



After Dickens

A collection of writings from the Dickens 2012 project



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AFTER DICKENS

(A collection of writings from the
Dickens 2012 project)

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DICKENS 2012



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Introduction

About Dickens 2012

The British Council worked with over 50 countries worldwide to coordinate an exciting range of educational and cultural events celebrating the bicentenary of the UK's most prolific and influential novelists: Charles Dickens. To celebrate the bicentenary of Charles Dickens in India, the British Council presented a range of activities through live as well as digital interface. Initiatives such as Reading Rooms, Film Festivals, Fairs, Seminars and others weaved live audiences across India to rediscover Dickens. The project kept constant pace with technology and the growing demands of Digital, blogs and online competitions ensured that the tech savvy generations had something to cherish and weren't left behind in our pursuit of getting audience reach for our events and programmes.

About British Council

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations. We work in over 100 countries worldwide to build engagement and trust for the UK through the exchange of knowledge and ideas between

About CinnamonTeal Publishing

Goa-based CinnamonTeal Publishing, provides publishing services that include editing, design, print-on-demand, translations and ebook creation among others. In 2010 it was awarded the British Council Young Creative Publisher award. It hosts an annual conference, Publishing Next, that focuses on the 'future of publishing'.

Winning Entries from the 2012 British Council
Dickens National Writing Competition

The Smile

Shritama Bose, Kolkata

The man used to sit on the pavement in front of the florist's shop. I had seen him on the first day when I had gone to place the order for the flowers. He would sit there on a faded tarpaulin sheet in a tattered blue-and-white polyester shirt. His wrinkled face was framed by tousled salt-and-pepper hair, with the salt overpowering the pepper by far. He worked with shining brass-like wires, shaping them into bicycles and cycle-rickshaws of at least three different sizes. As he worked assiduously at them, a constant unfading smile played on his lips.

As I approached him for a better view of his artifacts, he looked up at me. The smile was still there; he was directing it at me, not smiling at me. His eyes creased into wrinkles as he did that. I knelt down to examine one of the largest pieces. I was taken aback by the sheer quality of the work. It testified to being the handiwork of a true craftsman- the bends in the wires were smooth, the knots strong yet subtle. Particularly remarkable was the way in which the thinnest of the wires had been interwoven into a mesh of kite-like shapes to create the seats of cycle-rickshaws. If this man had indeed crafted the pieces himself, he deserved a station higher than a spot on a Lajpat Nagar pavement. I found out the prices- the smaller of the bicycles were worth Rs 10 each, the bigger worth Rs 25, the

small and big rickshaws worth Rs 35 and Rs 70 respectively. I wanted a rickshaw with its mesh-seat. However, having had my share of raw deals in the city, I did not dare to go for the biggest one. I settled for a small rickshaw, duly handed over to me with a- rather the- smile.

The next day and the one after that, I found groups of foreign tourists huddled around the smiling man's spot. On the fourth day, I went to the florist's shop to collect the consignment. The shop-assistant was packing the flowers when I, unable to resist the urge, asked him, "What is that man's name? The one selling those miniature bicycles?"

The assistant looked out in the direction of my pointed finger. He then replied, "You mean Rashid?"

"Yes. How long has he been here?"

"Two years ago, he was dismissed from this very shop. Very slow in making bouquets. Kept fiddling with the wires. They removed him and took away the bicycle they had given him. Now he makes these things and gives the neighbouring handicraft stores a run for their money."

As I walked out with my flowers, I turned to look at that spot. The tarpaulin looked more faded than ever, the smile did not.

Sunglasses for all seasons

Amartya Kumar Mitra, Kolkata

You can never focus on a single thing when you are in Esplanade. Something or other will make you look at it. This is not only because there are a variety of things but their low price tags. The only problem lies with the label. You may find a shirt with a costly brand name but you can never say if it's genuine because here the genuine and fake items are like Siamese twins. Trust me, if you feel down just step into a bus and head for this heavenly place. But it may help only if you are a bit too drawn to the lures of material world. If you feel those is not anything worthy for a man to dwell upon then change your bus if you are already on board and head for Dakshineswar temple.

The traffic sergeant with a wave of his hand stopped the vehicles. A huge crowd rushed to the other side of the street like violent bulls. Tired daily-passengers inside the bus exchanged hopeless expressions. Irregular passengers mostly woman watched the event with puzzled looks and open mouths. Everyday on such a busy hour Robi, a handsome twenty three years old boy would cross the road. His looks often drew attention of people passing him. Whether the weather was sunny, overcast or rainy he wore a sunglass and had a fancy stick with a bell metal handle. His attires changed only occasionally as he was not rich and neither did he want to be. Only thing he wanted was to help his brother in his studies

doing the laundry job for him as his brother was working in a well known laundry so that one day he can buy enough food to feed both of them . The laundry owner knew that Robi needed money to support his brother and his brother needed time for his studying. He allowed Robi to work in place of his brother.

Robi was knocking around the laundry building when the voice of his boss was heard. He was calling Robi. As usual Robi was waiting for this call and climbed the stairs.

“Yes Sir” said Robi

The stout laundry owner sipped his fruit drink slowly and said, “It’s in your delivery area but the address is new. Deliver this to 401, Serpentine lane, Howrah” and handed Robi a parcel packed in brown papers which had dry- washed kurta pyjamas. Robi took the parcel and repeated the address twice. He crossed the very same road but instead of walking this time he got into a bus.

Merely five or ten passengers in the office hours can make a man standing outside a bus think that the bus is over-crowded. (Just for the terrible noise they make). The same man might think the bus is deserted just after six full half hours but when he boards the vehicle he will find dozens of drooping heads in post lunch siesta. No risk of pick pockets as those thieves also probably doze at such an hour.

Robi couldn’t dare to take a nap as Howrah was not far from Esplanade. The bus reached there by half an hour. The clock said 1.30. The holy water of the Ganga looked like sparkling Champagne (though not transparent). Robi made his way to a dhaba nearby not to have lunch but ask the owner who happened to be his childhood friend the exact location of 404 Serpentine lane. The Dhaba owner forced him to have his

lunch there and Robi had no choice but to eat there. When he finished it was already two. He hurried to the address. On the way sadly enough he stumbled down as his feet struck a small rock jutting out of the narrow road. The pain was tolerable but the parcel he was carrying got torn and the kurta pyjamas got somewhat soiled.

“What the hell is this?” screamed the owner of those clothes. “I gave this to be washed and ironed but what is this? huh?” He continued.

“Sorry sir I...”

“Sorry? I want to kill the man who invented that word. Will it clean my dress?

“Sir I just...”

“Don’t say a word and just get lost. A young fellow like you can’t deliver a laundry in a good condition and what the hell for you are wearing a sunglass and carrying a stick like that? Style huh?” and he slammed the door.

“No sir pleases ...”

Robi didn’t get a chance to say a word and left. He feared the worst. May be his boss will fire him or pay him less or...

On the other side the angry customer who wanted the Kurta to be ready for attending a wedding went to the telephone and called the laundry office.

“Hello! Hello! Are you the worthless owner of the laundry?”

“Excuse me Sir may I know who are you speaking?”

“One of your customers from Howrah”

“What can I do for you sir?

“Shut up! This is possibly the worst laundry service in Kolkata. That stylish boy. Who came to deliver my laundry? He has ruined my Kurta. I thing he dropped it carelessly. Now you have troubled me much and I swear I will never use you service anymore Good Bye!!”

“Wait! Don’t show so many attitudes. We have hundreds of customers and we don’t care if you stop dealing with us any more but being the owner of the company I will refund you the money and Are you listening?”

“Yes”

“And for Heaven’s sake don’t curse the boy for his mistake. He is blind”.

Becoming Dickens

Sahil Acharya, Bengaluru

She was pretty. And the thing that struck me most was the proud nose she had. It was defiant, almost challenging, and when she looked at me, it hit me almost as a physical blow. The nose seemed to be angry at everything she looked at, but I could imagine her smile would turn the face around altogether. I was, therefore, hesitant to approach. None of the brilliant single-sentence greetings those chaps on television keep saying seemed viable. So I kept quiet, and watched. She had the air of one who knows herself to be superior in every respect to the ordinary populace. She stared into space with resoluteness, as if she were looking for any particle brave enough to come close. I wondered how often she had intimidated males just like myself. Perhaps, I found myself thinking, she had had a tragic childhood. Perhaps she had been brought up to hate all mankind. She maintained a stony silence throughout, though the sound of the bus and the traffic outside more than made up for it. Twice I caught myself clearing my throat, and both times the noise seemed too feeble to deserve the attention of such a perfect lady. The bus ground to a halt, she threw her hair back, got up, and walked away and out. I was left alone. I could only stare at the faint depressions she had made on the seat, and yearn. Such beings are evil, I remember thinking, to make ordinary folk as us think of ourselves as unworthy. None deserve to live with such as her, I almost said aloud, but for days afterward I

could not stop dreaming of just that.

That night, I wrote about her. In the world of my words, she became a glorious queen- powerful, spiteful and cruel. She ruled over the hearts of many men, and let none touch her heart. Her kingdom was rich and powerful, and one day, she married. Her husband was an unfortunate young man, so enchanted by her beauty, so enamoured by her loveliness, that he forgot all, and gave her his kingdom. The beautiful queen laughed at the poor prince afterward, as she told him of her real intentions one day as they walked in the garden. The prince was a sensitive man, and he was so “humiliated, hurt, spurned, offended, angry, sorry”, that tears started to his eyes. He held them back, but the queen looked at him with delight for being the cause of them.

It was then, as I wrote, that I realized that in the pretty girl in the bus, I had found my Estella. And accompanying this realization was the second, more obvious one- I was Pip. In the mysterious mind, myriad tales are spun everyday, and ordinary people acquire personalities and facets more varied and exaggerated than any in real life. As I sat writing about my Estella, I understood the process by which I was, temporarily, becoming Dickens.

Modern Chennai in the Eyes of Charles Dickens

Hannah Hayworth, Chennai

It was the best of places, it was the worst of places,
It was a city, a metropolis difficult to constrain to rhymes,
It was a shining example, it was subpar at best,
Poverty, shouting, pollution, crowds, but lest
I forget! Also the peace and tolerance of a diverse people,
Where in one direction is a mosque, temple, and steeple.

An unforgiving climate, and an abundance of dust,
But where to sample the local cuisine is a must,
A historic language curving over tacky neon signs,
Yet carved as well into ancient ruins in poetic lines,
A history of colonialism, exploitation, and trade,
But where the colorful traditions shall never fade.

A conservative place, where time runs slower,
But do not assume a place where any development is lower,
A quiet, bustling place, an old-fashioned and modern place,
A place where ancestral homes and condos fill adjoining space,

This bundle of contradictions, my friend, this tumble of culture,
Is no decaying town circled by desertion and abandonment - those
vultures!

This is a city, reborn a thousand times with only improvements.

This, my friend, is Chennai.

An Unsaïd PRAYER...

Haard Barot, Bharuch, Gujarat

Life is a golden chain....which
Death tries to break,
but all in vain.

The years may wipe out many things
But some they wipe out never.
Like memories of those happy times
When we were all together.
What I wouldn't give
To have you in my arms again,
Let me lay my hand
Over your heart,
So I can
Feel it beating
Beneath my touch.

BUT...
I will not stand at your grave and weep,
BECAUSE...
You are not here.

YOU are a thousand winds that blow,
YOU are the laughter in children's eyes,
YOU are the sunlight that spreads hope,
YOU are the gentle pleasant rain,
When I awake in the morning's hush,
You are the quiet of birds in unknown flight,
You are the star that shines at night,
I will not stand at your grave and cry,
YOU are not here, YOU did not die.

**Inspired by...If Charles Dickens had an opportunity to visit the grave
of his son Walter Landor Dickens...at Kolkata**

Born 8th. February 1841, died at through the influence of Angela Burdett-Coutts, he obtained a cadetship in the East India Company and, in 1857, left England, never to return. He reached the rank of Lieutenant in the 26th. Native Infantry Regiment, and had been doing duty with the 26th. Highlanders, when he fell into debt and his health broke down. He was invalided back home but, on the way, died on New Year's Eve at the Officers' Hospital in Calcutta where he is, presumably, buried. Calcutta 31st. December 1863.”

The inscription on his grave reads:

“Lieutenant Walter Landor, second son of Charles and Catherine Dickens”



Death is not extinguishing the light; it is putting out the lamp because dawn has come. - Rabindranath Tagore

A Tale of Two Cities

Heba Ahmed. Kolkata

Two souls co-habit a single body,
The old city has two faces to it,
One with a proud brow, a smile of disdain,
The other, with pain, just winces a bit.
Two souls, two faces, one city, or two?
Some sigh, some sing,—its streets seem apart;
One seeks in the skies obscured by steel towers
And wonders where the city keeps its heart.

The Indians hail their ‘City of Joy’,
Its mornings glory in their snug abodes,
And for those who sleep beneath star-strewn roofs —
A ‘home sweet home’ on the dusty roads!
Hark! The city’s music, of varied tones:
Rag picker’s raga which smells of old stains,
Does the joy lie there, or will it be found
In dizzy discotheques’ jazzy refrains?

Its gleaming towers all heavenward soar,
While shanties revel in dust and disease;
“Fairy palaces”, or “shadows of night”—

Two spirits of what seems to be two cities!
The cradle, or grave, of modernity?
And the road to progress, onward it shoots;
A lonely roadside witness sees it all—
The withered man who still polishes boots!

The pretty young woman sits all day long
In a humble corner, and there she cooks
Little meals for the busy world around,
While her children run naked with hungry looks.
Another young woman drives past this scene,
Flinging some coins from her beaded handbags,
To ensure those waifs don't pursue her car
Or spoil the shine of its boot with their rags!

The footpaths here house the orphans of the earth,
Lisping old melodies to earn their bread;
Some get silenced under bus wheels,
And some by the whips of the world well-fed.
Then somewhere in the elitist arcade,
A crooner sings softly an old sad song
Of homeless children, of abandoned souls,
And the world in sympathy sings along.

Each visage of the city has its bloom,
One rouge-stained, the other reddened by cold;
One totters on footsteps burdened with care,
The other outruns Time, in leaps so bold!
One defies the tenets of all the earth,
Then makes the other its sole whipping-boy;
The metropolis dwells in fake concord,
And the Indians hail their 'City of Joy'!

General Entries from the 2012 British Council
Dickens National Writing Competition

A Christmas Miracle

Aditi Agarwal

SCENE-1 A cuckoo-clock strikes three times. One can hear the chiming of bells, the songs of Christmas and the hustle and bustle of a city. A middle-aged man stands at the centre of the room with a dark frown on his face. He looks old beyond his years...

SPLURGE (barking): Rob! ROB!! Yes, am talking to you. Go look outside and tell them to keep that noise down. Have they got nothing better to do than sing songs all day? Tell them I will sue for the very ground beneath their feet if they don't vacate the premises immediately.

ROB: Sir, they are simply singing a few carols in the spirit of Christmas...

NED: I really like them Dad! Please let them stay for a while.

SPLURGE: You wretched people! I work hard to earn every penny. Time is Money in today's world. Ned, go study! Don't waste your time. Rob! Get back to work.

ROB (dejectedly): Yes Sir.

NED (trembling): Yes Dad.

Narrator: Once upon a time in a city called Blondon lived Mr. Ebenezer Splurge. He was rich beyond measure and the owner of the largest law-firm in the city. Unlike his name, Splurge was a miser who hated holidays, especially Christmas. He believed that it was a time for free-agents to pick pockets under the guise of charity and celebration. He constantly ignored and admonished his son, Ned.

SCENE-2 Splurge slowly makes his way to his inner chamber, a melancholic place filled only with bare- essentials. He sleeps uneasily, tossing and turning.

SPLURGE: Who's there? Is that you Ned? Stop playing with chains and go sleep. Bah! One can't rest here, even at night!!

BARLEY: Hello Splurge! It's me, your partner.

SPLURGE (Scared): But, you... you are dead

BARLEY: I am, aren't I? Listen to me for your own benefit.

SPLURGE: No. No. You are just a dream. Go away! Leave me alone.

BARLEY: You are wrong, Ebenezer. I am the ghost of Racob Barley.

SPLURGE: Why have you come here? Explain yourself!

BARLEY: To tell you what lies in store for you. I was visited by three ghosts and I ignored their advice and kept defending people who should have been in jail. I sold my soul to the highest bidder- the devil.

SPLURGE: But you were the best lawyer I had ever seen. You were brutal in court. A good man of business!

BARLEY: Humbug! Mankind was my business. I should have paid more attention to my family and let the murderers rot in jail. I carry only remorse within me. I am chained with regrets. You are forging a chain twice heavier than mine, Ebenezer.

SPLURGE (Scared): What do I do?

BARLEY: Go save yourself. Forget the death of Rubella and be happy with her memories and your child with her. Be good to your people. Save people who deserve to be saved. (Fades away, leaving a shocked Splurge)

Narrator: Some incidents change your life. Miracles do happen. Splurge was never the same again. He became a good father and a good master. Most importantly, he kept alive the spirit of Christmas all through the year.

A Convict's Prayer

Ankita Chakrabarti

I'll be hanged. For the love of God, let them hang me. But I'll take that lying coward with me. Somehow, anyhow, I won't let him escape again. I'll close my fingers tighter than a noose round his rotten neck and choke the life out of him. Him and his fancy clothes, his gentleman's talk, none of that'll get him any more mercy. Mercy! Pah! The devil's own brood deserves it better than him. I'll smash his face I will! Damn this godforsaken darkness. Feels like Death's come-a-calling already. Is a man to be blamed if he fights for what is his right, his life? Calling me a rascal and him an angel! What chance do I have at a fair trial, even without his pretty speeches? A vulgar incurable criminal fit only to be mortified and condemned. I am bound on all sides by stone and iron; hunted and caged like a pathetic animal. There is no way out of this. How I crave for one candle, even a thin sliver of light. It's been so long since I was free. Will this be my life forever? Imprisoned and forgotten; leaving no trace of my existence in the world. Born merely so I can die, without ever having lived? With no one to remember and no one to forget? I can still feel the horrid cold of the marshes cling to my bones and it hangs heavier than the manacles on my wrists and ankles. I would have died out there had it not been for that little boy, Pip. I can see his dear little face looking at me, frightened. I can see him stumbling through the desolate marshes, haunted by the tombstones of his parents. So out of

place in that primitive bleak country. A mere bundle of shivers bringing food to a coarse hardened criminal. He'll remember me, won't he? Surely he cannot forget the haunted face of a dying man, saved only by his pity. I have nothing left in this world, not even the memories of a dead daughter can make this home. If I could only live on in his young mind, I'd call his heart my home; his bright eyes, my redemption. For all the times I was humiliated and shunned, I'll make him a gentleman! Oh my darling boy I'll live through you. If I ever gain my liberty, every penny I earn shall be for you. You'll be a gentleman my son, the proudest in the land. You'll stride above all those who trod over me and pushed me into the grimy dust. I'll make you a man. Oh Lord let me live! Let me live for my boy, Father! Let me live for him, so I can save him. Let me not fail him like I failed my daughter. Send me a thousand stormy seas away from him if you must, only let me live. I'll make him a gentleman. Let me live. Let me not be forgotten.

Breaking Heart

Ankita Chakrabarti

The vacant plot seemed haunted by the ghost of the Satis House in the late afternoon mist. I stood mesmerized by the half-light and the teasing shadows of the dying day. As though Time had grown weary and wanted to rest a while. Yet it didn't stop entirely, like it had in our house. Exactly at twenty minutes to nine. I could still hear the clocks chiming the same hour, over and over again. I had come back to forget it all. To sever the final tie that bound me to my past. But I knew I couldn't let go completely, for I was in love with him who was entwined and woven irretrievably into the fabric of my memories. The boy I had slighted, humiliated and detested had grown into the man I loved desperately. The icy soul that had been taught to hate, to shun and abhor all emotions had instead frozen around him, holding him in a desperate embrace. Intimately bound by a forbidden passion, to the love that I had never understood. The old, yellowing letter I held in my hand had been crushed by the weight of the intervening years yet the words still screamed in pain and anger, ...do you want me to hurt you? Would that be proof enough for you? I will tear you apart, I'll set your soul on fire and then when you're nothing more than a whimpering ghost, a dead destroyed man, I'll tell you how I've loved you all these years. How I have ached to be with you. How I have tortured myself for falling in love with you. You'll see that my love isn't gentle, that it is fierce and devastating. The ice cloaks an inferno that'll incinerate you. Defeat me if you can,

recognize the lies my eyes tell you and I'll surrender. I'll learn how to. Love me when I wound you, when I tear you to pieces love me even more. Tame my pride even as I strip you of yours. But till then know that I have no heart. Know that I am lost and dying. Know that I'm betraying myself. Do you want me to deceive you Pip? Would you love me if I did? I knew even then that I could never let him read it yet I couldn't part with it either. But it was too late now and I had to let go. My pride had fled and I was broken by suffering. I watched the fire engulf the words, obliterating them forever. Only ashes remained at my feet. The wind picked them up gently and they vanished into the growing darkness. I was as haunted as the empty plot I stood in. I heard the creaking of a gate in the distance and footsteps a while later, growing louder and louder. I turned around and saw my past alive, walking towards me. The words had taken shape, and the fire had set him free. Pip... "Estella!"

An Encounter with the Great, Charles Dickens

Sumona De Sil

“The Personal History, Adventure, Experiences and Observation of David Copperfield, the younger of Blunderstone Rookey” commonly refers to as David Copperfield is the eighth novel by Charles Dickens. The year 1850 is suppose to be the most significant year for Charles Dickens as he, unlike other authors who incorporate autobiographical elements in their fiction, took pain to mask his characters which had the ability to capture the “everyday man” to whom readers could relate. In the preface he wrote “...like many fond parents, I have in my heart of hearts a favorite child. And his name is David Copperfield.” The fact that the novel reminiscent of his own early life it is said to have been Dickens favorite novel. The plot revolves around the life of David Copperfield where the story starts where everyone’s life starts: birth. He does his best to grow up in tough circumstances where his father dies before he was even born and with his stepfather who is cold and abusive. Dickens with his literary techniques builds up highly sentimental scenes to contrast with his caricatures and showcasing the ugly social truths which is revealed through this. Soon after his mother’s death David is sent to work in a factory revealing the ruthless behavior prevalent during those times. Also reveals the grim

reality of hand-to-mouth factory existence which echoes Dickens own travail in a blacking factory. The story follows David as he grows to adulthood and is enlivened by well known characters that enter, leave and re-enter his life. These include Clara Peggotty; the faithful servant of Copperfield family, Betsey Protwood, David's eccentric and temperamental yet kindhearted great aunt who becomes his guardian. Many others include Mr. Chillip, Mr. Barkes, Emily, and Dora Spenlow, Uriah Heep, James Steerforth and many more. Dickens has truly proved his extraordinary sense of portraying and making a character with especially their typical whimsical names till date are amongst the most memorable in English Literature. The characters are believed to be living characters outside the novels with David being an optimistic, diligent and preserving character. In typical Dickensian flavor, the major character eventually gets some measure of what they deserve and David ending up marrying Agnes Wickfield. And with this Dickens incredible coincidence and his belief that good wins out in the end with unexpected ways ended the great novel on a happy note. The story is told from the point of view of the first person narrator, David Copperfield himself, and was the first Dickens novel to be written such a narration as he rarely departed from his typical Dickensian method of episodic writing of stories. In this he experimented with varied themes, characterizations and genres. Hence, one of the most autobiographical works undoubtedly.

Charles Dickens from the eyes of a critic

Vaibhavi Jaidhav

I have no rights to criticize a great writer like Charles Dickens. As a reader and a passionate writer I look at the work of Charles Dickens from the eyes of a critic.

Being a journalist one starts thinking about social problems deeply. So did Charles Dickens. Too many problems lead to too much of anger. This fire of anger starts a new fire-a fire to change the society. Charles Dickens took the weapon of writing to set this fire on. His books depicted the plights of society such as poverty, of money lenders, inequality and incapability. Though all of this is true, some questions remained unanswered.

Why almost all of his protagonists were either orphaned or lost one of their parents? Charles Dickens must have thought that having both the parents to the protagonist would have made the stories less blue. Most of his novels including 'the old curiosity shop' and 'Oliver Twist' had orphan protagonist whereas 'Nicholas Nickleby' had protagonists with dead fathers. Well Charles Dickens was clever enough to understand the psychology of the general public which is, by the way, that a main character with loss of a parent or parents has more effect on people.

In the writings of Charles Dickens one will easily observe the consistent inclusion of the immoral conducts of the money lenders or the financial problems. Didn't it become too much at a certain point? This perhaps was the effect of financial problems that Charles Dickens and his family had to face in 1822. Money, after all, is not the sole cause of all the problems. Charles Dickens failed to consider other significant problems of the society such as political corruption, ineffective judiciary system or even the common problems of that time such as gender inequality and low importance of education.

The most important question is how far Charles Dickens was successful to enlighten the society? Well not much. Charles Dickens was a writer in the period of 1812 to 1870 when not many people were literate enough to read themselves not at least the poorer strata of the society and as a matter of fact this stratum was the only class of the society which was needed to be enlighten the most.

The unsuccessful attempt to enlighten the society did not deter Charles Dickens from becoming a successful writer. Whatsoever who will decline the fact that Charles Dickens did entertain and educate the masses at a same time and that he was one of the greatest revolutionary writer in the history?

Society in England in the 19th century

Adrija Maitra

Charles John Huffam Dickens was considered to be one of the greatest novelists of the Victorian period, if not the greatest. Dickens enjoyed a wider popularity and fame than had any previous author during his lifetime, and he remains popular, having been responsible for some of English literature's most iconic novels and characters. Each of the novels that he wrote, had a significant impact on the readers, while also giving a deeper insight into the condition of their society. The popularity of his works depended on the fact that people could relate to it well, and compare it with their own life situations. He was indeed a realistic writer, and his novels paint before us an appropriate picture of the Victorian society in which he lived.

Dickens was born on 7th February, 1812, in Portsmouth, England. When he was about two years old, his family moved to London. His father John Dickens, a navy clerk, was sent to the debtor's prison soon after. During this time, when young Dickens had to support his family, he worked in a factory of London pasting labels on shoe polish bottles. This gave him a taste of the life a factory worker leads; the life of the working class. Although he was very young, he did get a fair idea about the factory and its proceedings, treatment received by the workers, and their poverty,

during his short experience as a factory worker. When he reached the age of twenty, he became a newspaper reporter, covering debates in the Parliament and writing feature articles. Thus again, he got exposed to another social strata; another class of people. In this way, Dickens had seen all the three classes of people, and could therefore; write about them correctly in his novels.

Dickens's novels were, among other things, works of social commentary. His novels are more or less filled with social commentary, helping the readers to realize and see clearly what their society is coming to. It also helped the people of the Victorian age – the common, ordinary people – to see the loopholes of their so-called picture perfect society. He was a fierce critic of the poverty and social stratification which existed. The saying, “the rich becomes richer and the poor becomes poorer”, was in full swing in all its true senses. A suitable example to further elaborate this point would be one of his works – *Hard Times*. We see Stephen Blackpool, whose character depicts a typical factory worker of those times. He is sincere, and diligent in his work, but yet he is unfortunate. He doesn't even get the little he rightfully deserves. He was always an honest man, firm in his principles and determined about his integrity. But near towards the end, he is accused of bank robbery. And meets an untimely death; he is beaten to death. The person who actually robs the bank, is the son of the most “eminently practical” and extremely well-known person of Coketown. Yet, he doesn't even arouse the slightest of suspicion among the people. Another, rather brutal, example would be Oliver in *Oliver Twist*. Oliver was worked to the bone and literally starved, and deliberately so.

Throughout his career, Dickens protested the abuse of children and the corruption of individual feelings. Children in 19th century England were victims of child labour, and were hence, exposed to the oppressive work culture from a very young and tender age. They were often taken

for granted, and never paid their due. In *Hard Times*, young Tom, even being the son of a rich man, was to be employed at a young age. It was something which was expected. Then we see another side of the story, the circus. Mr. Sleary's daughter, Josephine, was tied to a horse at the age of two and learned how to ride a horse from then. Children were taken as apprentice from the age of seven, or even less. It can also be argued that such was the case because these poor children had nowhere to go to, as mostly they were orphans, so they had to earn a living for themselves as soon as possible. But, nothing can excuse the physical torture they went through during their work.

Charles Dickens lived during a time of great social change in Europe. His attacks on society were based on traditional moral beliefs and humanism rather than on social or political theories and programs. He urged a secular ideal of human brotherhood. Since the Industrial Revolution took place in England between the 1770s and the 1840s, there emerged a new class – the working class. Now the merchant class could, for the first time, acquire a lot of wealth and power, which initially existed only in the nobility. With this sudden enhancement of their position, all they wanted was more and more. Hence, they made the working, poor class of labourers and workers work like machines, and taking advantage of their helpless situation, freely exploited them. This was what Dickens was against. He could see that the moral values and humanistic ideals were getting lost somewhere, in the new workaholic lifestyle. So in most of his novels, he tried to put forth the exact condition of the society in front of the readers, at the same time instill in them some feeling, some sentiment, by the way he framed the bond between the characters in those novels. He hoped, that this would be some sort of a comfort to the people who can relate, and some kind of a lesson to those who had in them compassion.

Dream Dickens!

Adishi Gupta

Tranquility and serenity were at its best , when one night I was in deep trance and the powerfully imaginative mode of me was in full swing. Since the day I was told to write about Charles Dickens, I was thoroughly reading about his life and his works. The urge to be imaginative, creative and inspiring in my expression had been producing endless thoughts and a bit of commotion in my mind.

Thinking so profusely about Dickens all the time, the Victorian writer got stuck in my subconscious mind. Because of an overdose of the world of Dickens, I had his hallucinations even in my deep sleep. It was the wackiest of dreams I could ever see. Some of the characters from Dickens's renowned novels were picked up from their respective plots and landed in the story " A Christmas Carol " ; the story which appealed to me the most because of its stark relevance even in today's world. The dream involved the visiting of a corrupt and selfish government official named Mr. Hog Fraudulent by the ghosts of Fagin (from Oliver Twist) , Scrooge (from Christmas Carol) and Uriah Heep (from David Copperfield). Mr. Hog , was a hoggish and a covetous man with the only aim of accumulating dominion and wealth. Malpractices like bribing, undue influence , exploitation etc. were a regular routine for him. He took undue advantage of his power and position by exploiting the poorer lots. One day, in his deep sleep, he was visited by the Ghost of Fagin; who

in his life was vivacious and miserly. The ghost showed him how he , all his life , forced innocent homeless children into burglary for his own selfish needs and destroyed their childhood. He used to employ others to commit crime and came out harmless himself so that he was saved from suffering any legal retribution. He was thus termed as a “loathsome reptile” by everyone. Mr. Fraudulent was dumbstruck to see, in front of his eyes ,how cruel Fagin was all his life. Just when he was pondering upon it , a strong blinding flash of light caught his attention. Now, It was Ebenezer Scrooge’s ghost. He too was here to warn Mr. Fraudulent to mend his fallacious ways in the greed for money and power. He showed Hog how cynical and monotonous life he used to live without any spirit of conviviality and revelry for Christmas festivities and his disbelief in the joy of giving. Hog could well relate to all this with his own life and a sense of self- realization was starting to creep in. And , just then.. BANGG!!! Another ghost. This time it was Uriah Heep; whose painful childhood days made him a vengeful and a bitter man. He used to believe that the world owed him something for all the hardships he faced as a young man. There was an enormous link between the life of the three ghosts and Mr. Hog - all of them were selfish, unfeeling and cunning and thus were loathed by people during and even after their lives. Mr. Hog realized this and pictured himself in the mirror and all that he could see was a selfish and an unfeeling man. He was taken aback and his head hung in shame. Just then I heard a voice... “Adishiiii”. And Whoosh! I’m in my bed and my mother is in front of me. I just then realized what impact Charles Dickens, his novels and most importantly his characters had on me. Suddenly it struck my head that I was getting late for school. A normal day’s routine started, gradually my dream started to faint away with time and yet again it was proved that dreams are based on your subconscious and everything is possible when you are dreaming.

Dickens in Kolkata

An account of Charles Dickens visiting an Indian city in 2012

Aishani Gupta

Kolkata, February 19, 2012: Mr. Dickens' coming to Kolkata is certainly no trivial occasion. And the litterateurs were suitably excited to welcome the great writer to town on Friday, 17th of February, 2012. There was certainly a lot of hullabaloo surrounding the arrival of the writer, but his first steps into the city put everyone at ease. Dickens' personality shone through his crisp, easy gait, a friendly smile and a warm handshake with the Secretary of Calcutta Literary Circle, Mr. Sanjay Ghosh and other eminent personalities who were also present.

Mr. Dickens was first taken to the Taj Bengal for inaugurating a seminar on British novels in the post-world war period. The inaugural lamp was lit and the guest presided over the seminar which lasted about 2 hours. He then met some popular Indian writers including Mr. Amit Chaudhuri and Mr. Amitav Ghosh. He also encouraged the upcoming writers in the audience. "There are always possibilities that people will not like your work at first, but you have to press on, and your dedication will reap its reward", he said.

Lunch at Oh! Calcutta was a quiet affair, and the author was served

several Bengali delicacies. He seemed to develop a partiality towards Ilish Bhaape and made humorous quips all throughout his luncheon. “The City of Joy, is it? I now see the implication. City of great food, that’s more like it”, he joked.

A trip to Jorashanko was next on his itinerary. Dickens admitted that he was a great fan of Tagore, and would stay awake for nights at an end, reading his short stories and poems. “Though I’m not much of a poet, I can really connect with Tagore’s poetry. It makes me feel better”, he added. He was visibly excited to visit Kaviguru’s birthplace, and he made sure that he absorbed in every detail of his favourite author’s sprawling mansion.

Mission Jorashanko accomplished, Dickens headed for the Victoria Memorial. The grand structure in white marble definitely appealed to his aesthetic tastes, and he could be seen taking a lot of photographs outside the memorial. “This place is so London-ish, yet so Indian. I doubt there are any structures that show so much integration of the two cultures”, he pointed out. And how did it feel to stand before the statue of the monarch on whose reigning period he had written so much? “Well it is an important feeling; if you know what I mean; but I’m not sure Her Majesty would have liked me much if she was alive!” That was an honest enough answer. And would he be writing about Calcutta of the Victorian days in near future? “Someday maybe...”, he smiled mysteriously; he obviously preferred to keep us in suspense for the day when Kolkata would be immortalized in his work. As we bid adieu to Mr. Dickens eagerly heading towards a sojourn in the Maidan, we were sure of one thing – he was one from whom we certainly had ‘great expectations’.

A Christmas Carol

Ankita Goswami

A Christmas Carol, first published in 1843, is the most popular of all Christmas stories. Its moral, which still applies today, is that a change of heart is needed among those who are well-off regarding the less fortunate, and that there is no better season for it to take place than Christmas

Ebenezer Scrooge is a cold, hard man who loves money more than people. For him, the worst part of the year is Christmas, a time in which even the poor make merry. He rejects a Christmas dinner invitation, and all the good tidings of the holiday, from his jolly nephew, Fred; he yells at charity workers; and he overworks his employee, Bob Cratchit. At night, Scrooge's former partner Jacob Marley, dead for seven years, visits him in the form of a ghost. Marley's spirit has been wandering since he died as punishment for being consumed with business and not with people while alive. He has come to warn Scrooge and perhaps save him from the same fate. He tells him three Spirits will come to him over the next three nights.

Scrooge falls asleep and wakes up to find the Ghost of Christmas Past, a small, elderly figure. The Ghost shows Scrooge scenes from the past that trace Scrooge's development from a young boy, lonely but with the potential for happiness, to a young man with the first traces of greed

With *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens hopes to illustrate how self-serving, insensitive people can be converted into charitable, caring, and socially conscious members of society through the intercession of moralizing quasi-religious lessons.

The Honest Thief

Ankita Sinha

Dipak Munda is a boy of 10 years of the Santhal tribe. He goes to the school of that tribal village. The school was undertaken by government last year. So it was obvious that mid day meal, free books and notebooks would be given to every student and that was the reason why the school attracted hundreds of boys and girls from different villages and Dipak was one of them. With no interest in getting education, his main motive was to get the supplied meal and leave the school and run to his didi Gopi and his step mother. The mid day meal was the only source of food in their family and so everyone relied upon Dipak. Everyday he went to school and after taking meal he ran, with the teachers following him to a certain distance. His friends and teachers in school tried hard to make him study but met failure. Gradually he became a center of mockery among the other students in the school but he remained expressionless. This continued for many years and the greed to feed his family more increased. This led him to steal others food and even food from kitchen. As he grew up, he started stealing utensils from the school kitchen and even from the village households, selling which he got more money to feed his family.

When he was of twelve years, he was told by his teachers that in the coming examination if he failed, he would be thrown out from the school as he lacked interest in studies as well as in other activities. And if this

happened, his family would have to die due to lack of food but he would not allow this to happen. This made him take interest in studies and gradually he started liking his subjects. Teachers and his friends started helping him when he faced problems. Many teachers even provided him extra books and notebooks. He started doing his exercises and home works but he never forgot his duty to bring food for his didi and maa. Seeing the benefits of education, he thought that he would leave stealing but his maa stopped him from doing so telling that the family needed money to meet daily needs and moreover his didi was growing older and was gaining a marriageable age. So even if Dipak wanted to become good, he could not because of family pressure. His didi was everything for him and he could do anything to see her getting married to a good family and see her happy, even if he had to be a thief.

Finding a rich, city belonging patra Sanjay, maa got Gopi married to him. Sanjay took Gopi to the city and there began her sadness. She forgot that city was for the rich sections and not for the poor ones like her. On entering Sanjay's house, she learnt that she was the fifth wife of Sanjay and she had also been fooled like the previous four wives. All five of them had to stay their and work in the house as servants whole day. They were not allowed to go out of the house. And if any of them failed to do any work, she was ruthlessly beaten with a whip or belt. Gopi being very simple and innocent found it hard to bear the pain. She wanted to go back to her village and hold her brother to her chest and ask her maa that when she knew the motives of Sanjay, then why she got her married to him. But unfortunately she was like a parrot in the cage. No way out, but to die in the cage only.

Two years passed, and one day suddenly the postman dropped a letter at Dipak's house. Dipak was in the last year of his secondary education and was to pass out with flying colors the upcoming year. Leaving theft, he started participating and winning competitions. He saved the prize

money to buy gifts for his didi in a hope that when he would visit his didi in the city, he would give her the gifts. Seeing the letter, he broke. The letter was from his didi and was posted a month before he received it. The letter revealed the grief, truth and ethos of Gopi- how they were cheated by their own maa, how Sanjay tortured her and how desperately she wanted to leave the world. In the letter Gopi mentioned that this was going to be the last letter from her as she was to commit suicide and even if Dipak wanted to save her, he would not be successful because the time he would receive the letter, it would be already too late. Dipak just broke. All he did went in vain- be it stealing food or utensils or winning prizes. His beloved didi, his world, his 'everything' left him. Cursing his maa, he ran into the house but found her missing. Unknowingly when he went to check the money he saw that it was missing and then the truth unfolded before him. His maa was the main culprit. She used the two children to get money for herself and now when she was done, she fled so that Dipak could not reach her. Feeling lost to everything, with the letter in his sweaty fist, he ran to the bridge under which was flowing the river Ganga. Climbing the railing, he stood on the edge, and without thinking a second thought, he closed his eyes and jumped. And everything went dark.

A Stranger in the City

Antara Biswas

Charles Dickens the man who through his works bridged the gap between the rich and poor ; the socially relevant and irrelevant ; the fortunate and the deprived. Today as we witness the growing changes in the social dogma in India ; the controversies arising among the members of the different social strata clashing with each other over the issues of liberalisation and woman power, I wonder what the great Dickens would have written, had he been part of Today's " Incredible India ."

Rubbing his eyes, the man uttered in a low tone " Ah! It has been quite a long time." He looked around ,glancing up and down and was out of his wits to perceive with his eyes, the magnificent monument bathed in white in front of him. While speeding cars whizzed past him, making him speechless and he remained gaping at the speeding vehicles. It was even wondrous to see just then a horse drawn car approaching him, which reminded him of the old Victorian England making him nostalgic. Moving about the city the man through and through wondered at its diversification where he suddenly finds himself almost years after many lifetime. It seemed since he left this planet earth-kolkata meets Charles Dickens.

The people around looked so different in their clothing and attire-their

clothes remind him of his own dusty clothes, as he looks down and realizes that he is still dressed in his waistcoat and neck-tie. Summer in Kolkata had not an effect on the freshly re-incarnated Victorian literary stalwart fulfilling his long desired wish of visiting the “City of Joy.”

As he entered through the gates of the Victoria Memorial he could as if sense people laughing at his strange way of dressing, felt he was there visible to mortal eyes. Their whispers, mutterings and the dialect were equally strange. The women were much more freely dressed and the wanderer realized that the days of the Victorian gowns, corsets and stockings were now a matter of the bygone days and the privacy and convention existed no more. The litterateur wandered through the lawns and was greeted by the view of people spending time with their dear ones – as somewhere deep down – at a place where his heart would also have been craving for someone if he was still alive. He could feel the utter loneliness all around and an undefined emptiness loomed large.

With time the silence that pervaded was broken by the voices of some people outside the gate of Victoria Memorial. An angry group of men crowded at the gate, crying out slogans in a manner that was beyond our protagonist’s comprehension, as if paralyzing him making him petrified.

He looked to his left and the scene that he witnessed impelled him to question himself about human race, evoking a series of other questions on human existence in his mind. Suddenly the sight of a child scuffling over a loaf of bread with a stray dog made him speechless. He shrieked with in suffering an inexplicable uneasiness. Miserable thoughts of his past life occupied his mind and body and scenes from the past seemed to flash before his mind’s eye.

Moving forward the Victorian comes across a group of elites, discussing about grave issues of globalisation in contradiction to liberalisation. Dickens overheard their conversation, and was deeply struck by the thought of the growing independence of people around the world with regard to societal influence, economics and cultural exchanges. The integration between people around the world and the policy of ‘flexibility’ or ‘modernization’ within the country enthralled him.

Dickens through his literary works always portrayed the social injustice and poverty, the relationship between man and man and their cause and effects. Pondering over distinction thoughts, the literary artist travels to the north of the city where he finds old aristocratic houses. North Kolkata has an undefined beauty of its own art and architecture and alleys. The huge mansions and situations reminded again and again the artist of his old Victorian England. Thereafter coming further the Southern part of the city. He then enters the gates of the world of technology and is mesmerized to see people of this part of the city. This part of the city grew mostly after independence and consists of present day elites, so called by name.

It was time for the Victorian to set his foot on some other Indian city. He had a wonderful time looking about these streets of the city, but to him as the most striking aspect of the city was the contradictions that existed in the life and times of average citizens. On one side tall skyscrapers block the skyline, the other side occupied by the underprivileged and the hapless. The smoke and soot mixed with the cacophony of the traffic and the high pitched voice of vendors trying hard to sell their goods. The aristocrats still resided in the North; in the Southern part of the city survived the technological man – more precisely the modern man – all together into one bright canvas of life – the “canvas of the city of Joy.” As he bids farewell to the city, Dickens promises to return soon.

The Prologue

Anustha Pal

CHARACTERS:

Charles Dickens and Catherine; Dickens' wife.

Somok Ahuja; Professor of Literature, Minerva University and Dickens' neighbour.

Pujalis; Somok's wife

Russel and Misha; Somok's son and daughter respectively.

Eric; a poor shopkeeper

Rosalind; Eric's wife

Alex and Victor; Eric's sons

and Elsa.

Dickens and his wife decides to visit Agra, "the city of Taj" accompanied by their neighbour Somok and his family. They reached there by October 14th, when schools in their country generally remain closed for the October Fest.

The very night of their arrival they decided to rest. Meanwhile their interpreter-cum-guide went to their hotel and helped them in preparing their travel itinerary.

Next day morning they visited the Taj Mahal. They were wonderstruck at

its beauty and spent long hours admiring it and posing for photographs. Then they moved on to Agra Fort, Itmad-ud-Daulah's tomb, Akbar's tomb at Sikandra, Buland Darwaza, Chisti's tomb and Jodhabai's Palace. The monuments created a strong impression in Pujalis' heart and Russel was so over-excited after seeing these never-thought-before masterpieces of architecture that he decided that his specialization would focus on "Indo-islamic architecture".

According to their plan, they visited the "Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary", 56-kms from Agra, on the second day of their tour. I just forgot to tell you that Misha nurtured a special interest for birds and so it took three days for them to visit every nook-and-corner of the park. Thus on the evening of Oct'19 when they were about to return back to Agra, they were unaware of the transport strike that was effective from that very day morning and was about to continue for the next two days. They waited for a bus till late night, but all in vain.

Meanwhile, there was no chance of returning back to the Park's Guest House, as it will remain closed till Monday (Oct'22) morning. There was no inn nearby where they could halt for these two days. They went to the nearby tea-stall for some refreshments. The shopkeeper, a middle-aged poor man named Eric was in a hurry to close the shop and return back home, but he stopped after these six hungry tourists.

Eric helped them sit comfortably, served them refreshments and enjoyed the sight of his customers eating voraciously. Dickens enquired for a safe place to pass that night, when the shopkeeper gave them the offer to stay at his house. Without any other viable option left, they decided to do so.

Reaching home Eric introduces them to his family members. His wife Rosalind and children Alex, Victor and Elsa were very excited and welcomed their guests with great care and affection. After a bit of

conversation, they came to know that even Eric was a native of London. He said that he came to India as a business man, but became bankrupt. The condition of his dilapidated dwelling, worn out furniture, shabby dresses were clearly reflecting his financial status. But his cause for leaving London was not quite clear.

Dickens and Somok were clever enough to understand that Eric can't afford to feed six of them for these days. So they paid him in advance for their stay.

Eric's daughter Elsa so elegant and charming, that Russel fell in love with her. When he spoke about Elsa's union with him, his parents weren't quite willing, but later they agreed. But then Eric uttered some fateful words, "How can a girl get married to her own brother?"

After this many counseling, investigations, medical tests followed and ultimately reports showed that Somok and Pujalis were Elsa's biological parents. Eric admitted the fact that he kept secret for twenty long years. He was working as a caretaker in Somok's "Moksh Villa". But the meager salary he received was not enough to run his family.

His repeated attempts for an increase proved fruitless. His eldest daughter Ceres died due to lack of treatment and it was then he decided to kidnap Elsa and leave the place.

Finally, Dickens, Somok, their family members along with Elsa return back to London and Dickens start working on his next novel, "The Great Expectations" where Elsa's life is almost fictionalized as the life of Abel Magwitch's daughter Estella.

N.B. This story is entirely fictitious and has no connection with Dickens' original life.

The Wandering Shadow

Aratrika Choudhury

When twilight everywhere released the shadows, prisoned up all day, that now closed in and gathered like mustering swarms of ghosts.

Sometimes, there are shadows, looming dark and dangerous under the cold night sky. Lost shadows. Wandering shadows. Sad and lonely shadows. Hence evil shadows.

Phantomlike. It is strange how people rarely realize that the true source of evil lies in sorrow. One is vulnerable when he is sad. And his egotistical disinclination towards vulnerability leads him to seek solace in all that is evil. I would like to question the true nature of evil, but then I have already said too much. And too much thinking jars my nerves although I have none. Hmm... I do not have nerves. That sounds mildly interesting. I do not have toe nails either. At times, I wonder who I am. Maybe I am just the other side of Light. No bones. No teeth. No eyes. No gender. I move instinctively.

And I am always moving. Sensing. Feeling. Smelling? You must have heard of Ebenezer

Scrooge. I am was his shadow. I had caught him quite young and turned him into the man that he was until that terrible, terrible night before Christmas. It was quite unforeseen on my part. But I knew that it portended the end of our association as soon as I saw Marley's bloated face on the knocker. Old Marley, who was as dead as a doornail. I dislike ghosts.

They have a very inconsistent disposition, fleeting between two worlds (or more?) at all times, unaware of their needs. Trying to be omnipresent and failing miserably. When Ebenezer Scrooge bowed down to the three spirits in fearful servitude, he conveniently got rid of me. A new shadow was summoned for him. A meek one, to do his bidding. He went on to become another face in the crowd. A benevolent face. A tame face. A common and uninteresting face. And I became the flipside of Repentance. Shunned.

Rejected.Exiled. I walked on. Alone. In cold and dark. But, do I walk? I have no feet. I move somehow. I pass streets. I pass sewers. I pass years. Now, I move. Now, I stop. I listen. I wait alone on the lonely clock-tower. I sing myself a dirge which I cannot sing and cannot hear. I move again. I am moving now. In search of a host. A body. Somebody.

Anybody? No. I can feel them all. Grief. Anger. Hatred. They are everywhere. I can smell Vulnerability. Can I smell? Nevermind.I am moving faster now. I am gliding to contain myself within that moment of human weakness.I can feel the need becoming stronger within me. The need to belong. And above all the simple joy of tempting a tortured soul albeit I am nothing half as stylish as Mephistopheles. Starved as I am, I am drawing near. Closing in on my prey. And now...

Everybody said he looked like a haunted man. The extent of my present claim for everybody is that

they were so far right. He did. I will be his dark twin then. And I will hope against hope that he does not repent, on this terrible, terrible night before Christmas.

The Indian Christmas Carol

Aritro Ghosh

You must have heard of the great man, Charles Dickens. I'm sure you have read his famous novel "A Christmas Carol." The setting for the novel is the early 19th century. Now at the same time, similar stories were taking place all over the world, in Japan, France and even in India! I will write about the Indian version of "A Christmas Carol."

Let me start with my reasons for this decision. I will begin with the pros and cons of Scrooge's nationality. Firstly, I have no experience of French or Japanese people (or their culture). Secondly for Ebenezer Scrooge to have been French, he would have to be a dandy, while being Japanese would make him have a name like Ika Sukeruge. Hence, in order to bypass these complications, I will make Scrooge an Indian. Not only will this remove the cultural difficulties, but it will also provide me a name for Mr. Scrooge that I shall be comfortable with.

My Indian Scrooge is named Mr. Amarnath Singh. He is from Kolkata, a rich but miserly shopkeeper. All who went to his shop and attempted to bargain left with the following things: their purchases, a bill, a bad mood and the very definition of the word "miser." Thus, Mr. Singh was very successful. People from all over India flocked to his shop to test their bargaining skills, and they were all found lacking.

Mr. Singh tallied his accounts every evening. He had a clerk called Balwant. Every evening, Balwant was subjected to the torture of hearing Mr. Singh's constant bickering. However he had an ailing son called Tirath who was ailing from polio. Hence, Balwant could not give up this job. He quietly bore Mr. Singh's grumbling and his insults every evening.

One day, on the eve of Diwali, Mr. Singh was in an exceptionally bad mood. He hated festivities and the very thought of people spending so much money on crackers for Diwali horrified him. He had even had a heart attack a few years back when he heard that his nephew had bought nearly a hundred rupees worth of crackers. Mind you, in the early 19th century, a hundred rupees was a lot, especially in a city like Kolkata. Hence, Mr. Singh hated Diwali. This particular Diwali, he was especially irritated because he had been irritated twice during the evening. The first to do so were two gentlemen from the NGO "Happiness for the Poor." They were collecting donations for poor people to be able to enjoy the festivities of Diwali. As soon as Mr. Singh heard that he had to contribute a minimum of ten rupees, he turned red in the face and threw the two gentlemen out. The second disturbance had been his wastrel nephew who turned up at the office completely drunk and tried to ply Mr. Singh with drink as well. He too was bodily thrown out of the office. Now the clerk Balwant got up and timidly asked, "Sir... Can I please have the day off tomorrow? It's Diwali you know... I must spend some time with my family." Mr. Singh heard this and screamed, "You useless fellow! You've been taking the day off year after year after year! If you don't turn up half an hour before time tomorrow you can seek employment elsewhere!" The unhappy Balwant knew that this would happen but he had decided to try his luck. He sat down meekly and completed his work. When the clock struck half past ten, he packed up and went home.

Singh worked till about one. He locked up the office and retired to

his chambers. As he was preparing his bed, he heard a knocking at his window. He opened it and found himself face to face with a rather sheepish looking owl, who prophesied in accents terrible, “You will suffer if you do not correct your ways. Miserliness has only brought misery to man. You will be visited by a spirit tonight who will show you the light.” Saying so, the owl flew into the night. Singh was amazed but he quickly pushed the incident to the back of his mind. He thought, “I must have eaten a mouldy piece of bread or a bad piece of meat which is causing these hallucinations. Only Shakespeare’s heard owls talk!”

Singh got into bed. Just as he put out the light, there was a blinding flash of white and behold! Singh saw himself looking at a ghostly white spectre... of himself! This ghostly Singh however was much older than the original Singh and he spoke in the voice of a weak old man. “My past self! It will not pay to be a miser! In the end no one will care about you. You will die all alone, without any friends. You have money, be generous with it. Help the poor and the oppressed. You will get happiness if you spread happiness! I am your future self and you should trust me! Miserliness only brings misery.” However, the Singh of the past refused to listen to the wise words of his future self. He rudely told him to get going and Singh’s ghost had to sadly take his leave. God saw this and he was very angry. So, he sent the saint Narad to deal with Singh.

Narad is known to enjoy a good bit of mischief. In fact he instigates fights between people simply so that they may shake hands later. He thought of a similar solution to Singh’s problem. When Singh went to sleep, he had a dream.

He dreamt that there was another shopkeeper known as Mr. Ping in town. This Mr. Ping had come from Murshidabad and was known for his generosity. Singh did not take this too seriously. However, within a few days people began to talk about how charitable Mr. Ping was. He offered

goods at half the prices in Mr. Singh's shop. The demand curve for Singh's products began to slope downward. So, Singh reduced his prices. Now everyone was astonished, and they came back to buy from Singh. Mr. Ping must have got wind of this for suddenly, his prices too came down. In this way, Singh and Ping seemed to be playing a game of ping-pong with the prices of their goods. One day however, Mr. Ping's supplies were over and he had to leave the town, Singh was the monopolist once again. People thought that he would have learnt the joy of being generous, but alas! They were sadly mistaken. As soon as Ping left town, Singh's prices began to touch the sky. All his niceness evaporated and he became the rude shopkeeper, miserliness' minion, enemy of bargaining. Then one day, his clerk Balwant asked for a loan as his son, Tirath was on the verge of death. Singh refused to believe this and he did not give Balwant the loan. The next day Balwant's son died.

The sleeping Singh awoke with a start. It took him a while to realize that he was still in bed. However the dream seemed to have wrought a change in him. Would he be the cause of the death of Balwant's little son's death? How could he be such a heartless killer of innocence? He reflected on the fact that he had no family to whom he could leave his wealth. He pondered on the question of generosity for a long time and ultimately decided that the good qualities of generosity outnumbered the bad ones. He decided to sacrifice miserliness.

The next morning when Balwant arrived, Singh gave some money. "Accept it as a bonus," he said. "And buy your children fireworks, but make sure that they are not callous with fire!" Balwant could hardly believe his ears, and the same feeling was echoed in the neighbourhood when Singh announced that a Diwali feast would be arranged at his shop, it was free for all. He also contributed a hundred rupees to the gentlemen from the NGO so that the poor children too could enjoy the spirit of Diwali. That night, watching the cart wheeling fireworks and

all the happy faces, Singh realized that the true joy of happiness lies in giving and giving and giving. Diwali had proved to be a festival of change for him, a festival of light which led him from the darkness towards the shining light of magnanimity.

Smile

Arushi Dhupia

“When was the last time I had smiled?” I thought. It was 3am already. I tried harder, but couldn’t remember. I shut my eyes tightly for they were burning so hard I couldn’t bear to keep them open. I got up, unlocked the bathroom door, and cursed the demon snoring away on my bed as I walked out of the room on tiptoe. Tears wanted to form as I entered my son Aarav’s room, but my lachrymal glands had had enough for the day. I lay down beside him on my back and winced in pain. My back still hurt. I sat up, opened my top and felt the wounds on my back which were pressed deep into my skin. The monster never let them heal, he just made them worse.

I’m Muskaan, meaning ‘smile’. This is my ‘happily married’ life, as the car in which I sat with my husband after marriage screamed from all windows in large fonts of red and yellow.

I was married off to a 30 year old when I was seventeen. The man had a job in Delhi, and it seemed an attractive proposal to my penury driven family.

I never saw my parents after that; they weren’t too interested either. Soon I found out about his extramarital affairs and that he worked for a local

mafia. But, I was the one being beaten. and raped by my own husband. After two years, I had Aarav and that was the last time I had smiled, for the torture continued.

I threatened to go to the police, he threatened to kill Aarav, and I sealed my lips.

Ten years had passed. My insides burnt every time I saw the demon. I wished to protest, hit back, rebel, but he was too strong. I wanted to smile, but I couldn't.

It was 3.30am. I stood up wore my top and walked back into my husband's room quietly. I started rummaging the drawers for the one thing I desperately wanted, and there it was...the revolver.

Without wasting a second, I stretched my hands towards the demon's chest and pulled the trigger. Bull's eye. I went towards the dead body, took out the cupboard keys from his shirt pocket and wiped my hands which were now stained with his blood. I took out money, packed my suitcase, picked up my sleeping son and walked out of that hell.

Early in the morning Suhasini, sitting at the Indigo Airlines counter saw a lady with a child coming towards her. The lady purchased two tickets to Kolkata for the 5.40 am flight. She looked dishevelled, like she hadn't slept for weeks. Suhasini frowned at her curiously. "Is there a problem?" the lady asked. "Not at all Ma'am", Suhasini smiled. "Here are your tickets. Mrs. Muskaan Mullik, right?" The lady took the tickets and smiled for a long time before she said, "Yes". She picked up her luggage, held the child's hand, and walked off, still smiling.

Untitled

Aswathi Gopinath

It was close to midnight when Agnes Fleming stole out of her house. Without a single glance back to where her family lay in deep slumber, she left. With no place to go to, and no definite destination, Agnes took the first street she came across, walking without a pause, not aware of where she was going, thoughts of the previous year playing in the recesses of her mind.

She was the elder daughter of Captain Fleming, the well-known naval officer. Her mother lay in the county cemetery, having died on giving birth to her younger daughter, Agnes's sister, Rose. It was during one of the parties that her father was so fond of throwing, that she met Edwin Leeford, the father of the child she was carrying. She was nineteen then, and beautiful, and within two months of courtship, Agnes was with child. It was for the only reason of not wanting to shame her father of the social consequences of having a daughter to whom was born a child out of wedlock that she ran away from home.

Agnes walked on, her gait slowing with every passing moment. Her burden was weighing her down and hindering her progress considerably. The excruciating pain in her womb was warning enough for her to know that it wouldn't be long before her child would be born. Staggering

under her own weight, Agnes meandered along, until, unable to walk any further, she fell to her knees. She felt damp concrete beneath her hands and, weak as water, she lay down on the cold street, rain beating incessantly on her frail body.

Having thus lain upon the street, Agnes's mind traveled back to what seemed like a lifetime ago, when her darling Edwin had embarked upon a journey to Rome, leaving her with only a locket and a ring in remembrance of him, both of which now lay close to her bosom, tied in a bundle. Agnes had hoped for word from him, but when none came, she grew apprehensive. It was only later that she came to know that upon reaching Rome, he had taken ill and, in consequence, had died.

And, as a single tear rolled down her cheek, Agnes Fleming blacked out, wondering just why Edwin Leeford refused to marry her.

When she finally came around, it was to agonizing pain. She failed to notice that she was now lying in bed in a shabby room, surrounded by a woman of a somewhat plump make and a surgeon. She failed to register how long she endured the pain. She only knew that her child was being born. Only when she finally heard it cry did the young mother heave a sigh of relief. Beckoning the woman by her to come closer, and upon the latter's doing so, Agnes let her know of the gold in her possession. Then she died, that quintessence of Venus, pressing her child to her bosom. The child, who, henceforth, was to be called Oliver Twist.

Realize, relight and rejuvenate

Avantika Agarwal

At the first chime of the church bell “he” met his past, as the bell stoke the second his present, at third his future. A Mr. Scrooge, lies in each one of us, in the face of either “a forgotten past, ignored present and a helpless future” or “a ignored past, helpless present and a forgotten future”.

Every many, mostly unconsciously, wait for the heard?unheard church bell to ring, and wait for the correct hour to strike.

There are many scrooge, breathing in the , ‘A TALE OF TWO CITIES’ and many a scrooge surviving in the ‘OLIVER TWIST’.

Scrooge doesn’t refer to a miser, self centered man, who after an illusion turned over a new leaf and started living a better life.

Scrooge was a man who, (in true terms) started to live after the illusion on the Christmas eve. he could relate the word ‘life’ and ‘living’, which, earlier seemed (to him) to have different origins. The scrooge in you still tries hard to relate these words better.

Merry Christmas and a very happy journey to all.

Buried Future

Ekta Kumari

The months following the death of our son Stephen Paul Couvillion from accidental drug intoxication can only be described as “a parent’s worst nightmare” (quite literally) thus, a hint at part of the title of this small collection of writings. This collection describes the journey from a nightmare to a new place, called “trying to feel normal again,” through a struggle to regain joy (title hint). The months following Stephen’s death have been at times, disorienting, bleak, lonely and isolating, filled with anxiety and fear and anger, and always exhausting. Maybe that most describes this time of grieving, just plain exhausting, physically, mentally, and spiritually. Since the writings are dated and ordered chronologically, the reader may recognize some sort of internal struggle coming to completion within the writer, or maybe not.

In the spectrum of human experiences, the loss of a child has to be one of the most devastating. What is most striking about it is the loss of a future not yet lived out and the burying of someone who should have buried you. Your child is supposed to bury you, not the other way around. Considered rare in western culture, the loss of a child is not a well-known experience, war-related deaths excluded, not like burying a parent. Because it is rare, those who have not experienced it have no frame of reference with which to connect with this sort of grief. Consequently, many say the stupidest

things, quite accidentally and innocently without even knowing it. In the past few months, we heard it all: “Well at least you had him for 29 years.”; “He’s in a better place.”; “He’s at peace now.”; “Are you over it yet?” and the standard “How are you doing?” Others just don’t make eye contact or avoid you altogether.

Furthermore, our son died after taking heroin into the vein of his arm. When the Temple University police and hospital personnel called separately to inform us (my wife Kathy and me) as we slept quietly in our bed in Baton Rouge, after the nauseating fog of disbelief dissipated, I actually had to look up how to spell “heroin” in the old Merriam-Webster dictionary in my bookcase. I just could not believe this. “My son died from heroin intoxication?” That’s what the tape played in my head over and over for several weeks. My small-town upbringing just did not include that manner of death as being within the realm of possibilities for my son. Not my son. Not Stephen. I kept telling myself, “That’s what happens to drug addicts.” It took a while for me to understand that a drug addict is what Stephen had become at the end of his 17-year struggle with mental and physical afflictions. This fact has been particularly hard to take.

However, the greatest joy (and I’m not just writing this to plaster over the pain and find meaning in this chaos) from this experience, however, is the surprise at how caring and understanding some people can be in a tragedy like ours and in having hope that Stephen is in God’s eternal Kingdom. Kathy and I are deeply indebted to those who have not looked away or said anything stupid, especially Kevin Murphy, Ernie and Gretchen Wroten, Pastor Kim Little-Brooks of the Lutheran Church of Our Saviour in Baton Rouge, Joel and Linda Bankston, Sarah and Rebecca Brown, Mike and Robyn Nettles, Matt Cosper, Tina Adams, Susan Behrens, Dr. Gilbert Chase Robinson, Jr., Dr. Thomas Senor of the University of Arkansas, and members of the faculty and staff of Temple

University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, especially Drs. Nate Norment, Sonja Peterson-Lewis and Nilgun Anadolu-Okur, who so mercifully and faithfully reached out to us in this tragedy.

The Tale's Tail

Erika Seita Eitland

I am as alive as a dormouse can be. My life has been filled with tremendous warmth and joy for I had the good fortune of stumbling upon a house of great wealth. Let me assure you that the gentlemen living in the house is quite aware that I reside on his bookshelf and the wealth he provides is that of a literary nature.

My hardships as a poor thief lurking in dark alleys ended on a cold winter's night on Doughty Street in the year of 1837. Guided by the chattering of the kitchen help I was lured into the back door of number forty-eight. The maid declared with great frustration, "This is the master's fifth cup of tea this evening, he must be writing about a woman!" As she carried a tray of tea and biscuits, I scurried after her unaware of the world beyond my own hunger.

As she opened the door, candlelight flooded the dark hallway revealing walls of books and newspapers opened to installments of *The Pickwick Papers*. A pleasant contrast from the gloom of the streets I had grown used to. My gaze fell upon the master, whose quill was scratching quickly across the page, pausing only to dip it into ink. Muttering to himself, "His name should be Oliver, yes, Oliver Twist." The maid quietly set the tea down beside him and I waited desperately for him to take a bite of a

biscuit. As his quill traveled across the page he strangely asked, “Please sir, may I have some more?” An odd question when he had not taken a single bite.

I became a silent observer to his brilliance but my stomach grumbled in pain and with a burst of courage I dashed towards the desk and placed my paw on a biscuit. Focused on my own starvation, I was terrified when the sir picked me up by the tail and asked, “What do you think you are doing?” I immediately started apologizing only expecting it to translate to a series of squeaks and frantic whisker twitches, as had been the case with other humans. Yet I was surprised to hear in return, “Never fear dear mouse, what is your name? For I am Charles Dickens.” The master’s great imagination allowed him to hear the voices of those ignored by society and share the realities of the world. His humor and poetic nature made me forget my worries as a poor dormouse and provoked my passion for the world of words.

Sharing a biscuit every night, he weaves the great tale of Oliver Twist from my experiences as a silent thief and encounters with the terrible rat Fagin. The latest installment of his story becomes more enticing than a delicious piece of aged cheese. Feeding my hungry stomach and filling the dark spaces of mind with incredible fantasies, I find myself as alive as a dormouse can be.

Like a Moth Drawn to a Flame

Gayathri Nayar

I stopped midway in my conversation with Herbert and stared unabashedly as she entered the room on Drummle's arm. But I wasn't the only one who had been captivated by her charm; every other man silently prayed that she would grace them with a dance or at least a word. I looked at her like Astrophel looked at his Stella, the Goddess who kept him alive, alive only to feel the pain of his existence.

Herbert cleared his throat and said, "My dear Handel, you can hate me for saying this, but, that woman will be the death of you". So saying he walked away to a group of young women who stood huddled together, in the absence of any male attention. I turned my gaze back to Estella, who even if she had seen me, gave me no indication that she even knew of my existence.

An hour passed then two as I stood watching Estella dance with one man then another. On my part I tried unsuccessfully to converse with other people at the party. But Estella's presence had sent all my senses into overdrive and I found myself unable to articulate a single coherent sentence and was reduced to answering in monosyllables. It was after yet another failed conversation that Estella glided towards me with a glass in her hand. Without her having to say anything I offered her my hand

and guided her to the nearest empty table. As she sat looking at the other dancers on the floor I sat enjoying the feel of her hands in mine.

“You look beautiful” the words escaped my mouth like a prayer. She gave a short laugh and then looking at me for the first time that evening she said in her silken voice, “You don’t look so bad yourself Pip, not bad at all for a common country boy” and she condescended to smile at me. Overlooking the reinforcement of the unbridgeable gap between us I continued to gaze at her in awe as she sat sipping her wine.

All too soon she was standing up and pulling me to my feet along with her. “Won’t you escort me to my carriage Pip?” she asked, and it still came out sounding like a command to a slave. Even though I was disappointed at not having had a chance to dance with her I happily agreed to the opportunity of spending a few more minutes with her. We walked in silent leisure to her carriage, her body pressed closer to me against the cold December air. As she got into her carriage she said to me “I see you’ve still not taken my advice Pip”

“About what Estella?”

“Why do you still love me Pip?” There was a never-heard before tenderness in her voice.

I honestly didn’t know an answer to that. Why did I love her even though she made me miserable? After a moment’s thought I answered, “Estella, why is a moth drawn to a flame?”

Untitled

Harsha Peter

It was a summer afternoon when Mr. Pickwick entertained his fellow pickwickians. A customary silence hovered in the room as the deep, solitary voice of Mr. Pickwick narrated his misadventure out in the East. “The most interesting place was the fair. I decided to enter Madame Jasmine- the fortune teller’s tent first. Madame Jasmine was hardly visible under her scarves, chains and heavy makeup. She took my hand and slowly circled her own hand above it, chanting. I was hesitant, at first thinking that I had made the wrong choice, but a few moments later I was completely sure that I had made a mistake of gargantuan proportions. She squeaked in her high pitched voice. “You sir are an unlucky person! You will loose something very precious to your heart. I also see a great race accompanied by a few unlikely companions. If you would cross my palm with silver I’ll tell you more...” “I could stand it no longer” cried Mr. Pickwick “and walked right out of her tent and into the market. My stomach was growling with hunger and my eyeballs painfully searched for a place to satisfy it. I felt a wily hand reach for my coat pocket, grip my wallet and then get lost in the crowd. As soon as the pick-pocket had done his job I realized what was happening. Immediately, I ran after him. The thief was a cunning rascal with great speed. He slipped through the crowd with the ease by which I can spread jam on my toast! I could barely keep up as I swerved around carts, camels and stalls. Street roads

soon gave way to wild trees and woodlands. I could see him clearly now. Suddenly on reaching for my hat I found an empty space only comparable to a black hole! I stopped, looking in all directions for the would-be kleptomaniac. On a large banyan tree I found the culprit, chattering eagerly to his fellow long-tailed companions! I was confused as whom to follow when all of a sudden a loud trumpeting sound drowned out my beating heart. Two huge pachyderms were making their way right up to where I was standing! My mouth opened but my larynx seemed to have given up on me. One of the gigantic beasts wrapped its trunk around me and seated me on its back along with its sole rider, the mahout. He smiled at me merrily and asked in broken English, "you what come for?" "I narrated to him my misfortunes and after I completed my story he laughed out loud. Whispering something to his elephant he said, "you no worry, Sahib, I set things straight!" I was petrified to say the least as the pachyderm put us down again before charging up to the Banyan tree trumpeting loudly. The monkeys dropped my hat in fright and darted away. Handing my hat back, the mahout offered me a ride home. And that is how I finally cured myself of my fear of heights! Though Madame Jasmine's predictions were all in vain as nothing of the sort she described ever happened to me!" Stunned by the abrupt end, Mr. Snodgrass blurted out, "and what of the thief?" Nathaniel Winkle exclaimed, "How in the world did the elephant have the strength to carry you?" Mr. Tupman asked, adjusting his belt, "Did you finally get the snack you had set out for?" Mr. Pickwick silenced his companions and mysteriously stated, "Gentlemen, your questions amuse me and yet all I can say is that the rest, as they say-is for another time and day" and with that he started discussing his plans for their next adventure.

Dickens and the Bengali Wordsmith

Indranil Goswami

Charles Dickens could have never met Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay as the latter was born six years after his death. But if we take the liberty of bringing Dickens to Sarat Babu's drawing room won't that be great!

Dickens and Sarat Chandra are seated on wooden chairs in the drawing room, enjoying Darjeeling tea.

Sarat Chandra: I am privileged, having been paid a visit by one of the most renowned novelists of English literature.

Dickens: So am I Sarat Babu. I didn't know much about Bengali literature until I came here. It's great to see the great Bengali wordsmith. Some feel we have similarities in our writing styles.

Sarat Chandra: Maybe because we both write about the poor and the oppressed. You painted a picture of poverty and deprivation of the poor

by the rich and powerful in English society in novels like *Oliver Twist*, *A Christmas Carol*, etc. I did something like that in the context of rural Bengal, often highlighting the ill effects of the caste system in novels like *Bamuner Meye*, *Pondit Moshai*, etc.

Dickens: Caste system?

Sarat Chandra: Well! It's something like apartheid. Here the discrimination is not on the basis of skin colour but depends on the caste of the family a person is born in. The lower castes are often discriminated against by the higher ones.

Dickens: That's awful! But I like it that the literary community of Bengal is fighting against it. I believe it is the same story everywhere. Be it London or Calcutta, there are two kinds of people- 'haves' and 'have-nots'. By the way, I can't resist asking, which work of mine did you like the most?

Sarat Chandra: I like all of your novels but if I have to choose one I'll say, 'A Tale of Two Cities'. I believe no other novel has so poignantly described the ill effects of power concentration, how power can change people and how vengeance leads to horrible decisions. But that you are a master is proven by the way you end the novel where Sydney Carton sacrifices his life keeping his promise to his love Lucie, "to embrace any sacrifice for you and for those dear to you". No one has ever depicted the power of love the way you did.

Dickens: Well! You have, I read your novel, 'Shrikanto'. I was really moved when the protagonist leaves his lover's house for her own good- "True love does not only bring two people close, it can also create distance. "Lokhi, don't be sad, it is for your own good that I'm leaving. But I promise I won't insult you by wasting the life I owe to you". You are wonderful Sarat Babu.

Sarat Chandra: Now you are embarrassing me.

Dickens: Oh no! They don't call you the wordsmith for nothing but Sarat Babu I'll have to leave now.

Sarat Chandra: So soon! Won't You Stay for dinner?

Dickens: Sorry friend, I was never here. All this is just a dream you're having now. Your alarm clock is ringing, so I can't stay here any longer.

Sarat Chandra: What! Really!

And Sarat Chandra wakes up to the sound of his alarm clock. For the first time in his life he is sorry for putting on that alarm as it made him cut short his meeting with Dickens!

Triumph of Good Over Evil

Ipshita Banerjee

A great battle happened in a very far away place; Good and Evil were fighting but the situation was very delicate for Good since there were one hundred men of Evil fighting against every men of Good, up to the point that the men of Good were surrounded, unable to defend themselves and dying at the hands of the evil ones who were enjoying their criminal actions.

The battle lasted the whole day and night and the next day at noon, very few men of Good were left. The battle field was covered with innocent blood since Evil had strengthened and they were close to victory. Good was close to die since Evil had surrounded them as a ring but he said to his men: “Do not be afraid of being what you are, do not be afraid of death if it comes. Put all your will, free your thoughts of conflict and in your heart, abandon fear, get your strength in Love.”

This small army who was surrounded, strengthened their hearts and recovered their purpose while their guide said: ” We are going to win this battle and we’ll do it by honoring Good, put your swords aside, don’t be afraid, join your hands, join your hearts, let Love guide you. And they all joined their hands and opened their hearts and in a moment, their blood stained garments, turned as white as snow, bright as the morning’s sun.

And it was as lightning illuminating the night, and that shine became as sun but more luminous and potent.

And a natural thing happened, that light lighted the field and every corner and as a natural thing, also, took possession of Evil, whose men were badly hurt, their eyes were blinded and they were so angry that their desire to kill increased and by being blinded and mad, they kill themselves and not one was left. But with so much blood that it reached above the ankles and so much dead that a few hours later, the vultures filled the place.

And the one guiding the army of Good said these words: " We will never be happy about the dead of our enemies and the violence and cruelty that they experienced. Let's keep our hearts high, let's pray and let's honor theirs and ours in their graves by placing seeds of flowers to clean the horror, violence, anguish and desperation. We didn't win with violence, or rancor but with the strength that the truth give us; the truth of good sustained in Love. " And from that day on, those warriors became farmers.

Time passed and many years after, everybody had forgotten about the death and destruction. But what stayed and triumphed is that in that valley of death and desolation live people who cultivate Good and they know in their hearts that in that valley violence died and in the same moment Good and Peace were born forever.

My Dickensian Dream

Jagata Krishna Swaminathan

February 7th, 2012 marked the 200th anniversary of one of the most renowned authors of Victorian England, Charles Dickens. For over 200 years, Dickens has stirred the imaginations of his readers, young and old, and, in particular, coloured my world, with all sorts of characters and places. It was natural for me, therefore, to spend more than a few moments remembering the genius that was Dickens. Soon after, however, my mind was absorbed in other thoughts, and it was not until later that night, when sleep had consumed me, that Dickens was re-introduced into my world. The quiescent mind has a way of delving into the subconscious and reviving old thoughts, which often take the shape of dreams. But my dreams that night were haunted, not by the ghost of Dickens, but by one of the three Christmas ghosts with whom we are all so well acquainted.

Don't suspect me of being a curmudgeon right away! I have nothing against Christmas; in fact I celebrate it with all the spirit and cheer that must accompany it. The ghost didn't haunt my dreams to make me mend my ways, but in a variation from the original story, it proceeded to provide me with a picture of the life of its inventor.

The apparition, in his pearly white robes, beckoned me down the cobbled

streets of old London. I say ‘beckoned’ because in my dreams, he was mute. The visions had turned the shade of sepia colours that is seen on old photographs. Horse drawn carriages regularly passed us on our way to Landport, where I saw the tiny house, meagrely furbished and crowded with eight children and two fatigued parents. I saw successive scenes of Charles having to work to supplement the family income and how unlike his more fortunate counterparts, he was regularly pulled out of school to do so. His father’s imprisonment found him isolated in a huge, cold city, with barely enough to eat. These experiences would haunt him for the rest of his life and often find expression in his oeuvres.

Subsequent research over a cup of milk the next morning would reveal more details of the virtuoso’s life. Charles was the second in a long line of eight and responsibility often burdened his little shoulders. At the age of eleven he was pulled out of school. However, when family fortunes improved, Charles was sent back to school, after which he became an office boy, journalist and finally an author.

He shot to fame with *Pickwick Papers* and still remains one of the most loved authors. It is perhaps that personal touch in his stories that binds the reader eternally to the characters and the stories. If the Ghost of Christmas future had visited me, we would have probably looked into the future and found that Dickens will remain among the most popular authors because his books offer a near perfect blend of language, plot and pathos.

A Letter

Jayati Maity

DEVONSHIRE TERRACE, DECEMBER 31st, 1850.

MY DEAR FORSTER,

You may perhaps have seen an announcement in the papers of my intention to start a new cheap weekly journal of general literature.

I had intended the general mind and purpose of the journal to be the arising up of those that are down, and the general improvement of our social condition. And what with the preparations to get ahead, combined with the absolute necessity of my giving a good deal of time to the Christmas number, it had tied me to the grindstone pretty tightly. So one evening, while pondering over suitable subjects to write about in the journal, your tired friend was visited rather quickly by Mother Sleep. She lulled me to a most wonderful vision, a vision of a city.

It was not a city of machinery and tall chimneys, not one out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever, and never got uncoiled. It didn't have a black canal in it, nor arid vast piles of building full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long. It was beauty personified.

My eyes rested on a particularly beautiful house. It was a large square house standing on a bold height, with over hanging eaves like a Swiss cottage and surrounded by a garden filled with the most exotic flowers. There resided all the stateliest people. I was busy admiring the house when my eyes were arrested by a small hut situated at one end of the spacious garden. From their emerged a man, and rushed towards the big house. He was the servant of the house, or so it seemed. It was this person who opened my eyes to the squalid and poverty in the Garden of Eden. He had no hope of ever being rich enough to live a month without hard work. He showed me how the demon of Ignorance still grasped the poor. He showed me the plight of poor girls, perverted into a heavy, slatternly drudge, the poor boy moping down the ways of low sensuality, to brutality and crime, the changing of the dawning light of intelligence in the eyes of the children into cunning and suspicion. He showed me the insensitivity of the rich, the indifference of the middle class and the false promises of the politicians. And made me suddenly see the imperfections of this overgrown city, the immense mass of corruption and made me think, Is greater poverty the merrier proof of prosperity?

I regard your time as valuable and have no intention of diminishing the kindness you have shown in bearing with my deliriums, by thanking you. And may I venture to ask you whether you can give me any hope that you will write a short tale, or any number of tales, for the projected pages of the journal?

Georgy sends best love to you and to Mrs. Forster, so do I, Plorn, and Frank.

Ever affectionately.

CHARLES DICKENS

Off with his Head!

Joy De Costa

There were all lined up to die that day. Many were guilty. Many were innocent. Many cried. Many prayed to God. Out of this throng of many, a man stood out. He did not mean to do so. His eyes roved unseeingly over the mob. The girl he had been talking lay a lifeless corpse. Many were to follow her. He would too.

He had leaned carelessly against the witness box while his double stood trial in Old Bailey. He had worn a nightly shroud of candle wax in many taverns at London. It was he who had stopped for Death.

“Thank God she’s safe...” he whispered.

The executioner gestured towards him with hands stained now with blood, not wine.

“Off with his head, off with his head,” chanted the Vengeance like the Queen of Diamonds.

One.

Two.

Three.

His shoes made hardly any sound as he ascended. Briefly, he raised his eyes to look at the mob below. They were too beneath him to see what he saw. His eyes didn't see the knitting lying on Madame Defarge's vacant chair. Nor did they light on the Vengeance or Barsad and Cly. He saw a woman. She seemed an apparition. Her hair was the same gold as Lucy's. Her eyes the same blue.

"Lucy?" his mind cried.

He felt himself roughly dragged towards St Guillotine. They flung him on the block and he felt the rough wood graze his fingers. Hastily, he looked up to see her face again. It couldn't be Lucy. His upturned eyes sought for the mysterious angel.

It wasn't Lucy. Her forehead held not the other's distinctiveness. She was her replica. The crowd jeered and abused him. He closed his eyes ready to feel the chill of the axe. "A life you love..." he murmured again.

He saw the angel behind his closed lids. There was no darkness. Dr Manette stood beside her his face radiant. 'It was you! You who I saw in my cell' said he.

Mr Lorry joined them and Lucy appeared beside him. Her face wasn't the wan one he had kissed his farewell to. Darney had his arm around her. Was this the future he saw?

"Thank God if it be so," his heart prayed.

Then as if from nowhere, he saw himself besides them, with little Lucy on his lap. His face was blissfully happy. Was this heaven?

“Off with his head! Down with the aristocrat!” the crowd chanted.

The air stilled as the axe was raised. Barsad turned his eyes away. “He was a good man...” he choked.

A smile lit Sidney Carton’s face. Lucy’s face shone before him. Her blue eyes compassionate. His soul was light. His laughter was no more tinged with pain.

Finally, he could rest. Finally, there would be no pillow littered with tears. Finally, the sun emerged. And then - the axe fell. The air was rent with cheers.

In the carriage speeding towards London, Charles Darney opened his eyes.

A Date with Dickens

Kasturi Adhikarry

It was my 16th Valentine's Day, love was in the air. The breezy cloudy environment made it more romantic. I was coming back from my routine violin classes crossing Maidan and Victoria where I saw many horse-driven carts beautifully decorated with roses and balloons, inside them the usual love birds were sitting. Boys and girls holding each other's hand and walking past the Red Road was also eye-catching. I reached home feeling rather low and sad at my current single status. However to brighten up my mood I went to college street my favourite place in Calcutta. In spite of its congestion the call of the hawkers, the smell of old books fascinates me. I was walking through the narrow lane opposite "Presidency College" I saw a foreigner arguing with a bookseller. My old curiosity's shop wouldn't close its shutters down and I was drawn towards them. When I went nearer I heard the conversation, the foreigner had bought a few books but the money he was paying were in pounds, which the bookseller was not accepting. Out of humanity I popped in there and paid the bookseller. After that as I looked at the gentleman, I was shocked and dumbfounded. I couldn't believe what my eyes saw. It was Mr Charles John Huffam Dickens, the age old dead Victorian novelist who had produced the world's best classics ever to the readers. I somehow regained my consciousness. I felt scared and uneasy, he felt my condition and pleaded to me that he was not harmful and wanted to treat

me as I helped him at the bookstore. Though I felt awkward still I went along with him. We went to the Coffee House of College Street ,we sat in a corner ordering to cups of coffee .I looked around and was surprised to see that none of the people around us recognised him .I looked into his eyes which reflected how handsome he used to be in his youth. At the age of 199 he bore the same style,classic look and smartness along with him. He talked about his childhood which was not happy , his father was imprisoned and for his livelihood he used to work in a factory. He talked about his inspiration his wife and his children, his success as a writer and his life. We talked for many hours as the smoggy Calcutta sun was setting, we took the tram to Esplanade, walked around the old Hogg Market and stepped into Nahoums. Both of us relished the pastries and pancakes. In course of time all my fear regarding him was washed away and I sensed a great camaraderie for him. He even told me that his writings were more of realism than imaginations, the character of his novels were based on real life people whom he came across in his life. In the middle of the conversation suddenly my watch showed 9 30 p.m. I rushed out to go back home when he insisted to drop me and gifted me a book “Little Dorrit” as a token of remembrance. As I entered my house, I saw my parents strongly staring at me. I was able to receive the strong vibes of anger from them. Without uttering a single word I ran to my room and closed the door.

“A prison taint was everything there. The imprisoned air, the imprisoned light , the imprisoned dams , the imprisoned men were all deteriorated by confinement. As the captive men were faded and haggard, so the iron was rusty, the stone was slimy, the wood was rotten , the air was faint...”

When suddenly someone banged open my door and shouted. “Many a times I have told you to concentrate in your exam when it is so near and you are sitting with a stupid novel of yours, once again lost in a trance...”

Going Home

Madhurima Kumar

Arijit twirled his chair as he spoke to his mother, “Yes mom, we’re all perfectly fine, yes Aryan is performing well at school too. No we’re not sure whether we’ll be able to make it for the New Year; you know how busy it gets.”

After exchanging a few more banalities, he put down his cell phone with a sigh. Same old question, he thought, “When are you coming home, son?”

Still, Arijit thought as he stared out into the golden spring sunset, clearly visible through the translucent glass windows of his 23rd floor posh office in Avenue, twenty years is a long time, isn’t it.

Twenty years ago, Arijit had left Calcutta as a mere student, winning a scholarship at Oxford University to pursue a course in Law. He couldn’t wait to leave behind his middle class background and carve out a niche of his own in the world of his dreams. Having lost his father at the age of four to a gruesome car accident and raised by his family, he had seen his mother cower before her in-laws, heard the taunts and snide remarks from the other members of their joint family day after day. Of course he had been treated like a pampered prince – being the sole male heir

of the bloodline. He had finally become choked with the hypocrisy and had been only too happy to leave – if nothing to provide his mother with a better life. Initially things had been tough and there were several occasions when he had felt ready to quit but he had held on and it had paid off. He had been recruited by one of the most reputed law firms in London fresh out of college and had risen swiftly through the ranks till now he was a part owner. Incidentally he had also met his future wife at the firm while she had been doing case studies; Koel hailed from a suburban doctor's family – brought up in this land, she possessed none of the superstitions of Arijit's cousins back home. Perhaps that was what had attracted him – she had been like a breath of fresh air in his life. Anyhow, they had married there – his mother had flown out for the occasion (the only such incident), they had an apartment in a good, safe neighborhood and life was pleasant in all. So why did I come back, he thought as he stepped out of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's international terminal, luggage on a trolley and family behind him.

Well, Calcutta hasn't changed, he thought as the sweltering heat oppresses him even in April.....No, he corrected himself, Kolkata and that's not all that has been transformed – the CPI(M) had finally been dethroned after 34 long years, the city had upcoming g flyovers and malls in every other corner, housing complexes had sprung up all over ; seems like some sort of a 'wind of change' was blowing. The hoard of taxi drivers who surrounded him, trying to coax him into their cabs, resembled the ones at Howrah Station – he beckoned his family forward and jumped into the nearest one. "110, S.N.Banerjee Road", he told the driver. Home, he thought, well it would bring back memories of his childhood and Aryan would catch his first glimpse of Kolkata. Arijit looked over at Koel who smiled and Aryan who was dozing off by the window due to jet-lag; it would be 4:30 in the morning in London, he realized. As the cab drew up in front of the old house, 45 minutes later owing to the reputed traffic jams the typical nature of the Kolkata cab came into play. The driver

was demanding 350 rupees. “Impossible! Just because I have come from outside does not mean that you can coerce me!” exclaimed Arijit. As the haggling went on several inquisitive faces appeared at the nearby balconies and a small crowd gathered; everyone had their own opinions. Exhausted from his journey Arijit finally gave in. Well that certainly hasn’t changed, he thought.

The door was opened by his eldest cousin’s wife. Thanks to facebook they knew all their relatives despite having never met them. “Come on in, everyone’s waiting for you.” Everyone turned out to be correct for apart from the usual 22 residents of the house, other ‘close’ relatives had also turned up to see the foreigners. The distribution of gifts took longer than expected especially the western wear Koel had bought for the kids, since the mothers seemed to be constantly comparing which suited their children better. Poor, bemused Koel simply stared at them helplessly silently digesting the criticism of her taste.

“How old are you?”, ten year old Souvik asked Aryan. “Six”, he replied and then in accented Bengali, “I can speak Bengali.”

“Oh, can you?”, replied his mother, Renu looking at Koel as though it was unexpected from someone who dared to wear jeans before relatives;

“But we encourage Souvik to speak in English at home since he has been admitted in an English medium school.”. Koel merely smiled at this justification, unable to find the right words.

“Tomorrow we’ll go sightseeing, I’ve never.....” Koel was cut off by one of her mother-in-laws’ sharp voice. “Impossible! Tomorrow is the Bengali New Year. There will be puja at home. You have to stay and help us..... and wear a sari.”

Dumbstruck Koel only managed to stammer, “b....but I don’t have one.” Every one looked as though she had just committed a murder. Paramita hastily covered up, “Don’t worry ‘bouma’ I’ll lend you one.”

That night as the three slept in a single bed for the first time in Aryan’s ten years, Arijit tried to console Koel, “Don’t worry, they’re not accustomed to our habits. Things will get better tomorrow.....I hope.”

However that hope turned out to be in vain; Koel was made to stand alone at one side since she was a total novice at puja preparations, Aryan’s cousins showed more interest in his I-Pad than playing, and Arijit felt his cheek muscles go numb from having to greet the never-ending stream of relations. However the thing that enraged him was Paramita’s being isolated from the puja owing to the fact that she had become a widow at a young age.

“Why do you put up with them, mom?” asked Arijit. “Why don’t you live in that apartment I purchased for you, it has live-in help and is fully furnished, complete with security.” Paramita smiled and shook her head. How could she leave this family in which she had spent more time than with her own parents?

But Arijit had no such compunctions and the two rallies that blocked the roads over the next two days completely shattered their sightseeing plans. Even mild tempered Koel was getting irritated – “I feel like an exotic bird or something; either being dragged round to relatives’ houses or simply shopping unnecessarily. I miss my job!”

It was with a sigh of relief that Arijit and his family walked through the international terminal’s passenger’s gates. Renu’s family had come to see them off.

“Come and visit us again soon, we’ll be waiting at home for you.” she said. Home thought Arijit as the plane gathered momentum for take-off, no I am going home.

Mr Dickens in Ahmedabad

Mallika Sanjeev Kapoor

Many of us have met Dickens in our English textbooks but to see him in real flesh and blood was something hard to believe. But the fact is that he was here in India and that too here in Ahmedabad as a special guest at a Municipal school function.

He got off his BMW and walked towards the Open Air theatre. No sooner did he get off the car, a little boy, barely ten years rushed up to him and pleaded him to allow him to polish his shoes. Mr. Dickens was shocked, 'Oliver Twist in the 21st Century'.

He proceeded towards the theatre and was taken to a small room. The chief guest had not arrived. It was a stuffy room with a few chairs and a table. Mr. Dickens was surprised. 18th Century tables and chairs. Old paintings hanging on the walls, very much like Victorian Art.

As Mr. Dickens sat down, another boy of 15 came with a glass of water. Charles was again shocked. Did they still have child labour? Politely, he refused the glass of water and started glancing around. He could see children half-naked, torn clothes and no shoes. He was filled with horror and recollected his days in London.

As Mr Dickens continued to wait, a middle age man in suit walked in. “I’m Mr. Daniels”, he said. After the formal greetings they sat down waiting for the minister to arrive, later on came a policeman shouting loudly to the crowd to give way, he walked in and saluted Mr. Dickens and then slowly removed a small stuff box from his pocket and with a small pinch took the snuff and put it to his nose.

As they sat, Mr. Dickens eyes fell on the “Star of David” hung around Mr Daniel’s neck. He grew inquisitive and asked, ‘to which church you belong.’ “Oh no sir-I’m no Christian. I’m a Jew and come here as the president of the Lions Club International as we have jointly sponsored this program with the local Municipality school board.”

Charles was dumb folded, a Jew and that too in India. “They really don’t leave people alone, and how the heavens did they get here?”

Later Mr. Dickens was escorted to the dais. The minister was busy giving a speech and Mr Dickens could not understand a word. Mr. Dicken’s eyes wandered towards the sky. He saw a few kites flying and it reminded him of the countryside in London and David Copperfield. Eventually, Mr. Dickens was given the mike. He found it difficult to attract attention because of the language and therefore quickly wound his speech.

The presentation ceremony began and children of the municipal school who had won prizes lined up to take their gifts. Mr Dickens hoped no one would ask for ‘One more Sir’

As Mr. Dickens left, he could see old-fashioned slums. He was devastated by the huge gap between the rich and the poor. It was similar to the London of his time, so different he thought and yet so much like old England.

Untitled

Manisha Mahalingama

To Charles,

I watched the pride in your face as you walked the streets, your head held high. The spark in your eyes was mesmerizing, diming the world around me. From then on, you had my invariable love. I followed you everywhere, every step of my life, trying so very hard to have a constant glimpse of you. It might sound lame, as I let you know this but I did truly love you, from the very first sight.

You were just a journalist when I first saw you and to my very dismay, I learnt you were married to Catherine Hogarth. They told me you were a writer and that you wrote wondrously. I read “The Pickwick Papers” and it led to my first sight into your world. I continued reading your works earnestly, frantically trying to find the real you between the lines. I wanted to take your each word to heart, wanted it to stay there reminding me always about you. I read your Oliver Twist with hunger hoping that finally my search would end. As I read Great Expectations, I almost fantasized Pip’s feelings for Estella was meant for me, the unseen love of your life.

But not once did you turn to look back at the woman at the end of the street, her hair flowing hopelessly in the wind, a tear of love in her eye, a broken yet beating heart. When you separated from Catherine I deeply hoped you would extend

your hand to me. Alas, my poor heart! You found Ellen Ternan instead.

Not one day goes by without me dreaming of leaning onto your bosom. I continued to believe you were mine, well what was there to believe, it was the truth. But why had you never written about me? The lady in love with you. I could not be Estella, for I was not so cold hearted. Was I Dorrit? Helen? But then how would you have written, when you never actually set your eyes upon me.

For thirty-four years, I have lived with you through your books, not once having the chance to feel your shadow let alone you touch and presence. Ohh! my Charles!

Life is made of ever so partings welded together.

Its 9th June 1870, they say you are dead. I refuse to believe it, after all how can you? With me still alive? But your books no longer speak to me as they used to, I no longer feel your love. Something is wrong Charles; I can feel it. I think it is time I left too.

Here I write a letter to you, my love, knowing well that you would never read it.

Ahh! My lost love! Finally, we shall meet, in an eternal world. (1870-06-09)

From,

Your love.

Untitled

Manisha Mahalingama

February, 2012

To Charles Dickens,

“Whatever I have tried to do in life, I have tried with all my heart to do it well; whatever I have devoted myself to, I have devoted myself completely; in great aims and in small I have always thoroughly been in earnest.”

They say poetry is the most elegant form of expressing one’s feelings. When I wanted to thank you sir, I wanted it to be in the most special way possible-

To you I dedicate a short verse, which does not come from a well-wielded pen but from a grateful heart. -

*You became my eternal guide
When I first learnt to word my thoughts.
Under your grace I learnt,
How and how not to write.
Oh, my invisible teacher,
You became my master
Telling me always to*

*Write and write.
I gained more and more
As I read your words
Through ages- upheld
Celebrated and stored
You, my sir,
Fought through your books,
Against evil and society;
Teaching me all the way to voice my hurt and anger too...
Oh dear maestro,
You taught me everything,
From the essence of Christmas to
Having great expectations.
You continue to be there
to rectify me, to refine what I do.
I thank you sir,
For being my greatest teacher.
If I travel to Westminster Abbey and stand near you sir, and thank you; even
that cannot truly explain the real gratitude I have for you. After I pen my letter,
I would probably roll up the sheet and let it lie in my treasure box but it will
continue to be my constant inspiration to be the best in what I do. Thank you, oh
teacher, for being my guide.*

From, Me.

Oliver Twist

Mihir Parsani

Oh great just my luck! Did I have to be the one to pick the shortest straw? Why did I sign up for this? Oh right, I remember. I had to act like I was the mover and shaker in this miserable workhouse, at our little all-boys' board meeting.

"What were the odds of me picking the shortest straw?" I remember thinking. Well I evidently didn't think enough now, did I?

Just looking at that cursed straw makes my stomach churn. "Why did it have to be me?"

What was I thinking? And, do I need to be reminded over and over again of my 'good luck'?

These sweaty hands of mine don't seem to dry on my tattered trousers. The churning in my stomach is like the beating wings of a flutter of butterflies.

"Slow down, slow down", I want to say to the hands of the clock on the dormitory wall. They seem to toll a death knell.

This is one time I don't want to rush to the dining hall.

I can't prolong the moment anymore. Let me put away this offending straw.

Aah! There are the others. Is that the sound of my feet dragging and shuffling across the dirty floor?

I have to be brave. I'm the chosen one.

I can see our 'leader' with a smirk on his face. I feel those butterflies start up again. Even the usual cacophony of bowls filling up and hitting the tables seems to fade and pale in the glare of the staring faces.

My turn My bowl is full. I choose a seat not far from the master. I don't want a sea of eyes boring into me when I go up again.

What is that noise? My nerveless fingers don't seem to be able to stay still. My spoon clatters against the side of my bowl and scrapes the bottom. I'm through with my first helping and possibly, the rest of the boys in the dining hall too.

The time for reckoning has arrived. I fell myself push off the bench and like a sleepwalker I inch edgeways to the front. I can only see the master's apron. My eyes go no higher. I feel the oppressive silence all about me.

"Please sir, may I have some more?"

The Death of Abel Magwitch

Mitarik Barma

The sunrays of the setting day fell on the dark floor through the bars of the prison window and made long shadows. An array of light beams and shadows alternated. They grew long and touched the bars of the prison door. Mr. Magwitch looked at them lying on his prison bed. Coughing. Waiting for death. He knew that his life was short. Though they have removed him from the infirmary, getting back in the prison cell made his health worse again. Was he happy? Sad? No, such simple words like happiness and sadness cannot convey the feeling he was having then. When death is impending people tend to think about the past, the life they have led, the years that are gone forever, time that won't be back again, the past they regret and the past that make them feel proud. Mr. Magwitch was not an exception either. But unlike the most of them he did not feel crying for mercy to the lord. It is not that he did not believe, or that he did not feel like asking for mercy to the almighty. But that he could not cry. The sadness he bore was heavy on his heart. He felt pity for himself. He felt sad knowing that all his fortune will be gone, that Phillip is not going to get any. He felt pity for being foolish at his youth, for believing that Compeyson whose death was one of those things that made the heaviness of his heart feel lighter, even for a little bit. He did not regret killing him and knowing that his child was alive, he was happy. "You had a child once, whom you loved and lost." "She

lived and found powerful friends. She is living now. She is a lady and very beautiful. And I love her!” The words of Phillip still rang in his ears. Phillip later asked him if he would like to meet her and after some contemplation, he refused. How much he wanted to see her! But he felt that it would not be nice to meet her in prison, besides he considered himself to be already dead. Phillip was the only one that connected him with the living world. He still remembered that cold gray morning at the graveyard- an escaped prisoner in shackled handcuffs devouring the food before a scared little kid. He could never forget that favour. Cough! Cough! The guards are talking among themselves, somebody just passed by. He felt the dark walls are coming closer. He did not listen to anything and his mind drifted in the past. As the evening was approaching and the golden ray of the parting day was dying on the floor, he felt the darkness called death overshadowing his heart. For the last moment, he felt happy, knowing that he would not have to go to the gallows. The evening came and darkness seized the cell. When the guards later came to call him, he was already dead.

A Father's Treatment

Mitrajyoti Ghosh

He hadn't expected the pungence of smoke as the train pulled into the neat station of Norfolk. He had come here before, but then there had been the farm, and the blue river. He had seen the new factory spewing black discharge into the river, the nostalgic river where he had once taken so many baths just for the sake of it.

His mother had told him as she had left, forever, "learn, and you shall be great one day." his father had appeared the same evening, "I am sending you off to Norfolk. I won't be at home and you need someone to look after you. You'll be leaving for school next Tuesday.'

His father wasn't there to take him to school. He, at nine, was alone on the platform. Where was the cab his father had said would come?

So he thought of hitting the road, when all of a sudden a huge fellow, with a placard reading 'timothy Atkins' caught his eye.

'Did my father send you?'

'He sure did, boy and he told me to get you supper as well.'

‘Yes, my father is quite nice. So you’ll take to school.’

The man nodded in assent and they walked till the cab together.

The cab was handsome and embroidered with a red carpet and curtains. And as the carriage rolled, timothy, with an urge to make friends, showed the teddy bear his father had gifted him. ‘Look, this was for my birthday! And this is what my mother left me,’ showing a gold ring on his finger, with the letter T.

‘That’s quite precious! You shu’nt be play’n with it,’ was the answer. The man was greedy.

They stopped at the store where his father had paid for lunch. The storekeeper was an acquaintance of his father’s, for Norfolk was his home when we had been a child. The old storekeeper seemed to know him. As the fat man bought cakes and cider, he heard of his father’s childhood mischiefs and other stories. It comforted him to hear of the only person he had left in the world.

On the carriage, the fat man suddenly spoke up, ‘here boy, I’ll tell you a secret!’

‘What is it about?’

‘I’ll tell you if you give me some of yer cake’

‘I’ll give you half of it.’

He gobbled it up as fast as he could, but apparently he grew so sleepy that he could speak no more!’

‘Are you ill?’ timothy asked, concerned but got only a falsified snore in return.

The old Norfolk farms had been converted to a coal mine since traces of coal had been found there. Timothy remembered stories of his father’s refinery in Yorkshire, tall castles of metal and smoke. He took a look at the dingy lanes, at the sweepers on the chimneys, and small children carrying bricks, hay or sacks of soot after their cleaning.

Mr Higgins (the fat man) had woken up by now.

‘What’s the secret?’

‘I’m busy, kid, later.’

They stopped at the docks. The blue river was grey, but at least the harbourmaster was friendly.

This must be roger’s sun. Roger and I were at school together... best friend I had. How’s your mother?’

Timothy took a glance at his ring and said, ‘she’s ok.’

He hadn’t the cruelty to say the truth, but that his father was there, warmed him. He showed the man his teddy and trudged off with Higgins.

He saw the workhouse as rustic children cleaned their pots with their tongues after lunch, frail, sickly and overworked. He saw the plight of the chimney sweeper, barely visible in his attire of ash. The place was wet and grimy and hadn’t the slightest trace of hygiene. Higgins told him the school was beyond the red wall. He was happy to know that the school was away from the grime of poverty, from where each man had the urge

to swindle the other, where each child was tortured both by the master and the body, with its constant pleas of food. Where nobody went to school, nobody learned the alphabet or why the earth went round the sun.

A boy appeared at their feet to pick a scrap or a biscuit. Higgins, annoyed, kicked him, so he began bobbing courtesies, whatever he could to have the biscuit and eat it too.

Even the school was dark, and every now and then there were shouts and sounds of hitting. He asked Higgins:

‘What do they do if you’re naughty?’

‘They hire you’

‘Don’t you have to learn anymore?’

‘No, what do you need it for?’

He thought of his father and comforted himself that as long as he was there, near or far he would let no harm come to him. He did love his father very much.

But just as he was about to go up the huge staircase to the boys quarters, there was a pungent cloth wrapped around his nose! His insides burned and the world grew hazy. Finally, he was peaceful, he lost himself.

As he woke his head touched a moist pillow. There was the smell of grime as he had known from the mine. He heard a voice and knew it was Higgins.

‘Why did you bring me here? Take me to school.’

‘Your father left you to us, to work. His business is failing; he’s penniless, can’t look after you anymore. Now get going, no work, no dinner.’

He was pushed out of the bed, and he said nothing, only silently wept as he was pushed till he joined the other children from the workhouse into the dark shafts of the coal mine below.

Charles Dickens - A great writer and social reformer

Mitul Kansal

Charles Dickens (1812-70) skyrocketed to fame with his first novel, “Pickwick Papers”. When he was child he was forced to work in sometime in a factory because his father was put in prison. This incident created feelings of anger at his own mother’s betrayal of him when she abandoned him to hateful labour rather than procure for him an education. He felt humiliation and shame of being a member of an impoverished family. As the circumstances are more powerful than man, prevailing circumstances turned Charles Dickens into a great social reformer and a powerful writer.

Charles Dickens finest novel “Great Expectations” has impressed me the most. Through ‘Great Expectations’ is a story of a self-development, with the focus on Pip’s life story, Dickens draw the attention towards social values. In his novel he condemned the child labour and raised his voice that such circumstances should be created in which every child could get excellent education. The style of Great Expectations combines realism with a more fantastical and symbolic aspect. The legal system and criminal world in this novel serve a double purpose. They give Dickens a scope for detailed social observation and allow him to expose to view

many murky and fascinating aspects of the criminal law and prison life. On the other hand characters provide material for fantastic and symbolically suggested elements by means of which Pip's unconscious fears and wishes find expression, sometimes in almost surreal form. Dickens wants us to believe that we should be content with the social place to which we are born and that it is better to be a satisfied blacksmith than a frustrated man of expectations. He mainly expects the idea of 'Ideal gentleman'. He condemned idealness, greed, self-importance and snobbery and approves kindness, modesty and hard work. He believes a real gentleman is he who treats his subordinates, inferiors, dependents, helpless persons and children in a kind manner. A gentleman deals with others with forbearance, kindness and wisdom. He who threatens others who are helpless and too weak to defend themselves is a vulgar person and not a gentleman. Just as sandalwood trees gives sweet smell even to the axe which tries to cut it, similarly man of noble character take highest pleasure in doing good to others.

In this way Dickens is beyond appreciation, beyond praise and beyond comparison. He is a versatile genius. His best works have been translated into many foreign languages and have been liked and praised by one and all. Today he is considered one of the greatest authors of the world. He is still live in our hearts through his works. His other main works includes "Oliver Twist", "The Tail of Two Cities", "David Copperfield" and "A Christmas Carol". Some of which have been made into film and T.V. series. He died in 1870.

"It has rightly said "Not gold, but only man, Can make a nation strong and great. Men who far truth and honours sake stand fast and suffer long".

Death of an Idiot

Pushpak Chatterjee

My mother would usually close the door from the outside and cry silently. My room was filled with sound absorbers, so that, according to my father, the ruckus I made wouldn't travel outside. My father believed that, 'it's a fact that a peaceful environment creates a positive impression.'

"Do you know what the fact is? Do you?"

"No, father" I replied, my head held down.

"The FACT is, you are an IDIOT, nothing but an idiot. Did you think that by singing songs, writing stories, etc you can hide the fact that you are an idiot? These stories, poems, etc are nothing but camouflages invented by invented by the romantics to hide their idiotic nature"

I kept quiet. "Do you know that a subject called Mathematics exists? Do you?"

"Yes, father"

"Well then listen carefully. You better start improving on that and throw

these junks of yours away”, he pointed towards my books of poetry and stories. “You must make Mathematics your life. Think nothing but numbers. Juggle with them, play with them. But never dare to leave them and also never touch these junks. Have I made myself clear?

I kept quiet.

“HAVE I?”

“Yes, father”

“Not ‘Father’. From now on call me ‘Sir’”.

My diaries consisting of my life’s work, my guitar everything was taken away that day, because I had failed in Mathematics. And I was forced to solve mathematical problems day in and day out. But that wasn’t my subject and I was bound to fail, and so I did and all hell broke loose. By the time my dad got tired of torturing me, I was bleeding from head to toe. I kept quiet all the time.

“Why don’t u just die?” Grunted my father and walked away breathing heavily.

The next day, a lot of people had gathered in my house. I wanted to scream at my father in front of everyone, but I couldn’t. My neck was broken, the rope was really tight. I never thought it would hurt so much; I was scared though, most when I was pushing the chair away from under my feet.

Well father, I never understood all the jugglery of numbers or knew all the facts, but there is one fact that I do know, and that is, I am dead and u r alive. Now I hope u will provide a suitable mathematical reason for my death.

Philip's Test

Mukund Agarwala

In the cold, windy evening Pirrip laid calm on his death bed, tears trickled down the cheeks of Philip (Pip) and Pip's sister Amanda was not able to register that they would lose their father as they had lost their mother in a cruel accident. In the poorly lit room, stood Joe and Orlick trying to comfort the siblings as the other villagers did. Joe was Amanda's first love and Orlick their common friend.

Pip drew close to his ailing dad, Pirrip murmured, "You, you have to restore ... wealth, prosperity and peace back into the family" and then took his last breath. Grief and sorrow lurked around the farm which now belonged to Pip and his sister. Within weeks Joe and Amanda sworn in as husband and wife with the deliberate absence of their best friend Orlick, for some suspicious reasons. Pip even though younger to Amanda, conducted himself as a responsible elder brother in order to live up to his parent's expectations.

After the reception, Pip rushed to the graveyard to share his feelings with his parents and was met by a strange man who was chained and appeared to be a convict. The stranger threatened Pip to give some money. Pip gave it with ease and then the man vanished into the greens. Pip rushed to Mrs Havisham who had lost her husband Compeyson and brother

Arthur in an accident which was brutally planned by their partner to inherit all the wealth of Novis Technologies, a leading software company owned by three directors. She had a beautiful daughter Estella, who was the first love of Pip. Mrs Havisham promised to impart Pip the skills to be an entrepreneur and to mint money in order to restore all that Pirrip wanted.

Pip left for London to make his fortune and believed that it was all due to the grace of Mrs Havisham. There he was met and trained by Mr Pocket. Within few years Pip was a well known business man in the elite social circles of London. On a fine Christmas evening, Joe broke the news that Amanda was molested and killed by Orlick, her secret admirer. Pip was shattered and shocked, Joe couldn't forgive himself and lived all alone in the countryside.

Estella visited London and went around with Pip. They were planning to tie the knot soon, but destiny had its own plans. In the idle of March, Magwitch, the reason behind Pip's success, visited and narrated him the truth that he was the same convict whom Pip had helped. Magwitch was the director, the convict who had killed Mrs Havisham's husband and brother. Estella left Pip for she didn't want to associate herself with the reason behind her lover's success and the reason behind her mother's uncompensated pain.

Pip was all alone in a turbulence, where he lived in a world of illusion, couldn't save his sister, Estella had left him. He passed the test but didn't have anyone to share the joy of his success.

Remembering the Genius

Natasha Ali

Time is the strongest force of nature that surely rules both nature and mankind. Every person has different ways to relate and value time. Time well spent yields results even after life may stop. For some people time alone works marvels. A hundred years for a man with a treasure house of work is enough to make him a permanent figure on human mind. And when its two hundred years, time itself speaks for the man...

Time flies over us but leaves its shadow behind. Charles Dickens was a name, a persona who left behind him a vast sea of works that ranged from the hilarious *Pickwick Papers* to the family master piece like *David Copperfield*, works that even after two centuries remain widely acclaimed and read.

Dickens' early life was poor and obscure, at a young age he had to support his family. He worked by pasting labels on blacking bottles and spent many a nights like a homeless cat, sleeping under a counter and once a week he would meet his father in the debt-prison. Life was hard but all that changed in the year 1836, with his *Pickwick Papers* published. Money and fame found him and he was suddenly under the spot light. England acknowledged him as a literary hero.

Men are valued not for what they are, but for what they do. Time is the only capital that any human being has, and the only thing that he cannot afford to lose. Charles Dickens was widely known for his literary masterpieces, for his approach towards realism through his works. He used the time of his life to create and leave behind his vast works. His novels contained many hard realistic details. Dickens' novels showed sentiments towards children and outcast, his dramatic possibilities, very tense situations, his sympathetic soul made all people's joy and grief his own. His works fought against injustice, championed the weak against the strong. People could relate with him, with his novels, with his characters. They saw themselves in his many novels. Dickens' was able to play with public taste, smiles and tears. His often exaggerated characters pleased the people.

Time flies over us but leaves its shadow behind. Even after two hundred years his novels have the power to make his readers weep with joy at the happy ending of *Oliver Twist*, feel the sorrow of David's childhood days. His novels have the power to take non-reader eagerly to the library to hunt down 'that' novel, the extract of which he has read as a school text, obviously unable to ignore the depth of the novel. Dickens reflected the life of the common though his characters which his readers found to be their mirror images.

'To achieve great things two factors are needed; talent and time.'

Charles Dickens had the talent to be a great novelist, who in his time and our time is widely remembered, loved and idolized. He had excessive imagination-able to make good stories out of incidents and extreme sensibility, to be able to make others laugh and cry.

Dickens' talent enabled him to introduce unpleasant and loathsome characters. We can rightly say that Dickens believed in 'characters'. We

find in most of Dickens' novels three or four widely different types of characters; first, the innocent little child like Oliver, Joe Paul; second, the horrible like Squeers, Fagin, Quilp; third the broadly humorous character, the fun maker Micawber and Sam Weller. Fourth, a tenderly or powerfully drawn figure like Sydney Carton of *A Tale Of Two Cities*. Also the names Dickens' gave his characters were quite amusing, and often reflected their characters.

'What we leave behind is not as important as how we have lived.'

Charles Dickens though led an early life of suffering and poverty he left behind works to treasure. Dickens has been able to remain our friend even after two hundred years making us laugh and smile through the journey of his books. He presented society as itself, the world as excellent with some evils.

Today as we celebrate Dickens' two hundredth birth centenary, we acknowledge the fact that his novels will continue to be popular and widely read for more years to come, as time will keep this literary genius immortal forever

Child Labour

Nikhil R. Thadaney

They say that one's childhood is the best phase of one's life. It is in this phase that foundations are laid for a successful adult life. When we reminisce our childhood days, we are reminded of beautiful memories, when we were playful and carefree.

But this is not the case for every child. Many a child's best days are often turned into the days of labour and slavery. Child labour, coupled with child abuse, is a problem of growing concern in today's world.

Child labour is a curse on the innocence of a child's life. It tampers the development process of a child. A child is subjected to slavery at a very tender age.

The fact that the cases of child labour show an increase in its statistics every year scares a person. Underdeveloped countries like Africa and India account for the largest number children employed and exploited.

The main reason for child abuse and exploitation is poverty. Many families, suffering from poverty, are in need for an additional income, and are forced to send their children to work, or sell them for a lump amount. These innocent children are treated as slaves and are forced to

do what their masters order them to do. They lose their freedom and rights over their own life.

Another main reason for child exploitation is uneducation and unawareness of the parents, where such parents send their children to work without knowing the ill effects of their act.

Child labour is one of the serious barriers in the path of development and therefore needs to be eradicated.

Several awareness programs have been conducted to educate the people about the adversities of child labour. In fact, several laws have also contributed in the prohibition of child labour. For instance, the Rural Institute for Development Education undertook many activities to improve the situation of child labourers. RIDE brought down the number of child labourers to less than four thousand by 2007.

Products manufactured by child labour are also boycotted, in order to show public resentment towards such activities.

However, concerns have been raised that the boycott of the products manufactured by child slaves may force those children to turn to more strenuous professions, such as prostitution or agriculture. For instance, a UNICEF study found that after the Child Labor Deterrence Act was introduced in the United States of America, an estimated fifty thousand children were dismissed from their garment industry jobs in Bangladesh, leaving many to resort to jobs such as “stone-crushing”, “street hustling”, and “prostitution”, jobs that are “more hazardous and exploitative than garment production”.

Child labour is a human right issue. It is serious and extensive problem prevalent in various parts of the world. It is a hazard to a child’s mental

and physical development, and hence needs to be eradicated as soon as possible. Eradication of child labour will make this world a better place to live for such children, who are subjected to this injustice.

Her Dream

Nikhil R. Thadaney

We often say that men and women are equal. They should be treated equally and no discrimination should be made amongst the two. But do we actually mean what we say? In every sphere of life, there always persists a kind of gender discrimination. The women are subjected to unfairness in education, dowry deaths and exploitations of various kinds which are quite common. In fact, the women are becoming targets of atrocities of many types. The status of women in Indian societies has always been subjugated by male dominance.

In such conditions, an ordinary village girl, Kaveri, with extraordinary dreams, strives for an education and dares to go against her family and the society. The only girl child in her family, Kaveri faces many problems due to her aspirations. The most important woman in her life, her own mother, had developed a grudge against her dreams. Her intoxicated father would always beat her. Her brother would time and again try to flame her books which were the only source for her learning.

But Kaveri would not be weakened by her sufferings. She was a girl with firm determination to become a police officer in her district and fight against gender discrimination. In fact, she always thought that her parents would be the first offenders whom she would punish.

Kaveri was seventeen when her parents decided to get her married. For them this meant an opportunity to get rid of her and also to put an end to her dreams.

The night before her marriage, Kaveri ran away from her village and came to the big city. In the city, she got admission in a government school.

But Kaveri's unlucky fate concerning her education did not change. In the city, Kaveri had to go through a lot of hardships. Along with her studies, she also had to work hard for her living.

The fact that she was alone made her existence in the city worse for her. There even was a time when her landlord tried to assault her.

But Kaveri would not be affected by any of this. She only concentrated on her dreams.

After years of struggle and hard work, Kaveri finally fulfilled her aspirations. She had now become a renowned officer of her district. She was also well known in her village. Kaveri had set an example for each and every woman who followed their dreams.

But the hard fact of truth is that this story is a flight of imagination. As such, there are many girls, who just like Kaveri, have a dream of their own, but are unable to fulfill them. The freedom and rights of women are still a major concern in our country.

Cickens Visiting India

Oindrila Sanyal

His outstanding contribution in the field of literature, won Dickens the opportunity to visit city of his choice. He thought for a long time and finally chose to visit KOLKATA--- the city of three nobel laureates. Dickens had heard a lot about the rich and glorious heritage and culture of the city. He had also heard of the immense contribution of the people of this city.

When Dickens landed in Kolkata, he realised that he could relate to the city with his works and times. He came across a place, whose name he was unaware of, had tall buildings that kissed the blue sky across which the white clouds sailed. He moved his eyes across the place and was surprised to see that just beside those tall buildings was a sea of slums. People lived there with no proper facilities and with very poor sanitation. He thought that the gap between the rich and the poor was increasing day by day. Centuries have passed, so many new things have been invented but the gap between the two distinct sections of the society has yet not been bridged. He smiled to himself and thought-- this is civilization! Situations have worsened since his times to now. There in the slums he found not one, but many David Copperfields.

He walked further to see what the casket of Kolkata had for him. He

walked and walked for a long time, looking at the old houses on both sides of the streets and the trams passing by. Suddenly something struck his mind! He knew that Bengal was in the eastern part of India. Then why was it known as West Bengal? On moving further, he found the National Library. He entered it and looked around for books concerned with the history of Bengal. On research he found out that in initial times, there was only one Bengal. But this Bengal was partitioned after the war of Independence. It formed West Bengal and Bangladesh. This place was in the western part of Bengal and was named likewise. He could relate this to “THE TALE OF TWO CITIES.”

Dickens was contemplating over what he had experienced till then, when he reached an orphanage. He entered it and found all the children in the dining room, being served only one tablespoon of rice and pulses. He saw the condition of the children and the behaviour of the caretakers which reminded him of his Oliver Twist.

He could not take it any more and thought of returning to heaven, where he had come from. On his way back, Dickens was still thinking about whatever he had seen that day. Just then he noticed a female dog playing with her puppies. While watching this, a small child came running towards him and tripped over something and fell. Even before Dickens could realise what had happened, the child's mother came running towards her, picked her up, kissed her and consoled her.

This brought a smile to Dickens' face. He realised that whatever may change in the world, the love, care and concern and the beautiful relationship between mother and her children can never change...

A Christmas Carol

Pritam Majumdar

A Christmas Carol was published in 1843, just six years after Queen Victoria was crowned the Queen. At that time there was a moral disintegration and degradation due to a lapse in Christian values. This led to the socially conscious novelist, Charles Dickens, to write the book “A Christmas Carol”. The novel brings to us light, joy, warmth and life as well as reveals the images and visions of darkness, grief, despair, coldness and death. Scrooge, the central and major character, is the personification of the cold winter. Just as winter is followed by spring, the season of the renewal of life, Ebenezer Scrooge’s cold, miserly heart renewed the innocence which was known to him in his childhood and youth. While Dickens’ dark days of childhood remained silent in “A Christmas Carol”, his conflicting emotions for his father voiced loudly led to the dual personality of the tale’s protagonist Ebenezer Scrooge. The first form is a cold, stingy person and the second one as an image of benevolence, generosity and goodwill, a person with near-saintly reputation.

The novel began on a Christmas Eve in 1843, exactly seven years before Scrooge’s business partner Jacob Marley died. Scrooge was shown a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching covetous old sinner. He had no place for kindness, compassion, charity or benevolence. He

hated Christmas day and called it ‘humbug’. He refused his nephew Fred’s invitation to the Christmas dinner and to donate for the poor. His only gift was given to his clerk Bob Cratchit, just a day off with payment. Scrooge considered it as a poor excuse and a day for “picking a man’s pocket every twenty-fifth of December.

On returning home after closing his office, Ebenezer Scrooge was visited by the spirit of his dead friend and business partner, Jacob Marley. The spirit of Marley warned Scrooge that if he did not change his ways, he would also have to face the same fate as Morley faced .Then Scrooge was visited by three other ghosts. The first of them was the Ghost of Christmas Past. The ghost took Scrooge to the time of his boyhood and youth and saw his gentle and tender side. Thus Dickens showed the readers what made the present Scrooge, a miserly man who dislikes Christmas.

The second spirit was the Ghost of Christmas present. It showed him the vision of joy-filled market with people buying several things needed in a Christmas dinner. The celebration of Christmas in a miner’s cottage and a lighthouse. The major part of the vision was taken by his clerk Bob Cratchit and his family. Their youngest was ill but the child couldn’t receive treatment as Scrooge disagreed with Bob to give him a decent payment. Scrooge was even shown the celebration of Christmas in his nephew, Fred’s house.

The third and final spirit was the Ghost of Christmas yet to come. It approached Scrooge very silently, slowly and gravely. The spirit showed what would happen in future. It showed that since Scrooge did not give decent money to his clerk, Bob, his son died of without treatment and also showed Scrooge his own untended, neglected grave. The spirit through his visions warned miser Scrooge that he could save himself only if he changed his way of thoughts and made him promise that he would change his life.

Finally, Scrooge woke up and came to know from a boy “in Sunday clothes” that the day was Christmas day. This changed good man bought a prize Turkey from “Poulterer’s in the next street” through that boy and sent it to his clerk’s house for Christmas dinner anonymously. Then he spent the whole day with his nephew’s family.

From a miserly cold-hearted man, Scrooge was transformed overnight into a man of generosity and love . The novel which began with a cold, unhappy character of Ebenezer Scrooge ended with his complete and permanent transformation.

Dickens, not just a novelist. A legend.

Priyanka Patwari

Charles Dickens, the name that changed the entire Victorian History. Or, should I say it moulded one. Mr. Dickens is imbibed in the heart of England, of THE Victorian Era. Which I'm distressed to haven't been born then to witness it, in the Dickensian way. It is simply terrific to notice the impression that he creates in the mind of readers all over the globe, straight back from centuries even till now.

The very sensitivity of Mr. Dickens is seen when he was dealing with prostitution in 1858, in victorian times. When he along with the help of philanthropist, Angela Burdett-Coutts who had financed Dickens in setting up a refuge for "fallen women" in Shepard's bush, in order to give shelter to the fallen women from the streets.

He wanted to throw light on the distressful, and sensitive issue of Prostitution in England. While, the other people saw them as a shameful pest and bane in their society.

This expressed, the open mindedness of Mr. Dickens who firmly believed in the freedom of a living being, and not remain merely shackled by the

chains of society.

But, having not to read the full letter by one of those fallen women which was published in The Times, had put Mr. Dickens to trouble. The latter part suggested that the woman was absolutely happy being a prostitute, and her letter was a denunciation of do-gooders- such as Dickens- who were trying to take her livelihood away. Because, that could have disclosed the anonymity of the woman, and put her into deep trouble.

However, this would not restrict me to notice his sensitivity towards the issue. The one where Dickens opposed people in Victorian Society that used prostitutes, and complained about them, in almost equal measure.

The hints of which could be seen in Oliver Twist and David Copperfield, where five fallen women's life have been depicted.

He was a man of the largest humanity, who has simply used literature as the means by which he wanted to pivot the deepest thoughts, notions in his reader's mind to build up a sense of correct morals in every individual.

Dickens, was the man of extraordinary combination of excellence, intellect and morality. Generations have passed away, yet none has filled the void of Dickens's absence.

And, none can ever fill it.

Ref: An article 'Do what Dickens didn't' issued in The Telegraph, dated February 4, Saturday.

Democratic Dickens

Riddhima Yadav

The pact made, Charles Dickens was now preparing to descend from his heavenly abode onto Earth. Being granted permission by Lord Indra, he was to appear as an Indian politician. The conditions were absurd according to Dickens. “How could anyone bring change in a year? And that to with the multitude of problems that existed in India?”, mused Dickens. And now as Dickens stood on the threshold of heaven, staring into the vast space which separated his ‘Political Future’ and the Indian subcontinent, he thought back in time. Over the past few years he had been studying the enigma that India was. Her culture, her thoughts, her past glory and her present sorrows but in spite of all his research he couldn’t quite claim that he finally understood India well enough. For instance a nation with so much diversity ought not to exist yet India did, and she did so with a pride and confidence that had attracted his ancestors to her soil some four hundred years ago.

Lost in thought Dickens didn’t realize his new surroundings until he felt someone shake his shoulders. He opened his eyes to a dark skinned boy who was saying – Sir, please wake up! The CM is here to meet you!

Dickens awoke with a start. It didn’t take him long to realize that he was now a certain Mr. Selrach ,a political leader whom he had specially

selected from the People Party, a party whose ideologies matched his. The discussion went well. Dickens had managed to convince the CM to include his idea in the party's manifesto for the upcoming national elections. He called it 'Power to the People'. It was a multidimensional approach to tackle poverty, a powerful bill that provided a platform for the oppressed to voice their concerns. Over the course of the next few months Dickens worked hard to spread his idea, touring villages extensively, meeting dignitaries, interacting with labour unions, and giving rousing speeches in his broken Hindi that had the public give him deafening rounds of applause. Within no time he had constructed new schools, an animal welfare centre and a sanatorium. And the people, thirsty for some change, for some responsibility on part of their leaders, adored him. Posters saying 'The good, the gentle, the high-gifted, ever friendly – every inch of him a noble man' with Mr. Selrach's picture adorned every nook and corner of public places. 'Power to the people' was the next 'in' thing. And all this while, the Dickens within Mr. Selrach cried at the sight of soot covered children squatting in dimly lit firecracker factories, raised questions on his colleagues blatantly accepting bribes and fought for the people as one of the people. And it wasn't soon before voting day finally dawned.

The very next morning after voting day, two articles appeared in the daily newspaper side by side in mock coordination. One read 'People Party comes to Power' and the second announced more somberly in bold black letters 'India's greatest visionary- Mr Selrach passes away due to an unexpected heart attack.'

So much for that one year deadline.....

Bibliography: 'The good, the gentle, the high-gifted, ever friendly – every inch of him a noble man' – Epitaph for Charles Dickens written by Carlyle

The ‘Other’ Dickens

Riddhima Yadav

I sat opposite a ninety year old man in an old English country home somewhere in the middle of a place in England whose name I just couldn't pronounce. And yes, I know that being a journalist makes it all the worse that I don't know my spellings, 'grammer' and 'Pronounciations' and it even raises questions on my credentials, but hello, wasn't that the very reason I was here in the first place? To say I was fired from my job is a euphemism but actually in no dire terms was I told that unless I got my creative juices activated I could go on a sabbatical forever..[Ouch! that bit hurt] So here I was in England after spending nearly all of my savings. Now don't ask me how I met Mr. Peter Dickens, but he claimed to be the great-great-great- grand nephew of the 18th century English literary legend – Charles Dickens. He tried to explain his entire family tree but my slow brain just gave up and believed him. So with dreams of getting my job back I politely requested him to 'be kind enough' to give me the opportunity to spend some time with him. He gladly agreed.

Talking of Mr. Peter, he was a very frail man with wrinkles crisscrossing his face, somber grey eyes and a beard that hid all his facial expressions. But it was my notepad which held priceless information, where I was furiously writing now, in a valiant attempt to keep pace with Mr. Dickens's narration. It opened up a whole new world of Charles Dickens for me. For

instance he told me that Charles Dickens had a mild case of Obsessive Compulsive disorder. He rearranged furniture in the house, including all the beds which had to face North - South, supposedly due to “magnetic fields.” He was also obsessed with the tidiness of the house, leaving notes to his children scolding them for not picking up well enough. He also touched objects three times for “luck,” and combed his hair hundreds of times a day. Then he talked about how Dickens suffered from epilepsy in his childhood and how he was fascinated with hypnotism, practicing it on his wife and children. He further revealed to me that Dickens’s study had a secret door designed to look like a bookcase with shelves full of fake books with witty titles, such as Noah’s Arkitecture.

And now sitting with him on the last day of our rendezvous while sipping tea from tiny china cups Mr Dickens cleared his throat and I readied my pen to write. “You know dear”, he said in his raspy voice, “Charles was a very queer man.” I ignored this bit as he generally started by this same sentence. He continued, “One da-” Suddenly we were interrupted by a knock on the door. I got up to open the door and found myself looking at two serious men wearing white coats and spectacles. They were doctors my thick brain deduced. One of them asked, “Is Mr. Peter Dickens there?” Why did he smirk on the Dickens’s bit? “Yes”, I replied politely. “Well”, he continued, “we have come to take him.” “Where?”, I asked as my heartbeat sped up. He pointed to the words on the Van behind him – English Country Sanatorium. My smile disappeared. “Doctor?” I struggled to say, “What is Mr. Dickens suffering from?” “Mythomania and Multiple personality disorder”, he replied. I racked my mind for what Mythomania was and that’s when my brain remembered [It always comes up with the correct things at the wrong time] that it was another term for, Ahem, Compulsive Lying.....

I stood like a statue, rooted to the ground and as they wheeled Mr. Dickens past me, he turned around, smiled and winked at me.

Dickensian Dystopia

Ronit Ghosh

“The London sun burned brightly, but strangely, it had lost its oppressiveness. The ragged streets of the city underbelly had assumed an unusually colourful guise of freshness and opulence. Charles Dickens, seated on a wickerwork chair, was wondering what Midas-touch had suddenly transformed the woe-begone London underbelly to this pseudo-paradise! There seemed to be a strange harmony among the people, as if each of their movements had been pre-programmed. He could liken it to the movement of two long rows of ants moving opposite ways, synchronized and uniform. Most surprisingly, several characters of his novels seemed to disorient themselves and perform acts quite unlike them. The materialistic Thomas Gradgrind bellowed, “NOW, what I want is anything but Facts. Teach those boys and girls how to be humane. Facts are just an ancillary requisite.” The newspaper headline gleamed before Dickens’ eyes, “NO TRIAL CASES PENDING IN ANY LAW COURT”. Virtually all the streets flaunted opulence and beggar-boys befriended the sons of ministers. Dickens could hardly believe his eyes!

Bewildered by this utopic spectacle, he suddenly had dark, strange thoughts forming in his mindscape. In a sense, he felt alienated in this all-perfect world. In retrospect, he discovered that all his writings had stemmed from an urge to rectify society. In a utopia, the corpus of his works would

be sheer babble! Through his caricatures of several characters, he had attempted to expose societal shams scathingly, with reformist aims. The new mould that his characters like Thomas Gradgrind had assumed in this utopia re-asserted the utter irrelevance of the fruits of his writings. Moreover, in this utopic milieu, Dickens identified himself with the sole earthly human-survivor, not affected by the utopic onslaught! He thought of himself as an outlaw in this society, with even his artistic position at stake. In a society devoid of crises, no Art thrives, since crises engender Art. Besides, the utopia being the zenith of perfection, there would be no room for further progress. Society would undergo a resultant stagnation which would render life free of challenges, precluding the element of spice! This resulting dystopic-utopia would be nothing like the social dystopia he had portrayed in his novels!

Dickens was in a fit of ambivalence. The society he had been prescribing and championing in his works had not quite matched his expectations in reality. The envisioned utopia had turned out to be a Dickensian-Dystopia... Dickens began scratching his head listlessly. The effects of the Vodka..."

The above passage is an excerpt from a school-boy's notebook where he has scribbled these lines during the History class. History is a subject he loathes but still has to combat with to run the modern rat-race, which is obsessed with Facts. On this occasion, his mind had played truant and taken flight in the wings of fantasy! However, he has told me that the modern society with all its follies and hypocrisies is way better than a Dickensian-Dystopia any day! I leave it to the readers to decide which of the two they would opt for since I am thoroughly confused right now!

Of Great Experience and Greater Expectations

Rushada Rafeek

Before I met my old flame, I relaxed in the sharp hours of Estella before I knew her too. Still untouched, with my chin lifted by vanity ever so often. My heart stone cold and like a claw in a fist. It was a territory hidden with careful barbed wires where romance and the naked baby tripped over injuring themselves. Their lips sliced and knees coughing red, I realized it was just as interesting as blood stitched in your veins. I was in the afternoon of adolescence in a new school for the next four years to learn a greater hurdle. In the mean time, I had to grab hold of my 'boyish entity' and tell him that this school included people I tried to be. And so with much clash of protest, like sugar drizzles I foamed atop my beached muliebrity in a moral way. I courted vanilla to velvet not just for the matter of attention but in expectations, ripe in the hope for result. Smeared with my feet together, I giggled like a girl and cried like one but behind closed doors of the girls' washroom. And for the first time, there, in that dull corner kissed by isolation, I asked myself why. There were days my heart learned to melt its icy stare. The trickle turned into flood. I was aware a shadow followed me. Not that it was mine, but because it was someone who wanted to be behind, ring their arms around things they owned and knew as a rose does to thorn,

sew his ornate music to the defining columns of my heart which I barely let touch. It takes a fine one to notice this.

Five years after, we were thrown into our own lattice ways. Sunlight stung bright on his road but mine was where, it calmly waited to die. We were, as they say, complicated. There, where I thought we were us, he had come wet with another woman's welcome. Deceivingly right. Forever wrong.

Strange, I think, to still have his 10th grade literature term answer paper that included Great Expectations in our syllabus content. It is tattooed with a shoe print. I must have picked it up seeing it stray like the last of a kicked dog. Torn and fringed it is willing to make memory. This, I will keep from the Pip I once knew.

Perhaps than the heart, you can't find love worn by other places. That, I believe is lust in stilettos. It was purely an interruption, an intrusion to him never important. Great or little let it be. We were young, I'm nudged today. A wise inkling, this must be.

"We sat down on a bench that was near, and I said, "After so many years, it is strange that we should thus meet again, Estella, here where our first meeting was! Do you often come back?"

And this Estella shall say: yes, indeed my love. But you are just to me, a passing shadow.

A Tale of Two Dickens

S Arun Siddharth

The telephone rang for the umpteenth time since morning. The screen of the caller ID flashed a landline number. Most probably it was just another newspaper requesting for a date of interview. Ah! The qualms of being famous. But wasn't it what for which Mr. Anirban Chakrabarty had been toiling for the past 38 years? "...rightly hailed as the next Dickens in the making, Mr. Chakrabarty deserves to be the youngest Noble recipient till date and.....", the newspapers were strewn with such praises and Anirban knew he deserved it all. He let the telephone ring. An unattended call signified appropriate celebrity behaviour. "...next Dickens in the making...", the words reverberated in his ears time and again. He was being compared with his idol and what more could he ask. His rendezvous with Dickens had started in his 5th grade when he picked up an abridged version of Dickens' "Oliver Twist" from the school library. Once he was over with it he could not help but say to his librarian, "Please, sir, I want some more". From then began a passion, a heady desire to inculcate this literary genius.

Anirban did not restrict himself to just devouring the literary creations of Dickens but also researched as extensively, as the limited book supply of his government school would allow him to do. One might call it sheer coincidence or the cruel farce of fate, at the age of 13 Anirban's father

left him and his mother for good much like young Dickens' father. Anirban had to dropout from school to support his family. He joined a biscuit factory. However the predicament was soon over as Anirban's mother managed to acquire a job. Yet those two years of isolation fraught irreversible damage on the young mind of Anirban. However this uncanny similarity between Anirban and Dickens gave the former a new zeal to pursue his dreams of scaling literary heights like Dickens. And today 23 years 4 months and 7 days later after he left the factory Mr. Anirban Chakrabarty sat in his plush New Alipore bungalow preparing to leave for Stockholm in Sweden.

This time the string of reveries of Mr. Chakrabarty was interrupted not by the piercing ring of the telephone but by the tinkering sound of bone china being carried cautiously on a gleaming silver tray by a certain Mrs. Chakrabarty. Anirban looked at his wife who was setting down the china on the ornate table 'separating' them. It was yet a mystery to Anirban as to why he consented to get married to Sumana as per his mother's wishes. It was not that she did not render appropriate 'service' that befits a good housewife but it seemed that she could never match up to the opulence and grandeur that enveloped Mr. Chakrabarty. Anirban shifted his gaze on the platter in the table in front, as his wife stood waiting for the 'verdict'. All seemed perfect yet it seemed an unfortunate waste of opportunity of showing his superiority if he did not yell at Sumana. Anirban picked up the steaming cup of Darjeeling tea and aimed the contents towards Sumana's bruise adorned face. The liquor mauled a part of her face. As Sumana went down on her knees, whimpering, covering her face Anirban's baritone boomed through the bungalow, "Is this what I drink woman before I leave for a journey? Is this what I drink? Where the hell is my coffee you bitch? Now clear up the mess and get the coffee. Fast." As Sumana hurried back to the kitchen to get the 'proper' drink the telephone rang once again. This time Anirban received the call. "Ani, this is Maya speaking. A reporter friend of mine wants a little

chat with you. What's up with you? Why the hell are you panting?" " Just now threw a cup of steaming tea on that woman's face. What relief!" " Ani? This is so stupid. When will you stop doing this?" " I? Stop? I mean she deserves it. Just like Catherine deserved it from Charles." " You are obsessed. Dickens lived in the 19th century and this is 2012 for gods' sake. Whatever speak to this reporter, just hold on..." Anirban adjusted his voice, "...good evening sir. It's a pleasure to speak to you..." " Oh! Please! The pleasures mine. Kindly proceed with the questions..." " Oh! Yes sir. All knows about your literary achievement. But please sir could you throw light on the women empowerment programme that you are funding? It is a real noble cause to extend helping hand towards all these sex workers. What is your inspiration sir?" In the mean time Sumana entered with the platter again. Anirban looked upon her with disdainful eyes and pointed towards the table with his index finger. As Sumana deposited the tray she was dispatched with a contemptuous wave of Anirban's hand. "...Oh! Women are the pillars of our society and their empowerment is the empowerment of the society at large. And as far as the source of inspiration is concerned it has always been, is and will be Charles Dickens..."

A Boy's story is the Best that is ever told

Shresth Arora

“He was the life and soul of the entire affair... He took everything on himself , and did the whole of it without an effort. He was the stage director. Very often the stage carpenter , scene arranger, property man and the band master .The dullest of clays under his potter's hand were transformed into little bits of porcelain .”

The most popular of all English novelists, Charles Dickens, was born in 1812, the son of an unpractical and improvident government navy clerk whom, with questionable taste, he later caricatured in ‘David Copperfield’ as Mr. Micawber. The future novelist's schooling was slight and irregular, but from childhood he showed the passion for the drama and the theatre which resulted from the excitable dramatic quality of his own temperament and which always continued to be the second moving force of his life.

Dickens' popularity, in his own day and since, is due chiefly: to his intense human sympathy; to his unsurpassed emotional and dramatic power; and to his aggressive humanitarian zeal for the reform of all evils and

abuses, whether they weigh upon the oppressed classes or upon helpless individuals. Himself sprung from the lower middle class, and thoroughly acquainted with the life of the poor and apparently of sufferers in all ranks, he is one of the most moving spokesmen. The pathos and tragedy of their experiences--aged and honest toilers subjected to pitiless task-masters or to the yoke of social injustice; lonely women uncomplainingly sacrificing their lives for unworthy men; sad-faced children, the victims of circumstances, of cold-blooded parents, or of the worst criminals--these things play a large part in almost all of Dickens' books. In almost all there is present, a definite humanitarian aim, an attack on some time-consecrated evil--the poor-house system, the cruelties practised in private schools, or the miscarriage of justice in the Court of Chancery. In dramatic vividness his great scenes are masterly, for example the storm in 'David Copperfield,' the pursuit and discovery of Lady Dedlock in 'Bleak House,' and the interview between Mrs. Dombey and James Carker in 'Dombey and Son.'

Dickens' magnificent emotional power is not balanced, however, by a corresponding intellectual quality; in his work, as in his temperament and bearing, emotion is always in danger of running to excess. One of his great elements of strength is his sense of humor, which has created an almost unlimited number of delightful scenes and characters; but it very generally becomes riotous and so ends in sheer farce and caricature, as the names of many of the characters suggest at the outset. Similarly his pathos is often exaggerated until it passes into mawkish sentimentality, so that his humbly-bred heroines, for example, are made to act and talk with all the poise and certainty which can really spring only from wide experience and broad education.

He usually made a good preliminary general plan and proceeded on the whole with firm movement and strong suspense. But he always introduces many characters and sub-actions not necessary to the main story, and

develops them quite beyond their real artistic importance. Moreover, Dickens often follows the eighteenth-century picaresque habit of tracing the histories of his heroes from birth to marriage. Not least striking among Dickens' traits is his power of description. His observation is very quick and keen, though not fine; his sense for the characteristic features, whether of scenes in Nature or of human personality and appearance, is unerring; and he has never had a superior in picturing and conveying the atmosphere both of interiors and of all kinds of scenes of human life.

Worthy of special praise, lastly, is the moral soundness of all Dickens' work, praise which is not seriously affected by present-day sneers at his 'middle-class' and 'mid-Victorian' point of view.

His stories are all admirable demonstrations of the power and beauty of the nobler practical virtues, of kindness, courage, humility, and all the other forms of unselfishness; but for the underlying mysteries of life and the higher meanings of art his positive and self-formed mind had very little feeling

Dickens draws us into the utter insanity of human experience. His characters are more real and more memorable than any possible reality. Dickens observed the best and worst of human life, and then turned those experiences into wit and wisdom. Beyond simply refashioning reality, he developed an identity for himself--through "that extraordinary magic by which he turns a cheat and a crook into a charming character, a criminal imposter into a thing of delight."

Those early experiences, heartaches, and disappointments were later channeled into some of the greatest masterpieces in English literature. In reading the novels of Charles Dickens, we are thus introduced to the world: laughter, tears, loneliness, and depression--with the ecstasy of romance and the utter devastation of lost love.

A man who could build a church, as one may say, by squinting at a sheet of paper

Shreya Mahajan

“**S**ure I am that this day we are masters of our fate, that the task which has been set before us is not above our strength; that its pangs and toils are not beyond my endurance. As long as we have faith in our own cause and an unconquerable will to win, victory will not be denied us.” These lines by Winston Churchill, speak volumes about the man that Charles Dickens was. He is the most popular and perhaps, the greatest writer of the Victorian era. Charles Dickens drew from an early life of poverty, loneliness and exile to create the magic of fiction. Born on February 7, 1812 to John and Elizabeth Dickens, he had a bitter childhood. His early experiences, heartaches, and disappointments were later channeled into some of the greatest masterpieces in English literature and the characters of his real life formed the iconic characters of his novels. His novels introduce a reader into the world of laughter, tears, loneliness, hard work with ecstasy of romance and utter devastation of lost love. Beyond simply refashioning reality, he developed an identity for himself-- through “that extraordinary magic by which he turns a cheat

and a crook into a charming character, a criminal imposter into a thing of delight.” His stories are all admirable demonstrations of the power and beauty of the nobler practical virtues, of kindness, courage, humility, and all the other forms of unselfishness; but for the underlying mysteries of life and the higher meanings of art his positive and self-formed mind had very little feeling.

Dickens’ popularity, in his own day and since, is due chiefly: (1) to his intense human sympathy; (2) to his unsurpassed emotional and dramatic power; and (3) to his aggressive humanitarian zeal for the reform of all evils and abuses, whether they weigh upon the oppressed classes or upon helpless individuals. Himself sprung from the lower middle class, and thoroughly acquainted with the life of the poor and apparently of sufferers in all ranks, he is one of the most moving spokesmen whom they have ever had. Dickens succeeded in opening “the windows to the soul” as he captured so much of the horrific realities of Victorian industrialism. Social reform was important to Dickens, as he worked to raise the social consciousness of his public through his articles and his fiction. In “Bleak House” (1853), Dickens attacks the abuses of the Court of Chancery and satirizes government red tape. In “Hard Times” (1854), he attacks the deadly ugliness of the industrial society. In “Oliver Twist,” Dickens calls into question the Poor Law of 1833 and dramatizes the plight of children, who were forced into the poor house, or into the hands of men like Fagin and Bill Sykes. His exuberant physical energy gave to his life more external variety than is common with authors. He made long sojourns on various parts of the world and stretched himself too thin—editing, writing, and philanthropy. Much social and outdoor life was necessary to him; he had a theory that he ought to spend as much time out of doors as in the house. Beyond the literary master, Dickens fashioned himself as a public figure and entertainer. His literary speaking tours were legendary—his passing was mourned by readers around the world. His novels,

namely, The Posthumous Papers of Pickwick, The Adventures Of Oliver Twist, Hard Times, A Tale Of Two Cities, Great Expectations and many more, are a treat for readers.

As Dickens himself said, “Whatever I have tried to do in life, I have tried with all my heart to do it well; whatever I have devoted myself to, I have devoted myself completely, in greater aims and in small I have always thoroughly been in earnest.”

And a grand salute to this great writer.

Guilt Gets Paid Off

Smita Ray

The story unfolds around the life of Oliver, a malnourished orphan boy. At the early age of five he was engaged in boot polishing in Rajabazar. Lashes of cane and abusive language were his only companion. So on one dull, foggy Calcutta morning he headed for a new destination. He arrived at Khidderpore. Alien in that environment he came across a tall gaunt man. This man came to know from Oliver that he was being ruthlessly beaten up. The former understood that Oliver was innocent and took him to his place. 'Falguni Shaheb' as he was called, headed a beggars' association, sold small children for doing anything and everything. Oliver was sold to a Jew for Rs.6500. He moved from one hell to another.

"You dare not speak out a single word about me to the public. Just be careful and remember what I have told you!" warned the Jew. Oliver was sent to a hose for a robbery in disguise of a servant. Being too innocent he could not carry out his master's orders. After few days his parochial undertaker sent Nancy to that house. Nancy was the didi of their gang. She knew everything about the Jew's moves. Though she brought Oliver out of that house, but freed him as she got too attached to him emotionally. Oliver wandering in the streets came across a young gentleman who enticed him that he would provide him with everything he desires for.

Oliver was then taken to a bricks factory where life meant to labour sixteen hours a day at a stretch in lieu of a piece of burnt bread and half a bowl of gruel for sound sleep. The reward that he once got for asking for some more was to stay away from food for next five days. The factory owner, Nibaron Halder was mean, cold and nasty with his workers and with anyone who did charity. He did not allow anyone to come near Oliver or pamper him.

During the Pujas, Oliver was very excited to go for pandal hopping around the city. But destiny sent him to another factory in Ahmedabad where finally his life changed for good. Mr. Shah, the owner of this factory one day when found Oliver completely lost, he asked “Oliver! don’t be heartbroken. Speak up my child !”

There was a pull in Oliver’s heart. He started narrating his life’s tale. All the culprits of the tragedy of his life, the manager of the orphan house, Falguni Shaheb and Nibaron Halder were given lifelong imprisonment. Oliver tried to forget his past and feel the essence of a healthy life. Mr. Shah and his wife adopted him as their son. The three were grateful to God for gifting them Oliver. He started filling Oliver’s mind with stores of knowledge and sowed the thriving seeds of all he wished him to become.

Dickens in the City of Joy

Sneha Mallick

What India has done for Rabindranath Tagore in the 150th anniversary of his birth Britain is repeating for Charles Dickens the author of such classics such as ‘The Adventures of Oliver Twist, David Copperfield and many more...’

In the literary meet of the Kolkata book fair of 2012, a literary discussion was held between the author of the 21st century CHETAN BHAGAT and the author of the Victorian Period CHARLES DICKENS. When Dickens and Bhagat took the stage, even the youngsters’ were excited to hear from both. The discussion left everyone spellbound and dumbstruck. Silence prevailed in the audience.

As soon as he started with his introduction, silence prevailed in the audience.

After formal introduction Chetan Bhagat started the programme with simple and relevant questions for Dickens.

BHAGAT : “Sir please tell us about your views on the Victorian Period and Victorian Novels”

DICKENS: “Well according to my view Victorian Period was a period of Faith and an age of doubt. It produced more humorous writers than any other single period.”

Immediately after completing his statement he laughed out and took a deep breath and said LOL(laughing out louder)

He said that “I know all the youngsters here must be wondering how have I come to know about this phrase?? Well may be I’m not a modern author like Chetan Bhagat but I try and read up all the books written by the contemporary writers like Bhagat, Seth, Jhumpa Lahiri and Amitava Ghosh.

“About the Victorian Novels I would like to say that the Victorian Novel has manifold merits. It is very entertaining; it has creative imagination; it can capture and hold the attention; it has comparable gift of humor. Because of these qualities the Victorian Novels are highly admired.”

If we read the writings of both we can find that as Dickens has given a vivid description of a child’s struggling life in Oliver Twist. Bhagat portrays 3 youngsters struggling to their final in Bhagat’s one of the bestsellers Five Point Someone.

Then the two authors’ engaged themselves in discussing about their early period of struggle.

Dickens said: “I was born in poverty. Before I was ten, I was earning my living in a murky London Warehouse; my father was held in a debtor’s prison. I later worked for the solicitor and also a news reporter.”

Bhagat started with how he had started his writing career with the bestselling novel Five Point Someone in 2004 followed by One night @

the call centre(2005), The 3 mistakes of my life(2008), 2 states: The story of my marriage(2009), and last but not the least Revolution 2020 (2011)

Dickens also shared his views about wonderful journey with the publication of his novels. . He started with Oliver Twist(1837) his first social novel. Then Nicholas Nickleby (1839) Bleak House(1852) Hard Times (1854) Little Dorrit (1855) etc .

He gave a overwhelming explanation of his masterpiece, David Copperfield.

He said “My closest approach to autobiography and my acknowledged masterpiece is David Copperfield (1849-50) a long novel of the early life of my central character. This work is filled with realistic incidents of picaresque nature and a memorable portrait gallery of characters of mine.”

He said that every author expresses his feelings through his novel. Always there is some truth except the author himself. These are the dark secrets of the authors’ life.

After this he passed the microphone to the audience in order to hear their views on him.

One of the audience’s view: “The word Dickensian instantly conjures up a vivid picture of Victorian life with all its contrast and intrigue and its characterisation is as fresh as today as it was on the day it was written.”

A big round of applause went through the audience.

After this several views were exchanged between Bhagat, Dickens and the audience and then the programme came to an end leaving the audience

feel extremely happy. Dickens and Bhagat passed a shower of autographs to the audience and bid 'good bye' to the huge mob.

Oh! I missed out one thing.... I was also present in the huge crowd setting in the very first row.

“Thank You” is the very last thing we can say to God for creating such a masterpiece on earth. He is the eternal ‘Hero’ who is alive for the last 200 years through his works in various parts of the globe.

ST.ELSEWHERE**i**

ST. ELSEWHERE School lies at the heart of the city of KATOKAL. MR. KNOWALL was the sole teacher in the entire Literature Department. His grandiloquent style of analyzing, scrutinizing and criticizing a text on perusing it, has made him belligerent to his young scholars who hardly understood half of his ideas. There was a poor soul- John Ignoramus who believed that while the teacher was in the acme of his performance- was obscure, and no doubt ‘covered’ the lesson than ‘uncover’ it.

Mr. Knowall had a propensity to separate the boys from girls whenever he taught a Romantic text- “Romeos to the left, Juliets to the right”. He was like one of those Classical teachers, who believed that if a boy and a girl shared a Romantic text then inevitably- they will fall in Love, and he could never quite acquiesce to such “childhood follies” as If there was a big, fat rule-book which contained all the protocols that guided the natural desires and impulses of the entire race.

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One day, Mr.Knowall entered and addressed the class through his reading glasses that hung as if about to slide off the tip of his thick aquiline nose- “Facts, facts, facts and marks, marks, marks should be your sole concern in my class!” Moving towards the second row, third bench, he grumbled, with his index finger pointed towards Jack’s heart like the tip of a lance ready to pierce through his flesh, “You, my lad, Jack Smurf, your answers are decorated with mythical allusions, which is absolutely egregious!”

He lifted his head and to the class he reiterated loudly, “You must never imagine, you must never wonder, and all Myths are false. Facts are necessary, not Knowledge. Period.”

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It was on an ebullient morning of the last working day of the session with Mr.Knowall that John Ignoramus noticed huge portraits of Wordsworth, Aeschylus, Tagore and Walter Scott on the wall; and like Richard the Lionheart, gathered enough courage, raised his hand and asked the idle pedagogue- “Sir, who-are-these-people hanging from the wall?” The corpulent man with a glowing face said, “Well my lad you see, people say they’re great men, they’re legends. Here, towards your right is Wordsworth, to whose spirituality I could never come at par with. That’s Aeschylus, whom I could never explore, since I have never explored Homer and later for that same reason I could never explore Aristophanes! To your left is Tagore, our favorite Nobel laureate, whom I’ve never bothered to peruse because he writes in Bengali, which is absolutely unintelligible to me ; and there’s Scott the chivalrous, whom I’ve read a bit until a plethora of chivalry got on my nerves. I put up these portraits because people believe them to be great and I take pride in it.”

Professor now asked John triumphantly, “Now you know why I’m called MR.KNOWALL?”

John took his seat and thought-”Yes, now I know that you’re- a MR. PSEUDO!”

The Burning Soul

Sourav Parmanandka

“Amma, will I have to eat these spools tonight? I don’t find them appetizing.”-said seventeen year old Kabir.

It was an ordinary eve. But Mukta noticed an extra-ordinary repugnant temperament in her son. The silence of the somber was suddenly shattered. The mild breeze blowing nurtured the candle flame focusing Mukta’s anxious face while she was spinning spools.

“Calm down.”

“How can I? You don’t let me.”

“Let me cook some delicious halwa.”

“Wow! The food is not ready. Hang yourself up then. Here take these spools, strong enough.”

“Kabir, stop being violent.”

“Coward GANDHI and his mighty followers.”

“You look sick. You need rest.”

“I am sick? Oh please! Had enough of you and that old gnat. I am leaving.”

Infuriated Kabir thwacked the door and left Mukta with tears to shed, having life yet dead.

The year was 1937. The place was a small village named ‘Saharanagar’ in undivided Bengal. Extremism was running in the veins of every Indian youth. Kabir was no exception. He joined ‘AURBAGNI’ a revolutionary group which followed NETAJI BOSE’S ideals. Tejveer Thakur, the functionary head of the group was brisk to broaden Kabir’s mind with his preachings. Kabir soon became expert in handling explosives and guns and an adroit bomb maker. The group soon turned to slay British executives. They became audacious. Kabir added a zest to their brawn.

News spreads faster than fire. Mukta came to know this, she was dumbfounded.”...I knew this...it is the same blood running in his veins.....no one can stop him now.”

But the teenage heart was not burning with the annals of patriotism only. Meher was the member of the same regiment. Her parents were shot dead by the British. The fire of vengeance was burning inside since then.

Meher became an obsession to Kabir. He couldn’t take his eyes off her whenever they came across. The extremist heart couldn’t escape the most tender feeling- Love.

Boom!!! Kabir seemed helpless. People were dying. Lord Mesan was dead. But Kabir’s men were also dying.

It was a perfect azure sky. Suddenly Kabir heard some screams. Out of his house he noticed that villagers were being whipped by the ‘firangees’. Tejveer was out of town. Kabir’s ineluctable anger led him to call upon his men to eject the sycophants out of the village. They started haphazard bombardment without thinking of the consequence. Though Lord Mesan was killed, the others were still alive. Kabir wanted to uproot them all.

Kabir drew a bomb and hurled it noticing Lieutenant Wilson. Just then he saw Meher running. “Oh hell! She is running towards Wilson.”

Within few seconds she was torn into pieces.

Kabir was on his knees. Tears and perspiration flushed his face.

Everyone rejoiced. They got what they wanted. The ‘firangees’ were dead. They were converging towards Kabir to celebrate. He went away silently.

“Amma was right. Gandhi was right. Violence endowed me with nothing. Some people died and Meher too. I am her murderer. But in the battle I am fighting, people have to die. Extremism even doesn’t support killing innocents. But I have...”

Kabir didn’t go back to Mukta. He surrenders.

Mukta got this news too. Her son was hanged. Yet she stood with her head held high.

The Marooned One

Steemita Sarkar

Esmee was walking hot footed. Just as she hurried past the last turn before school she eyed a nearly two and a-half-year old girl - whining and weeping from time to time - but had no voice to speak out. The unkempt and uncared for child, the unwanted and uncalled for creature - was sobbing piteously. No one had any clue to find the child's parentage since she is either dumb or hasn't learnt to speak as yet. She could utter some in-comprehensive words. It was quite understandable that it is its parents who have abandoned the child and devastated it's life - left in lurch to be at the mercy of footpath, dirt and dust, among canines and felines to live in the squalor of society as a destitute and deserted creature. No one paid heed to her existence.

Esmee was nonplussed. What can she do? What should she do? If she calls her mother over phone, she is sure to be reprimanded blatantly by her. She dared not phone her father during duty hours for he might be irritated and disturbed. She read such stories in books, newspaper- she had heard about some of them like Phalak but she had never imagined to come across such a firsthand experience in reality.

It's nearly five years or more since Esmee recovered and rescued the child and took it to her principal who heard everything patiently and told her

to let the child stay there, in her chamber. Later on, the ma'am conducted the child to police custody to take lawful measures regarding the child's subsistence and paraphernalia. Before handing over to the police - the child was given a thorough medical check-up, bathed- fed well, given a few sets of dresses, warm garments, slippers et al for her subsistence. Esmee came to learn later that the child had to be sent to a home for orphans.

All the events of that fateful day came alive to Esmee in a flash back as her father informed that the girl has grown in an orphanage, but the orphanage has been in a mess for lack of funds and dedicated individuals to make it run smoothly free from any bias on religion, caste, creed or community.

Just as dad informed her that the children are kept half-starved or half-fed and beaten mercilessly if one, even by mistake, asked for more food. Esmee envisioned the story of David Copperfield who had to undergo immense mental and physical torture even about a couple of centuries ago, she realized that nothing much has changed since the Victorian days and Dickens is as much relevant today as he was nearly two centuries or more ago. The attitude of society towards the abandoned and destitute child has not changed a wee bit even today; those destitute and abandoned children have no face to look at with love and affection, any more.

The Miracle

Suchita Paul

25 December, Monday, 10:00 pm, London

I am still living in a state of awe, even after an entire day has passed. I still can't believe that I am that regular old Scrooge and not a new young gentleman. I haven't experienced such incessant happiness in my life before. Oh! What a day!

I still remember in details what all happened last night. The arrival of ghost of my dear old friend Marley really scared me. But I am happy that he has been trying to help me even after his death. Oh how glad I am that he helped me. All these years I had been living like a machine, without any eyes, brain or heart. But the three ghosts of Christmas- Christmas past, Christmas present and Christmas future have opened my eyes. They clearly showed me how inhuman, selfish and money-minded I had been. I did injustice to all, including poor Bob Cratchit, who had been working hard day and night and I never paid any attention to him! How very hardhearted I was!

But today I think I am totally changed! I never felt so delighted in my whole life. I was as light as feather, as happy as an angel, as merry as a school boy, as giddy as a drunken man. Christmas has never been so

full of fun before. I wished merry Christmas to every passerby. A merry Christmas to everybody. How beautiful the day was. Golden sunlight; heavenly sky; sweet fresh air and merry bells. Oh, glorious. Glorious!

My mind was glowing with good intentions. I saw a boy on the road, what a splendid remarkable boy he was. I asked him to buy me the prized turkey that was hanging in the poulterer's in the next street to send it to the poor old Bob. I knew he and his family, specially tiny Tim would be very happy to see that.

Then I decided to spend the day with my nephew. I knew he would be delighted to see me. So when I was on my way to his house, I came across that portly gentleman who came to my workplace the day before to take some donations for the poor and the needy. He was so very surprised when I wished him merry Christmas, and a greater lot when I told him that I will give him my entire bank account to spend it for the benefits of the poor and the needy. Oh, I feel so delighted.

Then I went up to Fred's house and it took me a little time before I could go up to the door and knock. But they accepted me with full enthusiasm and after that what a day! Wonderful party, wonderful games, wonderful unanimity and won-der-ful happiness!

Christmas has never been so merrier to me before. I came home late today and immediately decided that I will increase poor Bob's salary and support his family and ensure that tiny Tim is fully recovered. It's my promise.

My Experience

Urvashi Saxena

I am a traveller, when I was young I loved travelling . its my favourite hobby and now I have taken it as my profession.I travel around the world and visit different countries.

Last year I planned to visit Southern Asia. I visited India, it's a country filled with moral values and great culture. Its one of the best countries I have even visited. The people even though being poor are rich from the heart. My guide showed me many great cities like New Delhi, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Chennai and Mumbai. But I did not want to see the best parts of the country. I wanted to see the best parts of the country. I wanted to see the real India and as Indians say 'real India'; ie rural India So I decided to go in the interiors and meet the people and stay with them.

After visiting great parts of Jaipur and Qutub Minar of New Delhi, I went to Mumbai., The night life of Mumbai was just amazing. The soothing sea, the cold and dry breeze, the helpful people, the great shops and other fancy stuff. In the day I visited the old shops and art galleries and saw ancient houses. At night I preferred staying in my room and having dinner at various restaurants and tasted the delicacies of Maharashtra. The food was spicy but tasty. The Pooran Poli must be tasted at least once in a lifetime. I had stayed in Mumbai for three days and the next

day was my ticket to London my hometown. On my way to the airport I passed by an unusual place. Dharavi I asked my taxi driver about it and he told me it I the Asia's biggest slum. I thought of canceling my ticket but after a second thought, I called the airlines and asked whether my flight was on time or not.

My flight was delayed by five hours due to some technical reasons. Taking advantage of the situation I told the driver to take my back to Dharavi. The driver was aghast by my decision. Reluctantly he agreed and took me to Dharavi. It was not a decent place rather not a place where a man could stay. I saw the small children crying and playing in rags, the women were busy filling water from a single hand pulling pump. Most of the men were sitting in their specified compartments smoking, gambling and drinking. I saw a house rather a small one covered with tin which had a small television and many people surrounding it and watching the cricket match.

There was mud and snakes all around and most of the drainage pipes were left open. Around the dustbin there were flies and mosquitoes. The condition was miserable for a man to survive. There was a pungent adour all around and no place of cleanliness. There were hardly any plants and the air was unclean. There was no facility of proper drainage, sewage and proper paths. It was the month of October and no place was so horrible. I couldn't imagine the state of this part of Mumbai city in the month of July /August.

I asked a child who was wearing a short trouser and a dirty T shirt. He was running behind a fly to hit it when I got hold of him, I asked him whether he goes to school or not and his reply was in the negative. I interrogated him for some time about his daily

routine and his diet and his family. The small ten year old boy had lost

his father in a car accident. He had three younger sisters and a mother whom he lives with. I felt bad for the small boy and his fate.

I saw some part of Dharavi and I was guilty and I felt bad of my accusation and achievements. I wanted to do something for these people and their small children. The people of India had treated me like no one else did and they welcomed me with an open heart and did everything possible for me. These small children will be the future of this great country and they have to face such situations. They have to live with it. I could not bear the sight for a longer time but they had to live forever with it.

Most of the people across the country come to Mumbai for jobs and to support their families. The lucky ones get a job and become successful. Rest of them are left behind and since they run out of money they come to this slum for shelter and gradually they even call their family members here. They get a job which does not pay them enough. So the small children have to beg at different places to earn money for their families. This has an adverse effect on the child and he gets into bad company and gets used to bad habits.

Poverty, India's most common and dreadful problem. So many men suffer from unemployment and they either get attracted to the enemy or begging and get into depression and commit suicide. In India being a good country has certain black spots. Education is a must for every human being. But in India more than 65% of the children mostly girls do not go to school. More than 80% of the people in India sleep without having proper food. Mostly infants and some youth die of diseases which are curable but do not receive proper medication. The Government should seriously look into the downfall of India.

I would like to do whatever possible for this country with beautiful monuments great people rich heritage and glorious values. Though India

is not my native land still I feel that it is my country and I am obliged to do something for it.

As I entered my flight, the face of the small boy crossed my mind. He is unaware of his surroundings and the world around him. Not only him but there are thousands of children who have to go through all this. I consider myself lucky to get guidance of both my parents and my honourable teachers and all the things that god has provided me with. I pray for the under privileged and I wish god helps them with their future and provides them with what they want.

The flight took off and I went into my dreamland.

Sterile Fantasy

Amrita Biswas

Seven missed calls and a message-

“Come to KV clinic. Tisha admitted.”

I dialled Punam’s number fast but she didn’t receive. I called her up again...the news chilled my senses. Tisha had passed away an hour back. And I knew nothing of it. It was so sudden, it was grotesque. I didn’t have time to negotiate with myself. I rushed to KV.

I returned to my hostel from KV and sat on the bed. Tisha’s death had affected me a lot. But there was something more than just feeling pity...I felt guilty, for at moments of crisis, the mental faculties are numbed and superstitions eclipse logic and reason. I felt I had orchestrated her death and that all the cosmic forces had operated themselves according to my design. Neither reason nor logic could carve their way out as I sat there, motionless, my brain fatigued with questions, whose answers I could not arrive at.

“Cobwebs” had been my film studies project for the second semester and Tisha had acted in it. In the film, Tisha had died in the same manner and under the same circumstances as in reality. It was a strange coincidence.

I was at conflict with myself. I was blinded the moment I had touched death. The co-incidence had triggered a complex thought process that rendered my image as a witch invoking death from the evil cauldron. I was ignorant of my identity. Was I a mere mortal or was I imbued with the darkness to create death out of nothing? Was the scene a mere cinematic device to advance the plot or was it the perception of that great truth which dissolves all human life? Was it a mere co-incidence or was it so that darkness had taken recluse in my mind so that I could shape one's life and herald one's death? When the mind is baffled by ambiguities, the inner consciousness imbibes the psychologism of others; when the inner self is ignorant of its identity, it seeks to belief the identity thrust on it by others; for life is but an endless search of one's identity. As for me, when my room-mates seemed to secretly talk about me, all I could do was throttle my conscience by the feeling of guilt. I knew they thought that I was so ominous that my inner psychic space could prove fatal to somebody.

They say time heals every wound. But certain nettles and briars of the past assert their perpetuality over the fleetingness of time. Time cant reduce their intensity, rather they get seasoned by time .To those of you reading this and thinking about the course that my fancy will adhere to, to those of you wondering whether I will see through this dead pall of superstition or whether I will be clouded by mystery till eternity; I have one statement to make. I am still a wandering soul haunted by enigma and mysticism, pinned down by the burning chains of sterile fantasy...

Zenith of Indian Lifestyle

Ambujan Nair

It was the eve of The International Conference on Literary Works in Ahmedabad. My flight landed at Sardar Patel International Airport, Ahmedabad. The airport was chock-a-bloc with the presence of writers and poets from all over the globe. The crowd outside the airport gathered like swarm of bees. The car from the Hotel was waiting outside the airport. I also had a guide, Mr. Bhavesh Patel, with me, also my translator. I could see the greenery and the serenity along the road. Gradually, as we entered the city, I wanted to notice the lifestyle of the citizens of India. People were setting up small stalls by the road, most of which were tea stalls. I also saw a group of energetic senior citizens performing a couple of exercises without the slightest feeling of tiredness! School children were cycling and chatting down the road, some were also going on a three-wheeler, fully packed with bags and children. After an hour's journey we reached 'The Hotel Surya Palace'. Here I got a glimpse of varied Indian culture, of which Mr. Bhavesh gave a brief description. Along the red carpet were the statues of mythological characters. The hall was very huge with reception and booking centre. At centre of the hall was the idol of 'Ganesha', a Hindu god considered as the destroyer of bad omen. In front of it was a grand and lucent golden lamp made from an alloy of five different metals. Tables and sofas were beautifully carved out from Rajasthan. The room keeper guided me to my room-'Room No. 108', where I relaxed and decided to have a power nap.

Shouldering the burden: Child Labour

Ananya Stuti

Childhood is the most innocent phase in human life. It is that stage of life when the human foundations are laid for a successful adult life. Many children, instead of spending it in a carefree and fun-loving manner while learning and playing, are scarred and tormented. They hate their childhood and would do anything to get out of the dungeons of being children and controlled and tortured by others. They would love to break-free from this world, but continue to be where they are, not out of choice, but force.

15th February, 2012. Charles Dickens had come to India. He was taken aback on seeing the conditions of the poor children. Innocent children were employed by industries and individuals who put them to work under gruelling circumstances. They were made to work for long hours in dangerous factory units and sometimes made to carry load even heavier than their own body weight. Then there were individual households that hire children as domestic help and beat and physically torture them when they make a mistake. The children are at times made to starve and are given worn out clothes to wear.

Seeing small kids living in those conditions was heart breaking. When he asked them whether they went to school, they proudly said yes and took him to their school. The school was just a small structure and classrooms had no desks. There was no ground for the kids to play in. A liquor shop works right next to the school and on Sundays, when the school is closed, men use the building to play cards and gamble. The compulsion is of course, the meagre income of the family, who cannot afford to even feed the children if they do not work, and besides this a lot more comes into play for creating this unhappy situation. But, given a choice, all these parents would love to see these little slogging children enjoy their childhood at home or at school, but how – is the moot point.

The problem of child labour must be recognized as a human rights problem, both directly (e.g. slavery) and indirectly (e.g. compulsory labour that results in denial of the right to education). It embraces not only “the rights of the child” per se, but also the broad panoply of entitlements across the whole spectrum of rights through which, at least civil, political, social, cultural and economic rights. Seen from this perspective, it becomes a mandatory duty of all governments across the world to take all possible steps to put an end to the problem of child labour once and for all. Today’s children will constitute the backbone of tomorrow’s society. Hence, it is the obligation of every generation to bring up children, who will be citizens of tomorrow, in a proper way.

Flabbergasted by what he saw, Charles just wished that these innocent souls get to live their life in their own way and not bound by responsibilities at such a young age.

Folly of the Curse

Apoorva Goyal

“Ahhhhh...” cried the mother in labor pains.

“Please...please help me...this is too much.”

The shouts didn't stop until with a last shout, finally died.

Not just the shouts have died but the child too had died. This was the death of the 6th child. No child survived in the Tale family. A family known for their arrogance and ruthless trade.

The elders got very disturbed and feared a spell on the family. So, The tantric was called .

“What is the reason that no child survives in the family?”

The tantric boomed, a dark figure with red villainous eyes. He chanted some mantras, then boomed in his monstrous voice, “Your house has been under the spell of Mara(the god of death) . One of your ancestors had done some sinister deed and the girl who was hurt in the process had cursed this house, that no girl child would ever be born in the family and all boys would have some disability.”

Mr. Tale went pale as he remembered the disastrous event that had occurred. His grandfather, Mr. Y Tale had taken a fancy to the most beautiful girl of the city, the young and stunning “sunder summer”, daughter of the wealthiest trader. When Tale had been 25, the young girl had been 15, a beauty filled with the innocence of her tender age. Tale had been so obsessed with her beauty that one night he sneaked into the girl’s chamber and tried to lure her, when the girl cried and shouted he flew. But the next day he kidnapped the young girl and raped her all night, in his own house, where he lived alone. The “sunder summer” was devastated. She shouted and shouted but no one was there to hear her cries. That night she cursed the house and the Tale family that no girl child would be born in their family, and every boy child born would have some disability.

Y.Tale hearing this realized his folly and asked for forgiveness but she cursed him and died.

The tantric shouted, “This curse can only be broken when the son of this family marries a disabled girl and keep her with intense love and care. The love should be real and natural otherwise the boy would both die.”

The Tale family started looking for a girl with a disability. After a long search, they came upon a girl who was from a poor family and physically disabled with polio.

The marriage took place in a small church near the Tale’s house. And the couple started lining in their home. After a few years the girl became pregnant, the whole family prayed and took great care.

“Ahhhh...” cried the girl in labor pains.

“Dear...Another push...” Said Jack assuring her wife,holding her hand.

With a last cry, a beautiful baby girl was born.

Thus, the curse was broken and the soul of “sunder summer” rested in peace .After this, known for their intense love for their wives.

1028

Apoorva Gupta

In a night's time

Fagin sat down at the kitchen table. The boys were in bed, the dishes were done, and he was finally able to do whatever he wanted. He stretched, yawned, and looked about the room. What would he do? I could read, he thought . He fidgeted in his chair. After a few moments, he stood up and walked over to a small bookshelf and picked a dusty book off of it. He sat down at the kitchen table and placed the candle onto the table's surface, and opened the book. He began to read a paragraph discussing a robbery leading to murder when suddenly he jumped after hearing a knock at the door .

O my god ! he said. He quickly walked through the passage , reached the door and asked in a soft yet audible voice "Who is it?"

"It's Nancy," came Nancy's voice through the other side of the door.

Fagin opened the door and let way for Nancy to come in .

"You look in good spirits," she commented.

“Ah, well ... why shouldn't I be?” Fagin guided Nancy to the fireplace .
“The boys are in bed after a productive day of work and the house chores are complete... it's a fine life.”

“Indeed it does seem so,” Nancy commented somewhat solemnly.

“Something troubling you , dear? Have a seat and I'll get you a drink.”
Fagin pulled out a chair for her to sit .

“It's just that Bill's gone on another one of his excursions.” She sighed .

“Well, my dear, that means ... profits... and money...” Fagin smiled greedily as he handed her a glass of gin.

“There are many other things which are more important than money ,Fagin.” Nancy commented.

“Well, yes, my dear. There are, aren't there?” Fagin shook his head thoughtfully. “Well, either way, money is one of the things that makes life worth living.”

“You and Bill! All you think about is business and money! Don't you two understand that there are sometimes more important things? What about people?”

“What about them, my dear?”

“Well, they have hearts... hearts enabling them to care... to love...” her voice trailed off slowly.

“Why are your thoughts so bent on such things?”

“Well, I was sitting alone in the living room after he had left and I realized how lonely it really is ... “ Nancy said .

“Certainly, my dear, but you have Bill quite often,” Fagin pointed out not so much to lift the girl’s spirit’s as to get her to talk.

“Oh, Bill? Really, Fagin! I think you would have noticed by now that all I am to him is a housemaid! Someone to do his laundry and cook his food!”

“My dear, you must be much more than that,” Fagin soothed, letting his hand rest on her shoulder.

“Oh, no I’m not! I don’t even remember the last time when he gave me some honest “ she finished proving her point .

“Well, my dear, conversation is fine and dandy, but how about some... fun?” Fagin rubbed his hands together excitedly as he rose from his chair.

“Fun? What have you got in your mind?” she asked curiously.

Fagin put on a thoughtful look. After a moment, he pointed towards the sky in triumph and walked over to her. Removing his hat with his left hand and extending his right hand towards her, he made his intentions clear. “Would you care to dance, my dear?”

“There’s no music,” Nancy pointed out , smiling sheepishly .

“Ah, yes, well...” He thought for a moment. “Ah! No problem , my dear! We shall have music!” he smiled victoriously.

“All right then!” She placed her hand in his.

After placing his hat back on his head, he pulled her out into a section of the room that was devoid of furniture. Fagin put one hand on her waist and took one of her hands in the other. A small laugh escaped Nancy’s lips as he began to hum an exotic sounding tune. They danced about the room twirling and laughing.

“Where did you learn this?” Nancy breathed lightly, as the dance became more complicated.

Fagin paused in his tune. “Oh, I don’t know... it was a number of years ago...”

Nancy laughed .She held tightly around Fagin’s neck, bursting with laughter after every spin .Suddenly she saddened and broke away from him .

“ What’s the matter , my dear” Fagin asked with seriousness .

“I... I-I need to be going. “ She turned, her skirt whirling about her and made quickly for the door.

Fagin followed her. He grabbed her arm, and stopped her as she reached for the doorknob.

“Nancy, my dear,” he breathed, “There’s no need for you to go rushing out of here like this... what are you afraid of ? What’s the matter ? “

She stared at him. Finally, she spoke. “I am afraid that I don’t love Bill! I’m afraid that... that... I love you!” Deftly Nancy pushed Fagin out of the way. She turned and pulled the doorknob ferociously and ran off into

the dark, starry night.

Nancy glanced back to make sure Fagin wasn't following her. She reached her apartment soon . She stood in front of it for a minute in confusion; something wasn't right. Key! she thought suddenly. And it finally dawned on her- I left my handbag that had the key in it at Fagin's! She groaned with annoyance and despair. She knew she had only a few options. One , that she could go back to Fagin's and get it from him. Second , she could wait hours out in the cold for Bill to show up, or third , she could attempt to break into her own apartment. Ridiculing the first one immediately as awkward and unpleasant, she considered the second one. It's too cold! She then considered the third one. It's worth a shot! Reaching up, she extracted a hairpin from her hair. She stuck the hairpin into the lock and turned it. After pulling it out, she attempted to turn the knob, but the door was still locked. She glared at it, then put the hairpin back in, turned it, and wiggled it again. She rattled the doorknob angrily before giving up.

"I'm not waiting who-knows-how-long for Bill to show up!" she thought , hugging herself tightly as the cold air bit her skin. Her mind strayed to her first option – going back to Fagin's. The memory of their dance ran through her head and she found that the night air was suddenly much too hot.

To business! she ordered herself. I'll just go to Fagin's, act like nothing unusual happened, and get my handbag!

Nancy searched the ground with her eyes, bent over, and picked up the hairpin that had slipped from her fingers in her moment of distraction. After pinning her hair back in place, she made her way back towards Fagin's to retract her handbag .

A Tribute to Charles Dickens

Arnab Mondal

Charles John Huffam Dickens (7 February 1812 – 9 June 1870) was an English novelist, generally considered the greatest of the Victorian period. Dickens enjoyed a wider popularity and fame than had any previous author during his lifetime, and he remains popular, having been responsible for some of English literature's most iconic novels and characters.[1]

Many of his writings were originally published serially, in monthly instalments, a format of publication which Dickens himself helped popularise. Unlike other authors who completed novels before serialisation, Dickens often created the episodes as they were being serialised. The practice lent his stories a particular rhythm, punctuated by cliff-hangers to keep the public looking forward to the next instalment. [2] The continuing popularity of his novels and short stories is such that they have never gone out of print.

The tribute to Charles Dickens engraved in Westminster Abbey's honoured Poet's Corner calls him "a sympathizer with the poor, the suffering, and the oppressed; and by his death one of England's greatest writers." Even today, over one hundred years later, Dickens's stature has not diminished, and he is still admired for his complex characters, brilliant imagery, and

themes of human suffering and social responsibility.

Many scholars believe that Dickens's insight and sensitivity stemmed from a kaleidoscope of contrasting experiences throughout his lifetime. The second of eight children born to a Navy clerk, Charles Dickens grew up in coastal dockyard towns like Portsea and Chatham, and also in Rochester, with its Norman Cathedral towers and Elizabethan mansion at Cobham Wood. His early environs encouraged him to explore the work of English novelists, as well as the delights of the theatre.

These positive images of Dickens's first twelve joyful years soon became a memory when his father fell into debt. The Dickens family moved, first to a shabby tenement in Camden Town, London, then finally to the debtors' prison. During his family's imprisonment, Dickens was forced to work as a child labourer in a dirty boot-blackening warehouse. His despair over his family's situation led him to lament, "my early hopes of growing up to be a learned and distinguished man were crushed in my breast." However, it was just this experience that would figure heavily in his writing, and ultimately it determined the course of his life.

A fleeting financial comeback for the Dickens family allowed Charles to get out of the warehouse, and he went on to make early career attempts in theatre, law clerkship and newspaper reporting before finding, in a writing career, an outlet for his creative energies and a means of exorcising his own painful past.

Many of Dickens's novels, including *Oliver Twist* (1837-39), *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-39), *David Copperfield* (1849-50), *Hard Times* (1854) and *Little Dorrit* (1855-57), illustrate the author's sympathy for human suffering and the struggle against social injustice. Dickens called on his own experiences to document the horrors of child labour and the effect of English industrialization on the nation's poor, championing England's

oppressed throughout his work. W. Walter Crotch writes that:

Dickens's view of the poor was simple...he refused absolutely to think of them as a class apart, conspicuous either for wickedness or inertia. He held that the fault of their condition lay not in them, but in bad laws, defective social arrangements, inefficient administration and general neglect. In short, they were the creatures of their environment. Believing this, he set to work, and, in the space of a few short years, affected sweeping and enduring reforms in housing, in education, and in the general treatment of children, by the community.

In 1858, Charles Dickens separated from Kate, his wife of twenty years and the mother of his ten children. At this personally trying time, Dickens's restless and depressed spirit found release in the theatre. Over a period of twelve years, he toured the British Isles and America with his one-man grand tour—a series of dramatic readings of his most outstanding characters and poignant dramatic prose pieces, receiving rave reviews on both sides of the Atlantic.

Exhausted by his obsession to breathe theatrical life into his characters, Dickens ended his final tour with the words, "I now vanish evermore." He died three months later at the old mansion in Cobham Wood that had been his childhood dream home and which he had recently purchased.

Like the haunting humanizing spirits of *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens lives on through work that is a continuing testament to his poetic vision, artistic accomplishment and hope for a more humane world.

Britain's Prince Charles has paid tribute to Charles Dickens.

The royal described the author - who wrote a number of classic books such as 'Great Expectations' and 'A Tale of Two Cities' - as "one of the greatest

writers of the English language” on 07.02.12 on the 200th anniversary of his birth. Charles was joined by his wife Camilla, the Duchess of Cornwall, to pay tribute to Dickens in a service of thanksgiving at Westminster Abbey. In a message from the prince read out at an event at Dickens’ birthplace in Portsmouth, Hampshire, to celebrate the novelist’s birth, he said: “My wife and I would like to send our special greetings from Poets’ Corner in Westminster Abbey to the Lord Mayor and all the assembled guests at St Mary’s Church in Portsmouth as we simultaneously celebrate the bicentenary of the birth of your most famous son, who was born 200 years ago at Mile End Terrace and later baptised in St Mary’s Church.”Despite the many years that have passed, Charles Dickens remains one of the greatest writers of the English language, who used his creative genius to campaign passionately for social justice.”

What is most painful is the fact that today most of us do not even know of his birthday or that it is his 200th anniversary. With the hope that this outlook changes and that we offer the great author the huge respect that he deserves, we wish him happy birthday and pray for his soul to be at peace, wherever he maybe.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, MR. DICKENS!

An Indian Author's Carol

Ashish Agarwalla

The bus conductor furiously rang the bell indicating the bus driver to slow down sufficiently enough so that the passengers could get off deftly, breaking into a slight jog as they did. Anirban Datta was amongst those who did, and stepped into a puddle of slush that had been created as a result of the torrential rainfall of the afternoon. A number of curses escaped him, which if any of his fifth grade English students heard, would have greatly diminished their view of their English teacher.

Anirban was a 36 year old Masters in English graduate from Delhi University, now teaching in a missionary school in South Calcutta. His routine consisted of him leaving for school every morning at 7 and returning in the evening via one of the few state buses that plied to his north Calcutta home.

He was also, as his mother said (usually defending him from the jibes of relatives), an aspiring author. But he was never published.

As usual on that gloomy day he ate his dinner, the process being made quicker due to his father's taunts, and went to bed with a Charles Dickens novel (his favourite author).

In the middle of the night Anirban was suddenly awoken by a sharp rasping noise. Forced to wake to and find the root of the noise Anirban looked directly into the face of someone he went to bed with every day. Charles Dickens himself!

The Boz's deep voice said, " Anirban. Everyday you go to sleep with me close at your heart. You want to be a writer like me I see from the manuscripts piled on your table."

Anirban still reeling from the effect and imagining it to be a dream reached out to touch the ghostly silhouette.

"My boy. I am real. You are not seeing things." Charles said.

"You're Charles Dickens? Heavens." Anirban said still flummoxed.

"Yes. And I wish to know why you consider yourself a failure as an author."

"Well. Do you really want to know? It is because the Indian publishers do not want true authors or writers. All they want is content tailor made for mass appeal. They don't want real literature."

" Well, are you sure? Let me take you back to your first attempt at meeting a publisher." Charles said, and as soon as he finished saying these words Anirban was transported to a small room on the third floor of a building that said Mohan Publishers.

" Yes, I remember this place." Said Anirban, " They told me my work was not fit to be published. Hmph. They want these cheap paperback styled romcoms that makes every Tom, Dick or Harry think that they're writers."

“ Yes. But then did you try to introspect once on what he said. Did you try and get a second opinion from your friends and colleagues?” asked Charles. “ Well your silence says it all.”

In the next moment another vortex of swirl and they were back in Anirban’s room. Charles pointed to his desk and said, “Did you try once again to reflect upon the criticisms that were pointed out to you.” Again silence met him. “Anirban, my boy- Failure is just a stepping stone to greater things. The future will be what you make of it”

And with a blinding light and swirl Charles disappeared. Anirban, blinded shut his eyes and could only open them after some time. For the next few minutes he was left wondering if he was dreaming. He opened his copy of A Christmas Carol lying on his bed.

It was signed- To Anirban, The future is what you make of it. - Charles Dickens

Life is a Blessing

Devi Meenakshi Chockalingam

“Reflect upon your present blessings of which every man has many - not on your past misfortunes, of which all men have some. “

Charles Dickens

Many people fail to realize the above words and they continue to lament that their lives are filled with misfortunes. Everyone of us would have faced problems in some stages of life and would have landed up in a pool of misery. But we should not think about those miserable moments and instead we must think about the blessings in our life.

It gives us the capability to do our jobs with enthusiasm and lead an active life. Indeed, life is a gift presented to everyone of us by God. It lies in our minds of how we take life either as a bundle of blessings or as a parcel of misfortunes.

We always think about what we don't have, we seldom think of what we have. Each successful man has tasted failure several times before becoming successful. So if we bear the burden of those failures constantly in mind, we can never do anything meaningful. Now let us consider a few samples of great legends who did not consider misfortunes at all but considered only the present blessings of life.

In 1914, Edison lost his factory to fire. Edison watched his lifetime effort go up in smoke and said, “There is a great value in disaster. All our mistakes are burnt up. Thank God we can start anew”. In spite of disaster, three weeks later, he invented the phonograph. We have to develop such an attitude.

Another great person is Abraham Lincoln who failed miserably in several stages of life before becoming the American President. Young Beethoven was told that he had no talent for music, but he gave some of the best music to the world.

All successful people succeeded in spite of misfortunes, not in the absence of them. All success stories are stories of great failures. The only difference is every time they failed, they bounced back. This is called failing forward, rather than backward. We must learn from our failures and misfortunes and keep going.

Misfortunes are inevitable. A misfortune can act as a driving force and also teach us humility. In grief, we will find the courage and faith to overcome the setback. We must learn to become victors, and not victims. After every misfortune we must ask ourselves: What did I learn from this experience? Only then we will be able to turn a stumbling block into a stepping stone.

If we look back into the history, all great people have come across misfortunes in some part of their lives. But still what made them great was that they were not shattered by the clouds of misfortune. Instead they considered their present blessings and continued their work with belief in themselves. That’s how they emerged successful in their lives. This is the way to succeed.

Extract from the Dikshit Club Papers

Eklavya Chaudhuri

The rickety yellow wooden monster of a cart shot upwards in a spray of mud and dust, and came down again, rollicking most exuberantly. All around, peasants ploughed, and those ‘blithe spirits’ that Mr. Shelley has written about so feelingly chanted an avian chorus. And a song was on our lips, too, dear reader, for the Dikshit Club, a pet project of my Master’s that strived to explore the Bengal countryside, was out on its fourth outing!

I use that term ‘Club’ loosely, for in reality there were but two of us, myself and my master, Mr. Shyamal Dikshit. Messrs KC Dhakkan, Anilnathan Twinkle and Maganmash Bodmash, had after three expeditions of a like nature, for some inexplicable reason decided to pass up another glorious chance to scientifically observe the life of Bengal’s emaciated villagers at close quarters.

It was hot inside the cart, the natural summer heat augmented by the workings of my Master’s mammoth intellect.

“Shyam,” he said to me, “Are you listening?”

I assured him I was.

“Don’t you think Mr. Dickens’s Pickwickians would have loved the Bengal people? Penniless, yet never deprived of wit; always ready with a cheeky reply?”

“Yes, sah, cheek that if given tah th’ British will lead ‘em to wear a hemp rope fer a bowtie.”

My master reprimanded my frivolity.

To say that the inn we came to looked a most vile inn graces it with no great distinction. There are many vile inns in Bengal. Indeed, inns of the vile category seem to outweigh the other kind. Nevertheless, from the appearance and smell and seedy look of the innkeeper (he was furry of whisker and furtive of eye, and I half expected to see a tail poking out from beneath his trousers), this inn was certainly of a high distinction in vileness.

Our stay did not go well.

The clock was striking twelve in our room, my Master was asleep, and I was just dozing off when I heard a snuffling and a ruffling.

In the darkness I could just make out a man, from his features either the innkeeper himself or a close personal relative. He was frisking the room in a businesslike fashion.

I should of course have woken my Master, but my kind heart relented. We had no great valuables.

But this thief was perseverant. He had felt the small pouch of coins my

Master carried on a belt, and was even now spreading his jacket on the floor.

This was going a bit too far. Wordlessly I drew the jacket away.

The thief upended the pouch on the spot where he thought the jacket was with a tinkling, and felt for the folds.

The explosive expletive he uttered when no folds were found shocked my Master into wakefulness.

“Thief!”

I patted my Master, mindful of his weak heart. “Nawnsense,” I said, “There be no thief.”

The thief interrupted indignantly.

“No thief? Oh yes? If there’s no thief, who the dickens has pinched my jacket?”

The Last Letter

Indrani Ganguli

There was a soft knock on the door. She looked up from the pages in her hand. Paul stood in the doorway. “Did you find anything?” he asked softly. “Paul...” she started, and then her voice broke. The tears came spilling down her cheeks. “Any! Don’t-don’t cry, please. I know your mom’s been missing for two days now. But we’re-we’re doing everything that we can to find her. I promise. Please sweetheart....”

“This,” she said, pointing to the pages in her hand, “is a letter mother wrote to me, probably before going away.” “Explain”, was all Paul managed to get out.

“As we are talking over here, mother is on her way to France.” “France? But... why?”

“Well honey, I’m not sure, but I think mother had just discovered the fact that she is Lucy Darny’s daughter, or maybe, you’ll better know her as Lucy Manette .”

“But I...she...I mean...wait a second...Lucy Manette, as in Lucy Manette, the famous character in Dickens’s Tale Of Two Cities? This is totally incredible. Wait, does this mean you are Lucy Manette’s granddaughter?....”

But how?...I can't wrap my mind around all these."

"Calm down. I know that you can't believe it, neither could I. But listen on." She turned to the letter held in her trembling hands.

"Dear Anella," it read, "I know that you are probably worried sick by now. But I am safe, and I am on my way to France. Remember what father had told me about opening mother's box? That I should open it the day after you turned thirty? Last week I opened the box and found a letter addressed to me, mother's last letter. Before she died, mother had made father promise that he would not reveal mother's identity to me any time soon, for as you know, at that time, France was a hotbed of rivalries and conspiracies. Mother thought, and rightly too, that knowing my true identity might endanger me. Just after mother's death, father came ,or should I say, ran away to America with me and my baby brother. He could not bring all the belongings with us but among the few things that he brought with him, my mother's box was probably the most precious to him. And I have to agree that he did a good job of hiding mother's identity until I was married. But even then all I had was only a vague idea that my mother was quite well known. It was only last week that I discovered who my mother was. And now I am going to France to find out more about her, more about her life as it was before the book states it..."

Anella looked up from the letter and both of them sat silently, staring at one another and thinking . Processing so much news at one go was too much for both of them.

"What do you think would be mother's first move once she gets to France?" asked Paul. "Well ,if I know her as I think I know her, she will first try to locate the prison where Dr.Manette was held a prisoner, in St.Antoine. After that, probably she would try to find out where Lucy

Manette was living before she found out that her father was not dead as she had been told, and with whom. After that, I have no idea what moves she has planned.”

“Okay. So do we follow her? I mean we could help her. And hang on a second, wouldn't she try to visit One Hundred and Five, North Tower? In the Bastille?”

“Yeah, that's a good possibility. “

“Isn't there anything else in the letter that could possibly help us?” Anella turned to the letter again.

“...Inside the box was another letter, addressed to me, but this one was written by father. It stated that the Evremonde family had many more blemishes and dark secrets than that had been disclosed in the book by Dickens....”

“Oh!” Paul exclaimed. “ This means she will try to uncover them...But I guess she won't find much, 'cause great care was taken to hush up all the whispers that had ever been heard against them.”

Anella looked worried. “But mother has nowhere to go to in France. With whom will she stay? She is an old lady of almost eighty, to cry out aloud.”

“Don't you worry about her. If she has had the courage to travel alone to France in search for her mother's past, she can take good care of herself. But I am planning to follow her nevertheless, to assist her in the search, for I too have become interested in the matter.”

Anella seemed to have resigned to the fact that her mother was determined

to reach the ultimate truth, especially regarding the Evermonds. Although she didn't show it, she too had become interested in her mother's search. But deep down somewhere in her heart she knew that some truths can never be discovered, and her sixth sense whispered in her mind that the Evremondes' secrets were of that kind.

Coming out of her contemplations, she smiled at Paul.

Unititled

Ishani Dutta

When Charles Dickens, one of the greatest writers of all times, was deported to India, he maintained a diary to share his experiences on his return. This diary was found by a canal in the Kerala Backwaters.

Well, he came to India like this –

Dickens, while visiting the English countryside, after a long and tiring journey, came upon a dockyard near Kent. He fell asleep while writing on a run-down boat moored nearby. When he woke up, startled, to the sound of a sudden siren – it was in Kolkata Port – for a steamer was to set sail. He got up, surprised and wandered around, trying to talk to people around, that went past him, pushing him from one point to another. He couldn't even understand the languages being spoken by them. Frustrated and dejected, he finally found a by-lane that took him out of the bustling dockyard. He went past the dock-office where he could see the owner dozing – Charles was very surprised by this.

When he actually reached the city, he observed various things – like the children running around with circles made of rubber – which he found were actually meant to be attached to wheels of bicycles for a smoother

ride – and this they were doing barefoot! He then noticed the clothes that a group of old men were wearing – ‘Only halfway down till the knees?!’ he thought. And women seemed to be draped in about a bale of cloth! He came across trams and metros too and thought that, ‘probably he was disoriented for a while - everything seemed so strange!’ But the fact that went against this thought was that the people were talking in a loud gibberish of which he failed to comprehend even a word!

He went further on, reached a sweet-shop and saw a crowd of people stuffing their mouth with loads of what appeared to be white, spongy balls, dripping some sticky juice (– if only he knew it was the famous Roshogolla of Kolkata!) His mouth watered at the aromas from the kitchen window. He thought of buying something to eat and offered the shopkeeper some of the pounds and shillings he fished out from his pockets. But there was a boisterous bout of laughter from the crowd and he was turned away. He move away and next, came upon a tour-operator who took one look at him and understood everything. He could communicate in a little bit of broken English and was told that he was in Kolkata and the year was 1975. He somehow managed to get himself transported by a loud clanking train to Haryana, and then to Gujarat and to Kerala.

Dickens diary pages that contain the account of these times are written in a strange kind of short-hand. But what can be made out from some decipherable portions, is that he somehow came across few people who could understand his predicament and took care to help him reach back home to England. After enjoying the sights and sounds and the famous hospitality of various Indian regions, he set sail for England.

Dickens went back home in ship from the port of Vishakhapatnam. What a twist of luck that he somehow lost his diary on the way somewhere – that is the reason Dickens could never include experiences of his India-

visit in any of his published works. This diary was found by Christopher, a fisherman from Kerala who handed it over to the authorities and now it currently enjoys a position of honour in the Kerala Museum of Literature in Allepey.

Charles Dickens in India

Jannat Sidhu

(Victorian writer visiting India)

The sky seemed to be a dwelling place of thunder and lightning. Rain was striking earth as it wanted to wash away all sins and evils of it. I wondered if God was in mood to punish humans for spoiling his world. I rubbed my eyes to be sure if I was awake as I could see a chariot coming from the sky to earth. It landed on a barren heath. Oh my God! It was Charles Dickens on earth! In India!!! It was his curiosity to know about India that compelled god to send this legend back on earth.

Charles moved forward with excitement to see India- the country of spirituality and morals. But look! The first sight encountered him was of OLIVER TWIST in India. He was shocked and he enquired of Oliver that what he was doing here. The reply shocked him further. Oliver, an orphan has joined band of pick-pockets and was aspiring to be a politician. He loves to trouble honest people for self centered goals. It's not bad in his words as society teaches this only. "In this world it is good to bad or best to be worst!" With these words he went away.

Moving little ahead, he was hardly seven of nine days out of wonder, when he saw a school in front of him just a copy of the school from

HARD TIMES. On further investigation he found hundreds of aspiring engineers and doctors and would be scientists being taught. With curiosity he tried to search the hungry souls inclined to be fed on imagination and literature. He got succeeded to find them sitting in one group with the tag of failures! They needed to cram science and math's formulas to survive in this world.

With choked throat and mood, he walked on and felt little delighted and relieved to see the Pageant of lovers. But gosh! What kind of love it was! The girl trying to measure the depth of love of the boy with the weight of his money!! Feeling his eyes burning like coal, he rushed forward. Now he came across a library. Oh! Which other heaven he could wish on earth!! Entering the library he jumped into the ocean of history and autobiographies of Indian martyrs. His soul's hunger and thirst got satisfied to know Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa.

Encountering the busy market he found people sitting and sharing their feelings without any difference of cast, creed or race. He sensed the respect for all religions and the feel of spirituality one of the hallmarks to define India. He found thousands of David Copperfield struggling to achieve their aims to make their country once again The Incredible INDIA!!!!

Accept THE UNEXPECTED

Isha Goyal

(If luck has one chance, then effort has infinite)
(Inspired by “Great Expectations” by Charles Dickens)

James is an orphan whose parents left him when he was just two years old. He was soon adopted by a poor couple who wanted to have a boy child to support them in their old age. But James was not loved by them. He was looked up as a source of comfort. Their condition was so poor that they sometimes had nothing to eat at all. As the time passed, James became mature. He looked after his family by working hard all day in the garage.

One day when he was coming back from his garage, he saw a girl who was very much tensed. James kept on looking at her with his head tilted. She had long brown curly hair and her complexion was fair. She seemed to be an angel from heaven. He moved towards her and asked her the problem. She tells him that her car is not starting. He checks the car and realizes that the engine has broken down. He asks her permission to take the car to his garage and repair it. She warns him, “Dare you put a scratch on it.” He assures her the safety of the car and tells her that he will send it to her house. The next day he went to her house. He did not care about the money but only wanted to see the face of the girl once. He didn’t know

what this feeling was all about. The same girl came to open the door. She pushed James aside and madly went near her car as if she had met her school friend after a long time.

James came to know that her name is Estella. She asked James about the repair charges. James's excitement was dashed to the ground by her indifferent attitude. She merely gave him a pound note and shut the door at his face without even thanking him. He left the place sadly. He could not sleep at night and Estella's thoughts thoughts pondered over his mind. After a day's wait he went to her to tell what he felt about her. With great courage in his heart he said, "Estella, I love you.....Will you marry me?" She laughed out loud as if James had cracked a joke. She said, "How can you even think that I will fall in love with a guy like you?" Meanwhile, a smart muscular boy interrupted them and asked Estella to sit in his car. Without even saying anything else to James she accompanied the muscular guy. James was left alone. He realized that it's only the money that matters. From that day onwards he started working very hard and within a few years he became famous round the town for his automobiles shop.

In search of job a girl came to his showroom. James realized that the girl is Estella. He was shocked to see her in ragged clothes. But Estella could not identify James. He showed her the pound note given to him by her. Tears rolled down her eyes. She told him that his father suffered a huge loss in shares. At the same time, the boy for whom she had rejected James betrayed her. James sympathized with her and they got united.

The White House

Yadpreet Kaur

(Inspired by “The Old Curiosity Shop”)

It was a windy night leaves were fallen down on the road, where an elderly man was walking alone in his own thoughts, it was hell dark, and so only gloomy picture of the man was being seen. As he walked further on the street his face was visible under moon light. He seemed to be thirty five; he had a mature look on his face. It looked as if he was out for a night walk.

As he moved down the street, he found a young girl sitting under a tree. The elderly man came closer to her and asked her in a very concerned way, “Dear, what are you doing on this road at midnight?” but the girl didn’t reply. So, he asked her again, “What was the matter? Why are you so sad?” Then she replied, “I am lost.” From her appearance she didn’t look neglected; she looked as if she belonged to rich family. The elderly man asked her, “Where do you live? Tell me your address; I will take you to your house”. She told her that she was the daughter of Mr. Jordan.”Ok “he said.”Where do you live?”I live at the White house in Switzerland.”Alright, I will take you to your house.” She agreed to him.

He told that his name is Smith and asked her name. She replied him

in very timid voice that her name is Kate They started there journey to her home. While on there way the girl experienced different emotions of people that Smith told her. Smith during the journey told Kate about the sorrows and happiness of life, whereas, her father had only told her about materialistic things. Smith told her that money can not buy love. While the journey father-daughter relationship developed between her and Smith.

They both reached Kate's house her father was very glad to see her. He gave him huge amount of money, which didn't please him, he didn't help her because of money, and he had built a strong relationship with Kate. So he promised her that she will visit her once in a week. And he did so. This made Kate's father very upset because Kate use to talk about smith only and neglected her father. He once told Kate that she should not meet Smith so often but Kate refused to do so. Which made Kate's father angry and he asked his security guards to not let Smith enter in their house.

Almost three weeks passed but Smith didn't turn up. Kate was very disappointed and she thought that Smith has forgotten her. She grew pale day by day and her health deteriorated. She hardly ate anything, her father became much tensed, and the medicines also didn't make her health any better. She used to take Smith's name unconsciously. Once her father heard her and so he thought that nothing else but Smith was his medicine. He called Smith to visit her daughter Kate and he had realized that money can not buy love. From that day onwards Smith started living with them as now Kate was her family. Kate's health also improved day by day.

A Walk to Remember

Shiven Shridhar

“I walked excitedly down the footpath in glee. I had secured the first rank in class and was clutching my report card near my heart. Turning at the corner, i reached the driveway of my house. My pace quickened as my hart beat with excitement. I wanted to break this news to my mother as fast as i could, because she was the one who had coached me and it was because of her only that i achieved this important rank. I ran through the gravel path and marched towards the front door. Surprisingly, it was open. Mother always kept the front door locked, i thought, puzzled. I entered the house. To my great astonishment, it was upside down. Not wanting to hear what my heart told me, i looked in all rooms. Everytinhg was a mess. I broke open the basement door and went down the stairs and saw the bodies of my mother, my father and my sister dangling from ropes on the ceiling. In a second my world had toppled over, my life had taken a 360 degree turn. I called the police and settelled down ,against the wall, on the floor, clutching my report card to my heart, staring at the lifeless bodies of my family, all the while crying inconsolably. The police came at the crime scenes and started their investigations. At first, they deemed it to be a suicide, very unlikely, the post-mortem report revealed that my sister and my mother had been raped and murdered.they became victims of a very cold-blooded homicide. My life was destroyed. I shuttled from home to

home, in search of haven and peace. A sudden urge of ending my life filled me.” My name is shiven shridhar and im 15 years old, just a very normal teenager living in arizona, philadelphia. Today at 65, 50 years hence the great tragedy that fell upon me, i narrate my story to the world, a story that tells all about me, the person i am. That incident made me a very different person. I started living in an abandoned shack. I opened a liquour shop from the money that the governtment of america gave me as compensation. At thirty my shop was shut down. My life became a mess, which no one wanted to put right. I was arrested on a fake charge of child molesting. For twenty- five years, i was sentenced to the Guantanamo bay- a prisoner’s hell, reduced to twenty for good behaviour. After i came out i started looking for the murderer of my parents. I resolved to myself that i won’t rest until i found the killer of my parents. The police helped me. They checked the semen directory of the state and the samples of semen that were found in the bodies of my mother and sister matched those of a person named, raynard waits. On checking out, it was discovered that he was invloved with my father in business and had murdered him for a business failure, for which he blamed him, untruthfully. The court sentenced him for a life term at Guantanamo. Today im the owner of a very successful shipping company, and, as i gaze out at the sea i write this story to the world, clutching it to my heart, with the same excitement and pain, with which i held it 50 years ago.

Questions to god

“the bombs exploded turning the beautiful masjid into rubble. The majestic, glorious marble structure was razed to the ground burrying beneath it my mother and noor.i looked at it fro the place where i fell, from the impact of my blast. I stared at the fiery spectacle, listening to the sires, seeing the people sreaming and running, crying madly for their loved ones. Why did it happen? Everywhere i saw, i could see blood the split bodies and death. I goy up and searched for mother and noor, my love .i saw noor blood spouting from her mouth her eyes stretched

towards the heavens. She was slowly being spirited away by god and i could do nothing. I screamed and started crying like a mad person. Why? Why? Why? Why did it happen? Why did god do this? Why did he create jealousy and hatred- two emotions which could just wrench the heart out of someone and turn them into stone statues and make them turn against their own kith and kin? Were the walls of their hearts made of glass? Then how could they so cold-bloodedly kill their own people? Who were they? Messengers of satan or allah, as they very proudly told? Perhaps i'm too immature to answer my own questions. my name is- sahil. God snatched away from me my most prized possessions. I wanted to study, to write but fate had other plans for me. The poor conditions of my family strove me to work in cracker factory, to earn bread and water. I was denied the freedom to express my thought. G snatched from me my mother, who loved me the most and noor, the love of my life, my only light in the darkness. God snatched from me all. People say life is anything that dies when somebody steps upon it. My life was trampled and razed down, just like the masjid." I wrote as i remembered the incident again. My mom and noor were killed in a suicide bomber blast on the local masjid. The horrific incident shudders me even today. The damage is irreparable. Today, i write this all in my first book, i want to tell my story to the world. the miseries and the tricks of fate, tell their effect on my life. But i haven't still got the answers to my questions. But i will search for them forever, until i find them. but one thing from that incident does give me something to think about- "life is a question no one can answer and death is an answer no one can question."

Report on Charles Dickens

Kirti Tyagi

Charles Dickens planted the seeds of his novels through his experience. One of the most eminent English novelist who was celebrated as the greatest novelist of the Victorian period . Charles John Huffam Dickens was born on 7th February at Landport in Portsea. John Dickens, his father was a clerk in the navy pay office. The Dickens family moved to Chatham in Kent which emerged as the authentic childhood home for Charles. He continually lived beyond his means and was eventually imprisoned in the Marshalsea debtor's prison. To pay off debt and aid his family, Dickens was forced to flee school and thus began the strenuous exertion of a 10 hour day at the warehouse daily. He acquired six shillings a week for binding labels. The strenuous and often cruel work state made an indelible impression on Dickens and subsequently influenced his yarns and essays. The predicament and condition in which the working class people lived became the principal premise of his work style. David Copperfield is one of his autobiographical novels based on his youth.

In Dickens first story 'A Dinner at Popular Walk' was released in London monthly digest. He trekked across Britain to cover election campaigns and this led to serialization of his first novel 'The Pickwick Papers' in 1836. On 2nd April 1836 he married Catharine Thomas Hogarth.

In 1842 Dickens and his wife made their first trip to United States and Canada. He took this opportunity to rekindle and ignite the fervor and spirit of the festival Christmas. The tradition of togetherness and Christian virtues were on the decline. He invigorated the deeply entrenched feelings of the people in Britain and America.

He began a grueling and ambitious tour through the English provinces. On 9th June 1865 while returning from Paris he was involved in Staplehurst Rail Crash .Dickens later used this experience as material for his short ghost story .

On 8 June 1870 , Dickens suffered another stroke at his home . He died at Gads Hill Place , never having regained consciousness .

With his death , the world lost one of the most natural story tellers who believed in spinning a yarns about real life situations and characters . A slice of real life is what we got from all his stories which have retained their charm and flavor along the passage of years . Be it Pip from Great Expectations or Oliver from Oliver Twist , it's their endearing sweetness that will always be enamoring for one and all .

The last word quotes by him –

“Be natural my children . For the writers , whatever is natural has fulfilled all the rules of art “

My Fair Lady

Shivani Sharma

As the night playmate bid goodbye to the morning chieftain who made its way westwards, the sky kindled with shades of oranges and blues. It looked similar to my paintbrush dipping in water as the colours seized a life of their own. During my undergraduate days, Tabussam, my roommate often mentioned her childhood place to me. Now that I was here, it seemed far more beautiful than her descriptions. The fact that her mother was influenced by Mughal architecture was evident in the construction of the haveli. A week back, I was on the highway when my car died and Tabussam suggested that I stay here: “The village is just few miles away. It has changed. Yes. But, you are not staying out on the road!” “What change?” “You will know.” And she hung up. The evening that followed, I spotted a swarm of men in orange jackets at the bus-stop. “Site workers!?” I remember wiping the lens of my glasses as their jeeps sent a plume of dust in the air. Looking further back in time, Tabussam would tell me how every morning she woke up to the serene landscape and spent the entire day swinging on the vines in the trees. Her father, a nature-enthusiast brought her nests that weaver birds left behind. Few days into the place and I realized this was no longer Tabussam’s pseudo-wonderland but, an emerging industrial town...the silence of the night embellished by the chirping of crickets was overpowered by the noise of fatfatiyas. The air smelt of smoke and soot making it difficult to smell the

Queen of the Night. I was completely stunned by the tenacity of human encroachment- the “desire” to cover every inch of land-“There!” I was broken from the reverie by Bhola, the new boy servant of the Project Engineer’s who lived on rent here with his wife, Mahua. “Above the temple spire!” The airport was few kilometers away. We were playing the game of who spots the airplane first. “I win!” Victorious, he waved the stick with a polythene bag tied to its end. “Aren’t airplanes birds of big size?” “I –I guess...” He continued, “Do birds think the same? If not, what do birds think?” At nine, he was bright for his age. I was told that his step-mother made him drop school after his father, a labour died at the project site. Mahua took pity on the boy and employed him. A kind woman. An earthly beauty. Her evenings went in collecting wisps of dry grass and feeding them to the dying fire. Her husband was always away for work. Had it not been his clothes on the string or the cigarette ash Bimala threw or the noise his jeep made at his arrivals and departures, one would never believe that a man lived in this house as well. I shrugged. “So, Bhola, do you remember the step I taught you?” His eyes lit. “Belt and sunglasses?” I removed the sun glasses from my head and the black belt from my white dress and gave them to him. He put the sun glasses behind his shirt collar, tied the belt around his waist, squared his shoulders, rested his thumbs on his belt and started to move from side to side. “Yes... keep repeating ...dabang, dabang, dabang... yes... that’s it! I forgot to ask, why not Shahrukh?” “He does not have muscles.” He said this in a matter-of-fact tone. “Hahaha!” “Do you know, I am the leader of my group! Wonder what they had been doing without me.” “Who else is in your group?” “Hemu hakla and Laali.” “Your girl friend?” He blushed, “No, my goat.” My soft chuckle was subdued by a loud cry of pain from behind. We turned and saw Mahua fallen at the threshold of the house with the vermilion box floating on the surface of the water puddle. I hurried over to her. “Are you hurt? Here, take my hand. Bhola, run and get some hot water!” I made her sit on the bamboo stool and knelt beside her. “Show me your right ankle”. Apparently, she felt shy to show her

hairy leg. “I had a slip like this and it turned to be really nasty. Come on, do not be shy...” Mahua lost the grip and I kept her ankle on my left thigh. “Does it pain?” She shook her head as if saying no. “Here?” She shook her head again. A little higher this time. “Here?” Mahua held my wrist. Her mouth was half-open. She continued to look me in my eyes. And then, the siren at the site rang. She gasped and walked away with a slight limp. Her long black hair caressed the white and black checkered floor. She turned to me and said, “I have got what I wanted.”

The Spring of Hope, the Winter of Despair

Namrata Agarwal

Long after every star in night's army had lost to day's soldiers, just as I was going to collect some rays of sunshine to bake a few Sunlight biscuits, rain came pouring down. "Oh!" I whispered to myself, "I'll just have to make a Raindrop pie then!" And teas, coffees, sandwiches, noodles... everything. The customers would soon be coming in and then I would know today's theme. There came Mr. Gibson and his family, the journalist Stella, Polly, Mr. Stevenson, Dandy, Viola, Finn....

Some books glided on top of each table from nowhere. Mr. Mark shouted "The theme, it's, it's Charles Dickens!" There came on the theme board the words "Charles Dickens" and a recipe landed on my kitchen table along with the ingredients. Capsicums of Suffering, Tomatoes of Sickness, Onions of Tears and all the things that I'd rather not cook. But what were interesting were the spices. There was the Shy Salt, the Shrewd Sugar, the Stupid Herbs and the Arrogant Chilies as well. There was also a box labeled 'comedy' which had some kind of flour. I started cooking, following the recipe like it was a cloud running away and that I needed for my Mamma's Cloud Cracklers (with extra cold wind whiffs... yummy!)

I took out the Wine of Happiness from my secret cupboard and poured one drop over the dish. The drop of happiness would balance the sadness. The sadness would bring out the peace of happiness and happiness, the realizations of sadness. The name of the dish was ‘The winter of Despair’. I added the words ‘The Spring of Hope’ before it. Perfect!

Had I not been working in this place for so long, my first reaction when I stepped out of the kitchen would have been plain astonishment. There were ghost-like-illusion-like creatures all around. It was like a riddle made by reality and solved by fantasy. A dozen or so Oliver Twists were the waiters of today. Sam Weller easily fit himself into the place of the indispensable manager. On one corner was a prison where the band was singing songs on its lost freedom.

The journalist was interviewing David Copperfield. Pip had taken the dance floor with Estella, dancing to the music and giving me yet another reason to refill my jar of love. Ebenezer Scrooge was presenting gifts to children along with Jacob Marley. Engrossed in writing in his notebook Samuel Pickwick sat on a chair in the corner, looking up to observe and down to preserve what he observed.

The evening passed and so did the night. The books were read, the plates were empty and the characters were fading. The lights were dimmed as the sun won the battle with night again, and the last customer was leaving.

“So, what are you cooking tomorrow, Jenny?”

“Sunlight biscuits?!” I half replied, half asked.

And he smiled that twisted smile of his, like...like he was the one who had made rain fall today...

Dobby Finds Bliss

Pallabi Paul

Down the snow covered white road around which the palatial houses stood with pride sat a lean figure in his villa. Dobby Clarke sat on his wooden chair with his face hidden behind his fingers. Dobby Clarke was perhaps the most powerful person in the town. He owned the ‘The Daily News’, the most read daily of the place. He had every materialistic possession money could buy. Hundreds of men ran on his orders. But he had a hollow place in his life. Dobby Clarke was also perhaps the loneliest person in the whole town. The day was Christmas. The whole grand town was decorated with roses and lilies and lights. The scent filled the air. Children ran up and down the street and merry people sang jolly songs. Through the lattice light streamed in Dobby’s room. But he was not blissful. Through his life all Dobby did was earn money. He was often boorish to the workers and people and now at 54 he was lonesomeness has crept in his life. He raised his head and saw a thick mist neighbouring him. The mist soon took form and turned out to be a spirit.

“Who are you?” Dobby asked.

“I am the Christmas spirit”

“What is your business here? What do you want?”

“Ask the question to yourself”

“All I fancy for Christmas is some delight. All the people think I’m brute and all my relatives have become distant”

“I am here to tell you a secret to be joyful on this day and eternally.” The spirit said.

“And what is it?” Dobby inquired.

“Charity is the answer Dobby. Do three charities today. But mind you, do it before the sun goes down.” No sooner than the spirit spoke the words, it disappeared into thin air.

Dobby rushed out to find and help the deprived. But he found none. The whole town was populated with the rich. Distraught, Dobby went a mile outside the town to find silence. He sat on the park bench for a while. Few moments later he found a young girl shivering and sobbing in cold.

“Why do you cry young lady?”

“My house burnt down this morning”

Dobby knew what he wanted to do. He gave the girl money and bought her clothes and allowed her to stay at his house till her house was built. He promised to build her the house too. On his way back home, Dobby saved a puppy from drowning in a frozen pond at the expense of his own life. By the time he returned to his abode, sun was about to go down and he still had to do one more deed. His servant Mr. Hobbs was walking out. Dobby called him back and handed him thousand bucks. Within

a moment there were sparks all around and the doorbell rang. Outside his house people were singing and wishing him and Dobby lived merrily after that cherishing the new found love.

The Signalman

Parikshit Mukherjee

“H alloa! Up there!”

These words seemed to freeze the man, they were addressed to. He looked down upon me from his solitary post, the solemn clouds hanging over him, as if brimming with sorrow.

“Can I come up?” I inquired, resisting the doleful alternative of staying in that piteous excuse for an airdrome, that too at the dead hours of darkness, alone.

Following his approval, I climbed up the air control tower, defying the chilling wind’s sinister screams.

The man’s peculiar stare made me uncomfortable enough to say, “Is something wrong?”

“I mistook you for someone else”, his voice deceived his young age,

“Never mind” he stopped abruptly.

The light-weight carrier, my ticket back, was delayed by three hours, so a

little tête-à-tête, I thought, couldn't hurt.

We sunk into easy conversations of life, love and the weather. And having gained his assurance, more earnest talks filled the air.

I learnt that he had not only been a student of natural philosophy, but also a victim to the recent Euro Crisis. As banks collapsed, so did his dreams. As a result his heart was lead to things, deadlier than philosophy. He had gone down, and without a bailout, never risen again. Presently though, I saw in him, a sober responsible man, stopping midway between talks, to check the radar or radio back replies.

"I am troubled, sir", he revealed after a quiet moment.

"Is it that someone else?"

"Yes! Well, I never saw the face"

"Since I am the only nocturnal worker here", he continued, "I was dazed to hear a scream, and surely enough, I saw a girl, white as a ghost, staring up at me with arctic eyes, saying 'Halloa! Up there! Help!'"

Panicked, I rushed down, realizing to my horror, she had vanished, not a soul around, and other airports, when I radioed them, couldn't account for it."

A bony chill had subdued me, as I tried to credit withdrawal symptoms (causing illnesses like delirium temern). But his reply followed a void of silence, still as death.

"A plane came crashing down the next day".

The apparition was a bad omen, he believed, describing another major crash, six months ago, preceded by a familiar sighting.

As I began to realize, that he hadn't entirely recovered, I saw my transport arrive.

Much too pleased to part with this delirious man, I made a hasty descent.

"She came again.... yesterday", he said, his refrigerated voice insinuating through my soul.

"Something dreadful will happen, and I am helpless to act!" his voice echoed.

Down, as I entered my aircraft, I looked back to find him staring at me in that peculiar manner, perhaps like the spectre's when it had stared at him.

I amused myself over his last remark, as the plane soared above the depressing clouds.

News from a daily paper: A light-weight aircraft carrying two people crashed yesterday, midway through its journey. While the actual cause is yet to be determined, most blame the weather. Regrettably, there were no survivors.

(A retelling of Charles Dickens' Signalman)

Untitled

Rupal Akansha

“Please, Sir..”

A child is like a fuzzy caterpillar. It is in its chrysalis and is innocent to the outside world. It is from this chrysalis that the caterpillar, if left undisturbed, will grow into a beautiful, fluttering butterfly. From then and there, when a child is in its cocoon, to now and here, when he transforms into an innocuous human being, is he able to build the destiny of the country. At this tender age by making them work, instead of imparting noble values and virtues in them, we are not only destroying their future but also the country's future.

It was during a journey, that I happened to spectate and understand the sufferings of a nine year old boy, a tea-seller. Through his clothing one could easily make out his pitiable plight, when his employer, taking advantage of him being an orphan, made him work day in and day out in return of a meager wage and food. Dressed scantily and barefooted, he slogged from person to person, offering them a cup of tea in return for a small amount of rupees twelve. Proceeding from one person to another, the tea seller approached my window. The person sitting in front of me was a stout man in his fifties. His appearance reflected his arrogance and depicted that he was a miser. The boy addressed him and offered him a

cup of tea. The man refused with a wave of his hand, but the boy clung on and started persuading the man to accept his service, until the man gave in. The man took a cup of tea and started drinking it and producing irritating slurping noises. Each time he took a sip, he let out an “Aah!” expressing his delight. But when he had to pay the boy his rightfully earned money the man took just six one rupee coins and handed it to the boy. The boy looked at the coins and then at the man and pleaded, “Sir, the tea cost you twelve rupees”

The man gave him a look of disgust and asked him to leave with whatever he had earned as he deserved not more than that. The boy was belittled. He desperately tried to control the tears that brimmed his eyes, trying to fight them back. The rude words of the man had hurt him to such an extent that the boy could say no more. He was about to leave when suddenly the image of his employer ceased him. With pity in his voice, he said, “Please Sir, I want some more or my employer will abuse me to death. This is the only means of livelihood I am left with” He hesitated but then continued, “ Sir, the money that I earn each day is just enough to provide me one square meal. Do you want to deprive me of even that?”

I was taken aback by the words so truly spoken by the little boy. He was right. At this tender age when other children study, he was working hard to earn himself a living. I had remained a mute spectator till then but my pity did not let me stay quiet any more. I took out a hundred rupee note and handing it over to the boy asked him to spend it wisely. The boy took it hesitantly and gave me a pleasing smile as though he understood everything I was feeling at that moment.

It is indeed unfortunate to find children being forced to work to eke out a living. Their gentle and impressionable minds which ought to imbibe good and noble qualities are exposed to the vagaries of the world. It is thus a childhood wasted which comes but once in their lives.

From Walls to Bridges

S Arun Siddharth

I hate my wife. Completely, not because of her appearance but something don't make my heart open to her. What repels, I can't find and I don't want to find. Just all I need is, the thing which I don't get from wife is to be in my hand now. Myself Gopal, mediocrity content writer and literary lover.

Roaming like an ant between the books my mind became debauchery. I was searching a harlot. Though I feel something wrong in this, on other side I was boosted up by colleagues. A long trail I made, standing before the mirror, I motivated myself.

Mayura, my wife looking at me strangely and I don't want even my eyes to hear the language of silence. Since, it has been a long gap and I avoid conversing with her. She is a solo rider.

At last, I found the place of harlots. Like child picking the dolls in the shop everyone was in that game. Slang, style and total atmosphere lured me a lot and the fear on other hand was dancing. I selected her and she was meek and sexy too.

Paying the money and I was walking towards the room. I was looking

around the room and by door side my girl was arguing with another man for extra charge. It was something ominous to me.

I moved near the window and just trying to open it. It was a newly installed one and with lot of news papers covered on it, it was adamant in not leaving the sun light.

Sports news, movie review, programs today in television and in quotes section my eyes got to roam. My eyes got stunned with the lines printed over there and lines revealed by Charles Dickens.

“To conceal anything from those to whom I am attached, is not in my nature. I can never close my lips where I have opened my heart.”

The girl came and she was closing the door and getting ready for the task. My mind basket was full of overbid. My mind with full fledge uttered” hey!! You are not Dickens. But feel the words and heal your mind “

How far I have periled my wife?? Ineffable.

Healed by the words with recuperated mind my heart was open. I was leaving the room, seeing the girl as my wife Mayura.

Just Another Witching Hour

Sanchali Ghosh

He kicked aside the worn out movie poster, and dug his hands into his pockets. “It’s a slow night kid.”

“Sure is”, replied the young boy in a sing song manner and picked up the poster. “Look, isn’t this the movie where the hero actually turns out to be a villain at the end and kills the lady?”

“How should I know?” he said, perching himself on the rusted street divider. “All I know is that I am nowhere near the amount I need to pay up today. How do we get home?”

The young boy’s face fell as he seated himself beside his partner. “Know what brother, I am sick of this begging stealing and getting flogged routine. Today is the third night I am going to stay without food. Why don’t we just run away?”

“And get ourselves into a new ring? No, thank you. I am well settled here.”

The young boy nodded glumly and then suddenly his face animated with the recollection of an old memory. “By, the way, you never taught me

how to do that blind man thing. I've seen coins pouring in when you do that."

"Oh, that is something I taught myself with time", he smugly raised his eyebrow. "For a beginner, you just do this" he said rolling up his eyeballs till the visible whites of his eyes gave him an eerie look, as he sat there demonstrating the finer techniques to his eager student under the flickering lamp post. "When you see the next car headlight, go and stand on the middle of the road, just under that signal there and spread out your arms like this" he advised.

A silent car whooshing past brought the pair out of their study session as they concentrated on the road once more. A pair of faint yellow light made the young boy jump down and run to the traffic signal. But the bulbous yellow lights moved faster than he had anticipated, and before he could gather his wits, he was blinded by their glare.

By the time he jumped down from his elevated seat and ran to the signal, the blood was flowing from the writhing figure under the wheels, tracing intricate patterns on the cold paved asphalt. He looked up at the car window horrified, not hearing the garbled nervous explanations of the man behind the wheel. He did not even realize how his hand moved on its own accord as he felt a few notes being thrust on his palm. As the stained window pulled up, he saw his rough demonic face being reflected on it – the face of an animal on the body of a fourteen year old.

"Where is the new kid I sent with you?" the man asked as he trudged into the hovel. He took out two currency notes from his pocket and handed them over. Feeling the spare note in his pocket he replied "He moved on" and sat down to his bowl of dinner.

A Midwinter Night's Dream

Satyaki Datta

These are years of life. These are the years of death. These are the ages of peace. These are the ages of war. It is the winter of joy. It is the summer of despair. We have enemies before us and friends after us in the rat race of life. The days we are facing are dark, the nights we are experiencing are glowing bright, and..

And I stared at the paper I was writing, because these words were not coming from my mind at all... may be the effect of reading ‘A tale of two cities’ again and again, I thought, watching me with a smile, saying, “actually, these are my thoughts about your time, my boy.”

The cold winter wind seemed to be flowing thorough my spine. “But sir, are not you dead already?” was my first reaction, “Oh. I must be dreaming, and this is not real, is not it?”

The writer said, “of course, it’s your dream, but does that mean that it can’t be true too? And for your another question, am I dead, really? My works live, my thoughts go on, and if a man without thoughts us dead, so why am I dead when my thoughts still live and inspire people?”

“Yes sir, your books inspire me a lot sir, Oliver twist, David Copperfield, I

read all these a lot, sir, I mean recently...” “Yeah, I can see the books on your table now” the writer beamed “and I thought that you were trying to write something on me, if I am not mistaken?”

“Yes sir, I mean... um... was trying to write something in your style. In fact, how could you write, sir? I tried but could not think over IITs and IIMs, sir... I mean how could you write about cities and lives and all?” I stammered...

“I just tried to feel, the spirit of life running among people, to narrate it, to draw a picture. You know, if you can feel the joy of tears, the hidden pain in smile, if you can feel the love, which is, actually all around us... In my style, or in YOUR style... You can really write...” the writer continued, “I heard that now a day, David Copperfield refers to not a fictional character, but a magician, but even he, in his own way, draw the picture of life... I, Charles Dickens, never died, my boy... I live in every Tom, Dick and Harry, in you, in everyone.”

Now, smiling, the writer said, “Just try to have a heart that never hardens, a temper that never tires, a touch that never hurts... and never, ever, be ashamed to cry, because.....”

I woke up, without hearing the answer, but the answer was already known to me, rather open to me, in a page of “great expectations”---

Heaven knows, we need never be ashamed of our tears, for they are rain upon the blinding dust of earth...”

The Gift

Sohanu Ghosh

“Hey Rabi!” “Oh, hi Charles! How ya doin?” “I’m good buddy. Man, the twenty-first century is really catchin up on us, don’t ya think?” “What do ya mean?” “Well, we seem to speak a different English now.” “Oh, ha ha ha. We sure do, mate, sure do.”

If anyone thought that this conversation was between some Rabi and his friend, some Charles, in some part of this earth, well, he or she is quite near to committing blasphemy. This Rabi and Charles are two people, who have bestowed the world with one of the richest legacy it boasts of – classic literature. These two people talk and exist in such a realm that is far beyond the physical or psychological reach of ordinary mortals.

“You’ve grown old Rabi – a hundred and fifty. My! Ain’t that ancient?” “Well, thanks granddad, but if you haven’t forgotten, you’ve hit a double century this year! “Hey, go easy on me, or else... I’ll laugh my guts off and you’ll have to take the blame for killing me!” “Ha ha ha ha. Nice one, ol’ timer, nice one.”

“Well, just like you did last year, this year I’m going to ask for a gift from you – and you can’t refuse.” “Well, shoot.” “Take me to your hometown

– Kolkata. I heard it’s called ‘The cultural capital of India?’ “Umm... I could, but we would have to take the permission of St. Peter.” “Well, that bit’s already been taken care of. Now let’s go.” And thus, this Rabi found himself being dragged by his friend Charles out of the gates of heaven towards the place, rather planet, where the mortals dwelled and in which, fortunately (or unfortunately?), once upon a time, even they did.

“Well, do you want to walk the streets or glide through the skies?” “Have ya totally lost it, dude? I surely don’t want any mortal staring at us as if Santa Claus popped up before him on Christmas. Talking of which reminds me, what did he gift you?” “Who?” “The reindeer guy?” “Oh, nothing much – a Lenovo laptop and a IPOD. You?” “The same, sans the IPOD.” ‘Outta cash!’ he said.”

“Stop! We’re here.” “Wow! What’s that? It’s beautiful!” “Yeah, it’s the Victoria Memorial.” “Victoria? Who’s Victoria?” “You don’t know Victoria?” Queen of England, nineteenth century?” “WHAT? She was our queen, my queen in fact. Jesus! How I hated her! Lived lavishly all her life, while hundreds of poor, hungry, homeless people strived hard to make her country prosper. Punished themselves by over-working to bring glory to her nation.”

“Hmm. Well, isn’t that the case of every nation, pal? Princes prosper and paupers perish? The world hasn’t changed a bit in all these years Charlie. People are still captive, still bound by the chains of their ruler.” “I agree, mate. Nothing’s changed. Have ya ever seen a Tagore or a Dickens Memorial as grand as this? You probably ever won’t.” “The world ever won’t old friend, the world ever won’t.”

The Dreams of Dickens

Sohanu Ghosh

“Charles John Huffam Dickens!” “Yes, sir?” “Stop goofing around and get to work you idiot!” “But sir, I was just taking a br...” WHAM! A hard punch on the nose made the little boy feel as if someone knocked the air out of him. He staggered and fell on the road. “Get back, right now!” yelled the voice. “Ye... yes, sir”, meekly said the little boy as he made a feeble effort to get up, but collapsed again.

Charles John Huffam Dickens. That was his name. He was a child labourer. Yes, it was banned in the twenty-first century, yet he existed. Thousands, millions of him existed. His life was just as they showed in the movies – father a drunkard, mother a maid in the day and a white-slave at night and god knows how many bastards as brothers and sisters.

“Quit day-dreaming and get to work you pile of dung!” Ah, yes! Work, work, work. That was all he heard all day apart from the occasional crack of the slaps and smacks. “Give me the bread, you slowpoke!”, a customer would yell and the shopkeeper, his master, would smack him in the head and say “The bread.” “Give me a litre of oil fast!”, another would say, and his master would punch him in the face and shout, “Fast!” He worked right through the week, right through the day and right through every second of his life.

The little kid of ten wanted to run. Fly away to a far-off land. Fly away to place where there would be no cruelties, no miseries. A place where there would be no one to lord over him, he would be his own master. He had heard, from the grown-up boys, who on the way to school stopped at the shop to buy lunch, of wonderful stories and movies. But he could never afford any of the two as he was always a few bucks short of a seat in the theatre and always, exactly twenty-six alphabets short of the English language.

One day, the boy discovered that he could dream. He could dream about anything, any place, any time. He could dream that he was free, dream that he read in a reputed school, and dream that he had the best seat in the theatre.

And from that day onwards, every single day, he would retire to a little bench by a quiet, unlit park and dream. Dream about freedom, about sunshine, about places where everyone did as they wished. For it did not require money to dream. It did not require a house, a country or even a parent to dream. And he dreamt that one day, he would write down all his dreams and thus provide courage and faith to millions like him all over the world; some of whom even had lost the power to dream. He dreamt he would change everything.

Miss Havisham

Somrita Ganguly

A re-telling of the old tale

I returned from work to find the house dark

Dark, desolate.

Deserted.

He had left. Or so the note said – the note ,

Scribbled on a scrap of paper, torn from my diary.

“Marriage is unnatural.

It forces two people to be together forever,

And that is unhealthy.

Fidelity is just a bourgeois construct.

We are after all,

All primal in our deepest instincts.”

I’d heard these words before –

From Sydney - a professor who taught us Irish literature in the university.

I’m certain that my beloved was happy to have attended those lectures.

He, after all, didn’t even have to search

For the parting words;

They had been tailor made for him by Sydney Carton.

“Therefore, I’m leaving”, wrote he.

(And I always thought that “therefore” is not a explanatory word!)

“- Leaving, to break free of this obligation.”

I stared for a while,
At nothing in particular, then,
Lighted a cigarette,
And a candle
And left both to complete the catharsis -
One burnt me,
The other, the paper,
As memories of the five years of courtship
And four years of our marriage
Danced on the ceiling
Like shadows
Cast by the flickering flame of the candle.
Sydney must’ve been right.
My lover must’ve been right.
Marriage must be unnatural.
We must be animals.
Who cares about fidelity?
Who cares about the tired wife,
For whom returning to her husband,
Spelt bliss?
A decade of togetherness can be obliterated
By a little letter -
That too filled with borrowed philosophy!
They must’ve right.
I must’ve invested my emotions in the wrong institution!
My phone buzzed
“Yes?”
- “Hello ma’am, I’m calling from the Celtic Resort to confirm
Your reservation for a suite for two, this weekend!”

“Cancel”, I murmured.

- Sorry ma’am, I don’t think -

I saw the flame engulfing the last bit of the paper –

“P.S. I’m moving in with Nancy.

She returned from London on Christmas eve,

When you were away for your lectures in Kent.”

- “I don’t think I heard you right”, the voice urged.

“Did you ask me to cancel your reservation for two-?”

“No, for one.”

- “I’m sorry, I didn’t get that - ”

“The suite will be occupied by one now.

Cancel the reservation for the other person.”

- “Oh that’s okay! The suite is still booked for you.

As long as you don’t cancel that,

It doesn’t make a difference to us.”

Of course, it makes no difference to you.

But what about the world of difference

It makes to the wife who’d planned

A weekend getaway with her husband?

The canopied beds in the honeymoon suites

Are a little too large for one person, aren’t they?

As confused tears streamed down my face,

I shut my eyes and saw that it was pouring outside,

And I was standing in the rain

Wet to my bones.

I had given my umbrella to Compeyson,

And he,

He had callously walked away,

Leaving my boat to subside in the deluge.

A Letter Never Received

Sujouy Chakravarthi

The first time I saw you, you ignored me. You were standing three people ahead in the queue. I had bought chocolates, you had chosen marshmallows. I held mine in my hands, you had taken a basket. I had walked and you left in a car. Then I stood where you had been a while ago. I think you left some of your smell. I looked at the pretty lady at the counter and wondered; would you have ignored her too?

The next morning I got ready to catch the bus. When the door opened, I saw your face. You were my new bus driver! I held the door handle to climb on the bus. The touch of the metal felt very cold. Something I never normally noticed. I placed 1.50 in your hands and you gave back two cents. Your hands were very rough; I would've never guessed seeing your gentle green eyes.

A few days passed. On the seventh day, you smiled at me. You were missing one of your teeth. Had they rotted because you barely opened your mouth to speak?

Then a few months passed. Each day an anticipation to see you and a disappointment of having just looked at you. It was as if every other aspect of my life froze and you were the last stream of river flowing. One

day the door opened, and you were not there. On the way out I asked the new driver where you were.

He told me you had died. The last 460 crashed yesterday and you with four other passengers, died.

I did not go to your funeral. Because to you and to everyone associated with you, I was no-one. Had you been alive though, I should've given back what you left with me. Your smile, your smell, your forty coins of two cents.

Sidney Carton's Childhood

Sunaina Bhatia

Little Sidney Carton was born into a middle class family living in the Suburbs of England in 1757. Those were hard times and great expectations were placed upon his little shoulders, for he was the one expected to rescue the family from working class monotony. He was lucky to have a mother, who strengthened his ethics and a father, who struggled to make ends meet, but ensured that his son received education at a boarding school. His father worked overtime to afford the tuition for their son's education.

Sidney Carton arrived at the boarding school and his parents hoped that the school would refine him and equip him to succeed in the world they lived in. Unfortunately, in 1767, in London, England all that mattered was lineage. Despite, being a witty kid, Sidney was no match for the haughty, pampered brats born with a silver spoon in their mouths. They looked down on Sidney from the day he had arrived. Shunned, Sidney spent all his spare time in the library. Friendless, homesick and uncared for Sidney's confidence took a beating and he withdrew into a shell. But that did nothing to quench his thirst for knowledge. When he returned home for Christmas his parents couldn't fathom as to what had happened to their cheerful son. His parents assumed that this sullen behaviour was expected of the rich and famous and did nothing. Sidney returned to his

personal hell at boarding school where spent the next ten years, never once complaining as he was aware of the sacrifices made by his parents for him.

After his schooling Sidney went on to study law where his peers were kinder to him, but his self esteem was already low. Despite being smart and at the top of his class, Sidney thought he was doomed to be unsuccessful. Whenever Sidney looked into a mirror he saw himself as an underdog and a failure. He resorted to drinking to get some temporary reprieve from disappointments in life. Sidney soon became an alcoholic and not a night passed when he didn't reek with alcohol.

A few years after graduating Sidney joined Mr Stryver's blooming law firm and found himself at the trial of one Charles Darnay, a French noble man accused of treason. Soon realization struck that Sidney looked a lot like the handsome defendant and would have been like him, if only he had some luck. Fortunately, the resemblance of Sidney to Charles Darnay helped create circumstances conducive to win the case against Charles. At the trial, Sidney laid eyes on the beautiful Lucy Manette. He soon proclaimed his love to Lucy and told her that he would gladly lay down his life for her. Lucy merely thanked him and went on to marry Charles Darnay. They remained friends and Lucy gave birth to a baby girl, whom a now sober Sidney proceeds to visit habitually. His love though unrequited proved to be true, as one day he sacrifices his life for Lucy's husband, Charles.

Irrigation to Deserts

Sweta Basu

REPORTAGE:

He is a tubby fellow, He always, tussles a lot to read. Pet name from “chintu” is changed

As “doubt” everywhere. He will question a lot to all. We all know he struggle lot to get understand a thing but he makes the same by forwarding questions to us.

Just opposite to his house I always use to ignore him by saying numerous reasons to him. I don't have time, my husband scolded me today, do you know the pain of getting hurt, and don't you have your own brain, please better you leave this course and join something else likewise the answers continued whenever he questions me.

On a day, sitting on verandah I was looking at the child's play. I was happy looking and I think that made him to conclude I would help him to understand the content in his book.

He was slowly approaching to me by his traipse walk. My face was too changing slowly. I don't want to cheat this time.

I got the book from his hand; he was smiling on other hand. Chapter name was “A Christmas carol” written by Charles Dickens. I have not read this story before; I started to read from the beginning. Husband came from office, he scolded really this time but I was studious in studying the story. After finishing the story, the word with tears I revealed to chintu is “sorry”.

Yes, I saw scrooge in the story as myself. I avoided him many times. How far I have periled him, I was thinking, under my consciousness I have made hurt chintu, but without my consciousness I would be hurting many chintu's. My feelings were ineffable. Now am making love to everybody without in return, like scrooge in last phase.

A Book Review on 'Hard Times'

- Charles John Huffam Dickens

Trishita Gautam

Hard Times is one of the most uplifting of Dickens's novels. This book is certainly different from all the other books by Charles Dickens as it has no particular central character. All the other novels by Dickens have a strong connection with London but this story depicts Coketown and Coketown only, a typical red-brick industrial city of the north. The story shows how the children were forced to give up on all creativity and only depend on and produce facts. They were not even allowed to "THINK". They were treated like vessels, where facts were to be poured till their brims. Hard Times is a very tragic and wonderfully described story of human oppression.

THE CHARACTERS

Among the many characters that appear in the novel, some of the most important ones are:

Mr.Gradgrind, who runs a school at Coketown, a parliament member, a stoic who believes in nothing but facts.

Mrs.Gradgrind, who always remains passive because her passive, inactive life. Only on her death she expresses her love towards her children, which she could not, when she was alive.

Mr.Bounderby, a heartless, boastful, wealthy manufacturer and a great liar as well.

Louisa Gradgrind, eldest daughter of Mr.Gradgrind, who against her will marries the boastful Bounderby for the sake of her selfish brother, Tom.

Stephen Blackpool, a “hand” at Mr. Bounderby’s factory who gets wrongly involved in the robbery of Mr.Bounderby’s bank.

Rachael,a factory hand, and friend of Stephen.

Sissy, or Cecilia Jupe, a deserted daughter of a circus clown, who is adopted by Mr.Gradgrind and Louisa’s greatest friend and advisor.

THE STORY

As there is no central character, the story builds up round all the characters who appear in this book. Everyone has a different story,most of which is only tragic.

Since Louisa’s name has been mentioned in the last pages of this novel,lets start with Louisa: From childhood,her mind has been filled with facts by her stoic father,with no place left for any emotions,dreams or fantasies. Yet in secret,she had always nurtured her imaginative nature and Sissy’s presence has also affected it much.She married Mr.bounderby,who was almost 30yrs older than she was (and whom she hated very much) only for her brother,Tom’s sake.And all her life she suffers inwards. Like her mother, she also became passive & almost emotionless.

Then there is Sissy, her father a circus clown left her, so that she could lead a better life without him, and then Mr. Gradgrind adopted her to modify her way of living. He tried to fill her with facts like he had filled his own children with, but Sissy was out-and-out indifferent to his practical facts and continued with her own childish and good beliefs.

Then there is Stephen married to a bad woman who is a drunkard and falls in love with his ever-supporting friend Rachael who is also a worker at Bounderby's factory. Stephen gets charged with a crime he didn't committed (Tom had committed it) and comes back from an exile he gave himself to clear himself, but an accident occurred and he lost his life. Before death he left Mr. Gradgrind (who has now, after many years, realised his mistakes) with the charge to clear him. Rachael, left alone, did not fall apart but continued to live an useful life.

As for Louisa, she was misunderstood by Tom for whom she had done everything she could. She was turned out of house by Bounderby and she lived with her no-more-stoic father, sisters, brothers (not Tom who didn't live to say sorry to Louisa for the wrongs he did to her, because he died out of a fatal fever) and her ever sweet friend Sissy.

MY VIEWS

Well this is a wonderfully described plot. The ending is neither happy nor very sad. It points out the social backdrops of the then times, where harsh regimes were enforced by the likes of Josiah Bounderby, the pompous self-made man and Mr. Gradgrind, the censorious disciplinarian. Well the tragic lives of Stephen, Rachael, Louisa and even Sissy are described very well. This book is a must-read for all according to me

Untitled

Ujjaini Chatterji

“**T**he world cannot grant me freedom. My liberation is within.”
His words had brought faith in my shattered life. I had felt the urge to live once again.

I remember the night my tears had dried up. I pretended that I was strong. I had never felt so weak ever before. My father pleaded to me,

“Stay back! You can find a job here as well. I need you. Please stay back.”

“And I need only success!” I had retorted. Though then, I did not know what success really meant.

I left home for the job in the city. Before closing the door, I heard my father whisper “God bless my child.” His voice cracked.

Many years had passed since that night. I could not move on with time. I had not cried even once. I pleaded for some tears. I was alive but I could not live. My tears refused to shed when I most needed them. Father’s words echoed within me “God bless you my child” The strength of his love mocked me every day. I could never face him again. I sought freedom from my past.

That day was lonelier than usual. I had stayed at home all day. I did not eat anything. By evening, the walls of my room began to suffocate me. I wrapped myself in an overcoat and left home. I walked to the park nearby and sat on a bench.

I dipped my hands hard into the overcoat pockets. The world seemed unbearable. I thought of the times that I had spent with my family. In these years, I had not once uttered my father's name. I had missed him every moment.

My thoughts were interrupted by a strange man. He sat next to me. He wore a suit that looked almost a decade old. His pants were torn and he smelled country liquor. I thought of leaving but my heart remained me seated. He called the boy selling chocolates. He was yelling and I hated him! As the boy approached us, I was surprised! The man did not just buy himself a chocolate. He bought the boy one too. He also offered me one. I refused. I asked him "Is there any special occasion?" He looked confused.

"Why? do I look too happy?" He asked.

"We generally do not buy everyone chocolates...and yes you look too happy!" I said, frowning.

"And you look too sad! Honestly, the whole world does! You are all a bunch of captive minds! The world cannot grant me freedom. My liberation is within! Liberation is success and my joy is my success!! The world is my home and all of you are my family!" He laughed as a lunatic as he walked away...

His words brought tears to my eyes. I began to cry bitterly. For the first time in years my heart felt light. I began to feel alive and felt redemption within me. I felt the soothing breeze as I moved on with life.

Truly, Deeply, Madly

Bidisha Sinha

At the age of six, my dad bought me and my sister tons of books from his visit to Calcutta(now Kolkata). Among them was the famous David Copperfield. It was the first novel I read and needless to say, I was hooked. I fell in love with David(truly, madly, deeply), hated his step-father, felt grateful to Peggotty, felt sorry for his mother and Dora, envied Agnes(purely because she was just so nice!)and loathed Uriah Heep. It amazed me that although he wrote in a different time, his characters and their characteristics were timeless. He possessed an intimate knowledge of human understanding. he made me believe in second chances, happy endings and above all- love and humanity.

Throughout school I devoured all my english books, attended all my english classes, listened attentively to literature talk, took part in essay competition and soared all my English tests. I figured that if I could master David's language I might have a teeny-weeny chance but well, the unimaginable happened...I grew up! I realised what fiction meant and though David Copperfield might not be real, there was a 'David' made just for me. But a lot of good things came out of my short-lived love; I topped my english paper, I acquired a nerd status and books became my best friends!

Mr. Dickens introduced me to the eventual love of my life: literature. I read like a girl possessed, analysing and admiring. I was so much in love with the language, it became my way of self-expression.

As a second year honors student of literature, Mr. Dickens is an integral part of my life. We read him and we read about him. Everytime I read his books, I am inspired and filled with awe. Even after I am done with the book, the characters stay with me and sometimes I can catch a glimpse of them in the people around me. And sometimes I see David...

How Beautiful is the Spring

Suman Kumar Pal

How beautiful is the spring,
After the cold and snow
In the lawns and meadows-
In the river ripples;
How beautiful is the spring.

How the dews shine on the leaves
Like the milky-white pearls-
How they evaporate in the gentle heat,
Through the hydro cycle of Earth.

Across the window pane,
Obscure the sun's red scattered mane-
And dirt, dust, cloud,
Makes the surrounding, colour of ground.
Oh, the spring, the delightful spring.

The bored boy in his room,
Looks at the beauty bloom,
He can feel the cool breeze;
Of each sapling blowing at please.
His refreshed mind
Grows grateful to the 'Kind'
Rejoicing at the beauty of spring.

From the neighbouring pool club,
Come the old and older people
With their usual chattering of politics
And astrology blub.
Down the greenery of the lawns,
Stop to admire the beauty.
Till the clock of town,
Tells them the time
To retreat to their home.

In the countryside, every barn
Seems to inhale the aroma
Of the spring beauty and freshness,
Stretching over the green gardens
From the green grass to the dried stalks
The spring, the welcome spring.

In the cultivated area,
Stands the combine harvester
Ready to pluck the stalks
Of the yieldful Manchester.

It stands quietly
Till its master tells it to ply and pick
The good quality seeds;
It rises its metallic arms to loosen
The soil's hardness
To produce a satisfactory grimace
On the farmer's face.

Near at hand, on the tallest tree,
Sits the cuckoo with a touch of pride
Sings the 'co – co' song;
Till the season does not change-
With mangoes hanging
From the branches
With laden fruits,
Waiting to be picked
All the people thank the weather
Of the King of all Seasons.

The Dark Glass

Sushma Phillip

Do you remember your childhood well?
Your wild imagination that wove a spell
Around you and carried you through
Worlds of your own...You flew...
Worlds filled with happy dreams,
Not of suffering and pain-filled screams.
Thoughts of cotton candy and stars,
Not hate, diseases or of wars.
With imaginary friends you'd play,
Flights of fancy filled your day...
Today, you know they don't exist,
Your lands of fairies and sparkling mist;
Today you're wise to the facts,
With bills and work your mind is taxed.
You see the world for what it is,
Now, your worlds, don't you miss,
Where all the superficiality, need and greed
Werenegated by flowers and honey bees?
You used to see through the glass darkly,
Now you see face-to-face, starkly
...And don't you wish the glass was dark once more?

They call me a Rock of a fella’.

Tejaswi Subramaniam

Weather, as it was the day I was born. Balmy.
The winds settled on my cheeks in a layer of moisture and grime;
The winds, which seemed to be of yet another change, swept me back in time;
To a time when, the winds- they were just the calm before the storm.

My earliest memory? - a vision of grace, and the embodiment of symmetry;
Later morphing into a body worn by years of harshness and belittlement;
The jawline became softer, the skin glowed no more,
The voice irked the drums, and the arms slaved in the factory;
But the eyes!- they burnt with a fire, that helped keep away, from her manner, the cold.

The father- a useless fella;
I am stuck with his last name;
Never violent, but always fulla’ tricks and empty wise words;
Departed from our lives very soon, leaving us in ill-fame.

The mother, she never cried. But her heart ached with heaviness;

The brother, he was too young. But his head buzzed with questions and mysticness;
The society, forever judging.
Forever poking.
Forever taunting.

I hadn't a choice. The crowned is not the entitled.
He is the burdened.
He cannot claim his freedom, for in place of that, he shall be shown responsibility.
He cannot claim the luxurious, for in place of that, he shall be introduced to unattended misery.
I hadn't a choice. I was crowned.
If the greats did it with talent and patronage-
I would compromise for it with scrupulousness and being thorough;
Never would dust, my vision, faze.
Never could hard work make my brows furrow.

And then came the day, when onto the fields, I did alight.
To watch the volcanic spurts- they were my first love.
It struck me- they could be tamed, sieved, and sold.
To change the world, no less- lo and behold!

And the gold poured into coffers like those of the government.
Motorcars and horses could be afforded, but I saw no need for amendment.
I took the train, the bus, and a stroll;
To the office, which was my sanctum- until now. Now, I'm too old.

How the winds have changed the tides, you ask.
Don't the society judge, poke, and taunt anymore?
Has the injustice to the hearts been undone? Unquote.
No, but, the sun has risen and is soon to set.
It is not the men's labour that maketh a day,
It is this orb's adherence to its holy oath.
They call me a Rock of a fella- one such that is rare to beget.

The Orphans in the Storm

V Rosaline Victoria

The dark cloud glared,
The orphans stared in rising tears
their milky -cream blue eyes,
Could'nt comprehend the threatening skies
The low moan of the wind,
as it caressed the fallen leaves,
Making their shapes flutter,
a second in high ecstasy,
before the calm lulled them back,
Onto the mossy -grass covered forest.
The rain drops fell,stinging fast,
Through the dense blanket of greens
They needle- like- poised did attack,
Making their way through,
Falling onto the crackling leaves,
Sparkling on their dull shades,
Withered, but with their glossy sheen
The leaves ever on the move,
They lay drenched,yielding.
The crisp crunches of footsteps,

Trodding on the autumn leaves,
Haste sensed in their very walk,
The two faces, little gentle ones,
Making their way through.
they trod on tender toes,
Tired of lost wanderings,
Tear streaked faces, lips parched,
The rain could'nt mar their agony.
Their clasped in each others,
For wanted warmth and craved company,
Their hearts furiously beating,
Their eyes ever on the alert.
the twigs snapped beneath his trod,
and she stopped, stunned with fright,
Her feminine grace, his unending fight,
Led on into the darkness of the night.
Wild beasts did prowl ,
and she did trip,
Over the dark, protroding, offensive root,
The huge bark looked on,
Its wave, a show of mockery,
Exuding pride, standing tall.
But her feet refused to budge,
Shivering with cold.
The rain still poured on,
Unmindful of its prey lying beneath.
Their stomachs gnawed by demons of hunger.
They fed on thoughts of fear,
their bed under the bark,
the crackling leaves no comfort,
With the faint hiss of the angry rain.

Fear chained them together,
They held each other tight,
Knowing that they may never again see light
By and by faint sobs were heard,
Tears unchecked slipped down their cheeks,
Their salty taste wiped away,
Relaxed again and again.
So young but trials so hard,
With no kind arms to cheer,
No fire to keep them warm,
No shut door to keep them from harm.
Abandoned yet again,
With no hopes for tomorrow,
their racking sobs subsided into a wakeful sleep,
The rain sensing it dulled her sound,
And ended in a quiet hush.
The children lay huddled,
Beside the offender and guard,
The might against the storm.
The shy moon cast covert glances,
Peeping at the radiant innocents,
From behind her dark canopy,
Shying away but hurrying back,
For another fond look, a loving glance.
The watchers wings spread forth,
Its boughs shook with the gutsy wind,
The withered leaves fell,
Nature's very own blanket,
Its wordless, kind solace,
Covered their helpless forms,
So miserable in their plight,

The orphans in the storm.
Their sentinel kept silent watch,
Through the dangers of the night.

Hope Springs Eternal

(And so does Dickens)

Vandhana Ravi

England, 1800s

Fog.

Smoke.

Crowds.

The rich grew richer,

The poor worked harder,

The glittering promise of

Brighter futures and hope,

Always in the distance,

Never to be acquired.

Hustle.

Bustle.

Factories running,

Night or day.

Everything ran like clockwork.

Men worked,

Children worked,

Men begged

Children begged.
Men stole,
Children stole.
Everything ran like clockwork.
But the Thames kept flowing,
And so life went on.

Enter Dickens.
A young boy,
As poor as the next.
A young man,
As determined as the next.
Yet,
In his eyes,
London was not a city.
It was his muse.

With a message in his heart,
And a pen in his hand,
He lit the candle of hope
In those dark times.
“Charity begins at home”,
He said.
And just like that,
The lights faded in,
The fog smothered the despair
The smoke hid the gloom
The crowds became friends.

Hope crept into London,
As slowly and smoothly

as the mist steamed out.
Smiles and laughter
Around every corner
Gifts and goodies,
Warm food,
Warm clothes.
The only ones poor
Were those who
Had only money,
And nothing else.

For it takes only a kind heart,
And a ready smile,
To be happy in this world.

The world, Today

Heat.
Smoke.
Crowds.
The rich grows richer,
The poor works harder.
The glittering promise of
Brighter futures and hope,
Always in the distance,
Never to be acquired.
Hustle.
Bustle.
Factories running,
Night or day.
Everything runs like clockwork.

Men work,
Children work.
Men beg,
Children beg.
Men steal.
Children steal.
Everything runs like clockwork.
But the Ganges keeps flowing,
And so life goes on.

Enter Dickens.
A dead man,
As peaceful as the next,
A buried grave,
As respected as the next,
Yet,
A legacy,
He has left behind,
One never to be forgotten.

With a message in his heart,
And a pen in his hand,
He immortalized himself,
Through the stories he spun,
And the candle of hope
That he lit,
In those dark times,
Continues to burn
In these Dickensian times.

“Charity begins at home”,
He once said.
And he still says,
If only we care to listen.
For if we do,
The lights will fade in,
The heat will smother the despair
The smoke will hide the gloom
The crowds will become friends.

Hope will creep into India,
As slowly and smoothly
as the heat will steam out.
Smiles and laughter
Around every corner
Gifts and goodies,
Warm food,
Warm clothes.
The only ones poor
Will be those who
Have only money,
And nothing else.

For it takes only a kind heart,
And a ready smile,
To be happy in this world.

Without You...Dickens

(A tribute from a friend)

Vishakha Mistry

Life remains dark without you, Light entered when you came in my life,
The best one from few,
And the morning fresh flower with a dew.

But friendship my dear,
There's a wondering eye for that smiley face,
And ears eager for the melodious voice,
And friend, it's still difficult to wipe those tears.

You showed me changes,
More than the natural seasons
After every ferocious storm, you sailed with ease,
But that devilish night, you left me without any reason.

Oh! Dear, you made me cry
And a laughter thereby
You made me angry,
And waved a bid bye.

Friendship my life, a precious knot,
I care for you and for your joy,
Never in a thought to repay
Yet, you showed and sailed a lot...

To the Night

Namita Krishnamurthy

I find you
like a letter in the back of a drawer,
black skies and supernovas,
shivering in the dust of every word.

I hold you up to the darkness, hold you to my chest -
but I will not read you. No, your name itself is a beautiful sound
ringing through the planes of universe
shaking the tiny bell of a horse who looks up to the sky in delight.

I touch your edges like the shrouds of black holes,
paint you blue with the colour of my eyes.

I cradle you like a river in my palm
only to let go.

I tear and throw you into the wind
so that you shake the leaves from every tree,
with the very gentleness you held me.

Untitled

Gouri Sattigeri

Charles John Huffam Dickens, an English novelist of Victorian period has been famous for some of English literatures most iconic novels and characters. He was born at Land Port, Port Sea, on 7th Feb 1812. Ever since his childhood he had a strong flair for writing. Dickens works portray his life's journey from being a journalist to a novelist.

His success began with 'A Dinner at Poplar Walk' to the famous 'David Copperfield' followed by several other novels like 'Oliver Twist', 'A Tale Of Two Cities', 'Great Expectations', 'A Christmas Carol' etc. His writings are florid, poetic and contain a strong comic touch. Dickens novels were works of social commentary, a fierce critic of poverty and social stratification of Victorian society. He was a great sympathizer with poor, the suffering and the oppressed and his death on 9th Jun 1870 was a loss to the world.

Dickens works are universally acclaimed. Being, inspirational they have brought to light the facts of life to the common man and thus motivates one to work for improving the lives of the poor and downtrodden section of the society.

Inspired by Dickens, I have tried to write a short poem that in brief describes the life of man in today's society. It is my tribute to one of the most revered novelist on behalf of my generation.

The Poem

21st Century Human!

Techno-century human we are,
where far is near and near is far.

We live in horror
in tainted smear of terror.

Of intense struggle, life is rough
where poor's life is even more tough.

Meekly surrendered, oppressed we are
living a life fuller of scar.

Rich is richer, living in grandeur
where downtrodden, not paid even for endure.

Habitation with marred tolerance,
paving way for social hindrance.

Metaphysical vain, knowledge is fiction,
where education is often at auction.

Technology driven to vandal friction,
deeply immersed on innumerable addiction.

Rapidly changing moral code,
where one lives in stressful hoard,

Living life on insane load,
striving hurriedly confused road.

Difficult Childhood

Aadrita Chatterjee

I was born at midnight,
An unlucky omen,
People used to say,
Probably true, six months
After my father had gone away.

Years passed by, I grew up,
Dear Pegotty and Mother,
Under the loving care of two,
Who loved me so much,
I needed love from no other.

I thought my life was perfect,
Alas! It was not to be,
For arrived Mr. Murdstone,
An evil murderer who,
Destroyed our family.

When I went to Yarmouth,
I had never enjoyed as much,

As I did on that holiday,
“Oh god, keep them happy,”
This was all I could pray.

I met such charming people,
And Ham and little Emily,
Oh! I remember the sunny days,
When I used to play with her,
On the beach by the sea.

Little did I know,
Mr. Murdstone was my father,
And my life was doomed,
And as he thought me bad,
He wanted me clean and groomed.

I was sent away to boarding school,
Oh god! What did I do so wrong?
Why did I have to leave home,
And neither Mother nor Pegotty,
Could accompany me along?

Salem House, the punishing school,
With old bricks and discipline,
Was the least pleasant of my dreams,
I had to stay there, desperate,
Tears flowing like the streams.

Oh yes! I made friends,
Traddles and suave Steerforth,
Who made me forget my pain,

Who made up for my loneliness,
And made me laugh again.

As if it was not enough,
God was again unkind,
My mother went away,
With my brother,
And left me alone behind.

My stepfather thought,
Now it was time to step aside,
He wrenched me from schooling,
And put me to work,
All alone in the world wide.

Even in great desperation,
I had people for help,
The poor Micawbers who,
Fought tooth and nail,
Alone to feed themselves.

I was still a little boy,
All the age of ten,
I decided to leave my life,
I packed my bags,
And set off alone again.

Where do I go, I ask,
Where is the place I should?
All of a sudden, the forgotten
Name comes to me,
Of dear Betsey Trotwood.

I walked and walked and walked,
All the way to Dover,
I slept in the haystack and,
Under the stars,
The nights over and over.

At last, I reached the place,
Where I was destined to reach,
To dear Aunt Betsey,
She put me up and then,
Decided to adopt me.

Mr. Murdstone came again,
With a lot of words to say,
But aunt, thank god,
Was not fooled,
And did not send me away.

At last, I felt that
God was kind to me,
He had kept me alive,
To live with my aunt,
My only family.

Slowly, I was cured,
By my dear aunt's love,
Over time, my wounds had healed,
I got a new life and a new name
Of Mister Trotwood Copperfield.

The Magic of Charles Dickens

Abhishikta Bandopadhyay

Oliver, David, Charles, Nicholas
The tell-tale faces of hunger and hurt.
Exploitation, deprivation, cruelty and all,
The tiny warriors fought all the social wars.

Born in Portsea two hundred years ago,
When poverty and crime plagued England.
His poor, wretched parents left him alone,
Thus Charles grew up in the 'dark and dreary land.'

Homeless and lonely was little Charles,
While his defaulter father served his terms.
Paying the penalty for being in debt,
The little boy toiled, with his little arms.

Barely twelve, he worked very hard,
At a warehouse which was even worse.
When at long last by chance of fate,
His father was free of the shameful curse.

The poor wretched boy was sent to school,
But was he there to get education?
Alas! It was another art he was to learn,
'Of surviving punishments and starvation.'

Unfazed by the irony of fate,
He took up a job of a junior clerk.
And led a life of honour and pride,
His independence was his only perk.

His amazing courage to portray life,
Based on his first hand tragic experience.
Made him the celebrated author he was,
None other than the 'Charles Dickens.'

His saga- unfolded through his works,
That touched the hearts of young and old.
The painful days and the darkest of nights,
At the factories and warehouses, we are told.

When the 'New Poor Law' to prevent crime,
Was passed to grant generosity.
His pen didn't stop to reveal it all,
The workhouse treatment and the insecurity.

While depicting the dark realities of life,
Dickens kept his sense of humour.
He celebrated the poor and stoic as well
As the criminals, by a 'degree of caricature.'

A genius by birth, Dickens wrote-
Of the gruesome cruelties and miseries untold.
Of men in jail and children at school,
The masses awakened and could not be fooled.

His stark criticisms so vocal and bold,
Brought social justice for one and all.
He reached the pinnacle of popularity,
'Public institution' people would call.

That is the magic of Charles Dickens,
Magic is there in all his works.
His moving stories moved the world,
His joys and sorrows became all ours.

While his body lies in peace forever,
Buried in the 'Westminster Abbey.'
His writings keep enthralling us,
A couple of centuries later- even today.

Snippets from a Poet's Mind!

Akshay Chougaonkar

Peep in.
Into this attic.
Myriad of emotions.
Maze of a farfetched pain.
Unfathomable scars.
Untold life of disdain.

Stands a castle,
Tested by winds of time.
Unfinished.
Unconquered.
Whispering a tale,
Which the soul silenced.

The mirror; this face.
Fogged by these tears invisible.
Reflection a hoax.
Rhapsody an ersatz.
Candor concealed.
Calm eyes behold tumult within.

From cradle to ashes,
The burden piles on.
Love, hate, adoration, jealousy.
Lurking like halcyon skies.
A poet holds it alone, lends an ear,
Altruistic he is ... till he dies.

They tag him silent.
Oblivious of what lies within.
He fights himself
His words are his friends; poems his lair.
Real life lies in this attic; this mind,
Rove in it; you're allowed, if you truly care!!

MUSIC

Music:
Amidst rhapsodies of victory
Music:
Whilst thou linger amidst fiends and
Betrayers.
Music:
'Tis clad in a furry coat
That hitherto repelled thy chills.
A coat, surreal, of comforting bliss.
Music. Ah! It doth redeem.

The vision savours,
A world of illusions.
The one that mind spawns.
Revitalising the colours
That hitherto defineth bland outlines.

Like a symphony mossed poem,
Defineth thine life.
With depths unperceived
Ever salvages turmoil within.

Music:

Thine shadow
Amidst life's dark.
It preach'd. Nay superficial,
But as a soul's bard.

The Venetian Fantasy

Anusha KM

My Eyelids Were Dropping
My Focus was blurring,
Bam! I was Floating
Never had Felt such Soothing,

My Eyes were Fast Closed
But I realise I had not Dozed,
As I Muse Where I am Now
Someone Greets me with a ‘Ciao’,

Shocked, I Flick my Eyes Open
So does my Mouth Gape Open
For What I was Witnessing was a Stunner,
A Place Where Just Everything is Finer!!

The Turquoise Road of Venice Lies
Before me Like a Miracle in Guise,
And it gets a lot Better
As I Feel a Rock-a-Bye Baby Jitter

Looks like Am Couching on a Gondola

Lying by my side is a Viola,

I Feel my Musical Nerves tingle

Readying to Brew up a Jingle,

I Wanted the Viola in my Hands Badly

For I Would sing About Venice Gladly,

Whose Would it be?, I Start to Wonder

Will He Lemme Have a Shot at it? I Ponder,

“Fire Away With the Bass, Signor..”, I Hear

Seems someone at back Had Noticed my Desire,

I Glance back and see a smiling Gondolier

Who nods at me and tosses me a Ginger Beer,

Here comes my calling to Bring an Outpour

All About My Dreamland’s Folklore,

I Take the Viola in my Hands

To Prove My Worth with this Chance,

I smile At the Romantic Couple before my Sight

Enjoying Smooches under the Bridge Of Sighs!!!

Their love had me mesmerised but motivated

And thus, a drive inside joyfully kickstarted,

All of a sudden, something was not right

The feel annoyed me like a Flea Bite,

Why were the couple giving me a Glare?

For heaven’s sake, why did they stare?

Maybe the guy assumed I was
Wooing his girl with a pass
Aimed straight at her from here
That for sure, he cannot bear,

Poof!! Vroom!! Shucks!!
The place around me Dissolved,
And I was Blinking stupidly At my Professor
Standing lankily before me with a Daggers Look,

Oops!! I must have been Dreaming, as usual
For such things, in classes, are very casual
“Out!!”, He roared, in a furious voice
I Left the Classroom with a Puppy Face,

Once Outside, My heart gave a delightful Leap
As I had a perky Tune from under Deep,
The Musical Chords were Still ringing
Within me, Lub n Dub, thus singing,

My dream did bail out on me
Today, leading me astray, But
This Tune was Going into my Record
As Soon as I dash Off the Road,

One day, at the summit, not very far
I shall stand proud with my guitar,
Till then, it is my time, during when
Songs shall be woven from HEAVEN!!!

Cherry Blossoms

Apala Chaturvedi

Therein it falls..
From atop the high trees.
Gently swayed by the gush of breeze,
Slowly.. sighing and crooning,
Hushed and yet moving.

Tenderly, the wind caresses its skin,
Murmuring of joy that springs from within.
Mildly.. it falls,
Halted by none but its own hazy descent.

Oh! How a beautiful a sight
‘Tis for mine eyes,
This cherry blossom leaf,
Lying languorously amidst the gaiety of spring.

NOTE: This piece is illustrative of Dickens flowery writing style and his attention to detail: for instance focusing on every small detail in the falling of a small leaf. The cherry blossoms in Japan indicate the welcoming of spring.

The Spirit of Christmas

Shreshth Arora

Before the Christmas arrival , nothing was moving in the house
No joy , no guys and not even a mouse.

Scrooge calls Christmas a Humbug !Humbug !Humbug !
But he was not atall humble.
Scrooge is getting fat
Please put a penny in the poor man's hat.

Time has come for Scrooge's transformation
And the ghost of Marley wants his resurrection.

Nw the Ghost of Christmas Past arrives,
And takes Scrooge to his youth alive.
Ghost takes Scrooge to his youth
And shows him the signs of his innocent views.

Nw it's the chance of the second ghost
And the ghost of Christmas present comes to post
Scrooge witnesses a family feast of his impoverished clerk
And realises that his youngest son can not receive treatement because of
his selfish urge.

Now the third spirit of Christmas yet to come
Harrows Scrooge by showing his future which is likely to come.
Scrooge's own neglected and untended grave is revealed
To awaken him from his deep sleep.

Scrooge awakens on Christmas morning with joy and love in his heart,
And treated his fellowmen with kindness and generosity in his cart.

Satís House

Bhagyasri Chaudhury

This is not the story that has been told
This is the tale that has not been sold;
For walls and beams, they make a house
And love and dreams they make a home

“Winter, be gone! For spring shall arrive!
Roses, lilies and tulips shall thrive!
For Compeyson, the man of my dreams-
Marries me today to bring me to life!”

I sang as Emily curled my hair
They smelt the fragrance everywhere
Chandeliers lit and glasses dowsed
The guests could only stop and stare

But little did I know that day
The light will slowly fade away
And in my heart will monsoon pour
Rain from violent clouds astray

“I can’t wait to bring you to my room
And show you where the roses bloom
You can see all of Rochester from these windows
Oh Compeyson, come marry me soon!”

Curtains, green like his eyes
Green grass in fresh mown lawns that rise,
With melting snow and dewdrops plenty
Stare at my dress, so pure and white

But little did I know that time,
That twenty minutes to the stroke of nine
Compeyson, the man of my dreams
Will commit the most heinous crime

“Riches here and riches there,
Our house is such a grand affair!
But Compeyson, I care not for these trifles
Come marry me, I’ll make you the heir!”

I waited for him, noon and night
When the stars shone vivid and bright
But the Moon cried helplessly
And prayed to the Lord, as she saw the sight

Tears ran down my rose kissed cheeks
I wouldn’t let the angels speak
I locked myself up in my room
As time brought cobwebs to a house so bleak

Never to speak to spring that came
My love, never to love again

For walls and beams, they make a house
And love and dreams they make a home
This is not the story that has been told
This is the story that can never be sold

A Short Poem

Chandrabati Chakraborty

There was a boy named Oliver Twist
He wore a black band on his wrist.
He had a friend Nicholas Nickelbay
Both of them went out to pray
While returning, they went to a shop
It was The Old Curiosity Shop
The shopkeeper knew them from very young age
A deep green parrot was kept in a cage
He smiled and said, “ O! Our Mutual Friend
Why don’t you come in this weekend?
We will put up on this block
An antique piece , Master Humphrey’s Clock”
On their way back, they met few Jews
They gave two friends The Daily News
It was Christmas the very next day
Both decided to visit the Abbey
Inside the Church they were loyal
Together they sung A Christmas Carol

The monks and the nuns played beautiful sounds
Which everyone remembered All The Year Round
Outside the church stood Mr. John
He introduced the friends with Dombey and Son
Both gave them few American Notes
Oliver took it and bought two coats
The weather was cool with soft pleasing zephyrs
Nicholas bought The Pickwick Papers
There was a painting by Mr. Goz
It was entitled the Sketches of Boz
Twist read a story that enhanced his mood
It was The Mystery Of Edwin Drood
The two friends then came back to house
It was beside the famous Bleak House
There was also a big greenfield
It belonged to the neighbour Mr. David Copperfield
Enough of poem, now no more rhymes
Another piece by Dickens is the famous Hard Times
He was the author of the entire nation
Readers looked forward with Great Expectation
His writings made imagination quicken
He was our dearest , legendary Dickens.

A Legacy of Dreams

Debarshi Mitra

Ageing winds herald, that ‘tale of two cities’,
and despairingly breathes the joy of pompous maladies.
Fostered by time it remains alone,
to hope that hope still live amid joys forlorn.

Their laughter is lost in mockery,
their praise poisoned with flattery ,
and in ignorance entwined, admonish nature’s chimes,
to find sleep in disdain , the laurels of ‘hard times’.

And yet there dawns ecstasy, in radiant apparel,
though shunned, clings as the dirge of a ‘Christmas carol’
to speak gently and yet remind of destiny’s predicament ,
that visions will break once upon the shores of lament.

Let not yours wings be clipped, outcastes of Eden ,
no more turn back ,to the mirage of memories sullen.
As a phoenix rise from the flames of privations,
to rise and escape the plight of ‘great expectations’.

Death wish

Debashmita Saha

I see incessant rain
But none to douse the fire within...
Amid the clutch of gloom
Little wish slowly creeps in...
Rotten is my heart,
Wrecked my soul is
For a folly done long ago...
Cursed is my being!
Hollow as a shadow I persist to live
O Death! kiss me and give me completeness
Sinner I am- captive of life
Be my redeemer ~ make me forever yours...

(Based on Miss Havisham)

Introduction

Deepatabha Misra

When there's no work and I'm free,
Sometimes I indulge in soliloquy.
“If it happens.” one me says,
“that I am, to someone else,
introduce myself, what should I speak?”
“My name of course, stupid chimp”
The other me replies.

“Does my name say what I really am?”
The first one says. The other one, ashamed.
Replies, “Should I say of my profession
What I do and related information?”
“If I get unemployed, or go somewhere else,
will I change myself?”
The first one replies.

“The last option left, is to speak of myself
and say what I like and where I get my strength.”
“I will have to mug up
the ‘about myself paragraph’

before I use this suggestion
But then it's sure to create confusion."
The first one replies.

"I'll have to say that this is a difficult question
and I cannot find a suitable suggestion."
"Then we will keep on thinking and thinking
And meanwhile use my name while introducing..."
The both Me's decide.

Decisive Factor

Deeptabha Misra

Walking, walking all alone through the dark woods,
The traveler came upon a fork, halted, confused,
He'd lost his map, forgotten the track,
Which path to take, or should he turn back?
Both routes seem alike, they lead different
Both routes seem alike their purpose different
For one was for good it lead to divine gates,
The other one was for foul, filthy, serpents
This choice made destiny, was it a game of chance?
Or no, God lead the travelers to the path He wants,
Thus the traveler chose the right, taking His name
Walked on bold, lo behold, he reached heaven.

Time the river flowed on, a second traveler arrived
Stood at the same fork, mused, for he couldn't decide,
Left or right? He submitted to the Great,
And took the path at left.
You say he reached hell? No, he didn't, you see
For the path was not decisive, it's what you be.

Back to Life

Gorika Dhawan

It was best of times,
It was worst of times.
It was season of light,
It was season of darkness.

On the throne of England,
Were a king and queen.
He with a large jaw,
She with a plain face.

In France on throne, king
With a large jaw sat.
Along with his queen who
Had a fair, fair face.

1775 was the ongoing year
When France was corrupt and
England diseased, with latter doing
Better, as matter of degree.

The Dover road, on which
Carriage moved, side by side
Had three who walked, two,
Driver and guard who rode.

Among three was Mr. Lorry
Who worked for Tellson's Bank.
Man of business was he,
Traveling to Dover on business.

"Wait at Dover for Mam'selle"
Was the message Jerry brought.
Answer to that, simple and
Strange was, "Recalled to Life".

Dozing of in carriage, Lorry
Would dream of Tellson's and
Dig someone out of tomb,
Who was buried so long.

Dig now, dig then with
Spade, with keys, with hands.
Dig now, dig then finally
Bringing the man out, alive.
He would ask him, "Buried
How long"? "Almost eighteen years"
The answer. "Care to live"?
"Can't say" and dig again.

The man of business arrived,
At Dover to meet Lucie
Manette, daughter of the “buried”,
To reveal the important news.

Miss Manette, young girl with
Golden hair and blue eyes,
Slight, pretty figure of seventeen,
Sat worried at the table.

Jarvis Lorry brought the news
Of her father being alive,
To the shock of Lucie,
Who sat pale and still.

All along this Dr. Manette
Lived making shoes with Jacques
Defarge taking care of him,
As his servant in Paris.

Lucie and Lorry traveled from
England to Paris to recall
Dr. Manette to life and
Take him back to London.

On way to live happily,
Lorry dreamed again and asked
“Care to live”? To which
Came the reply “Can’t say”.

Prayers to the Glorious Master!

Hena Israni

O God! My great creator of the universe
Here is the offering to you of my little verse,
Let the mother nature be there
Always present for everyone and everywhere.

The angels which you have created
Have made the birth of every child elated,
So let not the darker side of the nature shade
All the beautiful creations that are made.

The child is happy while playing with toys,
But it actually doesn't know about the real joys.
The mother while taking care of her child,
Sees its future in her dreams which are mild.

Across the seas and oceans wide,
Travels her hope, in spite of the high tide.
And when she wakes up the next morning ,
She sees another dream about the child in the sun shining.

With the child comes his father's expectations,
That one day he would definitely win the nations.
And then there would be celebrations
When he would be seen holding up relations.

And then would he cross his teenage gaining more responsibilities,
He would get a chance to show his abilities.
Throughout his middle age he would all of a sudden,
Be shadowed over with family burdens.

Then the time would come for him to meet,
All the challenges of life indeed.
With Your mercy he would be able to face,
Like a runner, crossing all the obstacles with pace.

Let him then in his old age,
Still live his life with courage.
And let him be not dependent on others,
For food or water or shelter.

And let him end his life,
Happy and contented leaving all things behind,
To be a part of you again,
With no losses but spiritual gain.

My Life Untold-Oliver Twist-In Anguish

Joslin Jose

Today as life summons into stillness
There is no place for peace or gladness

My hand yelled out
I long to laugh and shout

But life has betrayed me
Taken all chances for a smile or glee

Am I the only one?
A burden for all and good for none

My broken heart has no story
Except losing my childhood-a dark history

When I reached out for you
My hands were slayed without a clue

No sounds pass me
No sights astonish me

What am I for o'Lord?
My ways seem strange through which I trod

Counting my days
Waiting for my end, as time flies

Changing for the worse?

Joveria Sabbah

What India had done with Rabindranath Tagore in the 150th anniversary of his birth, Britain is repeating with Charles Dickens, the author of such classics as David Copperfield, A Tale of Two cities and the adventures of oliver twist, whose 200th birthday fell in february. The word Dickensian instantly conjures up a vivid picture of the victorian era. His characterisations are as fresh an enchanting today as it was on the day it was written.

If Dickens would have been alive today he would have summed up the current conditions of the society in the manner similar to this very poem.

Strolling down the streets of gloom,
not a green tree in sight.
Busy houses with windowless rooms,
my heart takes a grip in fright.

A society where racial discrimination
is said to have dipped,
and scoundrels nomore are
considered a hero.

then why ar'nt fairness creams skipped,
while corruption hasnt devcreased by zero?

No more in the schools are they taught,
that failing is far honourable than to cheat.
Backs are turned when help is sought,
is this because of the competitive heat?

While weapons of destruct stand erect and cruel,
The cries of war have changed.
from wanting territories to rule,
to commodities unnamed.

The carcass of animals lies in a heap,
results of experiments prime.
While mankind takes a forward leap,
nothing is considered a crime.

The heart wrenching cry of a father,
whose daughter sold for money.
The silent sob of a mother,
Whose son succumbed to the hands of an enemy.

A revolution is on is way,
the situation will change,
Oh! yes it may.

The Beauty of a Woman

Moumita Das

The beauty of a woman, isn't in the clothes she wears,
The figure that she carries, or the way she combs her hair.
The beauty of a woman must be seen from in her eyes
Because that's the doorway to her heart, the place where love resides.

The beauty of a woman isn't in a facial mole,
but true beauty in a woman, is reflected by her soul.
It's the caring that she cares to give, the passion that she shows,
And the beauty of a woman, with passing years, only grows.

I wish you bright mornings and warm, sunny days,
Soft shade to cool you from sweltering rays,
Raindrops, a few, from some cloud floating by,
Rainbows thereafter to colour your sky.

Rambling rivers and great shining seas,
Mountains and forests with towering trees,
Hillsides and valleys, all flower-festooned,
Nature that nurtures whomever's attuned.

A faithful companion who'll stay by your side,
Children to care for, to love and to guide,
Enough work to do with enough time for play
Then restful sleep at the close of the day.

Friends when you need them and when they need you,
Something to spend, just as much as will do
A heart full of laughter; perhaps a few tears,
A faith you can follow through all of your years.

Then, fearlessly facing your last setting sun,
As you contemplate all the deeds you have done,
Recalling a life that's been more than worthwhile,
Perhaps you will pause and give thanks with a smile.
Moumita Das.

Percussion

Manita Krishnamurthy

There are children who come with their songs,
with thirst
running deep in their blood; they come
every day-

their eyes bend into
the cracks of old soil:
too much salt for cultivation,
heads lowered, thighs plied - they crack the same old jokes
their mothers sang

and then, in the rain,
there seems to be
just too much

promise.

Storm, Thunder and lightening

Neelam Shah

Storm, Thunder and lightening,
The three work in a team,
To attack the world with their wild scheme.

Storm hits the islands with,
His power and rage,
He lays on destruction,
Blowing off everything,
That comes in his way.

Lightening makes his appearance before
Thunder leaving his,
Electrifying light flashes behind,
When finished he gradually disappears,
Into thin air without no sign.

Thunder warns the cities with his,
Monstrous bellowing,
Whilst painting the clouds,
With his favorite color grey,

He moves to another part of the city,
Once again to scare and play.

The tsunamis even fear of their enemies,
The powerful indestructible three.
The overgrown waves would,
Have no choice but to flee,
Leaving the oceans and seas tsunami free.

Storm, Thunder and lightening.
The three work in a team,
To attack the world with their wild scheme.

Pebbles of the sea

Neelam Shah

As the brutal sea waves crashes on to the delicate sand,
He leaves traces of tiny circles indented onto the tickly grounds,
Permanently stamped.

Who could have made these circles?

It could only be the Pebbles of the sea.

The tiny surface of hard cold stones wept across the soft,
Sizzling land of golden gravel, no single life has ever touched the sea's
treasures, wonder why?

If a soul innocently puts a tiny toe on just the tip of the sea's possessions,
The sea's wrath would rage against the poor soul.

He would order his mighty army of gnashing tides to capture this
trespasser,

With his mighty powers he would end his enemies struggle for life by
diminishing the so cold thief.

The sea has no compassion for those who dare to step on his fortunes.

He knows that his rocks are the only transitions of his life,

Family, guardians of the sea.

With out them he would loose control,

His contempt of life to control his armies.
He would bring upon misery by covering the whole island,
With his powerful salt-water body.

The sea's treasure has mesmerised many creatures,
But with his contempt of greed and desire, he has no mercy.
So why is the sea so obsessed with them?
Because the pebbles of the sea,
Are the only sources of light that keep the sea alive.

Timeless Travel...

Nilay Singh

Mr Dickens, I wonder... what would you have to say?
To rise from your grave and look upon us this day.
Wouldn't you be shocked?
For even with the turn of the clock,
Things haven't changed and yet remain,
Just as they were, nearly two centuries away.

Young Oliver Twist still roams around,
Though different masks he wears,
As he sets out on his task
Through toil and drudgery,
At the blacking factory,
All with no Great Expectations though,
But to find a place safe and sound,
Far from the prying eyes of the beggar mafia hound.

The Revolution as you can see still goes on
The Tale of Two Cities no more...
In France though it is long gone,
With its winds blown away to the East;

Rallying the angry crowds tired of being fleeced,
By the monarch and the priest.

The cobbled streets have given way to tar,
And people may now travel to places afar.
Your carriages have vanished, being replaced by the car,
A faster way to reach the seminar.

The Empire with its ceaseless boundaries has crumbled,
And sadly your country is now humbled.
Victoria's kin no longer rule Asia,
Any delusions of power are confined to Fantasia.

We live in the best of times and the worst of times,
We dwell in the age of wisdom and the age of foolishness,
A Season of Light for some and yet others a Season of Darkness.

But, wait! What do I see?
Is it hope for humanity?
Celebrations galore on your bicentennial year,
To you Mr. Dickens, the world beckons,
To remove the veil of ignorance of the powers that be,
Through stories untold...

So Mr Dickens, what have you to say?
With this invite coming your way?

The Taxi Ride

Ritesh Khandelwal

Nothing more did I want,
Nothing more did I crave,
I had everything from the start,
Every time I sighed,
Satisfaction blossomed in my eyes,
For I had everything from the start...

I had sung my way to eternal glory
Delighting the hearts of young and old
Breaking boundaries, transcending frivolities!
All loved the soul in my voice...
Nobody had ever heard such singing so nice!

I had nothing to care for, nothing to worry

I had friends, fame, power and money,

Though not selfish, yet I was unaware,

Wrapped in a cocoon of luxury everywhere...

A day came when I had a musical rendezvous,
Zipped through the streets like a streak of light...

When the vehicle broke down,
I was in a wretched plight!
Suddenly I saw a cab in the distance,
Languid but with hope, I hailed it!

And sped away to my Destiny...
We went through dingy lanes and alleys,
The thoroughfare of the commoner,

Never had I witnessed such a debacle,
It was like watching the other world through the yawning eyes of an
Oracle...

I watched the dogs running, the beggars begging,
I watched the smutty urchins play in the grime,
I watched the deranged man, the naked woman,
I watched her drinking from the sewer,
I watched the pedestrians hurling abuse,
I watched people toil away in the blistering inferno,
I watched them being enveloped by the dust.
I watched the hotels morph to slaughterhouses!
Working away in the masking darkness of the dusk...

Suddenly I could watch no more...
Everything so vivid became a blur of nothingness
I felt a single tear plunge down,
And disappear into the plush fabric of my coat...
For the first time in my life, I gazed at the sky with the meaning,
And felt something wake within me!

A roar reverberated from somewhere,
Threatening to destroy and preserve the world!
As I silently noticed the sheer endeavour it took for me to change
I realized that the whole world was in such a drunken stupor,
Driven deep like a chasm across the entire universe!

I considered the folly of Man to hold the delusion...
But wait, wasn't I such a fool myself?

As I sing today and enthrall millions,
I see; feel; the gaping void that is yet to be filled...
I find Mankind rejoicing for a failed cause,
Refusing to halt their lives for a short, brief pause...
Nothing more do I want,
Nothing more do I crave,
Every time I sigh,
Truth blossoms in my eyes,
For I had nothing from the start;
But a single taxi ride...

Oh! Death

Rohini M K

Death became my friend,
Don't know when?
Death became my partner,
Don't know how?
We lived together-
face-to-face...
Giving company and compassion..
I knew it was time,
To bid goodbye to hell.
Now I prepare...
I am ready
To R.I.P
Now I accept,
Now I regret
Now I acknowledge
Harsh realities....Is that so?
Building blocks of my life.
Oh! dear Death !!
You are my only true partner-
Who understood me,
Who accepted me,
Who acknowledged my existence...

To the Man Whose Name Cannot be Erased

Sabyasachi Sen

Life was the name of the book
Which he used to look.
Each page, a phase, he read
Not to memorize, but to experience instead.
He the tutor, he the learner
Dickens was his name.

A childhood, compelled to choose
In a factory making shoes,
His home drenched in debt
He followed the path that fate had set.
He the guide, he the explorer
Dickens was his name.

He mind, a cradle of creativity
Lay covered in a shroud of poverty
Hands, burdened with a family to sustain,
Were destined to spell magic with the pen.

He the fighter, he the winner
Dickens was his name.

Pouring his life into the pages
His experience in his sketches
Words flowing like the cascade of magic,
Expressed emotions tragic and comic
He the artist, he the writer
Dickens was his name.

Who says, he is no more?
Immortalized in Oliver, in Copperfield and many more!
His books, the jewels of our shelves
In each and every, he is present by himself,
No words to define him, no phrase to describe
He, the only, the one and only
Dickens is his name.

The Child who Harked to her Soul

Saurabh Bagla

I hark back to the epoch
When I lay helpless on the floor
I was hapless, but what sense does infancy hold?
I was black with dirt
With dust of poverty and social boycott?
I was oblivious of their disparage
But there was someone with sainted semblance
She clad me in her drape
And fed me to my modest content
She enfolded me with sympathy and concern
Whilst I felt akin a floret, flourishing
Enfolded by tender fronds
One day “Ma” was beaten to death
I asked around “Was it for me?”
And they rectified me with white lies
They said “She was lynched for stealing bread.”
What ensued was worse still
I was a mere creature with no voice

They disowned me
And fed me with dirt
I shuddered when they came
And cowered for clemency
When I failed in my errands
I beheld children giggling
And pined for play and lark
But kept my caravans of dreams deep
I desired to flee
With no clothes to wash and huts to sweep
It became explicit
They would lash and exploit me
Till I wilt and die
Compelling me to live my brutalized travail
As I hark to my soul
A pang lingers within
Is being born a poor a penal obligation?
Is being a girl a social curse?
-There was no answer
So she went for work
With streaming eyes
She harked but never followed her soul
For her the diamonds were the distant stars in the lone skies.

The above poem tries to portray the unfortunate world of a derelict. The girl saw her mother being killed for protecting her female child. She feels guilty but is forced to work and is treated with cruelty. The child analyzes her position but perhaps lacks the courage to combat the evils of illegal child labor and ignominious prejudices against girls.

Fagin's Song

Shambhobi Ghosh

We are the nameless shadows that hide
Within the bowels of an ailing city,
Artful in our dodging.

We lurk
As your footfalls trample our existence
In a perfect sense of denial –
Till the time we cross borders
To violate your world
With fallen colours of deception and slime.

This city-skyline has one eternal story
That never changes in dreams.
Only it takes up guise after guise
To hoodwink as we do
For deathless centuries to come and go.

We are all here
In this rumbling underbelly of sin
Ready to take in more to multiply

Rogues like pestilence
That needs a thorough cleaning.

But you haven't noticed those eyes
That you shut up in our oblivion,
That face without a name
Slowly sinking down, down
Yet reaching out in one last desperate grasp
To preserve that angelic ocean in those eyes...

Have you?

Shayeree Chakraborty

Disorder.

Harmony.

Disorder.

His soul stretched taut on cobblestones,
His life a dreary dungeon. Hush, the gates are closed.
Sleep forces down tired blinds, Hunger gnaws at them.
A dream is dreamt, and forgotten
A heart is loved, a hundred broken.
Gloom reigns the Dark, the fall out of innocence.
The heart yearns for morn, the womb for a memory.

He saw Happiness for the first time.
Saw it in her eyes, deep within.
Saw it change to ice-cold Skin.
An Unknown region to a Wandering mind.
The Unspeakable Sorrow of mankind.
His past swam before his eyes.
Memory and Misery it left behind.

I saw him yawn – a tired child.
I watched him work; raw and wild
Gashes are burnt into his flesh.
His education.
That forms, deforms and makes inhuman
A boy, a man,
An entire nation.

I saw him – masterful, playful at work.
Work. The theft of toil. Now, His toil.
The only gentle touch he knew earned him his bread.
Truly Miserable
Work it was. His eyes gleamed, the hint of steel
His hands experts. His stomach satisfied.
His Soul stabbed.

She had dreamt too. Of palaces, and finery and handsome men.
Of dances, warm fireplaces, Red Velvet.
She dreams of them again today, as she
Watches the Fire throw plaintive shadows on filthy walls,
Gray, brown and black. She trades her palace, her throne of Honour
For a few pieces of metal. Royalty, proud and beautiful,
Goes down on her back.

The Pen, the Almighty, I have felt as much as you have.
Cried as much as you have, for Sorrow has no boundary.
Cries have followed in your wake, across borders and centuries!
I have died a Hundred deaths for every tear they cried.
The Power of the Pen.
Lives are ruled by bits of paper - we kill and die for it
In ways worse than one could surmise.

I am no other: ruled by paper, but of a different kind.
An icy wind has touched your lives; a Golden Pen's made love to mine.
Garlands of praise they weave in your honour and yet
The Battle is unfinished.
But drunken with Hope and drugged with rhyme
My soul dances to the rhythm of Time
And touches a heart, and kisses a Soul –
Brothers and sisters, I am your own.

The World dances to the snapping of fingers – my soul snaps at all.
The Sun shall rise. The Pen shall rise Again.
Be not unfaithful to my Faith. Forgive me, bless me –
Many a prayer have I offered to you. And now this my life.
A drop in the ocean of ink and yet
An ocean of tears.

A night of storm shall lead to morn.
A new ray of Hope will be born
From streets strewn with stubs, filth and dirt.
The Heavens will sing to the grandest birth.
Compassion shall rule, Stones transform –
A dilapidated house. He's weak. Hungry.

Bless the pen, for the battle Must be won.

Harmony.
Disorder.
Harmony.

Colours Of a Red Rose

Soumyashish Gupta

When the rose blossoms and bloom,
A happy lover sighs to see the colour of love;
A lost soldier sees it reminder of dusk and gloom,
Whose mangled shirt bears the proof of his soldiery above.

An abandoned child stares at it wonder-struck,
In a dilemma-should she or should not she pluck?
She meant to do it, she did intend,
But her eyes had knitted a tale with a happier end.

A mason keeps his tools aside.
He forgets his wall half-built,
Marvels at the scarlet bride,
Who soothes him by her delicate lilt.

A beggar descries and stops by,
Regaining his senses, he attempts to cry
For in a life that tastes of gall,
He had for a second seen, some light that rivals the pall.

A mother picks it up for her child with a kiss
And thousand verligte images of pre-marital bliss.
The tempest of emotions is soon brought to calm,
As she wipes off her eyes two tears warm.

One from the corporate doesn't take a stand,
Finds nothing impressive- renders it bland.
To perceive it, somewhere he did feel the desire,
But time and work were entwined with his attire.

A vedette puffs up with heuristic passion,
Realizing what it is to be ever-young, in his profession.
He makes a frown and turns in dismay,
The sun was shining and he was to make hay.

A boulevardier puts on the vase with a shimmering smile,
A flower that well suits his lifestyle.
A life that is smudged with extravagance and vanity,
Can it ever parallel the flower's simplicity and beauty?

At twilight, an old man sees it eloquent,
Destitute, retired yet with a heart still vibrant.
Tears scarf up his weak vision,
His spirit revolts his age's prison,
His heart soars with a certain furbished gumption,
As he like a scalded cat, scampers into the depths of oblivion.

While others don't pay a tinge of heed,
I feel it bears a lot more to read.
While others see it as a token of love, a red flower, coloured in satiety,
I see it revealing the seven colours of the society.

Departed amidst

Susmita Dutta

You left alone amidst the raging waves
Was this only your love ,you carried on?
Not caring at all about my feelings
Was this your generosity you carried on?

Lamenting and lamenting but i didn't show
Couldn't you feel what i asked for?
A pure friendship with the fullest glint of faith
It also was something special but you poured terror

I would have liked to divide your sorry state
But had you not the patience allowing to sediment patience?
Really a cheat or else another i couldn't know\
This was your folly and it took away the relevant reliance

When with utmost hardship i swam to the shore
There was none to lend a hand to me
I looked for you everywhere ----be it heaven or hell
Then with thunderous shock i spotted you in glee

With here a beauty and there a glazy dream
Flying with wings and discovering a new mirth
Heartbroken so i decided with staunchness in my fist
That i shall leave alone you and forever your earth.

Charles...Charles Who?

Ushma Nair

Born to John
Being the second son
Charles never thought
His life would take such a turn

His early life
Was spent in strife
His every day
Was a shade of grey
Still he never lost
Nor did he give up
Life is unpredictable
And he had it tough

One day, his luck shined
It felt that destiny was kind
He gave his thoughts expression
They were his outbursts from suppression

Then came to life Oliver
Copperfield, and even Pickwick
And time passed
Tick-Tock-Tick

He shot to fame
And it wasn't just a game
It was his hardwork rewarded
And his works recognised

Charles was now a name
A reflection of strong persona
A spirit of creative mind
A soul no-one could ever weaken
Yes that is true,
It was Charles Dicken's!

The Night of the Storm

V Rosaline Victoria

Glazed air of the struggling ship,
The misty evening breathed death,
The tumultous waves raised a roar,
Cried - "Down to good health".
Sounds of retching midst the crew,
as they braced themselves on the rails,
They struggled valiantly along,
But their weakening bodies did'nt wish,
to go any further on...
Night draws nigh,like a sordid anchor,
Dragging through the sands beneath,
catching,plowing all through,
Not waiting but running ahead deep.
The sound of the thunder mixes,
Along with furious flashes of light,
The tossing ship moved around,
Lost in the clutches of the night.
Splashing waves ,spraying foam,
The sleet,rain , made them roam,
In wide circles the ship ran,

Till they no longer knew where they went,
The screams of the chilling waves,
Dampened the hearts of many,
Some fell, their hold had weakened.
The master shut himself in the cabin,
The summons unheeded, unnoticed,
Nothing worked, lost in the din.
Hours ticked feverishly , flew by,
and the long awaited hour came,
But no morning arose, but seen
were the dull misty clouds still,
Blocking out the sun, cajoling the rain.
It poured as it never had,
The crew worked to pump it out,
Hands, feet, head, drenched in water,
Spiced up by the salty pour of the sea.
The beat up waves crashed on the timber,
The load was lightened or all be lost,
They threw livestock, all in need,
And the sea carried away their rest.
A day and night passed in vigil,
as in the morn the awaited dawn failed
to come,disappointment abounded much.
The roaring wind tore at the bark,
The cracks grew wider with each breath,
The conquering waters poured in,
Bringing along the feared death.
And in that last night of no hope,
They gave themselves to the coming fate,
The merciless waves lashed them,
And the groaning ship laden full

with the salty wetness, slowly began
its downward descent in destiny.
Its mast was the last to sink deep,
It would never see the morn again.
The silent master dead in his cabin,
The floundering crew were quick covered.
They died unheard in their watery graves.
The next morn through the misty clouds,
Shone rays of calming light,
The spoils spread over the serene sea,
Calm in its loneliness, splendour,
Subdued. Its pursuit had come to an end.
It had crashed all earthly hopes, longings,
And all that was now left,
Was buried in the regretless sea.
Its raging fire had eaten up all,
Leaving nothing but a mournful stillness..

A Tribute to Dickens

Aarti Gupta

7th Feb, 1812, a Friday night, when the clock struck 12
Broke out a fire in Hampshire, England.
Elizabeth & John dickens,
Gifted this world a great legend.
At the age of 12 who pasted labels on boxes;
Supported his family at the time of crisis;
Himself a victim of the harsh times,
Most of Dickens' books are the reflection of his life.
From a factory worker to a court reporter,
From a political journalist to a well-known author,
Voice of England, spokesman of the poor,
Dickens sympathized with their sufferings and torture.
Dickens' first story, 'A Dinner at Poplar Walk'
Was followed by 'Sketches' serialized under the pseudonym 'Boz'
This paved way for his debut novel, 'Pickwick Papers'
Witty accounts of Samuel Pickwick & friends made him a literary
sensation.
Then came 'Oliver' with a 'Twist'
'Nicholas Nickleby' was next on the list.
'The Old Curiosity Shop' was to follow,

With 'Barnaby Rudge' coming out from the mist.
 His 5 Christmas books revived the traditional celebration'
 Uncle "Humbug" Scrooge left an everlasting impression.
 Next were 'Dombey & Son' and 'David Copperfield'
 Which in literature created history.
 They were more serious in theme, more carefully planned,
 It gave Dickens' career a new stand.
 'No Thoroughfare', 'Hard Times', 'Bleak House' & 'Little Dorrit',
 'A Tale of two Cities', 'Great Expectations' & 'Martin Chuzzlewit'.
 His works went on and on.....
 Short stories, plays, novels, the list is too long!
 Mastery of prose, mixture of comedy, realism and fantasy,
 Some of his characters' names provided a pre-hint of their personality.
 'The Mystery of Edwin Drood' was Dickens' last unfinished book;
 Towards the end these were the last steps he took.
 Blown out was the fire that had once lit,
 9th June, 1870 Dickens bid good-bye after doing his bit.
 However the sparks and ashes still remain,
 His works are the thumping footsteps down literature's lane....

The Ethereal Leap

Akash Goyal

If Disparity and anomaly a way of life be,
Then why endowed I be,
With a faculty that moans its existence
That groans its continuance,
That bewails its repugnant radiance,
That chooses to be apprehensive,
Of its aloofness to humanity,
Of its strangeness to divinity,
Of its moroseness to equanimity,
Of its grossness to moral vanity.

If on Earth discrepancy be the rule of thumb,
Then should I moan it being dumb?
Rather, I choose to mourn the death of such a humane instinct
Which has bound me with such a horrendous sting
Of gloomy, sepulchral irony,
Of acrid mental tyranny,
Of my myriad reflective finery,
Of my artlessly artless sublimity.
If I ache beneath my bosom knowing,

That I have scratched the surface a little,
Should I wake underneath my senses acknowledging ,
That I ought to be slumber more?

I groan, I moan, I supplicate for reform,
I ask for your lights whose pure form ,
I wish to perceive in your created human form,
In your constructed mental frame ,
Whose manifestation is my frail, fallible frame,
My tormented, but indefatigable brain,
My mind which has become a picture-----
Of its crying shame,
Of this seemingly tired thoughtful rain,
Of this maddening shriek of inner pain.

I laugh for the sake of preserving my time-honoured existence,
I cry for the sake of making the world feel my presence,
I groan so that mankind can sense my essence,
I moan so that I can make my heart acknowledge its more-than-absent –
Brazen, blatant decadence.
But why do I ponder, brood and ruminate
Over my life's frail reflections
Which weigh hard on this soul,
Which fill my bosom with more than what it can hold,
I pray for respite and I hope
That my prayer is not drowned,
In my conscience' muffled fight.

Leisure Dreams

Anisha Agarwal

The sun goes down 'midst a golden gleam,
They're holding hands in her scarlet dreams.
They range from past and present scenes,
Of people met and places been.
Another day and maybe more,
Of undying faith and forgiven scores.
From an angel's touch and a poet's eyes,
That speaks true love and never lies.

The clouds part away to show the stars,
She stares at them through his guitar.
She smells the air- he sings his song.
And he promises he won't be gone.
While plucking chords and pulling strings,
And tying together her favorite things.
He pins her photos on his wall,
And weaves a story with 'em all.

The freckled bark of garden trees,
The morning dew on baby leaves.

The sound of air on troubled chimes,
And his voice, engraved in her mind.
She hasn't looked- and it's been a while,
At every little thing that makes her smile.
But amidst tears-in-time, and joy in reams,
They're moving on with their scarlet dreams.

Girls...Not a Denial!

Anuvratty Saxena

Gazing the shades of the countryside
Beneath the sparkling golden rays
My eyes froze on a group of young boys
Filled with zeal of Life, sense of Pride...

And then I wondered about
The Little Angels, the Delicate Darlings,
About their presence,
About their absence,
Were they playing hide & seek
Within themselves
Or with their own life shell?
Where are they?

Eluding the thoughts of the womenfolk
This is what I can say:

‘The floral of childhood
Is more delicate than a cocoon’
Then why there is so betrayal?

The Zenith deserving,
Yachts in the trail of Hassle!

Is this a justification of nature?
Or a monopolistically dictator
Decision of rowdy & unruly men?

Denial from life
Denial from the greatest virtue of God....
Why such a Denial?

The daughter of the Omnipotent
Canst be ignored
Canst be an object of hatred!
He'll strengthen her
How can He lone alone her devote...
And let the solitary assassinate her!
His whereabouts are in her soul
And in the depth of her wisdom....

And so she'll prove Him
With a grace of Lioness
And shall defeat the men
With a mesmerizing victory of
Her Self Esteem!!

Life in Fleeting Times

Apala Chaturvedi

I whisper past the roads in a daze,
In a frenzy, a hurry,
A mindless chase.

The gravel is hard beneath my feet,
I counter the mounts ever so steep.
I rush in a fray..
Yet never pause to stay

I see the horde through an unconscious gaze,
Delusive and dreary..this place.

Tall birch trees, gurgling streams,
Now and then, a blackbird screams.
Unbearable, this beauty..
Yet I cant halt to praise.

Move on, I must
Or my steps shall gather rust..
For I live in a world of mindless chase.

My conscience it stirs,
No longer can I resist,
Once I do stop,
Sighing.. to contemplate.

My thoughts swim like an incomprehensible rhyme..
For I realize I'm living in fleeting times.

Note: This poem is illustrative of what Dickens might write in our modern times.. it is abstract when it draws sudden comparisons to nature and goes about in a matching flow of rhyming words which I noticed in Dicken's poems.

Cherry Blossoms

Apala Chaturvedi

Therein it falls..
From atop the high trees.
Gently swayed by the gush of breeze,
Slowly.. sighing and crooning,
Hushed and yet moving.

Tenderly, the wind caresses its skin,
Murmuring of joy that springs from within.
Mildly.. it falls,
Halted by none but its own hazy descent.

Oh! How a beautiful a sight
‘Tis for mine eyes,
This cherry blossom leaf,
Lying languorously amidst the gaiety of spring

Note: This piece is illustrative of Dickens flowery writing style and his attention to detail: for instance focusing on every small detail in the falling of a small leaf. The cherry blossoms in Japan indicate the welcoming of spring.

Illuminated Memories

Arup Bhattacharjee

With a jingling sound, the rain is falling
Like many of beautiful girls dancing and singing.
A dark nimbus cloud stays in the sky
Like an unknown spy.
From the sky, rain falls with a speed of fountain
a harsh of electric on the top of the mountain.
A gentle breeze flowing over the lake
A crash of thunder after a long break.
The rain water appears to the bird so hazy
While they sit on the tree branches feeling lazy.
A group of frog makes a joying sound
This makes children spell bound.
A little boy, running with a lotus in his hand
It is mirage for me which often happens in sand
In my inward eye, this remarkable scene
I want to see
Not a glorious, a simple to be.

Dear pianist...

Chayan Chatterjee

I hear a symphony...
Dear forlorn pianist,
That plays within the restraints of my consciousness,
A rhyme, that breathes your swelling passion.
Lost am I amidst the labyrinthe of its impeccable notes,
That redeems within me,
The memories of episodes forgotten.
I hear the music in silent dreams...
Upon solitary walks, down the snow clad streets of December,
Do I hear that impeccable tune,
Flowing alongwith the choked voices of the hopeless.
And as I cross the harrowing lamps,
That betrays the drooping shoulders of your neighbours,
Those mystical notes remind me of that sordid moment I first met you...
You, with your soul contrived, a penniless orphan of ten,
Your arm, clutching the smooth fabric of my coat,
A token on your palm,
And you had asked for more.
But no more shall your soul sail against such shipwrecking storms,
The direful thunders, shall no longer preclude the fulfillment of hopes,

With which it had set forth.
Oh pianist,
If this symphony be the messenger of fulfillment,
I urge composition.
For sweet is the melody that translates voices subdued,
Into such mystical notes of aesthetic beauty!
Dear pianist, the audience hall resonates with the symphony
That you have so delicately composed.
Your pains are past, your agony immaterial,
And the languid aching of your soul, has finally found respite.
Boy...my dear pianist,
The deep intimacy that the fingers cherish with the keys of melody,
Has now touched the hidden chords of my soul...
For the symphony I hear, is yours.
Therefore, to you I pray,
“Let not the heart seek passion,
But the passion seek the heart”
Therefore, dear pianist,
Play on.

Birth - A Blessing

Gautam Agarwal

I came on this earth and who welcomed me?
They were poor, loved sibling more.
God had promised me the moon in future- I didn't know,
My childhood was like an orphan's life,
with sleepless nights-dark and blue.

Spending the early days in the chores of shifting,
A candle burns, melts- being irrevocable,
and the financial trauma, left us homeless again and again.
a place no stable.

She brought me to this world still wasn't my chum, and not even moulded
me with blithe.
But he was and tried doing marvels for my life.
The waterfalls never stopped.
and his expenditures for me never failed to match such pace.
He fell in black holes, in debt, maybe I was the reason, changed my world
thereafter, pretty drastically but not well,
And I had nothing left, except the feeling to dwell.

I didn't see my stepparents next, aunt gave me even more love and care.
Money was then also the god, I was born in those years.
I began working, closed books forever, but pen was still my kin.

God's grace was on my head, they left him and I went to them again.
But she showed a women's true face, being my life giver,
didn't let me leave my job's place.
I cried, I worked, all alone with pen being my only companion.
Resulting in a disbelief attitude towards women.

The love then came next, life was a dilemma, I was dumbstruck and chose her,
But she too was a hell's gift, went away giving hearts a death,
The wind flowed and I still sensed her breath.

I now desired of living for me, predecessor word was because not known to me.
Chose ink, made it a sword.
Journals helped me to pen down the blunders, and I enjoyed my next life,
an editor's under.

I roamed, I saw, I experienced the globe,
The decisions are sacrosanct- the rich had declared.
I tried raising the power, masses did the most,
Life changed for them, liberty lying on feet, the king's then became ghosts.

This was all I could give to all.
"Don't let life go in vain"- father had taught.
Death came next, I had no sorrow
Was clinged to mind concepts, done with my duties, something worth

with the pen I had borrowed.

Life ended at home, children still had a smile on face,

I had done everything, they would have expected from a supreme's
grace!

Untitled

Mark Ahron

Fumes of tea, a misty air,
A moon above, and stars eclipsed.
The dewy light a shadow cast
Of chairs, in number three,
A table and a cup of steel,
Virgin heat on a wintry night.
Two seats full, two cups sucked,
Behind shakes a short bush,
A whisper or two in the dark,
Then silence, numbing the vast moor.
A desert of tripwires,
Buried dreams.

Fumes of blood and wounds unhealed,
Sweaty odours, a dark tomb.
A single hole, a fractured brick,
The only ray of light
But blocked by eyes inside,
Destined to look.
Never to think, never to speak,

Just to groan a scream unheard.
Noisy mob in a voiceless room,
Stripping rags, Stinking skins,
Eyes closed, a silent prayer.
Fumes within and those without
Mix and vanish in empty air.

A little kid in suits and boots,
A plane in hand, runs on the street.
Trampling carriages and horses
Sound on the brick-paved boulevard.
A step or two, all back and forth,
In khaki jerseys, red bandage,
Marching, talking of the night.
“’Twas unruly and yet silent
Although I felt, I closed my eyes.”
“Was it so? I think I heard
A scream last night aloud.” “Oh ‘twas
No one! Some beggar on the street.”
Yet creative it was for that li’l kid,
Who made a li’l device to fly,
Saying “My father flies it,
An army-man, a soldier.”
And shone his blue eyes, as he saw
Through the looking glass, into him.
How he looked from above!
Men in green and red, beneath
The cloud of fumes, oozing
From the kitchen.

Advent'rous heart, a curious mind,
A restless soul, in a bright shell.
Eyes accustomed to dust and smoke,
Eyes blue, by the sky overhead.
Trapped in the four walls of his room,
A book in hand, eyes buried in
Black, bold letters of ignorance.
Up, a window, half ajar,
Catches his sight, he drives his feet
And runs he out, his plane in hand,
In suits and boots,
Swinging each pole that passes by,
Through the haze, cut apart,
By morning light shining
In flitters, through walls and leaves.

He knew where to go with the plane,
A garden of tripwires, pure joy,
A friend he had there, bald-headed,
Who wore, like all other inmates,
Striped pajamas, black and white.
Why? He didn't know, just that he came
From a land far-off.
His father, a merchant there, now
Carried bricks and stones, much like him.
Today, he sat drooping. When asked,
He sunk, "My father went to bathe,
In the chamber, with others, and,
Has not come yet, two days have passed."
"Let's find him then, let's get some clothes
For me, like you, to camouflage."

He dug a pit under the wires,
For they sparked when touched.
Went to the self-same chamber
That trapped his father inside.
With the rest blissful to have a shower.
Lo! They've never come back again.
No scream was heard, for no-one screamed.
Empty fumes, a burning air.

Priceless

Namrata Agarwal

The unusual bareness of reality
The infinite colors of fantasy
The extension of immutable boundaries
The memory of experience and its families

The unsurprising peace of hope
The unreasonable satisfaction of dreaming
The song of dancing happiness
The call of the stories of silence
I wonder why I couldn't cash it...

Haly Aausen

Neha Shetty

It was a stormy, grey and yet a very calm night.

When a young girl made her way away from the dark wicked souls and towards the light.

She ran breathless and teary eyed with feelings of amber,

Recalling those words of wisdom that her dear mother had once uttered.

Now, the young Haly Aausen remembers those days when her soft, delicate hands worked till they started to bleed. With a bruised innocent heart and the excruciating pain of her crushed spirit.

She had belonged to no one, no cast and no creed.

She was now a phoenix who has risen from the ashes of the former one.

Old enough to resist the old pain and question the power of the great one.

With her head held high, a strange unknown feeling which ran through her body; and those dark captivating eyes,

She enchanted those strangers who ever passed by.

“The name is Haly Aausen...gentlemen. “She said,

This made everybody resume their small talk and listen with curiosity.

Nobody uttered a word...none but she.

She talked and they heard to this marvel of a woman of the new world.

Things change, Things stay the same

Nilay Singh

Mr Dickens...I wonder what he would have to say
If he rose from his grave and looked upon us this day
No doubt he would be shocked
Because even with the turn of the clock
Things have changed and yet remain the same nearly two centuries
away

Young Oliver Twist still roams around
Though he wears different masks
As he sets out on his task
To find a place where he is safe and sound

The Revolution still goes on
But in France it is long gone
Its winds have blown away to the East
Rallying the angry crowds who are tired of being fleeced
By the monarch and the priest

The cobbled streets have given way to tar
And people may now travel to places afar
Your carriages have vanished, being replaced by the car
A faster way to reach the seminar

The Empire with its ceaseless boundaries has crumbled
And sadly your country is now humbled
Victoria's kin no longer rule Asia
Any delusions of power are confined to Fantasia

Mr Dickens here is a summary of our world:
We live in the best of times and the worst of times
We dwell in the age of wisdom and at the same time the age of
foolishness
For some it is a Season of Light and others a Season of Darkness
Many dire predicaments assail the world you knew but one thing has not
changed over the centuries:
Our love of you....

Life...love...a reverie

Nisha Koppa

I walked around and was so amazed...
'cause life wasn't what i'd dreamed about.
It's really very strange 'cause sometimes, charles,
It makes you laugh and sometimes cry.
These small things and these moments are what brings a smile on our face.
And all these material gifts just fulfils our wants and makes us crave for more...
And know it; life can't be made perfect with them...
Infact life can't ever be made perfect
And it is lovely the way it is.
Theres always a possibility of finding love in what you hate.
There are so many treasures life has for us to find.
But i guess we arent keen to know about them.
Our life runs on the fuel of our faith and hope that no matter what...
As dicken's taught.
It is not a dream we are living in, it is real.
Everything we ever did, everything we ever loved, and just everything...
God has provided us wit a heart with a condition that we spread unconditional love everywhere.
n't just dream...believe in it.

The Facebook Crush

Nishant C

“While going through d e-book
I saw a girl on facebook!!!
Who has got an angel look
N i forgot wat i read in d ebook!!!
I luv d way she smile
But d distance between me n her is more dan a mile...

I wish she could have been mine
Den loving her wld have started every evening ten till morning nine!!!

I wish she could have been here
Den even living in hell dere wld have nt been any fear

I wish i could see her smile...
But suddenly i woke up frm my dream..n my heart realised
Dat d distance between me n her is more dan a mile!!!

It was the past - Not the Last

Nishant C

It's been so long ,that i haven't listened 2 d song....

Dat used to mke me feel...everything around me is just going wrong...

Now i'm sure dat song was just nt d last...

N dose days n thoughts were only my past...

Having u in my life has made everything 2 go in d right way...

N i wish...dat our relationship becomes stronger ..n stronger ,,,day by day...

U r just like a beautiful dream...which i am seeing with my open eyes in reality...

N i am nt getting...such words by which i can say about your speciality...

I can say dat wen i saw ur simplicity something happened 2 me fr a while...

N i wish that ur cute face never misses ur sweet smile...

I wish dat...i never hurt you...n let u say”u r wrong”....which makes u cry...

As life without u even fr a second...seems to b sad n dry...

I must say thanx to god fr giving me an angel like u...who loves me n i also care...

N i wish in d future we both have more happiness n a little bit sorrow to

share...

Ur presence in my life is one of d reason behind my smile....

N i expect ur presence.....in dis journey of life fr miles!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Finally i want to say....u have made me to live my life with pride....

N i expect u to b my bride.....even if fr dat i have to ask to wait” 2 both time n tide”!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

The Light of her World

Pallabi Paul

Reach for the stars, they say.
But it's only a dream in
The land of the broke and deprived.
She wakes up every morning
With the dream suspended in her eyes.
Miles to go before she can reach for it.

But she knows she will reach it.
The school a mile away too.
She of the stick figure
Has high dreams set in mind.
Smirked at by the world,
But she cares not.

One day she knows she will
Reach high and fly at her will.
She of the marginalised faction
Knows she will conquer the world.

Hope never dies in her heart.
Fear has no position in her world.
Her voyage is long.
But she is not weary.
She knows she will
Fly at her own will.

Her school hidden in the dark slum
But hope resonates in its walls,
Echoing a bright future that
She desires in her heart.

She of the weighed down head
Knows staying at her 'home'
Will grant her with naught.
The Shakespeare hanging at the wall
And Dickens in her books
Speak of hope and light.
A way out of her deprived life.

The Butterflies Are Free

Parikshit C Mukerjee

When I woke up, I saw dawn
Waiting for me to realize
When the darkness went away, but the stars still shone
The violet light sliced the sky.
The beauty in it so faultless, while others ignore
I say “Please sir, I want some more.”
The graceful illuminations help recognize,
The sins of our lives.
And this, I have thought many a times.
But I cannot change
The beauties passed away, along with time.
The cobbled streets have run away,
And the old houses crumble.
But they still carry their beauty
Every design beguiling through intricacies,
Their complexity, increasing with time.
Roots climb up, as
Nature, architects her way into the house.
And it fills me with happiness
To witness such a thing, as it takes me back in time.

I wish for simpler days,
For the cobbled streets to show me the way,
But all I see are the relics of yesterday.
Jaunty works, now feel damp.
Where has life gone?
The old joys of feathering around
And Dickens by the oil lamp.
All the houses look like boxes
Boxes, no better than coffins.
The spiral stairs have been straightened out
And their essence lost to the world.
The poets hide as the mad men preach
Unaware of faith's breach
Dickens has gone, while Fagin remains
Waiting for tomorrow's history.
But the relics of yesterday still stand,
Their beauty, crumbling with them.
The house that is haunted,
Is no longer feared
And the ghost is clueless.
Worried that he might lose his charm
He searches for the reason....
The reason, not to be found.
He calls upon life, but finds no soul
He finds no light, he finds no faith
The horror of realizing:
Life itself is dead!
The children outside play,
Oblivious of the ghost's tears.
And the rusting eyes of many old men,
Start to fail, fall away.

While we attempt to shape tomorrow
And the mad men turn insane
We forget to see today's glories.
The hidden treasures buried in the open;
The graceful illuminations in the sky
Fails to make us realize
The pristine beauty of this day.
But that haunted house, still crumbles away
History digging its own grave.
And when in happiness, sorrow underlies
The time goes on
It goes on, as the ghost cries.

Note: I would be lying if I said Charles Dickens was my only inspiration. I like to appreciate nature in my spare time, personify it. But I am at an age, where my text-books are starting to out-weigh my story-books, dwindling my spare time as well. And all this studying is supposed to help me tomorrow. So this poem is also an attempt to pen down the ensuing emotions flowing out of my body. Since all my poems are untitled, I found this title most fitting, as not only does it have a prominent connection to Charles Dickens, but it also succinctly expresses my sentiments when I had written the poem.

Untitled

Rohini Banerjee

It was the best of times,
It was the worst of times,
Where nightmares came alive
In a world of seasoned bliss.

It was the harmony of saints,
It was the tyranny of giants,
It was the glory of resurrection,
It was the gory of destruction,

It was the epitome of truth
Enveloped in falsity,
It was the worst deluge
Amidst calm passivity,
It was the age of glitz and glamour,
It was the age of filth and squalor,
It was salvation,
It was damnation.

And, trapped in unseen clutches,
Bound in unknown manacles,
Men, steeped in riches,
Yet choked in wretched poverty,
Abandoned without mercy.

Yet, it was all by man devised
All the product of evolution,
It was the victory of man
And his darkest decline,
His own destructive creation.
In spite of itself,
It survives,
Glittering in dim triumph.

Children of a lesser God?

Rupal Akansha

When I was born my mother embraced me
When they were born, they probably had no mother
When I was four I entered school
Into a new world that would decide my future
When they were four they started to labour
Into another world which had already decided their future
When I lived in a carefree world, studying and playing
They worked day and night, to earn their survival
When I got the love of my teachers family and friends
They got the hatred and abuses of their masters
And of the world alike
When I shall grow up to become a teacher, a doctor or a scientist
They will grow up to be the same unwanted souls they are now
Probably worse!
When I will die a peaceful death with my grandchildren beside my bed
They will die alone with only misery and misfortune for company
And this will continue to happen
If these children are obliterated into their sorry states
Unless..
We pause and ask
Are they the children of a lesser God?

Olivers in a Land of Twists

Satyajit Chatterji

One fine day, Charles Dickens decided to travel
To a place where the evergreen valleys
Argued with the gravel
To India, the city of Mumbai
To understand the Indian working class cry
Rich was the food, blue was the sky
Through which kites and white doves did fly
He observed the ups and downs of society
From white marbled mansions to black trash-can-alleys
They were fine, the suit-suitors and the hatters
But to Dickens there was more than these that mattered
More than that which met the eye
There was grey between the black and white
There were those who worked
Worked from morning to moon
And still had wallets as light as balloons
So many little Olivers, small, poor and weak
Living at the mercy of the highest order of society
More Fagins than Roses
More Sikes and Bumbles

More empty stomached Dodgers that ran and stumbled
Upon evil and need that forced them to steal without regret or grumble
Evil that makes evil of the humble
In a world that spins and twirls
Like an empty barrel in a rumble
Dickens saw many Olivers who fought life everyday
And at night dreamt of pennies
And asked for a little more on their plates
But never got any
Those who woke up every day to the smell of war
And found comfort on the wrong side of law
He saw the Burnlows and Fagins
In this land of contradiction
Sin and redemption
Those fortunate ones that sang and danced
Watching in a window-peek-glance at those who had no choice
But to dance to the tune of circumstance
Those little girls and young lads
Who always seemed to be grinning
With the joy that life was bringing
Largely because they didn't know what they were missing
But Dickens knew that this was life and what life must be
To love what you have and strive to be free
To live like a child
That knows not of a troubled world
This is why he wrote, to show
That it is neither money nor fame and its glow
That life is about,
Not a battle to get in and struggle out
It is to love and to feel
For only love is real

Friendship is all you can hold
Through the night that often gets so very cold
He saw children and grown-ups of the Indian working class
And answered were the questions in his mind that he asked
About whether life was the same on the other side of the world
Was it just as hard for these unfortunate little boys and girls?
As he read stories that poured from their eyes
He realised that though the place was different
Every soul in the world lived under the same sky
Faced the same sorrows as well as the joys
He understood the plight of the Olivers
Who lived under the iron fist
Who lived lives of struggle,
Of hardships...and just as many Twists...

Ode on a Statue

Sahil M Beg

I stood on the Paved Lane
Gazing at the Enormous statue
Lit'le Childrens Running around and Again
But none of the people Remarking bout His virtue
A man stood Next to me
Enquired "who this fellow is"
I replied "Father of Oliver twist and Ebenzer Scrooge"
The man wobbled around the corner to the stalls I guess, to have a cup
of tea
I turned around and thought bout his greatness Which is only His
Why those people gazing at the statue Just because It's huge

A Jumbo Concern

Salini Johnson

Amidst a flamboyant crowd stood I,
Gazing at the grandeur of the multitude,
Gathered at the holy of holies,
Deities carved in gold as onlookers,
Celebrating the festival of festivals,
In God's Own Country;
Then came the walking boulders,
All their true nature shed,
With majestic strides and alabaster tusks,
Serenading with the unannounced footfalls of a lusty lass,
And clad in magnificent costumes,
Gilded headdress and wrought-iron chains abound,
All gleaming under the harsh mid-day Sun,
An enduring vestige of the species of elephants!
Their placid demeanour,
Adeptly concealed their basic instincts,
But why are they so callously denied,
The free will to wander unrestrained,
In the wilderness relishing their true abode;
I wonder how much it hurts,

For these pachyderms oblivious to their plight,
When their tender soles,
Trudge along sizzling tarred roads,
While serenading to human whims,
Being chained, poked and scarred,
By the mahout sometimes too tipsy;
One has to be content it seems,
With futile musings on the brutality,
And something far too nasty to name,
Meted out to these unsuspecting jumbo souls;
Trying to subdue them with rods and spears,
When their hearts belong to the unruly jungle,
Like the hapless glowworm and the monkey,
We continue to pursue a lost case here,
Trying to fit in a jigsaw puzzle,
That is indubitably a misfit.

A Christmas Gift

Sayantan Ghosh Burman

Children of the night, sat shining in the grey heavens
Children of Innocence, sang carols down the merry streets.
And passed beneath the silent window.
Brought forth their sweet melodies.
Beneath the silent window
In a cancer ward of the old hospital
Two forlorn eyes gazing through the night,
Into the air of Christmas.
Festivity no longer sparkles
In the limpid eyes.
Her lips are withered and wry.
With the rustle of the wind only the blue drapes moved.
The eyelids flapped with a painful effort
Softly a hand grasped a white rose
From the golden urn by her side.
Held against her little heart,
She spoke, as if to herself
“Father, why do you not hear me?
Why dispense my joy like dry leaves?
Speak o Father, speak to me.”,

Tears down her ashen cheeks, yet ears responded
To the mute sound of the dark bright night
“ Come into my city dear one,
Let me touch thy soul , heal thy heart,
The cease thy pain and sprouts thy joy,
Accept this gift on the eve of Re-birth”.
The prayers made their way in the dark night
And a smile passed through the pale lips
To the petals of the fair rose.

Christmas Carol Revived

Shalini Banerjee

Ever wondered what would have happened
If the past was to be revived?
Who would have haunted us often?
And who wouldn't have survived?

Returning home on Christmas eve,
I missed my bus in haste.
Being a Kolkatan I wasn't peeved,
And in the nearest park I did wait.

Cold and worn out, I was,
Wondering when I could reach home.
To put up my legs in front of the heater coz,
'A Christmas Carol' will drown out world's drone.

And then it struck me,
My idle mind conjured it up.
Walking past that mango tree
Ebenezer Scrooge said "Wassup?"

My head started spinning
As the scene unfolded.
With a swagger in his walk and ‘smiling’
Which my mind instantly revolted.

It wasn’t the miserly creature
That Charles Dickens wrote about.
“a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner”
Was transformed in over a century and a half’s turnabout.

He came and sat beside me,
A smile plastered to his face
“How do you do?” he asked of me.
I got up in haste.

My mind was playing tricks on me,
I convinced myself.
When WHAM I banged into someone,
Someone the size of an elf.

I looked down to see,
A small boy with a crutch.
Picking him up I said sorry.
“God bless us everyone!” Tiny Tim said as much.

I smiled down at him and patted his head.
Evidently pleased by the familiarity in him,
Matching with everything that I had read.
And heard Scrooge say “Bah! Humbug!” to Tim.

Confusion and relief
Swept over me,
The familiarity evoking my belief,
But the change making me cautious, you see!

To clear my head
I turn around again
To see Bob Cratchit walking this way,
His composure regained.

But as he came near
It was very evident.
Parts of his clothes were torn
But parts were illuminant!

Confused as it is,
I took a few steps back.
Only to feel the air around me freeze
As 3 ghosts walked through me with a SMACK!

They huddled together in a corner
For all to see
While one looked like Father Christmas ready to holler.
Fearsome were the one in black cape and white gown shining like
Christmas tree.

Though they laughed amongst themselves
A sound too strange to behold,
Their laugh was like ringing bells,
While the aura was frightening in their cape's fold.

Bewildered, I was
As these mixtures weren't expected.
When all of them crowded around me coz,
To me were they detected?

"A part of your mind we are.
An illusion of what you have read.
A mixture of the great Charles Dickens
And what you want us to be instead.

In you mind we are,
And always will be.
Your companion whenever you ask.
Your guide wherever you need."

With that they did vanish
Leaving me with a smile.
In my heart I know this isn't finished.
But it was the best Christmas present for the next few miles.

Pip's Song for Estella

Somrita Ganguly

I lie here waiting for you,
Staring at the reflections on the ceiling.
They cannot imagine what has become of me.
And all I want to do is to sort out these troubled, tangled feelings.

But who has ever clapped with one hand?
And so all I can do now is stand, simply stand.
Stand there by the window;
Sometimes walk up to the door.

It's past 11 o'clock,
And I think I already know -
That you're not returning to Satis House tonight,
But when you're back at dawn, I'll try again to set things right.

She had lied to you –
Yes Estella. Because, or so she says, she wanted to save you from the
pain;
From the hurt, the humiliation and betrayal that she herself went
through;
I know that you need help - because she isn't, and neither are you sane.

You talk to fifty other men. You sleep with some, sometimes, with many.

Only to later break their hearts, and esteems.

You're addicted to the games but I'll try – try still – to bring you out of that den,

I'm your solution Estella; allow me to help you redeem; life isn't what she makes it seem.

You're a part of my existence, part of myself.

You've been in every line I've read, since I first came here –

The rough common boy whose poor heart you wounded even then;

But you're still the mistress of that common heart - this much is clear.

You have been in every prospect I have ever seen since –

On the river, on the sails of ships, on the marshes, in the clouds, in the light,

In the darkness, in the wind, in the woods, in the sea, in the streets.

And I've sworn to bring you out of Miss Havisham's clutches, sworn to set things right.

You've been the embodiment of every graceful fancy

That my mind has ever become acquainted with.

The stones of which the London buildings are made, are not real, or impossible to be

Displaced by your hands, than your presence and influence have been to me –

There and everywhere, and will be.

Estella, to the last hour of my life, you cannot choose

But remain part of my character, part of the evil,

Part of the little good in me.

But you're gone now; removed yourself from me, physically; it has been a day or two.

I feel numb, anxious, helpless, yet somehow, unsure too.

But there's one thing I know for certain – that I love you,

That I always did, and still do.

Will you never know this, Estella?

Men are capable of loving -

Capable, indeed, of loving you

When will you believe, that this is true?