

Chapter One

Dickens as a Humanist Writer

This research work analyzes failure of humanism in Charles Dickens' widely acclaimed novel, *Oliver Twist* (1838), which mainly deals with churches and government institutions that failed to deliver on needs and desires of working class people and children in the Victorian English society.

The novel opens with Oliver's birth in a workhouse, as his unmarried and nameless mother dies. Oliver spends the first nine years of his life in a badly run home for young orphans and then is transferred to a workhouse, then to Mr. Sowerberry's. Ill-treated, Oliver finally runs away toward industrialized London, where he takes shelter in the London house of Fagin, a career criminal.

Fagin sends Oliver to assist Sikes in a burglary. Oliver is shot by a servant of the house and is briefly taken to Mrs. Maylie's. But Fagin and a mysterious man named Monks are set on recapturing Oliver. Meanwhile, pursued by his guilty conscience and an angry mob, Sikes inadvertently hangs himself while trying to escape. By the time novels ends, Mr. Brownlow, a gentleman, having retraced family ties, adopts Oliver again after a long series of his life marked by criminalities, hunger and desperation, some common dehumanizing features of the then industrialized urban London society.

Dickens, through the story of young orphan boy Oliver Twist, who suffers a series of abuse and misfortunes and becomes in the underground world of London pickpockets and criminals owing to faulty social institution and values. In other word, Dickens presents the series of hardships and misfortunes suffered by the young orphan boy at the hand of his cruel masters as failure of the social and legal institutions of that time that were supposed to ensure respectful survival of the poor and children. The novel also explores the destructiveness of such institutions

towards the vulnerable working class especially orphaned children in the society that was primarily driven by quest of material affluence, one of the dominating characteristics of the Industrial Revolution that overlaps with Dickens's time.

In the hindsight, the Industrial Revolution saw great political, social, economic and cultural upheavals in England. It was the time for surged intellectual and literary activities, scientific discoveries and advancement and social movements. To be precise, the era was a time of radical change in almost every spheres of human life.

Without a doubt, it was an extraordinarily complex age that has sometimes been called the Second English Renaissance. It was the era of peace after England fought several wars while promoting its colonial powers, the new order of peace and progress also brought social unrest resulting in the decadence of individuality and humanly concerns largely due to rise of the Industrial Revolution. Jordan puts it, "As a result of the Industrial Revolution, the face of the country altered more in the next thirty years than it had done in the previous three hundred" (78).

With advent of the Industrial Revolution, there was a creation of a consumer economy and means of purchasing consumer goods. The social norms of the farm and tenement changed into capitalistic mode of economy. The importance of accumulating wealth was felt more ever than before creating new lines of economic stratification as owners, who controlled means of production and the workers, whose labor was exploited for economic outputs. The primacy of humanity and individuality took over by money and machine.

The social classes of England were newly reforming, and fomenting. With the churning upheaval of the old hierarchical order, the middle classes were steadily growing. The upper classes' composition was changing from simply hereditary aristocracy to a combination of nobility and an emerging wealthy commercial class. Conditions of the poor, especially the working class were steadily going bad to worse. Jordan writes:

Down the thriving docks amongst the gin shops a hideously squalid population struggled fierce for existence in the free for all tragic-comedy of unenlightened self interest. Like swiftly moving tide of grey scum, the tenement housed of the poor began to cover the few remaining fields and meadows in the heart of the city.

(39)

There had been certain reforms and legal acts to address the deteriorating conditions of the poor working class, but they were turning ineffective due to corrupt governance that resulted in widespread poverty and crimes.

Victorian society failed to accept the existence of the poor. Those members of England who worked as chimney sweeps, rat catchers, or spent their days in factories had no place in the echelon of the upper class, although their services would be needed from time to time. The miserable conditions of the poor usually did not improve. Workhouses were developed, but the living was horrendous and it was almost better to be back on the street.

The advent of the Industrial Revolution triggered an unprecedented migration of rural population to the cities. The shift of population to urban areas occurred beyond resource sustainability that bred grounds for unemployment, organized underground crimes and urban poverty. The questions of human needs and greed magnified to the extent that aspects related with humanitarian actions, humanly considerations and individual choice and personal enrichments fell in shadow.

A horrible reality of child labor persisted throughout the Victorian period in England. This was also because more labor was needed to operate mushrooming factories. Poverty was a way of life for many Victorian children. There often wasn't the time or energy for play. Food was whatever could be found, scraped together, or stolen. Starvation and cold were facts of life. Children were expected to help supplement the family budget and were sent to work quite young. These weren't gentle jobs, they were manual labour paying extremely low wages.

Some poorer Victorian children found that criminal activities made their lives easier. Pickpockets were everywhere. Snatching food off food-vendor's carts and quickly running away was often the only method of getting something to eat. Being without shelter, or parents, wasn't unusual. Parents were often unable to support their offspring. These children would be turned out into the streets to fend for themselves. Child abuse was a common occurrence; so many children would just run away.

Members of Victorian society kept busy with parties, dances, visits, dressmakers, and tailors. Keeping track of what other people in your social class were doing was also a full-time occupation. Humanly feelings and considerations were replaced by class and money. Now the only difference between being a member of the upper-middle and the middle class was the amount of wealth you had possessed.

It was the age of the private gentlemen, who could ignore politics, the press, the beggar who happened to be dying of hunger in the coach-house and who felt no pressure of social or national existence. The Victorian Era was also a time of tremendous scientific progress and ideas. Darwin came up with the Theory of Evolution. The radical thought associated with modern psychiatry began with men like Sigmund Freud toward the end of the era. The ideas of Marxism, socialism, feminism churned and bubbled along with all else that happened. Rickett writes:

The literary and scientific institutes take a more prominent place in the life of the day, and science, once a sealed book saved to an elite few, has become democratized. The man of science is no longer an academic reduce, he is the person of Huxley, a man of rare influence as a social and educated force. (78)

The discoveries of science have particular effects upon the literature of the age. Though, the Victorian Age produced two great poets Tennyson and Browning, the age is also remarkable for the excellence of its prose. It marred the growth of the English novel. William J Long says,

though the age produced many poets, and two who deserve rank among the greatest, nevertheless this was emphatically an age of prose and novel (489).

Literature of this age tends to come closer to daily life which reflects its practical problems and interests. It becomes a powerful instrument for human progress. It is often considered as an age of doubt and pessimism. The influence of science was in almost every field including literature. The whole age seems to be caught in the conception of man in relation to the universe with the idea of evolution.

Despite rising industrialism and materialism, religious feelings continued to dominate the thought of the people of in the Victorian Society. The Victorian people were moralists at their heart, and religions were sheet anchor of lives. There was marked contrast between religion and science. They laid emphasis on order, decorum and decency. To talk of duty, honor, the obligation of bringing up a gentleman, the responsibility of matrimony and the sacredness of religious belief was to be Victorian.

1.1 Dickens and his Literary Works

One of the greatest Victorian novelists, Charles Dickens was born on February, 1812. In his early years, he worked as a reporter and this experience gave him a good knowledge of the political life of England. Dickens' father was a kind man, did not know how to take care of his financial situation and always ran into pecuniary trouble. He was put into the debtors' prison with other members of this family.

At that time, Dickens was eleven years old and lived by himself. He met all kinds of people, the rich and the poor, the kind and the vicious, and witnessed a lot of unfair phenomenon in the society. This unhappy experience of his childhood leaves such a deep impression on his mind that it becomes a recurring subject in his novels. His novels thrive for addressing human sufferings and pathos and exposes evils and brutality perpetrated against vulnerable poor and children with his merciful, sympathizing and humanitarian gestures.

In other word, humanism is an important subject in Charles Dickens' works. Dickens, best remembered for his novels, wrote altogether twenty three novels. Though there have been variance in subject matters in early and later works, the central themes in most of his novels more or less criticizes violence, social injustice, abuse and exploitation and poverty.

Success came early to Dickens. He was twenty-five when his first novel, *Pickwick Papers*, appeared and made him one of the foremost writers of his day. It is an exuberantly comic novel with almost no shadows, and readers expected all of his novels to follow this pattern.

With passing of his age, Dickens's view of his society and human nature grew increasingly somber, a maturity of his humanistic thinking His depiction of the destructiveness of social institutions and values against individuals especially children and lower class people including factory workers, warehouse children became insistent in his novels as seen in *Oliver Twist*, in which the orphan boy, Oliver, for no fault of his own has to undergo hardships at early age and is further forced to join the criminal world due to the corrupt social and legal system. Chesterton writes, "Dickens attacks the modern workhouse with a sort of inspired simplicity as of a boy in a fairy tale who had wandered about world in hand, looking for ogres and who had found an indisputable agree" (25).

Dickens while undertaking the treatment of childhood, he himself becomes a child. Lord David Cecil writes:

It is only when writing more or less in his own person, a David Copperfield or a Pip that he succeeds in presenting character as commonly seen. This he can do in the most masterly fashion, but hen he is writing as an adult remembering his childhood. Dickens always cherishes the memories of childhood. And childhood always charms him, enchants him and holds him in its magic spell (251).

A Tale of Two Cities, based on the background of the French Revolution, shows brutal social reality and sharp conflicts between classes in France and England at that time. Portraying ruthless rule over lower class people of aristocrats as represented by Monseigneur Euremonde, Dickens raises the issue of social stratification and at the same time brings into light the need of humanistic contemplation in the system.

Nicholas Nickleby (1838) is Dickens' commentary on the educational system in place in England when he was growing up. In the novel, the main character, Nickleby who is a teacher's aide, rebels at the evil of the headmaster, who abuses the poor students. The novel is Dicken's powerful social commentary that urges society not to lose capability of humanly love and treatment to individuals, that had been on the decline in the English society.

Dickens' own autobiographical novel, *David Copperfield* (1849-1850), shows how lust for fortune destroys love and humanity. With importance of material wealth in industrialized Victorian society becoming increasing eminent, Mr. Micawber conspires death to innocent child David. Depicting the rescue of beleaguered protagonist through humanly feelings like love, trust and encouragement as shown by Emily and Dora, Dickens reinforces his humanistic thinking.

Writing of Dickens's belief in domestic life as the source of happiness and the alternative to social evil, Angus Wilson added, "Even more vital to Dickens was the idea of pure love as the means of redemption of flawed, weak, or sinful men. Neither of these beliefs can properly take the weight that he imposed on them..." (47).

Dickens deals with corrupt social and political institutions of the English society in *Little Dorrit* (1857). The novel deals with prison life by representing the constraints and inhibitions of Victorian society, the rigid bonds inherent in the class system, and the inescapable maze of red tape associated with governmental bureaucracy.

In *Hard Times* (1854), Dickens deals with the inadequacy of an approach to life that emphasizes only the human intellect at the expense of the imagination and the heart. Dickens

attacked the failings of education and the wrong-headedness of the prevailing educational philosophy that only laid primacy on facts and figures, rather than individual's emotional need imaginative developments and human sensibilities.

In this way, almost in all of his works, Dickens places emphasis on fulfillment of needs, desire and treatment of every individual as human being irrespective of class, gender and age. His outrage on almost every social, political, legal, religious and bureaucratic institution ranging from school to prison house, establishes himself a vocal humanist that sought prompt reforms in the institutions remained apathetic to human needs, values and self-actualization. Angus Wilson put it:

There are a number of Christian, humanist and ethical themes in Dickens' work. Dickens work has the New Testament about it. This universe of evil is grotesque and mythic, where an unlikely promised good future is so much more uncluttered and humanistic. Goodness seems to be in small places and individual and involves sacrifice and suffering. The humanity in people comes in their comic ways; our foolishness is what makes us human. So the Dickens' novel is of course a social criticism, is in praise of humanity in its struggle and has a related religious content. (45)

For his fierce attack on the existing institutions, later critics, mostly Marxists, hailed him variously as subversive, rebellious, and even revolutionary. As a humanist, Dickens wrote for the cause of the poor and for betterment of the miserable and pathetic conditions of the poor factory workers, orphaned and abandoned children, maltreated and abused schoolchildren. He raised voice against the institutions only concentrated on material affluence which had destructive effects on individuality, social and spiritual progress. He aimed at shocking his reader by painting the picture of the ongoing abuse, exploitation and corruption and crime and impelling them to bring about reforms in every field of social life.

Dickens's masterpiece *Oliver Twist* has drawn widespread literary appreciations. The great epoch of the Romantic Period in England, largely marked by subjectivity and personal freedom, is followed by the Victorian society that placed high value on materialistic philosophy. Donovan perceives novel in the romantic light and describes the novel as "unromantic portrayal of criminals and their sordid lives" (61). In another world, the existing industrial enterprises affected whole society and life ceased to exist as a romantic adventure with all human efforts and living philosophy being reduced to material gains.

Walder analyzes the novel with the Marxist notion of class structure and describes the apparent plague of poverty and superficial class structures in London population, regardless of the social class into which they're born and with the ubiquitous misery making Oliver "owe his life several times over to kindness both large and small" (515).

In one of the earliest reviews published on *Oliver Twist*, Dickens' expressive style and talent has been remarked as:

That this author exhibits genius in embodying London characters and very remarkable skill in making use of peculiarities of expression, even to the current phrase of the day, is undoubtedly true; but he has higher merits, and other elements of success. His powers of pathos sadly touching rather than tearful are great; he has hearty sympathy with humanity, however, degraded by vice or disguised by circumstances, a quick perceptions to detect the existence of the good, however overlaid; his truth and nature in dialogue are conspicuous to all; he has the great art of brining his actors and incidents before the reader by a few effective strokes; though deficient in narrative... (Collins 45)

Makepace has given negative observation on Dickens treatment of characters especially Nancy, who represents the working class with full of virtuous qualities, and finds the characterization unrealistic. He writes:

Boz, who knows life well, know that Miss Nancy is the most fantastic personage possible; no more like thief's mistress than one of Gesner's shepherdesses resembles a real country wench. He dare not tell the truth concerning such young ladies. They have no doubt, virtues like other human creatures; nay, their position engenders virtues than are not called into exercise among other women. (45).

Another critic Miller Hills in *Charles Dickens* sees the novel in the symbolist light. Considering the food in the novel as symbol, he says, "Oliver's odyssey begins with a simple request for more gruel, and Mr. Bumble's shocked exclamation, represents he may be after more than just gruel, (Hills 31).

Regardless, Dickens' *Oliver Twist* is successfully depicts the hypocrisy and venality of the legal system, workhouses, and middle class moral values and marriage practices of Victorian England. It also exposes the destructive effects of those standing social norms and corrupt and incompetent institutions on the working class people, poor women and orphaned children. The novel attacks on cruelty and brutality perpetrated against the poor, arouses sympathies among readers towards the hardships faced by them, who are persistently denied humanly treatment and considerations from society, establishes Dickens as a human writer. Through the novel, Dickens firmly stands for reform of such institutions and improvement in the miserable conditions of the poor.

Chapter Two

Theories of Humanism

2.1 Concept and Origin of Humanism

Humanism concerns with humans including human needs, human desires, and human experiences. The term refers to the centrality of human. To be human means to be entitled to getting humanly love, compassion, self-respect and treatment along with fulfillment of needs and humanly considerations. It is an attitude of thought or action, which advocates for the maximization of individual liberty and opportunity in line with social responsibility.

The *Oxford Dictionary* defines the term humanism as “devotion to human interests; systems that is concerned with ethical standard but not with theology and with the study of mankind (416)”. Humanism thus derives the goals of life from human need and interest rather than from theological or ideological abstractions, and asserts that humanity must take responsibility for its own destiny.

In another word, the concept of humanism centers around the attitude or worldview that recognizes human beings as part of nature and holds that values--be they religious, ethical, social, or political--have their source in human nature, experience and culture. It shows overriding concerns about promotion of general human welfare, emphasizes on a person's capacity for self-realization based on human experience.

As a separate philosophical and literary concept, humanism came into the consciousness of humanity along with the Renaissance, the transitional period between the Middle Age and the beginning of the modern world. The return to favor of the pagan classics stimulated the philosophy of secularism, the appreciation of worldly pleasures, and above all intensified the assertion of personal independence and individual expression.

The concept however did not fully develop from the writings of a few Renaissance scholars. It has its roots over 2, 500 years ago, when early thinkers formulated that the idea that humankind alone is responsible for its own welfare and development. Many Greek philosophers including Socrates, Aristotle, Archimedes, Thucydides, and Hippocrates held the opinion that there are truths and rules of conduct which are the same for all, thus laying foundation for free reasoning and scientific inquiry. Newman writes:

Leaving behind a relativism which says that each country should stay with its own culture, the mainstream of Greek philosophy taught the spirituality of the human soul and the basic unity of mankind. So the models and categories could be developed which are at the basis of thought, the sciences and the arts. (97)

The social, political and economic sciences Greece and Rome elaborated many of the principles governing our societies. Justice in Athens later went on to be the basis of Roman Empire. The Roman Empire was considered the realization of the Hellenistic idea of the unity of the civilized world.

During the Renaissance, humanists such as Petrarch, Coluccio, Salutati and Leonardo Bruni created a philosophical movement based upon what they discovered especially in ancient Roman and Greek manuscripts. Developed during the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth centuries, the humanists responded to the challenge of medieval scholastic education and emphasized on practical, scientific studies.

The main centers of humanism were Florence and nearby city states. As the grip of medieval supernaturalism began to diminish, contemplation on human interests became more prominent. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* describes the rationalism of ancient writings as having tremendous impact on Renaissance scholars:

Here, one felt no weight of the supernatural pressing on the human mind, demanding homage and allegiance. Humanity—with all its distinct capabilities, talents, worries, problems, possibilities—was the center of interest. It has been said that medieval thinkers philosophized on their knees, but, bolstered by the new studies, they dared to stand up and to rise to full stature. (842)

Thus the rebirth of classical literature, and especially the attempts among the philosophical elite to translate this literature, helped bring this enlightening knowledge to the gradually more literate masses. The zeal for education of these masses allowed the concept of individuality to spread to all social classes, an idea developed by Greece and Rome to a remarkable degree, which had been suppressed by the rise of a caste system in the later Roman Empire, by the Church and by feudalism in the Middle Ages.

Renaissance humanism negates transcendentalism that gave rise to feudalistic thought of the Middle Age and in all its manifestation, placed man centre of things (Doren 145). The feudal system and its theological thought had become a fetter to the development and creative power of human beings. Humanism envisages a free autonomous individual-harmony between exterior and interior instead of conflict and aims at ending the split between society and individual as well as the individual's internal split. Steven Kreis expresses widespread views:

The period from the fourteenth century to the seventeenth worked in favor of the general emancipation of the individual. The city-states of northern Italy had come into contact with the diverse customs of the East, and gradually permitted expression in matters of taste and dress. The writings of Dante, and particularly the doctrines of Petrarch and humanists like Machiavelli, emphasized the virtues of intellectual freedom and individual expression. In the essays of Montaigne the individualistic view of life received perhaps the most persuasive and eloquent statement in the history of literature and philosophy.

In this way, individualism and the instinct of curiosity were vigorously cultivated during this period. Honest doubt began to replace unreasoning faith. According to E. O. Wilson, humanists are “considerably more vocal, seem to have a perpetual grudge against anything religious and seem to be in a constant state of warfare against any and all signs of religious sentiment” (58).

In another word, the skeptical viewpoint regarding the religious orthodoxy reached high development and wide acceptance among the humanists. Finally, the spirit of individualism to a certain degree incited the Protestant revolt, which, in theory at least, embodied a thorough application of the principle of individualism in religion. Ericson maintains that all manifestations of humanism should be productive of human well-being, which was supported by the Unitarian Universalist Church, the Ethical Culture movement, and some liberal Protestants during that time in Europe (20).

Humanistic contributions to science consisted mainly in the recovery of Greek scientific literature which evinced a more accurate and acceptable body of facts and ideas than most medieval scientific works. The scientific treatises of Aristotle, Euclid, and Ptolemy were translated into Latin and known to scholars before the Renaissance. Moreover, Islamic scholars had already introduced most Attic and Hellenistic science into Western Europe, often with vast improvements on the original.

The spirit of the development of individualism and liberation of human nature, which began in the Renaissance, reached a period of full bloom in the 18th century. This was the age of the French Enlightenment. The Enlightenment was a reaction against the religious dogmatism of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The source of this movement was the economic philosophy and democratic political theory represented by John Locke, and others, coming from England, which had more rapidly achieved bourgeois development. This emerged as a completely revolutionary thought, and its impact spread to the thought of the European continent which was still under the old system.

The basis of this stance was to uphold reason against every type of authority and superstition. In France, inevitably, this movement opposed the authority of the Church, and then developed further into a struggle against the rule of absolutism. In this movement, there was a distrust of the noble and priestly classes, and a struggle against religious superstition, as well as a philosophical movement of atheism and materialism.

The eighteenth century French enlightenment, and consequently the French Revolution, loudly proclaimed the remaking of society in accordance to human reason, because they grasped the essence of man as reason. During that time, the religious dimension of man's life became shallower, the idea of humanism changed, which was now understood as meaning the total autonomy of man. Man came to be considered the only master of his life, whereas submission to God was seen as alienation. As theology was stressed to become anthropology, since God is

nothing but man's essence projected before his own mind, - a projection loaded with frustrations and desires.

After the Enlightenment, its humanism continued and was developed in the next two centuries. The idea of humanism was incorporated in various philosophical and literary doctrines. Humanism, with passing of time, has come to encompass a series of interrelated concepts about the nature, definition, capabilities, and values of human persons. As its continuity, perspectives in philosophy, anthropology, epistemology, aesthetics, ontology and politics have emerged based on human being as a point of reference.

During the last two centuries, various elements of Enlightenment humanism have been manifested in philosophical trends such as existentialism, utilitarianism, pragmatism and Marxism. During this time, humanists have campaigned for the rights of nonreligious, marginalized, disadvantaged and poor people, and developed organizations and ceremonies which provide for their values and beliefs, respectability and fulfillment of various levels of their needs that form core tenets of humanism.

2.2 Norms and Values of Humanism

Humanism maintains that moral values derive their source from human nature, human society and human experience and that they have not come from god. It rejects the concept of God and religion, and regard humans as supreme. Humanists do not generally believe in a supreme deity or deities, demons, ghosts, angels, in a supernatural world, in heaven and hell, or in a divinely ordained ethical code for humans to follow. Most would regard God as a creation of mankind rather than the reverse. However, as argued most persuasively by David Hume there is a definite intellectual disconnect between describing the world, including the attitudes of people in that world, and determining what in that world should be valued:

I can, for example, describe human ethical beliefs in great detail, but this does not enable me to decide which, if any, of those beliefs is best, unless I *already* have in mind what values I am looking for and how they rank against each other. While science is clearly invaluable in providing answers to factual questions intimately related to value judgments, the ultimate decision on what to value or how to rank values against each other is something which science is not equipped to make. (475)

However it has a general assumption that love, kindness, and generosity would still be good things in a world where no religions existed. Humanists believe that moral values stem from the human need for happiness, human experience, and the fact that we must live cooperatively together. Lippman puts it:

Happiness cannot be the reward of virtue; it must be the intelligible consequence of it. It follows, too, that virtue cannot be commanded; it must be willed out of personal conviction and desire. Such a morality may properly be called humanism, for it is centered not in superhuman but in human nature. (128)

Since there is no evidence for life after death, humanists place a special value on this life and on making the best of it. They do not expect justice in another life.

It lays primary emphasis on reciprocal transaction of humanly treatment and behavior. Humanists value all human beings, celebrating both our common humanity and shared values, and the diversity of human culture and rejects discriminatory practices based on race, gender, nationality or belief. Humanists believe that humans alone are responsible for sustaining and improving our quality of life on this planet

Humanism holds that the universe exists for no purpose. Humanity is the result of a blind and random process that does not necessitate any kind of meaning. It differs from the more extreme philosophy of nihilism, in that life can have a meaning if we assign a meaning to it. Life is only worth living if it is made worthwhile and enjoyable. It considers the complete realization

of human personality to be the end of man's life and seeks its development and fulfillment in the here and now.

Humanism does not deny the possibility of realities as yet undiscovered, but it does insist that the way to determine the existence and value of any and all realities is by means of intelligent inquiry and by the assessment of their relations to human needs and that religion should formulate its hopes and plans in the light of the scientific spirit and method.

Humanism asserts that the nature of the universe depicted by modern science makes unacceptable any supernatural or cosmic guarantees of human values. It rejects the idea of a created universe in favor of the theory of evolution and a universe that obeys natural laws. The humanist emphasis on the value and importance of the individual was however not necessarily a total rejection of religion. According to Nicholas Terpstra,

The Renaissance was very much characterized with activities of lay religious co-fraternities with a more internalized kind of religiosity, and it influenced the Protestant Reformation, which rejected the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church and declared that every individual could stand directly before God. (124)

Humanism maintains that no objective or universal values exist. A person may be moral if he or she creates a system of values and lives according to them. A humanist would maintain that no one is obligated to be moral. Therefore, humanism fails to provide moral objections to immoral behavior. Thus, in a humanist society, no one can really judge or condemn the choices or actions of others.

Humanism is fostered by the teaching of evolutionary science, materialism and moral relativism. Holding an organic view of life, humanists find that the traditional dualism of mind and body must be rejected. Evan observes:

Many traditional religions teach, for example, that human beings are composed of (at least) two very different components: an immortal soul and a perishable body. While

it is true that science cannot *disprove* that something like a “soul” survives bodily death, any more than it can *disprove* that angels exist, it can certainly weigh the evidence on one side and the other and contribute to making an informed decision based on reason and evidence. (9)

Humanism recognizes that man's religious culture and civilization, as clearly depicted by anthropology and history, which are the product of a gradual development due to his interaction with his natural environment and with his social heritage. The individual born into a particular culture is largely molded by that culture.

With the Medieval supernaturalism fading away, the facts of individual experience in the here and now became more interesting than the shadowy afterlife. The present world became an end in itself instead of simply preparation of a world to come. Indeed, as the age of Renaissance humanism wore on, the distinction between this world and the afterlife world tended to disappear. With the removal of God from the human affairs, the transcendental purpose to give human life a meaning is lost and all human beings are considered only struggling with survival till death. Achievements, the sacrifices and the good and beautiful acts and the ugly and dark acts are all taken as futile efforts.

Beauty was believed to afford at least some glimpse of a transcendental existence. This goes far to explain the humanist cult of beauty and makes plain that humanism was, above everything else, fundamentally an aesthetic movement. Human experience, man himself, tended to become the practical measure of all things. The ideal life was no longer a monastic escape from society, but a full participation in rich and varied human relationships.

2.3 Forms of Humanism

Humanism is a general term for many different lines of thought that focus on humanity and issues that are common to human beings.

Secular humanism sees the relationship between God and human beings as an essential aspect of human character, and posits that each individual is endowed with unique value through this relationship.

Jordan maintains:

Secular humanists start with the premise that the need for religion in human life is at least questionable, and they themselves are comfortable in dispensing with religious models in the formation of their world views and in the conduct of their daily lives. I see these differences between religious and secular humanists. (7)

It embraces some form of theism, deism, or supernaturalism, without necessarily being allied with any spiritual, religious, or ecclesiastical doctrines, beliefs, or power structures. Many believe it arose as an inevitable reaction to theism when it is authoritarian and dogmatic. Niebuhr views it as a new synthesis of Renaissance and Reformation (204). The movement upholds that the acceptance of humanist principles lies in a rational consideration of their value and appropriateness, not in any sense of their having a divine origin or of their being worthy of some form of worship. Religious thinkers such as Erasmus, Blaise Pascal and Jacques Maritain hold this orientation.

Existential humanism is based on the principle of human power to make freely-willed choices, independent of the influence of religion or society. It holds the view that best use of our capacity for making choices is to freely choose to live a fully human life that incorporates traditional human structures such as marriage. It argues that embracing our own personal freedom requires us to fight for the freedoms of all humanity. Albert Camus, Soren Kierkegaard, Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir are some of the prominent existentialist humanists.

Marxist humanism is concerned with Karl Marx's structural conception of society, or the alienation of laborer as has been advanced in his Economic and Philosophic Manuscript of 1844. Alienation, Marx argues, is born of a capitalist system in which the workers no longer function

as a free being. Petrosyan relates Marxist humanism with the humanist legacy of the past, with the human ideals and principles embraced by the mass of the people, with the basic moral standard which they have evolved over thousand of years in their struggle against social oppression and moral degradation (15).

In another word, the Marxist humanism is related with the good of mass as an entity of humankind against various forms of social and economic oppression and exploitation evidenced throughout the human history. The Praxis School, which called for radical social change in Yugoslavia in 1960s, was one such Marxist humanist movement. However many scholars including Luis Althusser have criticized this concept as being revisionist.

Cultural Humanism involves study of humanities and refers to cultural traditions which, originating in ancient Greece and Rome evolved through European history and has come to be a fundamental basis of Western culture. Aspects of this tradition include law, literature, philosophy, politics, and science, among others. It emphasizes on the value of such studies — not simply for material gain but instead for their own sake, as part of cultural tradition that has long been passed down along the human history.

Chapter Three

Failure of Humanism in *Oliver Twist*

3.1 Destructiveness of Social Institutions against the Poor

One fundamental aspect of Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* is its portrayal of the corrupt and unjust social institutions that took its toll on the innocent lives of the working class people especially orphaned and abandoned children. They were blatantly abused, exploited, starved, pushed to underground criminal world and deprived of humanly treatment and considerations in the Victorian society in England.

The poor children were sheltered at workhouses, also called poorhouses, which were originally established for their welfare. The facilities were publicly run by the parish churches and local government such as municipalities and feed people who were unable to support themselves.

The system, which was put in force by the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, stipulated that the poor could only receive government assistance if they moved into government workhouses. The workhouses operated on the principle that poverty was the consequence of laziness and that the dreadful conditions in the workhouse would inspire the poor to better their own circumstances.

Dickens in the novel critically deals with the descriptions of the repressive, soul-destroying workhouse regime and the horror and extreme despair and hardships the refuge seekers had to undergo in the facilities. The boards of guardians were responsible for running workhouses attempted to end the provision of outdoor relief - payments in cash or kind to poor people still living in their own homes - forcing paupers into the workhouse.

The workhouses were established widely across England: “Among other public buildings in a certain town...there is one anciently common to most towns, great or small—to wit, a workhouse...” (3). However, the sufferings of the inmates ever went unabated due corrupt bureaucracy, incompetent staffs and inefficient legal system. Worse, the system had its far-flung negative effects on the lives of the poor ranging from the disintegration of family to utmost cruelty perpetrated against the inmates.

Through the heart-rending story of Oliver Twist, who was born in a workhouse and left alone to face the hostile world of abuse, starvation and exploitation, Dickens calls for humanistic contemplation to do away with the evils of the system. His mother dies soon after giving him birth in a pathetic condition: “She imprinted her cold white lips passionately on its [Oliver’s] forehead; passed her hands over her face; gazed wildly round; shuddered; fell back—and died” (4). Dickens presents how pathetic her death was:

‘Work’us,’ said Noah, ‘how’s your mother?’

‘She is dead,’ replied Oliver... ‘What did she die of, Work’us?’ said Noah.

‘Of a broken heart, some of our old nurse told me,’ replied Oliver more as if he were talking to himself than answering Noah. ‘I think I know what it must be to die of that!’ (38)

While his mother was dying, the parish surgeon apparently had no humanly feelings for her and the nurse was drinking beer, without attending much to the dying patient as evident when she picks up the cork of the green bottle, which had fallen out on the pillow, as she stooped to take up the child (4). This shows that the workhouse staffs were incapable of humanly feelings and love even for somebody lying in the death-bed. The death of his mother leaves newborn Oliver in the mercy of utmost hardships and cruelty that would soon follow him at workhouse and elsewhere.

The indifference of the government and the upper class and the middle class people towards the welfare of children, especially orphans is epitomized in Oliver’s future sufferings. Just at the time of Oliver’s birth in the workhouse, Dickens reveals how the boy would be regarded:

“...a parish child-the orphan of a workhouse-the humble, half-starved drudge-to-be cuffed and buffeted through the world-despised by all, and pitied by none. If he could have known that he was an orphan, left to the tender mercies of the churchwardens and overseers, perhaps he would have cried the louder” (5).

The description is simply grotesque. No human being is expected to undergo the soul-destroying ordeals when he is not seen even a second day of his life. Rightly as said, the young orphan, Oliver, is soon trapped within the miserable parish workhouse, with absolutely no hope of any immediate rescue.

Oliver along with other inmates are treated worse than animals as reflected when Mr. Bumble remarks that Mrs. Corney’s cat and kittens receive better treatment than the workhouse paupers (173). In the house of Mr Sowerberry, where Oliver was apprenticed to help the

undertaker in making coffins, famished Oliver was given broken victuals that were even refused by the dog to eat. These instances clearly shows the denigrating effects the prevailing institution that considered the poor as having lower status than that of animal. The poor children were reduced to a sub human category.

The officials who ran the workhouses were corrupt with no regards for the lives of the workers. The management took unequal shares of money and hoarded some for their own pockets. Mrs. Mann, the caretaker of the workhouse where Oliver was kept till her ninth birthday, embezzles the funds that were meant for the poor children and instead starves them.

As Dickens puts it, the poor choose between “being starved by a gradual process in the house, or by a quick one out of it.” This statement refers to the new stipulations which, since they did not provide any supplementary relief to outdoor workers, forced poor people to live in the workhouse if they wished to receive relief. The workhouse reproduces the vices it is supposed to erase. In the name of dietary, workhouse boys were fed much too little:

Oliver Twist and his companions suffered the tortures of slow starvation for three months. At last they got so voracious and wild with hunger, that one boy who was tall for his age, and hadn't been used to that sort of thing (for his father had kept a small cook's shop), hinted darkly to his companions, that unless he had another basin of gruel per diem, he was afraid he might some night happen to eat the boy who slept next him, how happened to be a weakly youth of tender age. (12).

The boy's narrative suggests the destructiveness of workhouses that forced human beings turning into cannibals. The workhouse also mimics the institution of slavery as the facilities feed and cloth the inmates as little as possible and required to work without complaint at tasks assigned by the board, no matter how risky the task might be or how loathsome the working conditions might be.

One day, being pressed by his fellow inmates and following an acute pang of hunger, Oliver asks for more food that brings about a hue and cry in the workhouse authority, which is insensate to feel a basic requirement of enough food:

'Please, sir, I want some more.' The master was a fat, healthy man; but he turned very pale. He gazed in stupefied astonishment on the small rebel for some seconds, and then clung for support to the copper. The assistants were paralyzed with wonder; the boys with fear. What!' said the master at length, in a faint voice. 'Please, sir,' replied Oliver, 'I want some more.' The master aimed a blow at Oliver's head with the ladle; pinioned him in his arm; and shrieked aloud for the beadle. (12)

Soon after this, Oliver is offered with five pounds to anyone willing take him. The inhuman aspect of the board is reflected in their readiness to hand him over to Mr Gamfield, the brutal chimney owner, who happened to labor the slight imputation of having bruised three or four boys to death already. The deal would have meant death to the innocent child.

Later the board even thinks of getting rid of Oliver, who justly opposed atrocities, by sending him to sea, with "the probability being that the skipper would flog him to death, in a playful mood, some day after dinner, or would knock his brains out with an iron bar" (22). In this way, authorities rendered the poor children prone to losing life for no fault of theirs. They lacked even the slightest of level of human sensibility in dealing with the working class children. This shows the cruelty and ruthlessness of the system, the wrongs of which could hardly be righted.

Dickens presents Oliver as just a representative character that bear the brunt of the inhuman treatment at the hands of authorities of that time. Starvation, exploitation and destruction of childhood innocence are all the social institutions have got to offer to him, who was "the victim of a systematic course of treachery and deception" (5).

The novel is critical of the existing law, specifically the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, that paved the way for the sufferings of the poor and the corrupt practices of the system. He attacks the Poor Law Commission with scathing sarcasm: "The members of this board were very sage, deep, philosophical men; and when they came to turn their attention to the workhouse, they found out at once ... the poor people liked it! It was a regular place of public entertainment for the poorer classes" (11).

In general, charitable institutions only reproduced the horrid conditions in which the poor, having no other option, were forced to live. Dickens also lashes out at the regulation while aiming his anger at the officials who were responsible for the legislation allowing such inhuman practices:

They made a great many other wise and humane regulations, ... kindly undertook to divorce poor married people, ... and, instead of compelling a man to support his family, as they had theretofore done, took his family away from him, and made him a bachelor. (11)

This shows the devastating effect of the law on family by the practice of segregating men and women, even married couples, when they entered the workhouse and slams the rules that created a dynamic wherein families would enter the institution while the husbands remained outside working. The disintegration of family and separation of spouses from each other were some inhuman practices that utterly violated the poor's right to family life.

The utmost abuse, exploitation and starvation at workhouses meant even death to young inmates. When Oliver runs away from Mr Sowerberry's house to some unknown destination, unable to bear physical and psychological oppression, he reaches out to the workhouse where he was sheltered, where he bids farewell to one of the friends on a most heartbreaking note. His poor playmate is in a deteriorating health condition.

‘Hush, Dick!’ said Oliver, as the boy ran to the gate and thrust his thin arm between the rails to greet him. ‘Is anyone up?’

‘Nobody but me,’ replied the child.

‘You mustn’t say you saw me, Dick,’ said Oliver. ‘I am running away. They beat and ill-use me, Dick; and I am going to seek my fortune some long way off. I don’t know where. How pale you are!’

‘I heard the doctor tell them I was dying,’ replied the child, with a faint smile. ‘I am very glad to see you, dear; but don’t stop, don’t stop!’

‘Yes, yes, I will, to say good-bye to you,’ replied Oliver. I shall see you again, Dick. I know I shall. (45)

Another shocking fact about the system was that poor children suffered the loss of identity and individuality because of the existing institution. The name of Oliver Twist itself is not authentic as Mr. Bumble, the parish beadle, invents this name when Oliver is born.

The beadle drew himself up with great pride, and said, ‘I invented it.’

‘You, Mr Bumble!’

‘I, Mrs Mann. We name our fondlings in alphabetical order. The last was an S,-- Swubble, I named him. This was a T, --Twist, I named him. The ext one as comes will be Unwin, the next Vilkins. I have got names ready made to the end of the alphabet, and all the way through it again, when we comet to Z.’ (8)

A gold locket which could serve as a clue of his identity was trusted by his mother to Sally, an old workhouse pauper who attended her at the deathbed but the greedy old woman cheats Oliver concealing it till she is in the mouth of death. Also Oliver cannot even say his name due to exhaustion and terror, so a court officer gives him the false name, Tom White.

This process of inaccurate renaming occurs throughout the hearing, as Oliver is falsely named a “young vagabond” and a “hardened scoundrel” before he is eventually falsely declared

“guilty.” As these examples demonstrate, Oliver’s identity has been determined by the prevailing system, which made him a victim by robbing him of his sense of individuality throughout his life.

Another most devastating effect of the institutions on the lives of the poor children was that they were forced to enter criminal gangs of thieves. With the existing law forbidding to beg and the system clearly not in favor the working class people, poor kids like Oliver and the Dodger compelled to live at the mercy of criminal like Fagin, who used them for pick pocketing in the crowded city of London.

Their enrolment in the gang prevented them from getting opportunities to prepare themselves for professional lives, thus nipping in the bud any prospect of them saying good times ahead. In a way, the corrupt institutions forced had its hand in destroying the innocence of poor children and turning them into an abominable career criminal like Sikes and a slattern prostitute like Nancy.

There could hardly be any humanist assessment of such criminals as they are the agents driving the society to decadence and self-indulgence. Their fates, sooner or later, were to be sealed with death as in case of Sikes and Nancy, or imprisonment as in case of Fagin, or unjust sentencing as ordered to Oliver by the district magistrate, Fang.

Through the sufferings of Oliver, an orphan boy born and brought up in a workhouse, Dickens has exposed the corrupt social institution and legal system prevalent in the Victorian England. In so doing, he shows the destructive effects of the system on the lives of the working class people especially orphaned and abandoned children, subjecting them to utmost abuse, exploitation, starvation, separation from family, and entering a criminal world.

3.2 Prominence of Wealth at Odds with Humanist Ideals

During Dickens’s time, the Industrial Revolution in England saw massive rise of the middle class, with the economic mode shifting from subsistence agriculture to consumer’s

economy. Humanly considerations and treatments mean little; money became more important affair than anything else for survival in the society. The class conflict and subsequent discriminations against the poor were clearly felt on all fronts of social and economic life. The working class faced hardships and difficulties, with many of them ending up in vicious underground crime in the cities.

With the advent of capitalistic mode of economy, there was tough competition in accumulation of wealth and thereby increase one's purchasing powers. Conditions of the poor, especially the working class however did not improve. With material wealth now reigning supreme in human affairs, the novel depicts the age facing moral decadency and lack of human sensibility.

Mrs. Corney, the middle-class matron of the workhouse, leads a luxurious life out of the money meant to be spent on pauper residents, who are crammed into tiny, unheated spaces, while she enjoys a room to herself with a blazing fire during the bitterly cold winter. She seems to be incapable of moral sense and humanly feelings. Her lifestyle also suggests the moral decadence of the middle class and the upper class people who always showed lust for money at the cost of basic rights of the lower class people.

She is later proposed by Mr. Bumble, the parish beadle, inspired all by her material wealth. When she leaves the room, he verifies that her dishware is made from silver and that her clothing is of "good fashion and texture" (171) and assesses the exact condition of her furniture and ascertains that her small padlocked box contains money, before deciding on the proposal.

This shows the importance given by the Victorian society in its social dealings with no exception to the institution of marriage which is generally thought to be more of an emotional attachment and choice. Because of the priority the society laid on economic interests, human feelings, attributes, and considerations were obscured.

The description of Mrs. Corney further implies that the middle class controls conceptions of what is right and wrong, since church officials, intellectuals, and public officers—who have the authority to declare what is right and wrong—are all part of the middle class, which was on the forefront of accumulating wealth, even though thievery, taking advantage of disadvantaged condition of the lower class people.

Industrialization in England, the machine for triggering economic disparity in the society, was a lopsided phenomenon. While those in the city especially the owners of factories and industrial establishments reaped the benefits that came along with it, the countryside remained aloof from the phenomenon. At one instance, Oliver and his master Sowerberry travel to a squalid section of town to retrieve a dead pauper's body. The neighborhood is full of shop fronts that are "fast closed and moldering away" (33).

The people of this neighborhood have apparently been left behind by the economic expansion of the Industrial Revolution, which was in full force at that time. The bereaved husband's wife starves to death as a result of the economic realities of the society in which she lives, implying that the economic boom brought no less misery to the lower class people, who desperately struggled to lead a human life till death.

This also spurred a massive exodus of the rural population to newly established towns especially London in search of job and better livelihood opportunities. The great migration of the rural people was driven by their quest for better livelihood that came along with material wealth.

No matter whether it was in the rural areas or the cities, the upper class and the middle class perpetrated injustice, cruelties and inhuman treatment against the lower class people. To formalize the former's economic ambitions, the unfortunate, the poor, the destitute, the orphan and the abandoned were despised, disregarded and deprived of their rights. Dickens presents the misery brought about by the upper class and the middle class's lust for wealth at the cost of the poor children's sufferings:

When a child had contrived to exit upon the smallest possible portion of the weakest possible food, it did perversely happen in eight and a half cases out of ten, either that it sickened them from want and cold, or fell into the fire from neglect, or got half—smothered by accident, in any one of which cases the miserable little being was usually summoned into another world, and there gathered to the fathers it had never known in this (6).

In this way, the people belonging to the lower class people suffered because of economic greed of both the upper class and the middle class stalwarts. The means of oppression were simply the modes of the middle class's economic ambition to match their affluence with the upper class, but it was a way to premature death for the poor. With money dominating every social ties and transactions, humanly feelings, brotherhood and compassion mean too little. Subsequently, the workhouse inmates who represent the working class people were exposed to much vulnerability in Victorian England.

Oliver's trip to London parallels the migration of the poor to the urban centers of England during this age. Nonetheless, the miseries of the poor especially working class children were even worse in the city:

Although Oliver had enough to occupy his attention in keeping sight of his leader, he could not help bestowing a few hasty glances on either side of the way, as he passed along. A dirtier or more wretched place he had never seen. The street was very narrow and muddy, and the air was impregnated with filthy odors. There were a good many small shops; but the only stock in trade appeared to be heaps of children, who, even at that time of night, were crawling in and out at the doors, or screaming from inside. The sole places that seemed to prosper amid the general blight of the place, were the public-houses; and in them, the lowest orders of Irish were wrangling with might and main. (50)

The slums of London not only offered dreadful living conditions but a breeding ground of underworld crime in which the unprotected, neglected, starved and beaten children fall prey to. Criminals like Fagin, who operated a ring of young pickpockets which Oliver unknowing joined, aided by his ruthless aides Bill Sike used innocent children to meet their economic greed. The Dodger, Charle Bades, Tom Chitling and Nancy are all the representative characters victimized by the Victorian society which cared too little for humanly considerations and intellectual development of the poor children.

The shocking reality was that the innocent children were made to think that the life of a criminal was something romantic, offering them wine and cigarette and were motivated in crime by providing incentives and role models for what would corrupt the humanly aspect of their personality for the rest of their life. Fagin says “I never saw a sharper lad. Here’s a shilling for you. You go on in this way, you’ll be the greatest man of the time” (58).

Ordinarily, childhood is the time for acquiring education and learning about things that would help children to become good human beings later in life. But Oliver and other inmates at Fagin’s den put to training for excelling in pick pocketing:

The merry old gentleman, placing a snuff box in one pocket of his trousers, a note-case in the other, and a watch in his waistcoat pocket, with a guard chain round his neck and sticking a mock diamond pin in his shirt, buttoned his coat tight round him, and putting his spectacles-case and handkerchief in his pockets, trotted up and down the room with a stick, in imitation of the manner in which old gentlemen walk about the street any hour of the day.(57)

The material quest of the era made the society so inhuman and irresponsible that the working class children were deprived of their rights to wholesome upbringing and thus rendering them inefficient to live and act in full potential that forms one of the central concepts of what it is

to be a human being. Innocent Oliver is brutally thrashed and dragged to courtroom for no fault of his own and harassed being called “hardened scoundrel” (67).

Oliver’s innocence is responded with a sentence of three months of hard labor, which in the existing health condition of the child would mean death. Another time, ruthless criminal Bill Sikes threatens to kill Oliver if he refuses to take part in a burglary. After being forced into the house through a tiny window, Oliver is shot by one of the household servants, while Sikes flees, abandoning Oliver in a ditch. These instances speaks of horrid conditions and circumstances resulted from the material quest of middle class people against the working class children.

Oliver was exploited by the society in every possible way. For instance, Mr Sowerberry wants to exploit the melancholic countenance of the boy to enhance his business as evident when the undertaker says to his wife: “There’s an expression of melancholy in his face, my dear, which is very interesting. He would make a delightful mute, my love” (31). Also Crackit, the companion of Bill Sikes, the ruthless criminal, takes in Oliver’s angelic face as a plus point in pick pocketing as the innocence seen in his face would hardly offer a room for anybody to doubt that he is a pickpocket.

It is money that forced Oliver to live a life of sub human with want, poverty, abuse, maltreated, exploitation and fatal episodes pursuing him ever since his birth in the workhouse. His identity could not be established in time because Old Sally, the workhouse matron where Oliver was born, robbed his mother of a locket that could serve as a clue to his past. She made the confession at the death bed.

In fact, Monks is Oliver’s half-half brother. His greed for wealth pushes Oliver’s life to miseries. Oliver’s father dies years before leaving Monks’s mother and beginning a relationship with Oliver's mother Agnes. Monks had been watching for Oliver, and when the boy surfaced in London, Monks had enlisted Fagin to train Oliver as a pickpocket, for any illegal activities performed by the boy would invalidate his claim to the inheritance.

With the industrialization in full swing, people in general were addicted to smoking and drinking at public houses as the Three Cripples mentioned in the novel, which serve beer to the public and gathering places of criminals. The places were however not free of the idea of class discrimination. The residential quarters of the people of the lower strata of the society were considered a shame.

The idea of class conflict can also be seen being harbored by as gentlemanly figure Grimwig, a friend of Oliver's benefactor, Mr Brownlow, who wishes to send his payment and some returns back to the bookstall with Oliver. Upon hearing Mr Brownlow's wish, Grimwig might steal the payment and the books:

“He may have worse, I say,” repeated Mr Grimwig. “Where does he come from? Who is he? What is he? He has had a fever. What of that? Fevers are not peculiar to good people; are they? Bad people have fever sometimes; haven't they, eh? I knew a man who was hung in Jamaica for murdering his master. (89).

Mr. Grimwig's statement reinforces the upper class people's mentality held at that time that the poor are innately vice and have inherent attributes of criminality, meanness and wickedness.

Class tension could largely be attributed to a common misconception held by the upper class that the lower class people have innate attributes of vice and meanness. They held the view that the working class people are incapable of sophistication, learning and refinement. But the fact that Oliver speaks and carries himself with a demeanor that is much more sophisticated than that of the rest of Fagin's boys suggests that Dickens is using Oliver to show that even when people are born into squalid conditions, they can appreciate goodness and display sense of proper etiquette and morality.

For instance, Oliver though brought up in workhouse and did not attend any schooling addresses other with 'sir' all throughout the novel, implying that he has proper sense of etiquette.

When the Dodger and Charley Bates pick Brownlow's pocket, and again when Sikes and Crackit order Oliver break into the house of Mrs Maylie, Oliver reacts with shock and horror at the idea of stealing and rejects or expresses unwillingness to indulge in such acts. Also Oliver shows proper respect to her dead mother is reflected in his unusual aggression against bullying Noah at Mr Sowerberry's, when Noah calls his dead mother names.

At one instance, Mr Bumble shows Mr Brownlow his own identification papers to prove his statement about Oliver's past. His status as the middle-class beadle for a workhouse gives him the right to speak for Oliver and therefore to define Oliver's identity as he sees fit. This suggest the disparity between classes people belong to, as, with his identification papers, Bumble has the power of the state to back up his word but poor Oliver only has his own word to back him up. Outside of the workhouse, Oliver has no legal existence unless he commits a crime and enters the courtroom. The poor are thus reduced to a public existence as criminals, corpses, and mean paupers without genealogy and human attributes.

The relationship between Harry, an aristocrat, and Rose, who fails to maintain class equality, illustrate centrality of wealth and class one belongs to. On being proposed by Harry, she a penniless, nameless girl fears that outsiders will believe that she slept with Harry outside of wedlock and secured his hand in marriage. Thus, she demonstrates her awareness of the tendency of respectable society to assume the worst about individuals of low social standing.

This also shows the tendency of people belonging to the middle and upper classes of often marrying for economic reasons. Individuals usually married someone from a similar economic and social class because, presumably, marrying down would harm their social and economic interests.

Rose later regrets that she cannot offer Harry an economically profitable and socially acceptable marriage, but Dickens criticizes socially or economically motivated marriage that lacks any moral standing and personal understanding.. Mr. Bumble and Mrs. Corney demonstrate

one such marriage, and the Bumbles lead a miserable life. They dislike each other intensely. Mr. Bumble regrets marrying for “six teaspoons, a pair of sugar-tongs, and a milk-pot; with a small quantity of second-hand furniture, and twenty pound in money” (233).

Class tension is also manifested in Dickens’s depiction of Nancy, a poor female character having once served in Fagin’s pick pocketing ring and now working as prostitute. While the Victorian society was dominated by aristocracy and its notions regarding birth, wealth and mannerism, Nancy’s honorable acts, ranging from shielding hapless Oliver from Bill Sikes’s clutches to sacrificing her own life for the poor boy’s cause, directly contradicts Victorian stereotypes of the poor as fundamentally immoral and ignoble.

Through this, Dickens demonstrates that there are different levels of vice and that an individual who partakes of one level does not necessarily partake of the others. Nancy has been a thief since childhood, she drinks to excess, and she is a prostitute. Despite these tainting circumstances, however, she is incredibly virtuous where the most important matters, those of life and death, are concerned.

To sum up, the novels deals with the corrupt social and legal institutions of England during the Victorian period that had far-flung devastating effects on the working class people. The institutions, at its minimum, failed even to recognize the existence of the poor, and made their survival worst, robbing them of their rights to be considered and treated as human beings. The Industrial revolution in Europe brought drastic change in perception of class and importance of wealth.

The upper class and the newly emerging middle class were obsessed with material quest to meet their own economic ambition, bringing about their fall in morality and human sensibility. The poor in factories, workhouses, other industrial establishments were badly treated and were even deprived of their basic rights to food, clothes, and shelter. Poor children were rendered prone to criminal activities. The working class people were frequently subject to utmost abuse,

exploitation, starvation, injustice, inequality and forced family disintegration. They were deprived of humanly dignity and considerations and were reduced to a sub human category in total contrast to ideals of humanism that lays central emphasis on people's freedom, right to choice and determination, dignity and humanly treatment, self actualization and individualism, irrespective of political, social, economic, legal and cultural settings.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

Material Quest: The Cause of Failure of Humanism

Humanism concerns with human needs, desires, expectations, and experiences. The term refers to the centrality of human. To be human means to be entitled to getting humanly love, compassion, self-respect and treatment along with fulfillment of needs and humanly considerations.

The concept of humanism centers around the attitude or worldview that recognizes human beings as part of nature and holds that values--be they religious, ethical, social, or political--have their source in human nature, experience and culture. It shows overriding concerns about promotion of general human welfare, emphasizes on a person's capacity for self-realization based on human experience.

As a distinct literary discourse, humanism came into the consciousness of humanity along with the Renaissance, the great epoch in human history marked by the transitional period between the Middle Age and the beginning of the modern world. The main centers of humanism were Florence and nearby city states and its exponents were renowned scholars including Petrarch, Coluccio, Salutati, Galileo, Leonardo and Bruni.

Humanists maintain that moral values derive their source from human nature, human society and human experience and that they have not come from god. They reject the concept of God and religion, and regard humans as supreme. They value all human beings, celebrating both

our common humanity and shared values, and the diversity of human culture and reject discriminatory practices based on race, gender, nationality or belief. Humanism is fostered by the teaching of evolutionary science, materialism and moral relativism. The theory has emerged as a general term for many different lines of thought that focus on humanity and issues that are common to human beings. Cultural humanism, existential humanism, Marxist humanism and secular humanism are some the major trends.

The Victorian era in England saw great political, social, economic and cultural upheavals, with an unprecedented surge of surged intellectual and literary activities, scientific discoveries and advancement and social movements. With the advent of the Industrial Revolution, there was a creation of a consumer economy and means of purchasing consumer goods.

The importance of accumulating wealth was felt more ever than before creating new lines of economic stratification as owners, who controlled means of production and the workers, whose labor was exploited for economic outputs. The primacy of humanity and individuality took over by money and machine. The Victorian society failed to accept the existence of poor. There had been certain reforms and legal acts to address the deteriorating conditions of the poor working class, but they were turning ineffective due to corrupt governance that resulted in widespread poverty and crimes.

A noted humanist writer, Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* deals the repressive, soul-destroying social institutions of Victorian England that placed their primary emphasis on accumulating wealth, no matter how corrupt and immoral its means are. The institutions and authorities responsible for running the system are so much obsessed with their material quest that they clearly refuse to recognize the existence of the poor and fail to deal with them with proper sense of humanly considerations.

The novel revolves round the heart-rending story of an orphan child, Oliver, whose mother dies soon after giving him birth and leaving him behind at the mercy of the hostile world

full of corruption, abuse, exploitation and criminality, where money has replaced human sensibilities. There seems to be no end to his despair, sorrow and suffering from the baby farm to the workhouse to the house of Mr Sowerberry, where he is briefly apprenticed, to finally moving to London, where he gets entangled with the criminal world being run by a career criminal Fagin and his aide Bill Sikes. For him, faces of oppressors change, but the state of oppression just remains. It was only the kind act of a generous gentleman Mr Brownlow that he finally becomes able to cut himself loose from the world of evils.

Dickens presents the pathos of innocent childhood and protest against the abuses of powers, especially on the part of the governmental institution that stipulated that the poor could only receive government assistance if they moved into government workhouses, where they were systematically subject to all kinds of inhuman practices including utmost abuse, exploitation, starvation, humiliation and injustice.

The novel lashes out at the destructiveness of the social institutions such as workhouse and other legal establishments where a corrupt figure like Mr Fang is seated and at the same time exposes moral bankruptcy, material lust, and decadence of human values in the society. Dickens also reveals the ugly world of the age that following the Industrial Revolution got internally fractured by class tension and criticizes the English society that witnessed fall of humanist ideals and decadence of morality by unusually placed emphasis on wealth. In the novel, Dickens calls for humanly attributes such as love, affection, compassion, generosity, brotherhood and companionship and concludes that people's material quest is the cause of failure of humanism.

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