

5504641407

Puthita Yamchinda

John D. Rockefeller

Word Count: 1,047

Everyone has a time when a decisive situation comes and changes his life. Getting better or worse, it all depends on what situations he has faced and how deep he had been affected. Whatever it is, love, loss, danger, a person, a book, a speech, a film or even the smallest unimportant thing in life – can be the cause of the turning point that will change one's life forever. John D. Rockefeller's life depicts very well of how a small impact triggered so much changes in his life. The most interesting thing about Rockefeller is his transformation from a greedy industrialist to a great philanthropist.

John Davison Rockefeller was born to a big family. His father was a peddler who was always travelling from home and his mother was a homemaker and a devout Baptist. The financial status of Rockefeller family was not so good. His mother had to work very hard to house income along with looking after her children alone. Rockefeller did not like wearing extravagantly priced clothes and doing anything wasting money for no uses because of his little family incomes¹. Moreover, he started working in his early life for some extra earnings to help his mother and had been working hard since then.

¹ Ron Chernow. *Titan: The Life of John D. Rockefeller*. 1998. p.34.

In 1859, oil was discovered in Titusville, Pennsylvania. Rockefeller saw the potential demand for the oil as it would be needed more for electrical and technological products hence he got himself involved in the oil industry. In 1870, Rockefeller established the Standard Oil Company with his brother and other partners in Cleveland, Ohio. Rockefeller kept the company in competitive advantage side as he undercut other firms by buying their pipelines and refineries while he pressured the input good retailers to discount and ensured that his production cost as least as possible. Once the Standard Oil Company hardly had any rival in the market, the company grew impressively rapid and profitable that the company was able to extend to other states such as Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and New York City².

By 1878, John D. Rockefeller owned almost all of oil refineries and pipelines in the United States, or to put it simple, he had become a monopolist of the oil industry³. There were a lot of critiques against his ugly money-grubbing behaviour as he involuntarily became one of the most hated people in the United States at the time. Nevertheless, Rockefeller never considered himself as a greedy businessman because all of those that he had done were, in his opinion, business strategies to gain and maximise profits. The reason he wanted to gain as much profits as he could and become a rich man may have been because that he wanted to escape from his unfulfilled childhood images that still haunted him.

On the other hand, Rockefeller who had been raised as a devout Baptist always donated to churches systemically. The charity he gave to the churches was meant as his

² Will Rogers. "John D. Rockefeller: The Ultimate Oil Man." *United States HISTORY*. 31 Jan. 2013. <<http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h957.html>>

³ Ron Chernow. *Titan: The Life of John D. Rockefeller*. 1998. p.218.

duty. Rockefeller had never cared about philanthropic activities until 1889 when he came across the essay namely the Gospel of Wealth, written by Andrew Carnegie who was a steel tycoon and famous philanthropist⁴. His interest in charitable work began after that. In 1981, Rockefeller had begun his philanthropic works with help from Frederick Taylor Gates, who believed that the wealth was not the ultimate satisfaction in his life whereas sharing to the others was the greatest pleasure for him⁵.

The poverty, orphans and immigrants were his concern. He was determined to eliminate such difficulties and introduce a better life to these people. So, his charity was in the term of improving the root of their life. Rockefeller mostly provided funding for education improvement to not only the large institutions such as a college in Atlanta for African-American women and the University of Chicago⁶, but also to the small-scale institutions. Moreover, funding the scientific and medical researches was his interest because he believed in the power of technology and innovation that it results in a better quality of people's lives.

Apart from funding in education and medical research, as a businessman, he set up a business knowledge base for the future generations. Rockefeller foresaw that the economy of the United States would change from agriculture to wholesale manufacture and commerce so he fund in technological and innovation research. As a result of the funding, there were numerous of new efficient methods of production and high-

⁴ The Rockefeller Foundation. "Our History - A Powerful Legacy." *Rockefeller Foundation*. 3 Feb. 2013. <<http://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/about-us/our-history>>

⁵ John D. Rockefeller. *Random Reminiscences of Men and Events*. 1909. p.139-143.

⁶ Wikipedia contributors. "John D. Rockefeller." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 3 Feb. 2013. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_D._Rockefeller>

technology machineries⁷. Apparently, Rockefeller did not only concern about the well-being of his country's people but also the economy of his own country.

In 1913, Rockefeller established Rockefeller foundation with his eldest son, John Davison Rockefeller, Jr. At the beginning of the foundation, they focused mainly on donating for educational purposes such as improving schools and libraries, and granting scholarships and supports to the poor African American immigrants so they could live in a better condition. As time went by, they grew concerns about the hygienic welfare of the country so they started funding public healthcare, environmental sanitation and all the study involved. Their very first researches on this field were on hookworm, malaria, and yellow fever⁸.

For a century, Rockefeller foundation has contributed donations around the world, especially for developing countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa. The majority of the organization's work involves medical, health, and population sciences, agricultural and natural sciences, art and humanities, social sciences and international relations⁹. The charity usually leads the food support for the hungers, disease prevention and healthcare provision in undeveloped areas as well as establishing academic institutions for the poor children who cannot afford education. The amount of donation given by Rockefeller

⁷ Ron Chernow. *Titan: The Life of John D. Rockefeller*. 1998. p.228.

⁸ The Rockefeller Foundation. "Our History - A Powerful Legacy." *Rockefeller Foundation*. 3 Feb. 2013. <<http://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/about-us/our-history>>

⁹ The Rockefeller Archive Center. "ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION ARCHIVES, 1910, (1912-2000)." *Rockefeller Archive Center*. 3 Feb. 2013. <<http://www.rockarch.org/collections/rf/>>

Foundation up until now is more than 14 billion dollars¹⁰. With all of these, John D. Rockefeller was praised as one of the greatest philanthropists in the world.

In conclusion, John D. Rockefeller who had been a greedy investor that was hated by most of the people in his country changed into a very great philanthropist who had provided the improvement of human life. He is an excellent example of a bad gone good. People cannot be evil until the end of their life. One day, when they have faced a decisive situation which dramatically changes their mind, they will rise from the lowest to the highest.

¹⁰ Wikipedia contributors. "John D. Rockefeller." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 3 Feb. 2013. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_D._Rockefeller>