



**Formative zeal as reflected in Charles Dickens' novels**  
*Oliver Twist and Hard Times*

**Dr. Gopal Chandra Paul**

Independent Researcher, Uttar Dinajpur, West Bengal.

Email: [gopalphd85@gmail.com](mailto:gopalphd85@gmail.com)

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Dr. Gopal Chandra Paul

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**Abstract**

The present study is an attempt to deal with the social classes of the British society during the Victorian age, taking the novel *Oliver Twist* and *Hard Times* of Charles Dickens as an example. *Oliver Twist* and *Hard Times* reflect the life of citizens and give the differences between the three social classes in that period; the upper, the middle and the lower classes. This study attempts to make a comparison between the realities of Victorian society with the realities that Charles Dickens described in *Oliver Twist* and *Hard Times*. This research paper examines Dickens' pleading for reforming zeal as reflected in *Oliver Twist* and *Hard Times*. Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* exposes the social crisis that happened at that period. The novel gives us information about orphan boy, labor, crime, begging, money and legacy problem, sadness, homeless, and jobless. Those are serious problem at that time, which Dickens has marked in this novel. He talked about the orphans and was worried how they were treated and how they survived in the shadow of violence. Dickens challenged the society by showing the true picture of poverty and unwanted children. He had exposed the hollowness of the Victorian society. In his novel *Hard Times* Dickens became an outspoken critic of unjust economic and social conditions. His deeply felt for social commentaries and helped to raise the collective awareness of the reading public. He contributed significantly to the emergence of public opinion which was gaining an increasing influence on the decisions of the authorities. Indirectly, he contributed to a series of legal reforms, including the abolition of the inhumane imprisonment for debts, purification of the Magistrates' courts, a better management of criminal prisons, and the restriction of the capital punishment.

**Key Words:** the British society, social classes, realities, social crisis, hollowness, unjust economic and social conditions.

## Introduction

Charles John Huffam Dickens (1812 - 1870), known as Charles Dickens, was an English writer and social critic. He was the greatest novelist of the Victorian era. His works enjoyed unprecedented popularity during his lifetime and, by the 20th century. He wrote fifteen novels, five novellas, hundreds of short stories and non-fiction articles. He created some of the world's best-known fictional characters. Critics and scholars had recognised him as a literary genius. His novels are widely read today. Besides this he campaigned vigorously for women's and children's rights, education and other social reforms. His literary success began with the 1836 serial publication of *The Pickwick Papers*, (Dickens' first novel). His novels, most of them published in monthly or weekly installments, pioneered the serial publication of narrative fiction, which became the dominant Victorian mode for novel publication. Many of his works were adapted for the stage during his own lifetime. His well known novels are *The Pickwick Papers*(1836), *Oliver Twist*(1838), *Nicholas Nickleby* (1839), *The Old Curiosity Shop*(1841), *Barnaby Rudge*(1841), *The Battle of Life* (1846), *Dombey and Son* (1848), *David Copperfield* (1850), *Bleak House* (1853), *Hard Times* (1854), *A Tale of Two Cities*(1859), *Great Expectations* (1861), *Edwin Drood* (1870). *Oliver Twist* (1838) presents a much more realistic picture of social life. The story of the novel took place in nineteenth century England during the Industrial Revolution. Being a social reformer, Charles Dickens shed light on the burning social issues. The issues include class differences, exploitation of the poor and of child labor. The rich remained rich and snobbish, while the poor suffered. The society would determine the fate of the people. There were no scopes for the poor to raise and prosper. The novels shed light on how the author challenges the discrepancies of society. *Hard Times* (1854) is a novel about general state of affairs in which the lives of people are checked or restricted and in which people are

prevented from giving a free vent and spontaneous outlet to their natural feelings and sentiments. The novel throws light on the actual conditions of life of the poor and the prosperous of the nineteenth century England. It reflects the contemporary social realities. As the social reformer, Charles Dickens's novels *Oliver Twist* and *Hard Times* reflect the complex social reality in his time and manifest his humanity and love especially to the poor and the lower class.

Charles Dickens was born in February 1812 at Portsmouth in England. His father's name was John Dickens, a clerk in Navy Pay office and his mother's name was Elizabeth Barrow, a house wife. John Dickens was drawing handsome salary but was often in debt because of his habit of squandering money to show off his hospitality. In 1814 the Dickens family moved to London and then to Chatham to get education, but he was only twelve when he had to discontinue his studies for earning livelihood as the family was in great financial crisis. His father was sent to the Marshalsea prison for nonpayment of debts. Then Charles started working at a London warehouse to maintain his family expenditure. He worked daily for twelve hours at a stretch in a shoe factory where shoes were manufactured, cleaned and packed and the small wages which he got was just enough to support his family at this difficult time. This period of hardship played a significant role in his life as he has faced the ample unpleasant experiences as a growing young man which he portrayed in many of his works. As he was a child labour, exploited, poor, hapless and not properly educated; his anxiety, disillusionment and dejection is reflected in his novels.

Charles Dickens was the most popular novelist of his time, and remains one of the best-known and most-read of English authors till the date. His works have never gone out of print. The term 'Dickensian' is used to describe something that is reminiscent of Dickens and his writings, such as poor social or working conditions, or comically repulsive characters.

Dickens was perturbed by the return to power of the Tories, whom he described as "people whom, politically, I despise and abhor." He had been tempted to stand for the 'Liberals in Reading', but decided against it due to financial straits.

Charles Dickens's writing style is marked by a profuse linguistic creativity. Satire, flourishing in his novels is the gift for caricature. Many critics compared him to Hogarth for his keen practical sense of the ludicrous side of life, though his acclaimed mastery of varieties of class idiom may in fact mirror the conventions of contemporary popular theatre. Dickens worked intensively on developing arresting names for his characters that would reverberate with associations for his readers and assist the development of motifs in the storyline, giving what one critic calls an "allegorical impetus" to the novels' meanings. To cite one of numerous examples, the name Mr Murdstone in *David Copperfield* conjures up twin allusions to murder and stony coldness. His literary style is also a mixture of fantasy and realism. His satires of British aristocratic snobbery – he calls one character the "Noble Refrigerator" – are often popular. Comparing orphans to stocks and shares, people to tug boats or dinner-party guests to furniture are just some of Dickens's acclaimed flights of fancy.

Charles Dickens worked closely with his illustrators, supplying them with a summary of the work at the outset and thus ensuring that his characters and settings were exactly how he envisioned them. He briefed the illustrator on plans for each month's installment so that work could begin before he wrote them. Marcus Stone, illustrator of *Our Mutual Friend*, recalled that the author was always "ready to describe down to the minutest details the personal characteristics, and ... life-history of the creations of his fancy". Dickens employs Cockney English in many of his works, denoting working-class Londoners. Cockney grammar appears in terms such as ain't, and consonants in words are frequently omitted, as

in 'ere (here) and wot (what). An example of this usage is in *Oliver Twist*. The Artful Dodger uses cockney slang which is juxtaposed with Oliver's 'proper' English, when the Dodger repeats Oliver saying "seven" with "sivin".

In the third edition of "Oliver Twist," Dickens' stated that this novel was a depiction of what really happens in the world and that people should stop being so repulsed by the details of the lives of the criminals. In this instance, there is a bit of realism, as the novel shows the truths of poverty, human evil, and domestic abuse. The one aspect, arguably the most important aspect of the novel, which displays romanticism rather than realism is Oliver Twist himself. Oliver seems to represent all that is good in the world, and never fails to stand up for his ideals, even when faced with death. He is an idealized character and his "happy ending" is unrealistic, especially considering the circumstances he was placed in.

Charles Dickens' *Hard Times*, one of the many masterpieces by Dickens, torches the growing utilitarianism in the Victorian society. It is an "attack on the utilitarian" of the Victorian era, where emotions and sentiments were not counted but only the working efficiency, facts, number and calculations were given more importance. He believed in the ethical and political potential of literature. He treated his fiction as a springboard for debates about moral and social reform. He addressed many social concerns besides the abuses of industrial workers. In his novel *Hard Times* Dickens became an outspoken critic of unjust economic and social conditions. His deeply felt for social commentaries and helped to raise the collective awareness of the reading public. He contributed significantly to the emergence of public opinion which was gaining an increasing influence on the decisions of the authorities. Indirectly, he contributed to a series of legal reforms, including the abolition of the inhumane imprisonment for debts, purification of the Magistrates' courts, a better management

of criminal prisons, and the restriction of the capital punishment.

Charles Dickens was the first great novelist of social reform and most appreciated social commentator of urban England. In his novels he wrote about various ills of the society may it be economic, social and moral abuse during that period. He led a crusade against the vulnerable and social ills of the Victorian period. He himself was the victim of social and economic injustice. During his childhood he himself worked in a shoe-blackening factory. He was the first novelist who attracted his readers to read about deprived and the unjust social condition of the society. Through his fiction he exposed the social abuse of the society. He talked about class division, poverty, bad sanitation and much more. He is the novelist of social conscience and social commitment. He showed compassion and empathy towards the vulnerable and disadvantaged segments of English society, and contributed to several important social reforms. As a social commentator, Dickens exerted a profound influence on later novelists committed to social analysis.

#### Sources of Data & Methodology

This work is mainly based on secondary sources of information, such as published documents, books, literary reviews, autobiography, journals, critiques etc. I have collected some selected documents and records as the major sources of data collection for the study. I have involved myself in intensive and critical reading of Victorian novels. And put especial emphasis on Charles Dickens' novels. Primary data have been collected from Charles Dickens' novels *Oliver Twist* and *Hard Times*. I have profoundly analysed the social background of the Victorian Age and disclose the social reality too. I have collected the material from many secondary sources and make it possible in the preparation of my research work. Personally, I acknowledge these works in my work.

I shall use the descriptive method in the study of reformatory zeal as reflected in Charles Dickens' two novels *Oliver Twist* and *Hard Times*. The descriptive method helps me to describe the plays and the author's ideology and motives as reflected, and to analysis within the framework of the plays. It also helps me to study the relative statements regarding contemporary social order and the author's dream of a better world. The descriptive context will bring to light the different currents of ideas, making it possible for us to make comparative statements regarding the adjustments which have occurred continually between the societies. I have used critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a research tool to know the reformatory zeal as reflected in Charles Dickens' novels *Oliver Twist* and *Hard Times*. An attempt has been made to understand the Dickens' concept of reformation along with its historical aspects. To make the study empirical and novel, regional and systematic, a critical approach will be applied.

#### Reforming zeal as reflected in *Oliver Twist*:

*Oliver Twist* (1838) is Dickens' second famous novel. It is a social documentary. It includes various burning issues like poor law system, criminal world and its impact on poor children and the true picture of the workhouse. It has portrayed a true picture of the real condition of England- its hunger, physical punishment social humiliation, female prostitution, poverty and inhuman conditions of the people. Dickens also talks about the existing condition of the women and their place in the society. How they are forced into prostitution and hunger. How they survive in the shadow of violence. He talks about the orphans and was worried how they are treated. Dickens challenges the society by showing the true picture of poverty and unwanted children. At the same time he awakes his reader through a realistic scenario of Victorian society.

*Oliver Twist* is a journey of Victorian child suffering. It is the story of a young orphan, Oliver, in other words, it is also known as parish

boy, and his efforts to stay good in a society that refuses to assist. Oliver is born in a workhouse, to a mother not known to anyone in the town. She dies right after giving birth to him, and he is sent to the close minded orphanage, where he and the other orphans are treated terribly and fed very not enough. When he is nine, he is sent to the workhouse, where again he and the others are treated badly and practically starved. The other boys, unable to stand their hunger any longer, make a decision to draw straws to select who will have to go up and ask for more food. Oliver loses. On the appointed day, after finishing his first serving of gruel, he goes up and asks for more. Mr. Bumble, the beadle, and the board are outraged, and decide they must get rid of Oliver, apprenticing him to the close-minded undertaker, Mr. Sowerberry. It is not great there either, and after an attack on his mother's memory, Oliver runs away.

Oliver walks towards London. When he is close, he is so weak he can barely continue, and he meets another boy named Jack Dawkins, or the artful Dodger. The Dodger tells Oliver he can come with him to a place where a gentleman will give him a place to sleep and food, for no rent. Oliver follows him, and the Dodger takes him to a dirty house in London where he meets Fagin, the aforesaid gentleman, and Oliver is accepted to stay in that house. Oliver eventually learns that Fagin's boys are all pickpockets and thieves, but not until he is wrongfully accused of their crime of stealing an old gentleman's handkerchief. He is arrested, but the bookseller comes just in time to the court and says that he saw that Oliver did not do it. The gentleman whose handkerchief was taken, Mr. Brownlow, feels bad for Oliver, and takes him in.

Oliver is very glad with Mr. Brownlow, but Fagin and his coconspirators are unhappy to have lost Oliver, who may give away their hiding place. So one day, when Mr. Brownlow entrusts Oliver to return a little books to the bookseller for him, Nancy spies Oliver, and kidnaps him by forcing in public area and taking him back to Fagin.

Oliver is forced to go on a house with the intimidating Bill Sikes to robber that house. At gun point Oliver enters the house, with the plan to wake those within, but before he can, he is shot by one of the servants. Sikes and his partner escape from the house. Sikes holds Oliver on his shoulder but it makes him run slow, finally they leave Oliver in a waterway. The next morning Oliver goes back to the house, where the kind owner, Mrs. Maylie, and her beautiful niece Rose, decide to save him from the police and nurse him back to health.

Oliver slowly recovers, and is really happy and grateful to be with kind and bighearted people, who in turn are extremely happy to know that Oliver is such a good-natured boy. When he is well enough, they take him to see Mr. Brownlow, but they find his house empty, he has moved to abroad. Meanwhile, Fagin and his strange partner Monks have not given up on finding Oliver.

Nancy, listen in Fagin and Monks, decides that she must go to Rose Maylie to tell her what she knows. She does so; telling Rose that Monks is Oliver's half-brother, who has been trying to damage Oliver so that he can keep his whole inheritance, but that she will not betray Fagin or Sikes. Rose tells Mr. Brownlow, who tells Oliver's other caretakers, and they decide that they must meet Nancy again to find out how to find Monks.

They meet her on London Bridge at a set time, but Fagin has become doubtful, and has sent his new boy, Noah Claypole, to spy on Nancy. Nancy tells Rose and Mr. Brownlow information and how to find Monks, but still refuses to betray Fagin and Sikes, or to go with them. Noah describes everything to Fagin, who tells Sikes, knowing full well that Sikes will kill Nancy. He does it and run away from London. Mr. Brownlow has in the mean time found Monks, who finally admits everything that he has done, and the true case of Oliver's birth.

Sikes is on the run, but all of London is in a chaos, and he goes back to London and

eventually hangs himself accidentally in falling off a roof, while trying to escape from the crowd surrounding him. Fagin is arrested and after a visit from Oliver, he is executed. Oliver, Mr. Brownlow, and the Maylie end up living in peace, happy, and comfort. It shows the facts of life led by orphans and how they are stuck into unwanted circumstances and became or forced to become criminal.

Thus, *Oliver Twist* is a novel which depicts the misery and degradation of destitute children and adults. Oliver, a victim of child labor, is sold to an undertaker and later escapes the horrid experience and goes to London where he is exposed to the criminal activities of a gang led by Fagin. The foreshadowing misfortunes of Oliver's life hunt him at his birth.

In *Oliver Twist* Dickens presents a portrait of the macabre childhood of a considerable number of Victorian orphans. The orphans are underfed, and for a meal they are given a single scoop of gruel. Oliver, one of the oppressed children, dares to ask for more gruel and is severely punished. Dickens challenges the Victorian idea of charity for the so-called "deserving poor". He shows persuasively that the workhouse was a failed attempt to solve the problem of poverty and unwanted children. Dickens was critical about the Victorian education system that changed the lives of the poor.

*Oliver Twist* is a social study of poverty. Dickens is concern for the poor and poverty. The problem of poverty becomes a serious social and economic burden of English society of the Victorian period. Dickens is aware about the industrialization on the Victorian period which has created a massive urban development and class division. He, himself as a victim of child labor, vehemently attacks the unpleasant experience of the poor and slum dwellers. In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens depicts the plight of the poor and their treatment at the workhouses. Oliver is orphaned immediately when he was born birth and he immediately becomes a parish

child. At the age of eight, he is removed from the church and taken to the poor house. The conditions at the workhouses were obviously unbearable as evidenced by Oliver's first experience: "... on a rough hard bed, he sobbed himself to sleep". *Oliver Twist* is chosen by his companions to ask for more food which indicates starvation and lack of sufficient food to sustain the workhouse inmate .He is punished for this act.

Dickens paints crime and terror of Victorian society but it seems as his own childhood memories. The gloomy days of his life are reflected in it. *Oliver Twist* seems reflecting of Dickens own life related from his childhood, how misfortune followed him to the workhouse in a named town. The novel was written in Victorian Era and at that time there is child exploitation in several sectors which reflects in story. Through the novel, he demolished the barriers between the classes and gave emphasis on the point that political and social reform is necessary. *Oliver Twist* focused on the flaws of the society and his characters and stories of his novels dealt with many social ills and emphasis was given on the reformation.

Dickens, through the character Oliver proves us the revolt of weak against the strong. The character faces abuse and neglect in society which is converted into revolt and they are found making distance from the society which make them individual of less important. Oliver suffers a long period of starvation and malnutrition. The neglect abuse and pain change Oliver to deepest. He acts as an outlaw and rebels against the society. Oliver finds himself in London's slum which was all dark, gloomy. *Oliver Twist* is extremely appreciated and is ultimately financially and critically a big success. No doubt, *Oliver Twist* is the reflection of his own childhood experiences in which he has witnessed.

#### **Reforming zeal as reflected in *Hard Times*:**

Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854) was one of the significant writings bearing social

criticism and economic inequality. The novel is a severe attack on the industrial vices and faulty political economy which was responsible for the exploitation of the poor working class and weak section of the society. The novel also highlights the current issues like strike at working place which refers to the Preston strike in 1853-54 which was eight months old and had deep impact on the political economy of England. According to David Daiches, "*Hard Times* is based on the morality of the utilitarian industrialism and its effect on the possibilities of human happiness." *Hard Times* is a novel about general state of affairs in which the lives of people are checked or restricted and in which people are prevented from giving a free vent and spontaneous outlet to their natural feelings and sentiments.

*Hard Times* is considered as one of the genius works of Charles Dickens. There are three plot sequences in the novel, one centering round Thomas Gradgrind and his family, including Sissy, the second centering round Josiah Bounderby and the third relating to Stephen Blackpool and Rachel. All these sub-plots are tightly interconnected and integrated into an interesting story. There are no superfluous incidents or characters and no digressions to confuse the readers. The main characters in the novel are representative of certain concepts or ideas. There are certain characters who are individuals and realistic portrayal of living human beings of Victorian times. Dickens also arouses pathetic and miserable condition of different characters in his novel. There is Sissy's miserable condition when as a young girl; she is abandoned by her loving father. Louisa is married to Boundrby in spite his being 30 years senior to her and there is no love between them. Stephen's sorrow, his drunkard wife, his love for Rachael and ultimately his death is enough to evoke the pathetic condition to the readers.

Dickens is considered as one of the greatest humorists in Egnlsih Literature and *Hard Times* is full of humor. It is primarily a

satirical novel, using all the weapons of satire as irony, sarcasm, mockery, ridicule etc. The main target of satire is upon Gradgrind, Bounderby, Mrs. Sparsit, Harthouse and Tom. They are attacked for their misleading philosophies, their greed, their vanities and their false values in life. There is also playful and indulgent humor, especially in Mr. Gradgrind, Mr. Sleary, Mrs. Sparsit and Blitzer. Dickens puts his characters in the center of the matter of accuracy and makes them do what people and the world should. Deborah Vlock rightly emphasized that Dickens' popularity is due "to his intense human sympathy, his unsurpassed emotional and dramatic power, his aggressive humanitarianism and his zeal for the reform of all evils and abuses, whether they weigh upon oppressed classes or upon helpless individuals." Dickens has been rightly classed as the most touching and pathetic mouthpiece of the poor people.

*Hard Times*, a social protest novel of nineteenth-century England, is aptly titled. Dickens divides the novel into three separate books, two of which, "Sowing" and "Reaping," exemplify the biblical concept of "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap". He emphasizes the importance of reality in his novels by having sympathy for the poor and hapless labourers who are also neglected and suffering lot, all this add an appeal to the novel. His philosophy of facts is a perfect example of the heartless and cruel aspect of materialistic Victorian society. The novel is a severe attack on the industrial vices and faulty political economy which was responsible for the exploitation of the poor working class and weak section of the society. Dickens feels that a dependence upon capitalistic practicality without sympathy and brotherly understanding causes continued difficulties in the relations of capital and labor. He exposes the exploitation of the working class. Dickens throughout this novel has tried at his best in unearthing cruel, hypocritical, and inhuman face and materialistic attitude of the Victorian urban society.

Dickens was one of the most prominent social critics who aimed at pinpointing social, economic and moral problems of the Victorian age. In *Hard Times* Dickens created a Condition of England novel, which directly engaged with contemporary and social issues. The volume edition of the novel bore the subtitle: "For these Times", which referred to Carlyle's essay of 1829 "Signs of the Times". As Michael Goldberg has pointed out, "Carlyle remained a hero to Dickens throughout his life..." , and his critique of Utilitarianism bears a strong affinity with Carlyle's. Carlyle exposed the dangers of a mechanistic and inhuman system which deprived people of such human qualities as emotion, affection and imagination. Dickens echoes many of Carlyle's arguments against the power of social machinery and materialist consciousness. However, contrary to Carlyle, Dickens shows that the positive aspects of human nature are not easily destroyed. Fancy, imagination, compassion and hope do not disappear completely. They are preserved in such characters as Sissy, Rachael and Sleary. Even Mr. Gradgrind revealed eventually some traces of humanness. Ultimately, Dickens did not take up Carlyle's favourite theme of the aristocratic hero as the saviour of a disintegrating society.

Dickens provides a unique description of Coketown in the novel *Hard Times* " ... It was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but, as matters stood it was town of unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage. It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of the which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves forever and ever, and never got uncoiled. It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye, and vast piles of building full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long, and where the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down, like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness....". The repetition of the factory

structure in every aspect of Coketown's life has often been viewed as Dickens recognizes the shameness of factory work and the alienated nature of its system of production.

The Victorian society was full of inequalities- haves and have nots; poor and rich; working class and owners; circus people and elite people. Sissy Jupe is a daughter of an entertainer in the circus company. In the novel he is not directly seen but heard by his daughter because he has left his daughter and gone elsewhere. She becomes an orphan, later she is looked after by Mr. Gradgrind. In the city there are millions of orphans like Sissy Jupe. She is a catalyst for the recognition of a form of knowledge separate from Mr. Gradgrind's Fact-that of experience and of the heart and compassion. She is very humble and down to earth. Dickens has used her to show the social change can only come from outside Coketown. She emerges at the end of the novel *Hard Times* as a companion and moral supporter to Louisa following her emotional explosion and as a comforter to Rachael before the whereabouts of Stephen is discovered. Rachael is the representative of an honest working class. But in the end she loses Stephen. So she becomes alone in the society as well as life. Stephen is one among millions who are suffered by their employers. Neither is he successful as family man nor factory worker. He is victimized. Even law also cannot help him.

In *Hard Times* human relationships are contaminated by economics. The principles of the 'dismal science' led to the formation of a selfish and atomistic society. The social commentary of *Hard Times* is quite clear. Dickens is concerned with the conditions of the urban labourers and the excesses of laissez-faire capitalism. He exposes the exploitation of the working class by unfeeling industrialists and the damaging consequences of propagating factual knowledge (statistics) at the expense of feeling and imagination. However, although Dickens is critical about Utilitarianism, he cannot find a better way of safeguarding social justice than

through ethical means. "In place of Utilitarianism, Dickens can offer only good-heartedness, individual charity, and Sleary's horse-riding; like other writers on the Condition of England Question, he was better equipped to examine the symptoms of the disease than to suggest a possible cure".

One of the most important purposes of Dickens in writing his novel *Hard Times* is to comment on the faults and mistakes of inventing machines; in addition to that it brought pollution and malformation for nature. It also discusses violating and exploitation by the manufacturers. The inequality of social class and the wide gap between the destitution of the poor and the luxury of the rich are the other concern of Dickens. What is meant in this concern is to reflect the realistic facts of his society and to resolve these crises by building new society relying on justice, helping each other, rights and independence. Dickens illustrates the symbols of ash and fire in *Hard Times*. He always tries to bridge the wide gap between luxury rich and indigence of poor people in which they are unequal. Undoubtedly, Dickens refuses the ideas of bourgeois or the beneficiaries of applying these economic systems and rules. Some scientists and critics believe that laws and ideas of bourgeois might consist of virtues according to the religion they embrace and the religious men they follow.

### Conclusion

Charles Dickens pleaded for the reformation in the English society. He is a novelist with a social purpose. His novels belong to the humanitarian movement of the Victorian Age. He has been rightly classed as the most touching and pathetic mouthpiece of the poor people. Deborah Vlock rightly emphasized that Dickens' popularity is due "to his intense human sympathy, his unsurpassed emotional and dramatic power, his aggressive humanitarianism and his zeal for the reform of all evils and abuses, whether they weigh upon oppressed classes or upon helpless individuals."

The main concern of Dickens, as reflected in *Oliver Twist* and *Hard Times*, is the conditions of the English society. He shows the cruel effects of class division, the education system and economical as well as social issues. The socio-economic changes that Dickens witnessed and working in different institutions enabled him to employ his experience in showing the social and moral problems and hence call for reform.

*Oliver Twist* (1837-39), which represents a radical change in Dickens's themes, is his first novel to carry a social commentary similar to that contained in the subsequent Condition-of-England novels. According to Louis Cazamian, "the success of *Twist* confirmed Dickens' determination to write on social topics, and the inception of Chartism means that the burning social issue of the day was the problem of the working class." Dickens explores many social themes in *Oliver Twist*, but three are predominant: the abuses of the new Poor Law system, the evils of the criminal world in London and the victimisation of children. The critique of the Poor Law of 1834 and the administration of the workhouse is presented in the opening chapters of *Oliver Twist*. Dickens gives the most uncompromising critique of the Victorian workhouse, which was run according to a regime of prolonged hunger, physical punishment, humiliation and hypocrisy.

Dickens' *Hard Times* is a revolt against the Industrial Revolution in the Victorian Age. In *Hard Times*, he studies the social, economic and political issues of people and their government. He realizes that life is not just a fact running society relying on the economic processes as Mr. Gradgrind did with his pupils and his family. He always relates his teaching with what the capitalistic owners of mills and factories wish merely to build very big wealth and flourish. In this works, Dickens has attacked the defects of the legislative system and the abuses of social and political institutions. Poverty, workhouses, crime, class division, child labour, injustice and the education system have been exposed through his Writings to emphasize the

importance of reform. Dickens also shows the cruel effects of class division, the education system and economical as well as social issues. He provides images of exploitation among different classes for different reasons. Dickens presents a materialistic world in which individuals sacrifice their happiness to follow the values of society. He views two contrasting worlds: the upper class represented by Gradgrind and Bounderby and characters from the lower classes as Stephen Blackpool and Sissy, proving the influence of the environment on people.

In his novel *Hard Times*, Dickens calls for social reform and presents images of corruption in Victorian Britain. According to Lodge on every page *Hard Times* manifests its identity as a polemical work, a critique of mid-Victorian industrial society dominated by materialism, acquisitiveness, and ruthlessly competitive capitalist economics. To Dickens, at the time of writing *Hard Times*, these things were represented most articulately, persuasively, (and therefore dangerously) by the Utilitarians. Schor argues that *Hard Times* requires clearly to be read not as a mere fictional world but as a commentary on a contemporary crisis. It is, after all, *Hard Times* for These Times, and it is dedicated to Thomas Carlyle, the social thinker whose vision of a society of human connections ... influenced Dickens so profoundly in the 1840s and 1850s.

*Oliver Twist* and *Hard Times* are social documentaries. The novels portrayed a true picture of the condition of England its hunger, physical punishment social humiliation, female prostitution, poverty and inhuman conditions of the people. The novels confirmed Dickens as a novelist of social concerns and social issues and the problem of working class. He explored many social issues mainly three of them were prominent. These are- a) the new poor law system, b) the evil of criminal world and c) suffering of children in workhouse and society. In *Oliver Twist* and *Hard Times*, we can see how

acquiring material advantages overcomes human values and feelings.

Charles Dickens is an inspirational novelist of social reform. He acted like a catalyst between politics and literature with his literary work which was miracle for the common mass of the society. Dickens emphasized on the facts of the social trauma of England and brought awareness for other writer to write about the social issues. He inspired other to write much more. It showed how the system was manipulated and dominated by high status or wealth. In his novels Dickens picturised how the social class was divided into power authority and wealth. He always tries to bridge the wide gap between luxury rich and poor people.

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