

MATERIALISM IN FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT'S *A LITTLE PRINCESS*

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Abstract: Everyone has a tendency to prioritize material wealth and comfort over spiritual principles. The most crucial aspect of life is having money and possessions. The purpose of this study is to expose the materialism that the *A Little Princess* portrays. The study used qualitative research, which uses words rather than numbers to present the data. Data analysis employs a mimetic approach. The findings of this study demonstrate that materialism began during the Victorian era. The novel's portrayal of Miss Minchin as a materialistic individual was made clear through materialism. With the materialistic nature possessed by Miss Minchin, she will do anything so that her wishes are fulfilled without caring about others who feel tortured and hurt due to her actions.

Keywords: *Self-Centered, Materialism, Having money and possession.*

INTRODUCTION

A Little Princess novel draws how a girl from India named Sara Crewe who underwent major changes after her social status changed from upper class to lower class. Sara Crewe was brought from India to England by her father to attend Miss Minchin's boarding school due to the unfavorable weather and environmental circumstance there. The change in social status experienced by Sara Crewe was due to the death of his father named Captain Crewe. Miss Minchin, who was a headmaster with

materialistic nature, initially treated Sara Crewe well, then turned bad and abusive towards Sara Crewe because of the change in social status.

In the *A Little Princess* novel, there is a headmaster named Miss Minchin who treats people based on the material they have. If a child attending school in her place is from a rich family, then Miss Minchin will treat the child very well. Otherwise, if the child is poor, then Miss Minchin will treat the child like a maid. According to Richins and Dawson claims that the priority that a person places on possessions and their acquisition as a necessary, desirable type of behavior to achieve desirable states, including happiness, is known as materialism. (p. 307)

From definition above, it means material is considered the only thing that must be owned. With the existence of materialism, so that the values of life prioritize material or material wealth. But spiritual, intellectual, social, and moral are only secondary to them. The main goal in life is to pursue the material, and the main thoughts that only focus on body satisfaction, this is the essence of materialism.

From the explanation above, the writer would like to explain how materialism influence the life of people that means a negative impact on the people that attach importance to material. With the materialistic nature, so that it can have a bad impact on the people around them.

Miss Minchin is an example of how people who prioritize material in her lives. Material is a measure of how she will treat someone. Because if the child comes from a rich family then it will be very beneficial for her and her school. But if the child is poor, then Miss Minchin feels that the child will only be a burden to her and have a bad effect on the school's reputation so that she will treat the child very badly. With the materialistic nature possessed by Miss Minchin, she will do anything so that her wishes are fulfilled without caring about others who feel tortured and hurt due to her actions.

Material is usually used as a benchmark to determine a person's social status. If someone has abundant wealth, then he will be categorized as someone with high social status. And conversely, if someone who does not have any property, then he will be categorized as someone with a low social status.

In the *A Little Princess* novel, Miss Minchin will treat someone based on the material he/she has. For Miss Minchin, the Material is something that is very useful for her and the reputation of her school. People with high social status usually get service with good quality. Meanwhile, people with low social status rarely get services with good quality.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

Qualitative research was used in this study. The assertion made by Bodgan and Biklen that "Qualitative research is descriptive" is accurate. Instead of numbers, the data are presented as words or images. A citation from the data is included in the written study report to support and exemplify the presentation. (p.30)

According to the aforementioned assertion, in order to conduct this research effectively, data and references connected to the analysis must be gathered.

Data Collecting

The writer used both primary sources and secondary sources for compiling the information.

Griffith claims that "the literary works themselves are primary sources. Facts and viewpoints from sources other than the original work make up a secondary source. Fact about the authors, about author's philosophy, about literary history, about the audience, about the work's

influence, about similarities to other works, these are secondary source” (p.132)

The main source for this study is Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *A Little Princess*. The secondary sources are the book, internet browsing is regarded as a secondary source and information that will support this research.

Data Analysis

According to Hudson , literature is an essential record of what mankind have seen, experienced, thought about, and felt about the parts of life that are of the most immediate and long-term interest to all of us (p.58).

Literature can be interpreted as the origin or source used in all kinds of activities in science. Literature can also be interpreted as a reference used to obtain certain information.

The writer analyzed materialism in Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *A Little Princess*. According to Griffith stated analyzing something entails dissecting it into its constituent parts and figuring out how they are related to create the coherence and unity of the whole (p. 30).

The writer applied the mimetic approach for examining the data. According to Abram Meyer (1978) the major standard used to evaluate a work is the accuracy of its depiction of the subject matter that it depicts. The mimetic approach sees literature as an imitation, reflection, or representation of the world and human life.

FINDINGS

The purpose of life for a person affects his attainment of happiness. Not all goals will lead to good, even some of them exist which has a negative impact on the welfare of life. This will be proven if we pay attention the condition of our society his life is full of problems due to

the pursuit of worldly goals, such as wealth, fame, and appearance. Such a phenomenon is called materialism. Materialism a view of life that seeks the basis of everything including human life in nature material things solely to the exclusion of everything that transcends the senses.

The Character's Effort to Reach and Keep Their Material

According to Kasser Materialism is defined as a view that contains orientations, attitudes, beliefs, and life values that emphasize or attach importance to the ownership of material goods or material wealth above other living values, such as those relating to spiritual matters, intellectual, social, and cultural (p. 139).

In A Little Princess novel, Miss Minchin is an example of how people who prioritize material in her lives. Material is a measure of how she will treat someone. If the child comes from a rich family, then she will treat the child very well because it will be very beneficial for her and her school. But if the child is poor, then Miss Minchin will treat the child very badly. With the materialistic nature possessed by Miss Minchin, she will do anything so that her wishes are fulfilled without caring about other who feel tortured and hurt due to her actions.

"She taught French to the younger kids and heard their other classes, the least of which was her labors. It has been discovered that she can be used in countless directions. At all times and in all weathers, she could be sent on errands. She might be told to do overlooked stuff for other individuals. The cook and the midwives took their tone from Miss Minchin and rather liked ordering about the "young one" that had been so stirred up for so long. They were not good-class servants and had no good manners or excellent tempers, and it was often easy to have someone at hand to blame." (109)

Miss Minchin did everything in her power to make Sara a slave in retaliation for the tragedy that claimed Sara's life, and even Miss Minchin failed to provide Sara with food.

"Don't put on big airs," she said. "The time has gone by for such a thing. You're no longer a princess. Your carriage will be sent away with your pony— your maid will be rejected. You're going to wear your oldest and most plain clothes— your extravagant clothes are no longer suitable for your position. You're like Becky, you have to work for your life." (102).

Miss Minchin treats Sara like a slave because Sara's father died without leaving a penny behind.

"But obviously the owner of the smudgy face and the wide-open eyes was afraid she shouldn't be caught looking at important students. She escaped from sight like a jack-in-the-box and walked back into the kitchen, so suddenly disappearing that if she hadn't been such a bad little forlorn thing." (53).

Sara's room was moved by Miss Minchin. Sara should be prepared to share an attic with rodents and be treated aqally to Becky.

"I went to clarify that without my understanding she had intruded. "She turned to Sara." Go home immediately, "she indignantly ordered." You are going to be heavily punished. Go home straight away" (265).

Sara always gets punishment from Miss Minchin and bad curses, which would hurt Sara psychologically.

The cause of Materialism

According to Merriam Webster dictionary causes is something that brings about an effect or a result.

Economic Aspect

English society was segmented into three classes throughout the Victorian era: the upper classes, the middle classes, and the working classes. These three categories can be used to categorize and fit the characters in *A Little Princess*. Burnett uses the characters of Captain Crewe and his daughter Sara Crewe to depict the traits of the upper class. Burnett introduces Sara Crewe as a wealthy young girl who always gets what she wants at the beginning of the story. Miss Minchin and Mr. Carmichael stand in for the middle class. According to the depiction, Miss Minchin is a middle-aged woman who runs a girls' boarding school to help support her family and her younger sister. She employs several people in addition to a young girl servant. Becky, Miss Minchin's servant who stays in the attic next to Sara's when Sara works as a nanny at the school, is a representative of the working class in the meantime.

"Sara could be trusted with difficult commissions and complicated messages. She could even go and pay bills, and she combined with this the ability to dust a room well and to set things in order." (62)

From quotation above shows that with the wealth possessed by Captain Crewe (Sara's father), Sara got everything she wanted and all her needs were fulfilled.

"She was a forlorn little thing who had just taken the place of scullery maid—though, as to being scullery maid, she was everything else besides." (31)

From quotation above shows how Becky became a maid at school because she was a poor child.

“You can do anything you are told,” was the answer. “You are a sharp child, and pick up things readily. If you make yourself useful I may let you stay here. You speak French well, and you can help with the younger children.” (57)

From quotation above shows how Miss Minchin treated Sara after Sara’s social status changed from someone who came from upper class to the working class.

“You will have to do more than teach the little ones. You will run errands and help in the kitchen as well as in the schoolroom. If you don’t please me, you will be sent away. Remember that.” (58)

Economic factors take social status into account. Sara’s social status had drastically changed, forcing her to work as a servant at school, where she is treated horribly by everyone.

“I wonder how many of the attics in this square are like that one, and how many wretched little servant girls sleep on such beds, while I toss on my down pillows, loaded and harassed by wealth that is, most of it-not mine.” (96)

From quotation above shows that in the Victorian era children frequently get jobs, especially those from low-income families. Due to the economy at the time, they are forced to work.

The impact of Materialism

According to Merriam Webster dictionary impact is an impinging or striking especially of one body against another.

Becoming greedy person

Miss Minchin, who will stop at nothing to obtain money, is shocked to learn from Mr. Barrow that captain Crewe Sara’s father passed away and left behind no treasure.

"Do you mean to tell me, 'she cried", that he didn't leave anything! That Sara wouldn't have any fortune! That the kid was a mendicant? (90).

According to the quotation, Miss Minchin could not believe that her student Sara, who was meant to inherit and work in the diamond industry, had not received even a little portion of her father's estate.

"I've spent hundreds of pounds on crap for her. And I'm never going to see a cent. Put an end to her absurd party. Go and immediately make her alter her rock." (95).

Given the aforementioned quotation, it is clear that Miss Minchin is dissatisfied with her financial situation after spending a fortune on Sara's life.

"One of the most curious things in her new existence was her changed position among the pupils. Instead of being a sort of small royal personage among them, she no longer seemed to be one of their number at all. She was kept so constantly at work that she scarcely ever had an opportunity of speaking to any of them, and she could not avoid seeing that Miss Minchin preferred that she should live a life apart from that of occupants of the schoolroom." (74)

According to the quotation shows that after Sara fell into poverty, Sara was treated differently by Miss Minchin. Sara became a maid and became a quiet and isolated child from her friends.

"Among other things, she had heard that he was a rich father who was willing to spend a great deal of money on his little daughter." (12)

The quotation above shows that Miss Minchin is glad to hear that Captain Crewe (Sara's father) is the adult who is economically independent.

"Don't put on grand airs, 'she said. 'The time for that sort of things is past. You are not a princess any longer. Your carriage and your pony will be sent away-your maid will be dismissed. You will wear your oldest and plainest clothes-your extravagant ones are no longer suited to your station. You are like Becky-you must work for your living." (102).

The aforementioned quotation demonstrates how Miss Minchin ruled Sara's life using her position as head of seminary, arranging what Sara should do as a maid after she became an orphan and penniless.

"Don't talk nonsense about people liking you, said Miss Minchin. You will have to do more than teach me the little ones. You will run errands and help in the kitchen as well as in the schoolroom. If you don't please me, you will be sent away. Remember that. Now go." (102)

The quotation above shows that Miss Minchin treat Sara badly by saying harshly to Sara.

"It certainly seemed that there was no way in which any change could take place. She knew what Miss Minchin intended that her future should be. So long as she was too young to be used as a regular teacher, she would be used as an errand girl and servant and yet expected to remember what she had learned and in some mysterious way to learn more. The greater number of her evenings she was supposed to spend at study, and at various indefinite intervals she was examined and knew she would

have been severely admonished if she had not advanced as was expected of her...

This was what would happen: when she was older she would be expected to drudge in the schoolroom as she drudge now in various parts of the house: they would be obliged to give her more respectable clothes, but they would be sure to be plain and ugly and to make her look somehow like a servant. That was all there seemed to be look forward to, and Sara stood quite still for several minutes and thought it over." (158).

If Sara wants to stay in the seminary, she must comply with Miss Minchin's wishes by adhering to the goals she has established for her time there. Sara is obligated to follow every instruction, even if it means being treated like a servant in the seminary.

CONCLUSION

The writer draws the conclusion that a materialistic individual thinks that material possessions are the only things that should be owned after performing this investigation. With the existence of materialism, so that the values of life prioritize material or material wealth. But spiritual, intellectual, social, and moral are only secondary to them. The main goal in life is to pursue the material, and the main thoughts that only focus on body satisfaction, this is the essence of materialism.

A Little Princess shows how the materialism was revealed by the way life of main antagonist character, she is Miss Minchin. Miss Minchin is an example of how people who prioritize material in her lives. Material is a measure of how she will treat someone. Because if the child comes from a rich family then it will be very beneficial for her and her school and she will treat the child very well. But if the child is poor, then Miss Minchin

feels that the child will only be a burden to her and have a bad effect on the school's reputation so that she will treat the child very badly. With the materialistic nature possessed by Miss Minchin, she will do anything so that her wishes are fulfilled without caring about others who feel tortured and hurt due to her actions.

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