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## REALISM IN HARD TIMES

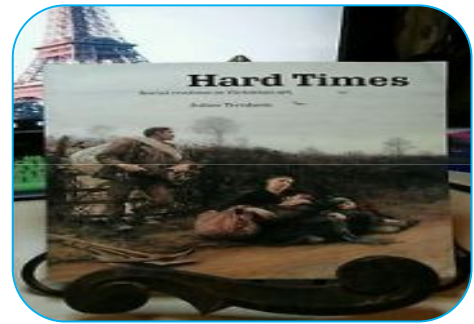
Dr. V. B. Sreerastane<sup>1</sup> and Miss. Shilpi Singh<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor, Deptt of English, R.M College Sasaram(V.K.S.U.ARA).

<sup>2</sup>Research Scholar, Deptt of English, V.K.S.U.ARA.

### ABSTRACT:

*Dickens has made a scathing attack on the hollowness of the utilitarian ideas which occupied centre stage in the Victorian society in the utilitarianism which catered more to the interest of the individual was more concerned with the rational faculty leaving feelings and emotions to the backgrounds. It craved more for facts which alone can help the individual achieve his objective. Dickens was extremely critical of such a philosophical doctrine laying more emphasis on rationality and showing least concern for fundamental human values like love and affection since. They don't bear any thing substantial in terms of monetary advancement.*



**KEYWORDS:** *scathing attack, fundamental human values.*

### INTRODUCTION

Dickens carved out a fictions town of coketown to voice his anger against the unlawful practices being carried out by those having no truck with fundamental values. The entire activities are confined to the school of Mr. Gradgrind who is a man having stern belief in rationality. He strongly recommended facts far the inmates of the school since facts alone can help the individual tide over the impediments making life worth-living. He narrates his longing far facts in this way. Now what I want is, facts.

Teach these boys nothing but facts. Facts alone are wanted in life 1 (P.1)

The idea of taking on these social arrangements had already flashed in the mind of Dickens while he had paid a visit to. Manchester in 1938 In a letter to his friend E.M. Fitzgerald he had revealed the secret of the ideas behind the composition of his novel Hand times. He says,

“So far as seeing goes, I have been enough for my purpose, and what I have seen has disgusted and shed beyond all measures. I mean to strike the Dickens was in produced for povalled cheants blow in my power for those unfortunate ceatures.”<sup>2</sup>

Dickens has introduced two parallel set of characters to expose the worthlessness of the philosophy of utilitarianism. On the one had Mr. Gradgrind and his pupils, propagating utilitarian ideas and on the other the circus people, particularly sissy Jupe reposing faith in feeling and emotion showing least concern for facts rationality. She insisted that love and compassion must be craved for to achieve perfection in life.

Mr. Goradgrind has great faith in his teachings. He claims to have achieved excellence using these ideologies and wanted his children and school boys to follow his footprints and had strongly

conveyed the message to the headmaster of the school. Mr. Chocumchild that only facts and facts would be taught to the students. Feelings and emotions must not migrate inside the periphery of their consciousness. Mr. Gradgrind is of the opinion that nothing substantial can be gained by pursuing feelings and emotions. Facts alone can help achieve perfection in life.

Dickens has revealed the hollowness of the utilitarian practices which are aimed at personal aggrandizement. Facts, reason and intellect are one aspect of life. They alone can not come to the rescue of the individual when he is in dire straits. The education policy chalked out in the school of Mr. Bounderby too has certain obvious limitations. It has turned the individual into a machine since the milk of human kindness does not come out of it.

Hard Times suggests that 19<sup>th</sup> century England's adoption of industrialization threatened to turn human beings into machine by the warring the development of these emotions significance This suggestion comes forth largely through the action of Gradgrind and his follower Bounderby as the former educates the young children of his family and his school is using fact, as tool whereas treats the workers in his factory as emotionless objections that are easily exploited for his personal interest. and have been branded as "hands", The narrator draws a parallel between the factory hands and the Gradgrind children both lead lead monotonous, uniform existences untouched by pleasure.

The mechanized effects of industrialization are contemplated by Mr. Gradgrind's philosophy of rational self interest. He is of the opinion that human nature can be measured and governed entirely by rational principles. He intends to turn the students of his school into machines. Dickens's primary goal in Hard Times is to illustrate the dangers of allowing human beings to become machines, suggesting that without compassion and imagination life would be unbearable Louisa feels this suggesting when she returns to her father's house and tells him that something has been missing in her life to the point that she kills herself in an unhappy marriage and may be in love with someone else. Louisa makes her father realize that his philosophy on life and method of childrearing are to blame for her detachment from others.

It actually took a long time to deliver the blow which finally culminated in the most powerful manner in his classic Hard Times which exposed the hollowness of this philosophical ideology which left people dejected and depressed with all hopes and aspirations virtually dashed to the ground. The prospect of a better future for those practicing these principles were virtually sealed and there was hardly any way left for them to come out from the mess they were lodged in. Even Mr. Gradgrind, one of the champions of utilitarian values in the novel who had trained his children and the students of his school in utilitarian values, is forced to reconsider his decision towards the end of the novel when all his experiments misfire. His children virtually lost their ways. His child Tom finally ended up as a robber caught in a bank robbery and quite surprisingly his own student Bitzer did not provide any assistance to Tom to overcome his miseries which was a heavy blow to the teachings of Mr. Gradgrind. The final nail in the coffin was placed by the unsuccessful marital relationship of his daughter Louisa whom he loved dearly and had himself taken initiative in getting Louisa married to Mr. Bounderby, the millionaire and propounder of the school almost twice her age Mr. Gradgrind and himself the greatest champion of utilitarian ideology, When Louisa was in a dilemma with regard to getting married to Bounderby Mr. Gradgrind prevailed upon her to tie the nuptial knot for perfection in life. Destruction in Bounderby to crop up once the balance between the two is disturbed.

Sissy Jupe very intelligently points out the advantages attached to love and affection. Dickens cleverly added circus people as contrast to the utilitarian approach to life. They are simple, open minded human beings whose goal in life was to make people laugh because they represent everything that is stunted in utilitarianism such as love, imagination and humour.

Tom and Louisa are examples of how this utilitarian method failed miserably. Tom is set up with his father's strictures that he revolts against him and leaves home to work in Mr. Bounderby's bank. He begins to drink and gamble heavily once he is set free from his father's clutches. He runs into heavy debt and gambling debt he robs the bank of Mr. Bounderby and is forced to flee the area When Bitzer realizes of the incident of Tom robbing the bank he catches hold of Bounderby by sensing a better prospect for her daughter in his company.

In contrast to Mr. Gradgrind and his company Dickens has introduced the circus people particularly Sissy Jupe one of the members of the circus who dares to defy utilitarian ideology practiced in the school of Mr. Gradgrind pointing out its obvious limitations. Mr. Gradgrind accepts it as a challenge and offers her shelter in his house to mould her by infusing his dry and drab ideas into her unconscious self but failed miserably. On the contrary Sissy Jupe succeeded in pointing out the worthlessness of the ideology based on sheer facts showing least concern for love, compassion and imagination which adds substantially to enrich our mental faculty. It helps restore mental equipoise. Actually the balance between mind and heart is what one should aspire for. Neither of the two is capable of helping man achieve of himself and turns a deaf ear to Mr. Gradgrind's repeated urge to let him go. The latter reminds him of all the hard work that was put on him while at the school. Ironically Blitzer using the tool of factuality that he had learnt in Gradgrind's school replies that the school was paid for the services rendered to him and he is not morally bound to abide by the instruction of Mr. Gradgrind which doesn't stand on moral ground. Now it is over and he owes nothing more. In this way, Gradgrind's educational theory has backfired in his face since his own student refuses to acknowledge his advice. Louisa, unlike Tom, does get along with her father. She ever agrees to marry Mr. Bounderby even though she does not love him in order to please her father.

After having experienced the affections of someone other than her husband Louisa realized she couldn't remain in her marriage. She went to her father and explained him the error of his belief. The words of Louisa are sufficient enough to pinpoint the loopholes latent in the philosophy of utilitarianism propagated by her father. She realized that nothing positive had emerged out of the practices made by her father. I did not yield a positive result. Her marital life was completely ruined. So was the case of her younger brother Tom who ended up caught by indulging in bank robbery. The kindly intervention of Sissy Jupe has fortunately saved the lives of Louisa's younger sister and two sisters too. Came Sissy to the rescue of Louisa when she betrayed the boy who tried to seduce her of a dire consequence had he not let Louisa go on her own way. This also shows the triumph of circus people disseminating love and compassion over those for whom fact also does matter in life and love and imagination are fanciful ideas which are unlikely to serve any purpose to human beings. Louisa forced her father to realize the worthlessness of utilitarian ideas saying,

"How could you give me life and from me all the in appropriate things that raise it from the state of conscious death? Where are the graces of my soul? Where are the sentiments of my heart?"<sup>3</sup>

"The failure of his system writ large on his face which is evident here. Mr. Gradgrind saw the pride of his heart and triumph of his system dying in insensible death at his feet"<sup>4</sup>

Mill too has expressed solidarity with Dickens on this issue in his essay way published criticizing Bentham's views on imagination.

"Bentham lacked himself and failed to appreciate a certain sort of imagination that which enables us by a voluntary effort to conceive the absent as it were present."<sup>5</sup>

Dickens was from first to last a novelist with a purpose. In nearly all his novels he in his autobiographical way expressed his grave concern over Bentham's antipathy to imagination, as from this neglect both in theory and in set out to attack some specific abuses of the existing system and through out he considered himself as the champion of the weak, the outcast and the oppressed. He launched a massive attack on the corrupt and inefficient system which no longer remained competent enough to cater to the interest of the masses who have been made victims to the vicious system engulfing the marginalized sections within its ambit, boarding school in Nicholas Nickleby, the court of chancery in Bleak House, the new manufacturing system in Hard Times. The work house in Oliver Twist, the petty-fogging lawyers in Great Expectations and atrocities of school authorities in David Copperfield. He has successfully brought home his ideas in a speech he gave in Birmingham in 1844.

"If you reward honesty, if you would give acknowledgement to good, if you would stimulate the idle eradicate evil or corrupt what is bad, education is one thing needful at the one effective end".

At the bitter end and all kinds of hardships which he experienced during his childhood days left a permanent record in his heart. He voiced his anger against the system through his works when he matured in age. He has made a very subtle comment on the existing scenario and has expressed his

most desire to make a complete over having of certain key sectors including education, law, warehouses, hospitals and others to make the society worth living particularly for the unpreveledged sections whose hopes and aspirations have dashed to the ground and long as these foul practices contine unabaled there is handly any possibility for these section to seek the basic amenities of life of which they have been devpried. memory of the bitter days which Dickens had experiented imprinted in his unconscious self and latter found expression in his works. In David Copper field Dickens made good use of his personal experiences to attack the social evils latent in English society. The miseries of child labour the tyranny in schools, the debtors prison as well as the cruelty get treachery that were prevalent is Victorian get end refected through his Thus novel are not merely a personal records but successive novels portrayl of the 19<sup>th</sup> century England. In the aftermath fo Industrial revelution.

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