do not know how to entertain themselves, it means that they appreciated life and tried to make it better. Moreover, this moral seriousness shows people's energy

and motives to improve mankind and increase their knowledge (Inglis and Spear 105).

During late Victorian era, Victorian literary work was making a prominent impact on people's daily lives as well. One of the influential aspects of the literary work of that time was the portrayal of hypocrisy and dualism prevalent in the late Victorian society. The description of duality can be taken from a Victorian psychologist, James Sully:

Psychology has of late occupied itself much with the curious phenomenon of double or alternating personality. By this, it is meant the recurrent interruption of the normal state by the intrusion of a secondary state, in which the thought, feelings, and the whole personality become other than they were. This occasional substitution of a new for the old self is sometimes spontaneous, the result of brain trouble; sometimes it is artificially brought about in especially susceptible persons by hypnotizing them. (qtd. in Block 451)

For instance, Robert Louis Stevenson, known for his masterpiece novel *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, had dreamed of writing a story about dualism. However, he only needed the right idea to make it a reality as he says in his essay *A Chapter on Dreams*, that he "had long been trying to write a story on this subject, to find a body, a vehicle, for that strong sense of man's double being which must at times come in upon and overwhelm the mind of every thinking creature" (Block 465).

These obsessions of Stevenson led him to write the famous story *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. The story is about Dr. Jekyll and his evil self, Mr. Hyde. The basic image is that of Dr. Jekyll drinking his vile potion and the hideous transformation scene that follows him to change into the evil creature of Mr. Hyde.

In the novel, Dr. Jekyll has great difficulties in coming to terms with his own

dual self. As a result of this, Dr. Jekyll degenerates and becomes Mr. Hyde. For him, there is no line between good and bad. Because of this he tries to hold back his true desires, which he considers evil, and that frustrates Dr. Jekyll. Consequently, Dr. Jekyll creates Mr. Hyde in order to lead a secret life where he can live up to his forbidden urges. However, this does not solve his problem, as it merely helps his dual nature to manifest even further.

Many readers in Victorian times might have been able to relate to Mr. Jekyll's case, and in a way, this might have helped Stevenson's story to seem even more real. Irvine Saposnik verifies this and states:

Victorian man was haunted constantly by an inescapable sense of division. As rational and sensual being, as public and private man, as civilized and bestial creature, he found himself necessarily an actor, playing only that part of himself suitable to the occasion. As both variables grew more predictable, his role became more stylized and what was initially an occasional practise became a way of life. By 1866 the English could already be described as "Masquearaders".

(716)

Sposnik clearly gives the picture of Victorian people and their real nature of enjoying duality that might have encouraged them to practice masquerading.

Likewise, one of the prominent literary works of that period was Oscar Wilde's masterpiece *The Importance of Being Earnest*, that portrays hypocrisy and dualism in the Victorian society. The genre of this play is a mixture of satire, comedy of manners, social criticism, intellectual mockery, and tragedy. As a satire, it uses comic techniques to ridicule an idiocy or an evil. Though the Victorian age is known as being one of high seriousness, its satirical writings show the hypocrisy and

pomposity of the age. Wilde's play satirizes different subjects as "the emphasis on appearance, Victorian attitudes to morality, the importance of 'name' and parentage, and British prejudice about other nations and their culture, in particular France and Germany" (Gregory 196). Also, being a satire, it is associated with the life of city and presents the country life as uncorrupt (Morgan 87).

Similarly, in *A Psychoanalytic Study of the Double in Literature*, Robert Rogers defines different forms of doubles (dualism), among which are the tempting devil or guardian angel, the dark shadow or mirror self, and the creating of a dual personality. According to Rogers, the creation of an external character to represent internal, instinctual drives is a way of "dramatizing the mental conflict within a single mind" (Rogers 29); by creating a double it is possible for the character to discard any responsibility for these desires. In the article "The Double as the 'Unseen' of 'Culture'", Živković states:

Over the course of the nineteenth century, narratives structured around dualism reveal the internal origin of the double. The demonic is not supernatural, but is an aspect of personal and interpersonal life, a manifestation of unconscious desire. The text is now structured between self and self as other, articulating the subject's relation to cultural laws and established rules. (Živković 125)

The duality was not only outward so but it originated from the very psyche of an individual. Duality brought a class between the desire for freedom and cultural boundaries for pomposity.

The Victorian society was formed by several classes based on birth and prosperity of the members of the society, classified by their work and income. The main classification of classes divided the members into the working, middle and

upper classes. The working class consisted of the skilled and semi-skilled labourers who had only a few possessions. The middle class consisted of factory owners and traders divided into the lower middle and upper middle class by income, categorized by working as businessmen and professionals. The upper class included the minor aristocracy, the major aristocracy and royalty. This upper class was unconstrained from work receiving income from the hereditary land and investments and thus, the richest class of the country. The only duties for the upper-class members were, as Leonore Davidoff says: “To be seen at the right places and given social recognition by visiting and being visited, plus mild philanthropy preferably in the local area.” (Davidoff 100)

Born to a certain class, it meant to be doomed almost certainly to the same rank for the rest of one’s life. In addition, Chalmers and Chayne states:

Different classes kept very much to themselves and did not know much about how others lived. It was very difficult to move up in class because the landowners considered ‘family breeding’ to be very important and looked down on people who had made money from ‘trade’, although trade made most of Britain’s wealth. (Chalmers and Chayne 5)

Organization of the Study

This thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter is the introductory chapter. This part includes general background of the study, problem, objectives, methodology, literature review, and the organization of the study. The second chapter is the main body of the discussion. In this section, hypocrisy and dualism will be discussed in detail. This chapter also includes the textual analysis from two literary works of the late Victorian era. For textual analysis, hypocrisy and dualism will be

used as tools taken from two literary works. The novel, *A Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Stevenson and the play, *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde will be taken as the primary sources. The hypocrisy and dualism practiced by the major characters from these literary works are analyzed. The third chapter is the conclusive chapter in which the reasons behind practicing hypocrisy and dualism in general, and also by the major characters from two literary works under discussion are discussed.

No research has been done in this subject matter yet and this study will open new horizon to aspiring researchers. The novel, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and the play, *Importance of Being Earnest* can be analyzed through different perspectives but this study focuses on the features of hypocrisy and dualism prevalent in the major characters of these two literary works.

Chapter 2

Victorian Hypocrisy and Dualism in General

Hypocrisy is the practice of concealing one's real character and engaging in the performance to criticize other for the same behavior. In general sense, hypocrisy involves pretense or a mock. It is an offensive notion that has been used to discuss the moral code in the Victorian society. Likewise, dualism is the quality of having dual nature or dual personalities, usually of two contrast characteristics like the good and the evil. Dualism can lead to hypocrisy and vice-versa.

A lot of social changes took place during the Victorian period, and these changes had great impact on the people of that period. The period was an era marked by many changes that occurred in every aspect of society and people's lives. The society was based on traditional values and strict moral rules, which originated from the Christian faith. Though the Victorian era was highly known for its strict social code and the sense of strong morality, not all members of the society followed those norms and codes. Included in this social code was the marriage between a man and a woman, as well as the idea of marrying within a particular social class. There were several social pieces in the Victorian era such as upper class, middle class and lower class.

The upper class consisted of individuals of nobility, and those considered to come from wealthy families. These families were held to the highest standard to maintain their social standing. Thus, when a certain member of this social class disobeyed the well-established social code, they may have faced a less severe criticism. Those who were taken to be of an upper class, may not always have been of the same image as they appeared. They were those who by society were held to what can be known as the highest social code, yet the evidence presented shows lower

moral value behind closed doors. This can be seen as the basis of hypocrisy in the late Victorian society. Eventually, this sort of Victorian values emerged in all classes and reached all facades of Victorian living.

During the Victorian era, men and women searched for an ideal relationship based on the expectations of a demanding conservative society. If a man or woman did not possess the qualities desired by the Victorian society, the opposite sex may have dismissed the person as an unsuitable mate. Such were the double standards which existed during the Victorian era. People led a double-faced life in their attempt to succeed in fulfilling the Victorian expectations. The Victorian era is famous for all such incidents which showed that not only high-profile people, but also lower-class people indulged in those practices which led them to practice a life of duality. The motives behind this is due to the repressive societal norms that did not let people gain better status in the society without power, status, or wealth.

The gap between the upper and the lower class was widening at that time and people felt more comfortable in faking their real identity to escape the divisive and unfair societal norms and conducts. Victorian society's severe moral restrictions made people want to disobey the rules and gave rise to the trend of leading double lives, which also caused doubt about identities. These kinds of practices led Victorian people to widespread dualism that seemed necessary for existence and survival in the late Victorian society. A clear reflection of this hypocrisy and dualism is found in two prominent works produced in this era, namely Stevenson's *A strange case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and Wilde's *The importance of being Earnest*.

Human nature is tangled with hypocrisy and dualism since the beginning of human race. Hypocrisy can be defined as the practice of engaging in the same behavior for which one criticizes another, whereas dualism or duality can be defined

as the state of being double. Duality refers to having two sides, often with opposite meanings, like duality of good and evil. Hypocrisy and dualism were practiced by the people of Victorian society to enhance their personal agendas. Through dualism, people often created their two distinct characteristics, usually of good and evil selves. This practice lets them obey the repressive societal norms which were very restrictive and judgmental through their good self, and at the same time disobeyed the strict moral codes to pursue their personal goals and freedom through their other self. Though, the Victorians pretended to believe in an earnest life, their wide-spread practice of leading double lives created a hypocritical society.

Hypocrisy and dualism have been used as literary devices and were important tools for writers of that time to investigate many themes, such as suppression and morality that were condemned topics in Victorian society. As Roderick Watson argues; “It is a structural convention which seeks to deal with the fluidity and the multiple complexity of our inner lives by setting up a more formal system, indeed a binary system, of doubles, doppelgangers, or psychological counterparts” (Watson 10). Watson clearly claims dualism in the system of human psyche.

As portrayed in the literary works of the Victorian era, that period is considered as an age of moral advancement or strict societal values. Through controlling almost every aspect of human life, the Victorian society promotes virtues like honesty, politeness, soberness, earnestness and respectable behavior. During this era of social organization, society plays an important role in regulating its members’ lives. Placing a higher value than ever before on the importance of respectability exerts pressure on people to display conformity. This unusual expectation led almost all members of the society to practice hypocrisy and dualism as a means for complying with the conservative societal norms as well as pursuing their own

personal agendas and freedom. In reference to Victorian people and ideas, as portrayed for a reader of Victorian literature, Richard D. Altick notes:

In an age, when respectability was a goal to which most people aspired, meaning above all the approval of one's peers, the pressures for conformity were stronger than they had perhaps ever been. It was not merely a matter of satisfying the pedantic moralists who fussed about trivial details of language and behavior: one felt, however subconsciously, the weight of a whole society's ethos, its criteria of decorum, which rested, ultimately, on religious grounds. (185)

Altick's focus is that whatever social decorum one could notice in Victorian society, it was based on religion.

Hypocrisy and Dualism in Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

Stevenson's novel *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, he uses the characters of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde to mirror the Victorian hypocrisy and dualism. In the novel, he introduces the main character to have two contrasting characters, instead of just one character. Using two completely different characters with different names and appearances, Stevenson develops his message of human duality for the readers. Stevenson is trying to tell the readers that everybody has evil inside of them, and has a curiosity about their darker side.

The main character, Dr. Jekyll seems to be in control of his desires and temptations but as Mr. Hyde, he can fulfil them without any regrets. Stevenson is stating that everybody has evil inside of them as the desire to express freely without moral restriction is inherent in most people. This was even more prominent during the Victorian era full of higher expectations and strict moral values.

As mentioned in the novel, in the Victorian society, a good reputation was very

important for better societal status and high standard. However, hypocrisy and dualism were prevalent in almost all classes of the society, because people would judge other people based on sobriety, thrift, cleanliness, honesty and chastity. Because of many dark secrets practiced by the members of the society, the Victorian society was believed to be divided into different layers and levels of societal classes and structures. Stevenson highlights the importance of having a good reputation in the Victorian society throughout his novel. He tries to portray a hypocritical society via Dr. Jekyll's and Mr. Hyde's two extreme characteristics contained within the same person. For most of the story, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde are believed to be different person. In reality, Dr. Henry Jekyll is a medical doctor and a fellow of the royal society while Mr. Hyde is a completely different person who is violent and cruel. This shows a great example of considerable prevalence of hypocrisy and dualism in the late Victorian society

In the novel, as Dr. Jekyll thinks he's in control of Mr. Hyde, his addiction to his darker side gets out of control. This leads him to transform into Mr. Hyde, an immoral and cruel character. Jekyll conducts an experiment on himself that helps him create Mr. Hyde. At first he feels horrible but soon after he is filled with energy:

I felt younger, lighter, happier in body; within I was conscious of a heady recklessness, a current of disordered sensual images running a millrace in my fancy, a solution of the bonds of obligation, an unknown but not an innocent freedom of the soul. I knew myself, at the first breath of the new life, to be more wicked, tenfold more wicked, sold a slave to my original evil; and the thought, in that moment, braced and delighted me like wine. (Stevenson 63)

Eventually, Mr. Hyde's character gains strength while Dr. Jekyll's character gets

weaker. Though Dr. Jekyll thinks he needs to stop Mr. Hyde's sinful character, he gets weaker at controlling to become Mr. Hyde as time passes by. By becoming Mr. Hyde and letting his evil side out, Dr. Jekyll has made his life even more difficult. This is because he won't be able to get rid of Mr. Hyde that easily.

Mr. Hyde seems to have overpowered Dr. Jekyll and remains in control over daily activities. As Jekyll recalls:

I have observed that when I wore the semblance of Edward Hyde, none could come near to me at first without a visible misgiving of the flesh. This, as I take it, was because all human beings, as we meet them, are commingled out of good and evil: and Edward Hyde, alone in the ranks of mankind, was pure evil. (Stevenson 63)

Through this prominent character in the novel, Stevenson is trying to tell his readers that everybody has good and evil inside them. Stevenson is indicating that the good in a person should always be in control, because if he lets his evil side out, it will eventually take control and change his character completely just like Mr. Hyde changed Dr. Jekyll.

In the novel, Dr. Jekyll concludes that every human being has two sides, namely "good and evil" (Stevenson 64). A person having both good and bad qualities simultaneously was regarded as a negative trait in Victorian society. It was expected that people followed the standards of Victorian society in order to maintain social integrity. Because of this many people had to hide any unwanted behavior and personal urges until they had suppressed their natural human behavior. Though Victorian people may have seemed perfect, they were not, since it is a part of human nature to have both positive and negative features within himself/herself. This concern for maintaining one's reputation led people to dishonesty and to conceal their

negative features from others. As mentioned in the novel, Dr. Jekyll has trouble in revealing his hidden desires and he tries to conceal them until he expresses them through Mr. Hyde, an immoral character.

The main character in the novel, Dr. Jekyll uses science and comes up with an experiment that could split him into “two natures that contended in the field of his consciousness”, so they could exist separately from each other:

If each, I told myself, could but be housed in separate identities, life would be relieved of all that was unbearable; the unjust might go his way, delivered from the aspirations and remorse of his more upright twin; and the just could walk steadfastly and securely on his upward path, doing good things in which he found his pleasure, and no longer exposed to disgrace and penitence by the hands of this extraneous evil.

(Stevenson 61)

Stevenson’s philosophy is that duality helps relieve us from unpleasant situations. A person with duality can have one aspect for an escape of repressed desires and another aspect for maintaining social life, a person opts for one by saving his/her character as far as possible.

Dr. Jekyll succeeds in creating a potion that splits his personality into two separate people. Without taking the potion, Dr. Jekyll is just the respectable doctor, his normal self. However, by drinking the potion he creates dual contrasting character, Mr. Hyde, who is a completely different person. By doing so, he releases his immoral identity that has been suppressed for many years. Mr. Hyde is the complete opposite of Dr. Jekyll. They not only differ in character but also differ in outer appearance.

Furthermore, a letter written by Dr. Jekyll and read by his lawyer reveals that

the story is about the hypocritical nature of man. Dr. Jekyll describes himself as a man given to light-heartedness, amusement and the entertainment of others but at the same time, he desires respectability and acceptance within cultured Victorian society. Besides, Dr. Jekyll goes on to deliberate that duplicity or dual characteristics which are not necessarily hypocritical in nature. He says:

Though so profound a double-dealer, I was in no sense a hypocrite; both sides of me were in dead earnest; I was no more myself when I laid aside restraint and plunged in shame, than when I labored, in the eye of day, at the furtherance of knowledge or the relief of sorrow and suffering man is not truly one, but truly two. (Stevenson 65)

As the plot progresses, Dr. Jekyll admits he is a double-dealer, though he argues that he is not a hypocrite as both sides of him are “earnest” in nature. Therefore, he seems to be open and honest about each side of his identity. On the other hand, his specific confession is lacking and requires further clarification. His real fear is that, his reputation in the society as a respectable doctor and admirable public image will be destroyed if he is exposed. Possibly this is a case of someone merely trying to rationalize his hypocrisy to justify his own actions.

Jekyll simply cannot reconcile his public and professional role with a desire to enjoy the natural pleasures of life. It is from this aspect that the monster grows, revealing that Jekyll is a Hyde from the start, even before discovering the chemical potion, that can split a person into two contrasting personalities.

At the same time, Dr. Jekyll casts himself as a scientific visionary and says he has discovered true human nature. A person has a divided self: man is not truly one, but two. His discussion of his split self is dishonest in many ways as he says:

It was on the moral side, and in my own person, that I learned to

recognise the thorough and primitive duality of man; I saw that, of the two natures that contended in the field of my consciousness, even if I could rightly be said to be either, it was only because I was radically both; and from an early date, even before the course of my scientific discoveries had begun to suggest the most naked possibility of such a miracle, I had learned to dwell with pleasure, as a beloved daydream, on the thought of the separation of these elements. (Stevenson 61)

Though, he believes in separation of two identities, he is engaged in immoral actions and allows only his ethical face to be seen in public. In that sense, he is a true definition of a hypocrite.

The theme Stevenson tries to decipher in the novel is the widespread prevalence of hypocrisy in the Victorian society. Though Jekyll or Hyde separately may not be a hypocrite, but together they represent a true element of hypocrisy. Furthermore, Stevenson is trying to remind his readers of the prevalence of hypocrisy and dualism in the Victorian society through the contrasting characters of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde confined within the same person.

In the novel, Stevenson writes about the split between good and bad, which can divide and unite man's nature. He explains that good and evil are the inherent part of the human nature. He does this by showing the actions of two characters in his novel. He mentions about the mystery of Dr. Jekyll, a moral character and Mr. Hyde, an immoral and cruel character and how they are connected to one another. It is revealed that Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde are the same individual. This represents the basic hypocrisy and dualism that were prevalent in the Victorian society. It can be apparent that the unethical society's higher expectation leads people to have a secret double life that creates dual nature in them, that can further enhance hypocrisy and

dualism.

Additionally, in the story, neither Jekyll nor Hyde was a hypocrite as a hypocrite acts honorably in public but the opposite in private. Jekyll always acted honorably, whereas Hyde acted in a completely contradictory way. However, both Jekyll's and Hyde's extremes contained within the same person were used to remind the readers of hypocrisy and to portray a hypocritical Victorian society. Jekyll and Hyde were separate individuals, each acting upon their own will. This dual personality in same character would make a case for hypocrisy. However, neither character was a hypocrite, but the combined idea that they portrayed was.

Dr. Jekyll may have chosen to take the potion that splits him into two different characters of good and evil. Nevertheless, he would not have chosen to do all the evil things Hyde had done. Eventually, it became so extreme that Jekyll had no control of anything, not even Hyde's behavior. This shows his complete loss of control of Hyde and his appearance. Jekyll and Hyde weren't supposed to look like characters that were hypocritical, but rather to show an extreme version of two people in one. Both Jekyll and Hyde were separate characters who acted earnestly, whether good or bad, in public and private but neither had control over the other and they were simply used to reveal a hypocritical society.

The novel depicts the image of the real world represented by the realistic descriptions of the society, contrasted double standard followed by its members. Stevenson tries to show his readers that good and evil exist in all men, and they often struggle with the two contrasting sides of the personality. The man's soul is paired with both elements of good and evil. These basic elements cannot be separated because man is defined by the conflict within his inner nature and how he deals with these dual identities. In conclusion, Stevenson reveals moral confusion, duality of

man and the negative consequences of relying on unethical principles of the society leading to prevalence of hypocrisy and dualism in the Victorian society.

Hypocrisy and Dualism in Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*

In the play, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Oscar Wilde portrays hypocrisy and dualism as a means of existence in the oppressive Victorian society. In the play, the major characters pursue double lives in order to escape burdensome social obligations and deceive others. This play deciphers the Victorian era as a society full of unrealistic expectations and oppressive social norms indulged in widespread hypocrisy and dualism. The play is about discrimination between upper class and lower class and the secretive double lives led by the members of the society. Wilde highlights the issues of hypocrisy and dualism in the late Victorian society by exploring popular Victorian topics that were controversial in nature. He satirizes the Victorian era's strong analysis of cash, class and character. "Wilde's basic formula for satire is their assumption of a code of behavior that represents the reality Victorian convention pretends to ignore" (Reinert 15).

The play, *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde is another obvious example of hypocrisy and dualism, reflecting the late Victorian society. The play is about discrimination between upper class and lower class and the secretive double lives led by the members of the society. The main characters in the novel are seen to be practicing hypocrisy and dualism for their own personal gains. Most of the characters are obsessed with the idea of the name of Ernest, a Christian name, or given name, as opposed to a family name. The name Ernest comes to symbolize different things for different people. For example, "Earnest" inspires absolute confidence and symbolizes the ideal lover for young female characters like Gwendolen and Cecily.

At the same time, for the male characters, Jack and Algernon, “Ernest” is an alter ego, an identity through which they can attract romantic partners and masquerade their original personalities to escape the moral obligations of the society.

Wilde uses the main character, Jack, who says he is Ernest but is not as earnest as he seems, to portray a character indulged in both hypocrisy and dualism. Gwendolen, the young woman Jack wants, certainly thinks he is Earnest, a name she is so obsessed with. Jack claims to be a gentleman though he leads a double life, yet dictates to others how a gentleman should act. In essence then, Jack, despite his admonishing Algernon, is a true hypocrite.

JACK. When one is placed in the position of guardian, one has to adopt a very high moral tone on all subjects. It's one's duty to do so. And as a high moral tone can hardly be said to conduce very much to either one's health or one's happiness, in order to get up to town I have always pretended to have a younger brother of the name of Ernest, who lives in the Albany, and gets into the most dreadful scrapes. (Wilde 1.10)

After Jack's admission of leading a double life, Algernon too confesses that he had created an imaginary character, Bunbury, in order to go down into the country whenever he chooses. Algernon tells Jack:

ALGERNON. Well, one must be serious about something, if one wants to have any amusement in life. I happen to be serious about Bunburying. What on earth you are serious about I haven't got the remotest idea. About everything, I should fancy. You have such an absolutely trivial nature. (Wilde 2.56)

For Algernon to be a Bunburyist is to live in a world free of the responsibilities and

hypocritical conventions. Algernon, who claims to be earnest, is serious about nothing but the deception of others.

Cecily and Gwendolen, too, due to their own obsession with the name Earnest and the pretenses they carry out, are characters of hypocrisy. Indeed, it seems as though Cecily is such a hypocrite that the only hypocrisy she can detect herself is in lies. Upon her meeting with Algernon, who is at the time pretending to be Jack's imaginary brother Ernest, Cecily pretends to be really good all time and questions whether Algernon is leading a double life, making herself a true hypocrite. The conversation goes as:

ALGERNON. Oh! I am not really wicked at all, cousin Cecily. You mustn't think that I am wicked.

CECILY. If you are not, then you have certainly been deceiving us all in a very inexcusable manner. I hope you have not been leading a double life, pretending to be wicked and being really good all the time.

That would be hypocrisy. (Wilde 2.32)

Cecily accuses Algernon of being a hypocrite though he says he is not a person of that type, however, he is indeed that sort of man.

In the play, the true irony of the hypocritical opinion comes out when Jack discloses that he wants to be rechristened and become Ernest. Then, Gwendolen is not opposed to the marriage as she had been before. Indeed, as events unfold her decision changes along with the changing of Jack's first name. Since earnestness is the sole objective, Gwendolen and Cecily both desire to marry a man named Ernest. When Cecily claims that she is going to be Earnest's partner, Gwendolen is surprised and says he is engaged to her; both of them claim earnest Worthings as:

CECILY. Quite sure. (*a pause*) In fact I am going to be his.

GWENDOLEN. (*enquiringly*) I beg your pardon?

CECILY. (*rather shy and confidingly*) Dereast Gwendolen, there is no reason why I should make a secret of it to you. Our little country newspaper is sure to chronicle the fact next week. Mr. Earnest Worthing and I are engaged to be married.

GWENDOLEN. (*quite politely, rising*) My Darling Cecily, I think there must be some slight error. Me. Earnest Worthing is engaged to me. The announcement will appear in the *Morning Post* on Saturday at the latest. (Wilde 2.50)

This tells something about the craze of the word “earnest” in Victorian era. This way, Wilde is trying to tell the readers that one of the primary reasons the main characters in the play are practicing hypocrisy and dualism is mislead people trying to keep their false show about norms.

Wilde highlights the wide prevalence of hypocrisy and dualism or double identity in his main characters. Many characters are obsessed with the idea of the name of Ernest, a Christian name, or given name, as opposed to a family name. The name “Ernest” comes to symbolize different things for different people. Wilde aims to illustrate how men are expected to behave duly and that makes them create a fake identity to escape the strict norms and restrictions of the society. The Victorian norms were so repressive and suffocating, Wilde creates episodes in which his characters pursue secret lives or create false impressions to express who they really are. Wilde suggests that hypocrisy and dualism were an essential part of existence in late-Victorian society as can be seen in almost all of the main characters.

In the play, the main characters are presented to have dual characteristics. Wilde portrays false identities as the main theme of his play. On one hand, he

ridicules the manners of the high class society and on the other hand, he satirizes the human condition in general. The characters in the play assume false identities in order to achieve their personal goals. The double lives led by main characters, Algernon, Jack, and Cecily are simply other means by which they release themselves from the oppressive norms of the Victorian society. They have the freedom to create themselves and use their double identities to enjoy the opposite sides of their characters. They mock every custom of the society and challenge its values. This illustrates that the Victorian norms and expectations are highly suffocating.

Likewise, Wilde shows the problem of recognizing and defining human identity in the Victorian society. Apparently, it is important not only to be earnest by nature but to have the name Earnest too, exposing the hypocritical nature of the society. The main character, Jack realizes the vital importance of being Earnest at the end of the play. The other main character, Algernon follows the idea of Bunburying, which means inventing a fictitious character by which one can escape the frustrating social norms and cheat others. Algernon plays with the word “serious”. He says one should be serious in what one does. Triviality does not provide success. Here serious does not mean “grave” or “grim” but “perceive” or “steady”. Whether it is a grave matter or funny, seriousness is required to enjoy life and its activities.

In the play, Wilde shows that the main characters live in a world in which order is constantly vanishing. They disrespect stability and simplicity. Algernon, who also goes by name Algy, and Jack fulfil their wishes by the means of lying. They are masqueraders who use false identities in order to free themselves from the conventional and traditional norms. Their trickeries simply serve them as a way to attain their personal freedom. The idea of having a name Earnest seems to add more significance than the person’s actual character.

Gwendolen, the lady who Jack wants and is also fond of the name Earnest, laughs when Jack asks how she might feel if his name is not Earnest. “Ah, that is clearly a metaphysical speculation”, she says, “and like all metaphysical speculation, has very little reference at all to the actual facts of real life, as we know them” (Wilde 16). Wilde takes this remark of Gwendolen and fits in the general theme of the play which is a needed double identity to survive in the society. Later in the plot, it is revealed, Gwendolen believes that she will marry a person with name Earnest, and her faith in the name are justified. Wilde uses this common effect in order to mock faith in morals with the aid of absurdity.

Similarly, Wilde shows the relationship between Algernon and Cecily as ironic too. This excerpt shows that Algernon begs Cecily not to think him a hypocrite, and she replies:

CECILY. If you are not, then you have certainly been deceiving us all in a very inexcusable manner. I hope you have not be leading a double life, pretending to be wicked and being really good all the time. That would be hypocrisy. (Wilde 2. 32)

Algernon has been telling her a lie about his name, so she doubts and calls him a hypocrite and deceiver.

Jack says that he never had a brother but this turns out to be not true, because Algy is in fact his brother. The lies of Jack reach the climax when he finds that what he thought to be false turns to be true. In comparison to Jack and Algy, the other characters Gwendolen and Cecily do not betray society by the means of deception. They appear to escape in a world of fantasy. They adopt identities which suit a special occasion. For example, they create lovers who they want to marry. Gwendolen clarifies her attitude to love in this excerpt:

GWENDOLEN. We live, as I hope you know Mr. Worthing, in an age of ideals. The fact is constantly mentioned in the more expensive monthly magazines, and has reached the provincial pulpits, I am told. And my ideal has always been to love someone of the name of Earnest. There is something in that name that inspires absolute confidence. (Wilde 1.15)

Here, Gwendolen seems to be following the ideals of Victorian period based on status and confidence. Again she also expresses her craze about the name “Earnest”.

Also, in the plot, it is revealed that, Jack is pleased that he finally finished the delusion of his nonexistent brother. However, Jack has a possible risk when Algernon pretending as Earnest suddenly appears in front of everyone and makes sincere apologies. Obviously, Jack denies he has a brother and refuses to shake hands with Algernon as a sign of compromise. He pretends to show that moral profile is pure but indeed, he is two-faced. In public, he appears far more moral and responsible while in private he practices in similar sort of immorality he disapproves of in his brother “Earnest”. In real life, he is a true example of a hypocrite who pretends someone he is not. Similarly, Algernon is also morally evil in the way that he deceives others and misuses their trustworthiness.

Finally, both Jack’s and Algernon’s characters bear signs of hypocrisy. They pretend to be honorable, while they falsely demonstrate morality in order to avoid restrictions of the Victorian society. Moreover, they lead a dishonest and fraudulent life in order to pursue their own personal agendas. For instance, Jack pretends to have a young troublesome brother Ernest, whom he is gratified to support whenever he tries to avoid the monotony of the country life. Likewise, Algernon fakes an imaginary ill friend to whom he is prepared to help whenever he needs to escape

social gatherings with his relatives.

The level of hypocrisy shown by the main characters in the play is quite dissimilar. In comparison to Jack, the act of hypocrisy by Algernon seems to be somewhat inferior. This is because Algernon just pretends to be something that he is not while Jack invents the second character of himself with deceitful personalities. Besides, Algernon is not secretive about being a hypocrite and tells the truth about his deception. However, Jack disapproves of being a hypocrite even though he admits inventing his fictitious brother Ernest, making himself a bigger hypocrite.

Wilde uses Victorian morals and ideas to exploit the hypocrisy of the Victorian society and the duality it creates. He criticizes the Victorian society in an artistic and meaningful way primarily through the natures of the characters in his play. He states that the society is notoriously overly critical, making the human response of dualism relatively understandable. These strict norms and expectations of the society force its members to fall in the trap of creating a double identity.

The Victorian norms are suffocating in nature in which one finds very difficult to survive without another secret identity. In the end of the play, the characters' fantasies are brought to life, as they appear to pursue the double lives and mock the laws and the customs of the society in which they live. The characters in the play challenge society's values and free themselves from its strict norms. In this way, Wilde states that dualism followed by the Victorian people is a hidden means of existence in the conservative and hypocritical Victorian society. Overall, Wilde suggests that these individual roles of hypocrites and double lives of the members of the society contribute to the widespread prevalence of hypocrisy and dualism in the Victorian the society.

Chapter 3

Reasons behind the Practice of Hypocrisy and Dualism

First, an analysis is made in the dual personality led by one of the main characters in *A Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Dr. Jekyll seems to be constricted by the Victorian society, which causes him to split into the two selves of Jekyll (good) and Hyde (bad). Additionally, the society forces Jekyll to suppress his secretive behavior that eventually goes out of control. This compels him to live a double life and causes the destruction of both of his dual characters, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Through the drastic change in Jekyll's character, Stevenson shows the duality in human nature, the idea that everyone is capable of good and evil deeds.

Throughout the novel, the two characters appear to be two separate individuals as this occurs especially because they are so different in nature, nevertheless, they are two characters in the same person. These contrasting characters in this novel implicated that an individual can be both good and evil. Having this kind of dual personalities was common in the late Victorian era. This can be little satirical in a sense that the repressive societal norms of that era invisibly forced people to pursue contrasting dual identities as a means of survival in the society. This reflects the general hypocrisy and double standard of the Victorian society itself.

Second, the double lives led by the two main characters, Jack and Algernon in Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* is analyzed in detail. They identify themselves with different personalities than their original characters to achieve their personal goals, and at the same time pretend to fulfill their social obligations. Jack creates Ernest and Algernon creates Bunbury as their fictitious dual identity. Having two different names give them the freedom to do anything in two different places, in the town and in the country. They can use the other side of their actual personalities

to escape from the cumbersome societal norms and responsibilities. Both Jack and Algernon struggle to remain free of the restrictions of Victorian convention. To live up to society's traditional values and to satisfy their own personal needs, they maintain double identities. In this way, Wilde suggests that duplicity is an essential part of existence in late Victorian society. He uses the main protagonists of the play to decipher the inherent personality pretenses and dualism prevalent in the late Victorian society. This pattern of false identities reflects the repressive societal customs and the existence of hypocrisy in the society.

Furthermore, this study has explored in depth the practice of hypocrisy and dualism or dual identities led by the people in the late Victorian society. Stevenson uses the theme of duality to provide two contrast personalities of the single character in the novel and depicts the double standard of the society. Similarly, Wilde explores in depth what it means to have a dual identity and suggests that duplicity is an essential part of existence in late Victorian society. Based on these observations, it can be concluded that hypocrisy and dualism were widely prevalent in Victorian society.

The main reason why the main characters in the literary works under discussion practiced hypocrisy and dualism is to escape the repressive norms and unrealistic expectations of the late Victorian society. By pursuing these negative traits of hypocrisy and dual personalities, the members of the society think they can achieve better societal status and gain more personal freedom. The constant quest of the Victorians toward liberty, better social status and escaping the suffocating societal norms not only made people practice dualism but also generated a hypocritical Victorian society.

In *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Stevenson displays the

hypocritical nature of the late-Victorian society. He illustrates the two sides of human nature within a single person, common prevalence of that time. He presents the idea of duality by using two protagonists, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, who are the same person. Jekyll represents the acceptable elements of human nature, the well-mannered and distinguished doctor who meets the demands of a narrow-minded society. Jekyll lives a double life, one of prestige and the other of shame. Jekyll is imprisoned by the moral demands of the Victorian society. In the novel, Dr. Henry Jekyll is a well-known and contributing member in the society. It is only when he wishes to release and be his true self that Mr. Edward Hyde is created.

Dr. Jekyll is able to transform into Hyde when he pleases with the help of his experimental potion, except when Mr. Hyde starts to take over. Dr. Jekyll, while well-respected, wants to be able to act as he pleases without being under the public eye. Mr. Hyde is seen as his degenerative form, sharp contrast to Dr. Jekyll's character. This degeneration of Dr. Jekyll is shown through Mr. Hyde, Dr. Jekyll's own personality, and also through the other characters own degenerative traits. In this way, Dr. Jekyll faces moral decay, a wide prevalence trait in the Victorian society.

In the play, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Wilde satirizes the Victorian era's importance of class, status and wealth. Wilde highlights the wide prevalence of hypocrisy and dualism in the main characters in his play. Many characters are obsessed with the idea of the name of Ernest, a Christian name, or given name, as opposed to a family name. Wilde aims to illustrate how men are expected to behave duly and that makes them create a fake identity to escape the norms and restrictions of their society. For instance, John Worthing, called Jack, one of the protagonists of the play, is a serious, responsible guardian to his adoptive father's granddaughter Cecily. He stands for all the Victorian values of morality including duty, honour and

respectability. However, he pretends to have an irresponsible brother, named Ernest, who lives a shameful life and always gets into trouble, which requires Jack to rush off to London to his assistance. Thereby, Jack can disappear for days and do as he likes. He thus uses Ernest, his alter-ego, both as an excuse and a disguise to keep his honourable image intact. Jack does, in fact, not know his real name and who he is for as a baby he was found in a hand-bag in the cloak-room at a train Station. This way Jack undergoes moral decay in his character.

Similarly, the other protagonists of the play, Algernon Moncrieff, also known as Algy, invents an imaginary friend to conceal his double life as well as borrow Jack's alias Ernest to impose on Cecily. Algy has no moral convictions other than to live beautifully and attract the woman who is fond of the name "Ernest". To be able to escape dull social obligations, he invented an imaginary invalid friend called Bunbury who lives in the country and constantly calls Algy to his wish. In that way Algy can indulge himself while suggesting seriousness and duty. This way Algy undergoes moral decay in his own character. The common theme of both literary works revolves around the prevalence of dualism, social hypocrisy and double standards of the Victorian society.

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