



# THE EROSION OF ETHICAL STANDARDS IN CHARLES DICKEN'S *MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT*

Dr. K. Anuradha, Ms. Harshini. S

Associate Professor in English, PhD Researcher Scholar (Part-Time),  
Department of English,  
Govt. Arts College (A), Coimbatore - 18.

*Abstract:* In the novel, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, he exposes the human's true character that was blinded from the society. This novel actually displays the 19<sup>th</sup> century social background and human mindset towards money and power. In this novel, almost all the characters lower their ethical standard or moral standards at one point of their lifetime for whatever reason it might be.

Keywords: morality, money, human mindset, society

## Introduction

English novelist Charles Dickens is widely regarded as the best of the Victorian era. A Christmas Carol, David Copperfield, Bleak House, A Tale of Two Cities, Great Expectations, and Our Mutual Friend are just a few of the numerous books he has written. During his lifetime, Dickens was more well-liked than any other writer. Both the poor and the queen, the simple and the clever, could find something in his work to appeal to them, and the attributes of his creations combined with technical advancements allowed his popularity to spread fast throughout the world. His books were enhanced by the depth, empathy, and wisdom of his understanding of his society and its flaws, which elevated him to the status of one of the greatest writers of the 19th century and a powerful voice for the social conscience of his day.

Charles Dickens exhibits his keen observation skills through his novels of human nature and also societal issues. In his novel, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, he exposes the human's true character that was blinded from the society. In this novel, almost all the characters lowers their ethical standard or moral standards at one point of their lifetime for whatever reason it might be. The majority one is money. It also develops the character

with the impact of money on their life and how it changes into a completely different person. This novel actually displays the 19<sup>th</sup> century social background and human mindset towards money and power. We'll see, how the characters of *Martin Chuzzlewit* behave with the impact of money.

The character Old Martin Chuzzlewit is the most suspicious person and doesn't even trust his own family members because he always suspects that everyone is planning to take his fortune away from him. This character results in exaggerated behaviour towards his own grandson, Martin Chuzzlewit who was named after his grandfather. The grandson Martin Chuzzlewit is the protagonist of this novel and he actually remains as a good person throughout the novel unlike other characters. As days pass, old Martin adopt a girl named, Mary Graham. He keeps her as his nursemaid and also warns her that she will be receiving money only during his lifetime which was accepted by Mary. Some days later, young Martin and Mary fell in love, but the old man thinks that they are conspiring against him for the fortune and made his own grandson leave the house. This act doesn't fall under morality standard yet he does for the sake of securing his fortune.

Old martin hadn't had good courtesy to leave his grandson after throwing him out of the house. After that incident, young Martin decides to leave the hometown and meet the old Martin's cousin, Mr. Pecksniff, the architect. There, he started to build a life for himself and befriended both the daughters of Mr. Pecksniff. He actually encouraged young martin to spend time with them because of his huge fortune which will be inherited by him after his grandfather's death. But this was not tolerated by old martin and asked his cousin to throw his grandson out of his house. The only concern of old martin is that everyone must obey his words and secure his fortune from others. Hence, the well-being of his grandson became unnoticed. As his grandson hadn't respected his words, he took revenge on throwing out of his house and also kept on destroying his life after that.

Coming to the next character, Jonas Chuzzlewit, who is the son of Anthony Chuzzlewit. Anthony, the brother of old martin always focuses on taking care of his family. He hadn't always submitted himself to the fortune. Contrastingly, his son, Jonas is always very fond of money. He yearns to inherit his father's wealth even before his father's death. Years passed, one day Anthony mysteriously dies. Everyone was puzzled over anthony's death. This incident made Jonas to inherit all his father's money. Though he pretends to be sad in front of the society, he is delighted to receiving the money. Jonas even marries Mr. Pecksniff's daughter, Merry for five thousand pounds as dowry. Even after inheriting the money, Jonas decides to do an investment in insurance company which scams the customers. This caused hatred between him and the company's

president, Montague Tigg. This reflects how Jonas hadn't had any vision over his life. He only plans to inherit the wealth and live a luxurious life. Even in the past, he hadn't done any activities to prove his integrity to acquire the money.

Mr. Montague Tigg actually hires an investigator to find more about Jonas which can be used against him. The investigator found that Jonas has secretly tried to poison his father but he died before drinking the poison. This shows how Jonas was impatient towards the money. The way he treats or sees the money has higher value than the life of his own father.

#### Conclusion

From this, it is noticeable how morality was defeated by wealth. Money had taken the greater value on human mindset. This reflects the 19<sup>th</sup> century people's mindset on compromising morality over money. This showcases the downfall of the morality standards in human life.

#### References

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