



Dickens Oliver Twist as a Way to Reformation and as a Tool to Remove Social Wrong Depicting Urban England

Suman Mishra*

Lecturer

Department of Applied Science and Humanities
Subharti Institute of Engineering and Technology
Swami Vivekananda Subharti University Meerut.

Charles Dickens (7 February 1812 – a June 1870) was an English writer born in Portsmouth England and was a social critic, Dickens father John Dickens was a clerk in the navy pay office. He had little formal education but his life taught him the formal education of facts this impoverishment led him to a successful literary person. From the very beginning his life was not easy and he suffered a lot. He was a man of various talents. He was a social reformer and very soon he became international literary celebrity and a keen observer of the society. His novels became the dominant Victorian mode for novel publication and outlook of social injustice. Dickens last days were spends at God's Hill at his beloved home. It was an estate he'd appreciated from the very beginning of his childhood.

No writer since Shakespeare has occupied as important place as Dickens. No doubt, Dickens talked about social abuse in a very 'realistic' way but also talked about the social greed in society. He mirrored the human struggles depicting London life. He says that people have lost the sense of value humanity. Charles Dickens was pleased when parliament eventually agreed to pass 1832 Reform Act____. He wanted to communicate with the society through his articles and various other means. He started editing 'Thousand Words'. He was the first great novelist of social reform and most appreciated social commentators of urban England. He wrote about various ills of the society may it be economic, social and moral abuse during that period. He led a crusade against the vulnerable and social ills of the Victorian period. He himself was the victim of social and economic injustice. During his childhood he himself worked in a shoe-blackening factory. He was the first novelist who attracted his readers to read about deprived and the unjust, social condition of the society. Through his fiction he exposed the social abuse of the society. He talked about class division, poverty, bad sanitation and much more. He became the novelist of social conscience.

Oliver Twist or The Parish Boy's progress (1837-39) became one of the Dickens second famous novels social documentaries. It included various burning issues like poor law system, criminal world and its impact on poor children and the true picture of the workhouse. It portrayed a true picture of the condition of England its hunger, physical punishment, social humiliation, female prostitution, poverty and inhuman conditions of the people. He also talked about the existing condition of the women and their place in the society. How they were forced into prostitution and hunger. How they survived in the shadow of violence. He talked about the orphans and was worried how they were treated. Dickens challenged the society by showing the true picture of poverty and unwanted children. Oliver Twist is a journey of Victorian child suffering. The novel depicts a serious social documentary.

He pleaded for the reformation in the English society. It is a matter of debate regarding social injustice and one of the most appreciated, morally inspiring novels. Oliver Twist (1837-39), which became a milestone in Dickens Literary theme. Oliver Twist confirmed Dickens as a novelist of social concerns and social issues and the problem of working class. He explored many social issues mainly three of them were prominent, First the new poor law system, the evil of criminal world and suffering of children in workhouse and society.

Oliver Twist seems reflecting of his own life related from his childhood, how misfortune followed him to the workhouse in a named town. The town was known as Mud fog and said to be seventy miles north of London but when verified, this is this is the location of town Northampton.

In Literary field after Marx (Marx was a great fan of Dickens) Dicken became social critique depicting universal brotherhood. His novels were known as social novel associated with various issues and relationships. Through Oliver Twist he demolished the barriers between the classes and gave emphasis on the point that political and social reform is necessary. Oliver Twist focused on the flaws of the society and his characters and stories of his novels dealt with many social ills and emphasis was given on the reformation. His characters are real and timeless. Oliver's life irony was that he, in spite of not willing to be in the gang of Fagin, he became one of the of pickpocket street gang and workhouse. Through Oliver Twist, Dickens gives a message that novels are not only meant for entertainment but they can also do more for society & many it be an optimistic social reform. Dickens had a deep faith and belief in people. Dickens painted crime and terror of Victorian society but it seems as his own childhood memories of gloomy days are reflected in it. It is an instrument of social reform with vivid evidences. The character Nancy is also described in Oliver Twist as she is a young prostitute and Bill Sikes Lovers. She is one of the noblest characters in the novel. In the end she gives her life for Oliver Twist, when she was murdered by Sikes when she revealed the facts about Monk's plot. Through the character of Nancy, Dickens aim is to explore the realistic portrayal of sexual moral ideals which were valid during Victorian period within society. Dickens characters are the storylines telling the story of

the women sexual fall. Oliver Twist is nothing but a social comment depicting sexual injustice which was forced by women and his philanthropic values on them.

Dickens awakes his reader through a realistic scenario of Victorian society and there formation which was needed for it. Dickens dynamically involved protesting the evils of prostitution for the Sake of society. He made his effort in his, Home for homeless women known as Urania Collage. His aim was to protect women from prostitution.

Oliver Twist (1838), the tale of an orphan who lives in unrest and was sold escaped from the worst and then travels to the London where unfortunately stuck into a gang of pickpockets, shocked readers when it came socially in lime light. It is the story of underworld unromantic portrayal of criminal community and reveals the cruel treatment of orphan in London during mid-nineteen century. Oliver Twist is a true portrayal of the London society and a bitter nineteen century English poor laws, Dickens gave voice to those who had no voice in their throat and who were afraid to raise their voice publically. It shows the facts of life led by orphans and how they are stuck into unwanted circumstances and became or forced to become criminal. The novel is an inspirational work of social reform. He acted like a catalyst between politics and literature with his literary work which was miracle for the common mass of the society.

Charles Dickens is always a wonderful author dealing with various facts like hypocrisy, cruelty and social injustice. It seems that the writer poured his own youthful experience of Victorian unspeakable world. Dickens emphasized on the facts of the social trauma of England and brought awareness for other writer to writer about the social issues. He inspired other to write much more. It showed how the system was manipulated and dominated by high status or wealth. Dickens picturized the corruption nature of the England and its harmful effects and impact on the poor. The social class was divided into power authority and wealth. Two labels came into existence “working class” and “middle class”. Oliver Twist demonstrated mainly the corruption in the Victorian society through the characters Fagin’s band of the pickpockets and monks who were responsible for destroying the inheritance proof and fact of the connection with his family.

Characters of the Oliver Twist are the characters of real world that are the corrupt. It is the description of 19th century and the effect of the new poor law, which divided the society into two, one the upper and seconds the lower classes. The lower class was neglected politically and society. Oliver Twist was written by Charles Dickens to poke who turned faces from the poor. They led a crusade against the system and it comes in shape of revolt of weak against the strong results from the oppression of the rich caste. Oliver Twist faces insult, abuse and neglect which turn into rebellion and being aloof from the society. The characters suffer from starvation from a long time and thus the pain and abuse changes Oliver as an outlaw. Oliver Twist is the novel’s

protagonist. The main characters refused to accept the world has death him. Oliver was victim of social injustice and he rebels the odd out of the wrecked spoiled system that dominated him.

He was the society neglected orphan. Dickens, through Oliver proved us the revolt of weak against the strong. The character faces abuse and neglect in society which is converted into revolt and they are found making distance from the society which make them individual of less important. Oliver suffered a long period of starvation and malnutrition. The neglect, abuse and pain changed Oliver to deepest. He acted as an outlaw and rebelled against the society. Oliver finds himself in London's slum which was all dark, gloomy. Oliver Twist was extremely appreciated and was ultimately financially and critically a big success. No doubt, Oliver Twist was the reflection of his own childhood experiencing which he had witnessed as a journalist touching the veins of the contemporary readers. Dickens Oliver Twist was a protest against the poor law system of 1834.

Dickens respected his image as a social reformer and it was also very important to him. Justice Mac Carthy the novelist said-“Dickens was madly worshipped by the lower middle classes and Dickens was the only author they were aware of---“. Percy Fitzgerald said-“No one can even get admired loved than Dickens”. Lucinda Hawksley said, “He was one of the very first celebrities in the modern sense. People were fascinated by Dickens as a royal greatest of war heroes. His son, Henry Fielding Dickens, recollects the memories when he was with his father. People reacted in an extra-ordinary manner when he walk in the streets of London----- was a royal progress as people talking off their hats and greeting him as he passed.

In May 1855, Dickens became part of Liberal party MP. His aim was to form the Association for Administrative Reform. He openly came into existence as a speaker in various public meeting and it was decided that Dickens must come for “House of Commons: but he was not interested in taking part of politics. He said “Literature is my profession- business and my pleasure and I will never go beyond it”.

Dickens, Oliver Twist in which the main character is ready and refuse to accept the poor hand the world has given him and the character rebels against the system that dominates them negatively. They are frustrated with their neglance from the society and want to stand firmly to fight back. Dickens speaks through his characters portraying poverty, hunger which makes any human being the struggling animals. He said, “Affection is the only source of true strength,” In his operation to become a higher person or to reach a great high of name and fame one must equipped with morality. People look up goals that would end abuse of power. The middle class who consisted of businessmen, teachers, lawyers, social workers and people of religion were major contributors were a big part in achieving an end to abuse of power. Dickens was lifelong champion of the poor class.

References – (Oliver Twist)

(1) Dunn Richard J. *Oliver Twist: Whole Heart and Soul (Twayne's Master work series No 118)* New York: Mac Millan;p37

- (2) *Dickens, Charles; Oliver Twist; Kiddy Monester Publication, p: summary*
- (3) *Dickens Charles; Oliver Twist or The Paris Boy'sprograss Edited byPhilips Horne; Penguin classis 2003, p-486, ISBN 0-14-143974-2*
- (4) *Ackroyd Peter (1990). Dickens, London: Sinclair Stevenson: o; 216 isbn 1-85619-000-5*
- (5) *Miller; J. Hills, "The Dark World" of Oliver Twist in Charles Dickens (Harold Bloom, editor), New York; Chelsea House Publishers, 1987, p-35*
- (6) *Richardson, Rath, "Dickens and the Workhouse":Oliver Twist and the London Poor, "Oxford University– press, USA,2012, P-56*
- (7) *Howe, Irving, "Oliver Twist- Introduction".*