# Voicing Slum-subaltern in Slumdog Millionaire

**Dr. A.J. Sebastian sdb**<sup>1</sup>, Dept. of English, Nagaland Central University, Kohima 797001, Nagaland, India.

### **Opinion Paper**

#### 1. Introduction

'Slum household' is described as a group of individuals living under the same roof in an urban area lacking durable housing, sufficient living area, secure tenure and access to clean water and sanitation. Though, segregated slums for the poor is an aftermath of Industrial Revolution, today one-inthree of all city dwellers live in slums. Over 90 per cent of this underclass are in the developing world, with South Asia having the largest share, followed by eastern Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America (Howden, 27 June, 2007).

According to a United Nations report, population growth and urbanization are veritably creating a planet of slums, which is expected to double by 2030. The slums in the cities of Africa and Asia are growing by more than a million people every week. The report states that the growth of cities

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> \*Dr. A.J. Sebastian sdb (b.1953), is Reader, Dept. of English, Nagaland Central University, Kohima. A Gold Medallist in MA English Literature from Manipur University (1988), he was awarded Ph.D in 1992 in the Poetry of G.M. Hopkins. The research undertake in collaboration with the Hopkins' Centre at Gonzaga University, Spokane, USA. He also holds a PG Diploma in Psychological Counselling. His major publications include: Aesthetic and Religious Quest in the Poetry of G.M. Hopkins (Delhi, Bahri Publications, 1994); Musings: A First Book of Verse (Kolkata, Writers' Workshop, 1996); My Travels My Teacher (Kolkata, Writers' Workshop, 1998); Literary Terms in Poetry (New Delhi, Authorspress, 2001) co-authored with NDR Chandra; Literary Terms in Fiction & Prose (New Delhi, Authorspress, 2004) co-authored with NDR Chandra; Literary Terms in Fiction & Prose (New Delhi, Authorspress, 2004) co-authored with NDR Chandra; The Poetry of G.M. Hopkins: An Ecological Study (New Delhi Adhyayan Publishers 2009). He has written over 35 papers and articles for National and international Journals. He is interested in Indian writings in English with special reference Literature from Northeast India and creative writings.

will be the single largest influence on development in the 21st century (Ibidem).

According to World Bank's Poverty Estimates, 1.4 billion people live at the poverty line of \$1.25 a day or below (Shah, 22, Nov., 2008). Being confronted by ever increasing global poverty, it is imperative on the part of the rich nations and peoples to contribute towards eradicating it. Peter Singer, Australian philosopher and humanist opines that philanthropy and charity to the poor is imperative for anyone to live a moral and ethically good life. He argues that affluent societies have the obligation 'to choose to give' a larger amount of their income to help the poor. Several international organisations and NGOs are using charity to build institutions and create job opportunities for the poor to give them independent and sustainable life (Guzeldeniz, 24 Feb. 2009). The fate of the poor and the subaltern people world over should go beyond voluminous documentation and debates.

It is my endeavour in this article to examine slumsubaltern with reference to the fiction and the film *Slumdog Millionaire*. Based on Vikas Swarup's Q & A, Danny Boyle has aptly brought out a celluloid sensation portraying slum-subaltern.

# 2. Portrayal of Slum-subaltern

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), the Italian Marxist and theoretician is believed to have introduced the term 'Subaltern' means inferior status, quality, or importance. During his imprisonment, Gramsci kept prison Notes where he wrote about 'subaltern social groups. He propounded the idea that these social groups are not united and which cannot unite until they become a 'state.'

In the South Asian context the term 'subaltern' may be applied to those groups that have been subordinated in terms of class, caste, age, gender, office and the like. Subaltern groups may be understood better in their binary relationship to the dominant group (Macey, 2001, p. 367). Gramsci considered the subaltern as a historically

determined category that exists within particular historical, economic, political, social, and cultural contexts. He tried to know the process, development, and lineage of the subaltern: how their social conditions were developed; how some groups survived at the margins of society, and how others succeeded in their ascent from a subordinate social position to a dominant one (Green, 2009).

According to Subaltern theory, norms are established by those in power and imposed on the "Other" who has had no voice because of race, class, or gender. Critics like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Ranajit Guha, focus on signifiers' while interpreting the term 'subaltern.' They argue that the colonialist discourse has socially constructed the signifiers from the colonial language, giving no real voice to the oppressed and colonized. As Spivak observes:

The relationship between global capitalism and (exploitation in economics) nation-state allegiances (domination in geopolitics) is macrological that it cannot account for micrological texture of power. To move toward such an accounting one must move toward theories of ideology--of subject formations that micrologically and often erratically operate the interests that congeal the macrologies...My view is that radical practice should attend to this double session of representation rather than reintroduce the individual subject through totalizing concepts of power and desire (Spivak, 1988, p. 279).

A slightly different opinion is postulated by Homi Bhabha on the signifier effects of the dominant discourse. He focuses on the fact that ideas are expressed in the dominant discourse, in which the oppressed and colonized are not well versed and not skilled at expressing their validity claims. Hence, the claims of the oppressed are often expressed in poor imitation of the master discourse. And they are not given good faith hearing by those skilled in the use of the dominant discourse (Curran, 21 Oct. 2000). The question that puzzles one is - why do the subaltern groups continue to remain perpetually thwarted? The elite groups have 'remained dominant devoid of the will and ability to

transform society, while the counterthrust from subaltern groups was perpetually thwarted or subalted by elite domination' (Sen, 2007, pp. 207-8).

Dipesh Chakrabarty has tried to clarify some of the charges levelled against *Subaltern Studies* being reduced to class relations of binary division of society into 'elite' and 'subaltern.'

...the word 'subaltern' in Subaltern Studies ...refers to the specific nature of class relationships in India, where relationships, at almost all levels, subsumed in the relations of domination subordination between members of the elite and subaltern classes... the language of class in India overlaps with the language of citizen-politics only in the minority of instances. For the greater part of our daily experience, class relations express themselves in that other language of politics, which is the politics of a nation without 'citizens.' It is in this realm that notions of hierarchy, domination and subordination work themselves out, as do traditions of resistance to domination and deference towards the dominant. 'Subalternity'- the composite culture of resistance to and acceptance domination and hierarchy- is characteristic of class relations in our society, where the veneer of bourgeous equality barely masks the violent, feudal nature of much of our systems of power and authority (Chakrabarty, 2007, pp. 375-6).

However, Spivak has been critical of the efforts of the subaltern studies group that has interpreted Gramsci's term 'subaltern' (the economically dispossessed) to reestablish a 'voice' or collective locus of agency in postcolonial India. Although Spivak acknowledges the 'epistemic violence' done upon Indian subalterns, in her view any outside attempt to amend their condition by granting them collective speech will certainly lead to problems such as: i) a logocentric assumption of cultural solidarity among a heterogeneous people, and ii) a dependence upon western intellectuals to 'speak for' the subaltern condition rather than allowing them to speak for themselves. She further

argues that by speaking out and reclaiming a collective cultural identity, subalterns will in fact re-inscribe their subordinate position in society. The academic assumption of a subaltern collectivity is similar to an ethnocentric extension of Western logos- a totalizing, essentialist mythology as Derrida might describe it-that doesn't account for the heterogeneity of the colonized body politic (Graves, 1998).

Those who inhabit the slums form a distinctive subaltern group. A Slum may be defined as an urban area heavily populated by poor and strangers living with substandard housing and filth. Such people living in a state of constant migration undergo problems due to unhygienic conditions, leading to outbreak of diseases. Living in constant poverty, they are easily prone to crime and evil practices.

## 3. A Window to Slumdog Millionaire

Slumdog millionaire based on Vikas Swarup's novel Q & A and directed by Danny Boyle bagged eight Oscars, seven BAFA (British Academy Film Awards) and four Golden Globe trophies in 2009. It was acclaimed the best movies of 2008, as it portrays an element of hope in an economically gloomy world. The film also has an appealing universal theme of passionate and romantic love in the midst of murder, thieving, extortion, communal conflict, prostitution, beggary and mafia rivalry.

The setting reflects life in Dharavi, Asia's largest slum of about 520 acres, existing at the heart of Mumbai. NGOs such as SPARC (Society for the Promotion of Area resource Centres) and PROUD (Peoples' Responsible Organization for a United Dharavi) have estimated the population from 700,000 to 1,200,000, comprising of 30% Muslims and 65% Dalit (Chatterji, 2007, p. 8). It is known for its vibrancy with entrepreneurial activities that generate US\$50 to \$100 million annually. The slum dwellers have also organized themselves into cooperative societies that provide basic facilities and protection to residents. "Dharavi is an economic success story that the world must pay attention to during these times of global depression.... Dharavi's messy appearance is nothing but an expression of intense social and economic processes at work. Most homes double as work spaces: when morning comes, mattresses are folded, and tens of thousands of units form a decentralized production network rivalling the most ruthless of Chinese sweatshops in efficiency" (Echanove, 2009). Dharavi in recent times has been observed differently by International Organizations, state policy makers and NGOs who have come to acknowledge the residents of the slums as consumers and future taxpayers and property holders. It is not a slum occupied by poor people, rather by income earners whose rights to housing need to be addressed (Chatterji, 2007, p. x).

Violence erupted in Dharavi in the aftermath of the demolition of the Babri mosque (6 December 1992). The riots were the outcome of Muslim anger over the incident and the subsequent Hindu backlash that ensued, aided by the police force, well orchestrated and planned by political machinations. However, despite violence, people have resumed their everyday life in the midst of collective disorder and rehabilitation work (Ibidem, p.3).

A commendable study has been made on concept of 'voice' to reflect on the 'emergent events' that have affected Dharavi, such as Bombay riots, mass demolition and the first slum survey in Bombay (Ibidem, p.21). Voices' have been differently articulated and differentiated as individual voices and the public voice of the collective. NGOs like PROUD have articulated generalized social interest, making the slum dwellers go beyond private and selfish concerns. These are manifested in developmental schemes undertaken for common good. "Voices associated with violence are anonymous. They are not associated with speech acts but rather with sounds and fleeting utterances of anonymous faces in a mob composed of strangers. Individuals engaged in violence do not take responsibility for what they do; instead they act as Hindus or Muslims and their victims are similarly devoid of personhood" (Ibidem, p.23).

Known for its criminal activities, several measures have been taken to contain social problems in Dharavi through the residents organizing themselves into chawl committees. These work along with the police to break up illicit distilleries and liquor dens (Ibidem, pp. 140-1).

The Maharashtra Slum Areas Improvement, Clearance Redevelopment Act of 1971 was a result of the and Government recognizing the slums to be an answer to Bombay's chronic housing shortage rather than considering problem to be solved (Ibidem, p.135). The Slum Upgradation Programme (SUP) was begun in the 1980s by cooperatives are formed by which groups of contiguous through housing societies which upgradation works in the colonies (Ibidem, p.137). The Prime Minister's Grant Project (PMGP) begun in 1985 with a sanction of thirty crore rupees for Dharavi by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, was a boon to the slum dwellers (Ibidem, p. 138).

According to a fieldwork study conducted on Dharavi it has been found that the slums could be turned into centres of human resources for economic development than liabilities.

Dharavi, and slums in general, should not be viewed as an overall liability to India's development, even if they are often public health and sanitation nightmares... The economic manpower and cultural essence of Mumbai reside in her masses of people who exist cradle-to-grave in this informal sector. Well over 50 percent of Mumbai's residents live in slums, and this percentage cannot decrease so long as rural migrants continue flocking to their congested city of dreams (Piven, 2008).

The practice of organised child beggary in Dharavi is run by slum mafia that mutilate many of the children to appear pathetic to draw sympathy from donors. Unfortunately, western media, for its own reasons, has often projected India in a poor light with the filth in the slums encapsulated in beggary, corruption, crime, communal tension, prostitution and drug trade. However, it should be noted that such evils exist in any slums in any metropolitan cities.

Slumdog Millionaire be seen as an eye opener to the global phenomenon of displaced populations as "it (film)

communicated across boundaries of culture, geography, economy and language. It shone a light into the heart of characters from Mumbai, but in so doing it taught everyone who saw it - from Mumbai to Milan, from Bangkok to Brazil, and from Lagos to Los Angeles, something about themselves and their immediate world" (Goldberg, 2009).

The potential human resources available in the slums of Dharavi makes many consider them no more as dreaded places full of beggars and criminals. The slums bustle with commercial arteries and form a lively part of an incredibly industrious city. People have been very creative in setting up a highly functional recycling industry. Dharavi's resourcefulness has been proven in the past 60 years of its growth from a small village in the marshlands to become a million-dollar economic miracle. It has been built by immigrants fleeing rural poverty, political oppression and natural disasters. It's economic success is an inspiration in the midst of global depression (Echanove, 2009).

Vikas Swarup has been very unique in his portrayal of his protagonist from a slum background to define forcefully the concept of slum-subaltern. His portrayal of characters living impoverished lives and yet sharing deep-felt human emotions, is a case in point to prove that slums are no more a threat to growing global poverty, but an asset to economic growth if given strategic direction.

Swarup has been very vibrant in his social criticism like Aravind Adiga in *The White Tiger*. Social inequality and injustice keep accelerating the poor-rich divide in society, leading to escalation of violence, crime and evils of all magnitudes. The fictionist, being a social observer from the bureaucracy, pauses critical questions for introspection and action, on the part of administrators and law makers. A brief critical analysis of the novel will serve the purpose best.

Swarup opens the novel with a prologue in which the protagonist articulates his subaltern concern:

I have been arrested. For winning a quiz show.

They came for me late last night, when even the stray dogs had gone off to sleep. They broke open my door, handcuffed me and marched me off to the waiting jeep with a flashing red light.

There was no hue and cry. Not one resident stirred from his hut. Only the old owl on the tamarind tree hooted at my arrest (*SM*, p. 11).

In the movie, Danny Boyle, presents the episode through a very powerful scene of the constable puffing cigarette smoke on to Jamal Malik's face as he begins torturing the young man to get a forced confession out. It is a symbolic presentation of the boy's dream of becoming a millionaire going into smoke.

It has been observed that police often falsely implicate slum dwellers in criminal cases. For example in 1995 during the 'danga' (riot) policemen broke open a certain Dina's house and bundled her husband into a van and assaulted him with the rifle butt. He was charged with homicide. Though the case was later disposed off, he had to report to Dharavi police station every week (Chatterji, 2007, pp. 119-20).

The story of the novel is based on the TV quiz *W3B*? (*Who Will Win A Billion?*) which became a national obsession in the recent past with "*Kaun Banega Crorepati*" hosted by Amitabh Bhachan. Danny Boyle opens the film with the caption which sums up the whole plot.

Jamal Malik is one question away from winning 20 Million Rupees.

How did he do it?

A: He cheated.

B: He's lucky.

C. He's a genius.

D. It is written.

I attempt listing the central characters with brief comments and place them side by side in the fiction and the film. It may be observed that the variations in character portrayal by Swarup and Boyle, with textual differences, render it difficult for any critical appraisal.

Main Characters in the novel	Main Cast in the film	Actors
Ram Mohammed Thomas	Jamal Malik	Dev Patel
•Ram, the protagonist, is an orphan, raised by a priest. •Ram Mohammed Thomas meets his ladylove, a prostitute, only in his teenage years. •Ram goes to the TV quiz show with the aim of making money to pay the pimp to free Latika. •He works as house help to different people. •In the book he reveals his story to his lawyer. •As a young boy Ram works for a Bollywood actress who has an affair with the actor Prem Kumar. The man abuses Ram and his girlfriend. •When Ram grows up and appears for the quiz show it is Prem Kumar who is the show's host. Ram has not forgotten his bitter	Jamal Malik  Jamal, the protagonist, is a Muslim boy from the slums of Mumbai.  He is orphaned after his mother is killed in a Mumbai riot.  Jamal works in a call centre and goes on the TV Quiz show to draw the attention of Latika.  The movie is a flashback of Jamal sharing the story with the Police Inspector Irrfan Khan.  All the quiz questions except the first one about Amitabh Bachan are changed in the movie.  It is to get a clue for the last question that he calls his brother Salim on phone.  Except for the trip to the Taj	Dev Patel
feelings for him.  Prem Kumar gives him a wrong answer while in the restroom for which Ram threatens him.  Nita  Jamal's girlfriend, is a prostitute	Mahal in Agra, his journeys have been altered in the movie.  Latika Latika the girl with whom Jamal is in love knows Jamal since	Freida Pinto
Salim •Ram's best friend. Salim goes on to become a Bollywood actor.	childhood.  Salim The elder brother of Jamal. He becomes a gangster and is eventually killed.	Madhur Mittal
Prem Kumar • The host of the TV quiz show.	Prem Kumar the host of the TV quiz show	Anil Kapoor
Godbole	Police Inspector Srinivas	Irrfan Khan
The Police Officer	•The Police Constable	<u>Saurabh</u> <u>Shukla</u>
	Javed	<u>Mahesh</u> <u>Manjrekar</u>
Maman	Maman	Ankur Vikal
Billy Nanda	Millionaire show producer	Raj Zutshi
Smita Shah	_	
·Lawyer of Ram		

The ever widening inequality and injustice prevalent in society in the wake of India's blooming economy has been exposed by fictionists in the recent past. At the centre of all

social unrests the problem of the gap between the haves and have-nots continue to loom large. "...the heightened tension within the country that's caused by the growing gap between the rich and the poor. The flare-ups can often take the form of ethnic or regional protests, but the underlying grievances are often economic.... Fixing the economic disparities has to be part of any attempt to address India's growing unrest" (Adiga, 10 Nov. 2008).

Vikas Swarup in his novel, wanted to prove how even an uneducated slum-kid could show his worth and succeed in life since knowledge is not the monopoly of the educated elite. Through a series of episodes the novelist tells the story of modern India through a quiz programme.

I read a newspaper report that street children in India have begun using the mobile Net facility. That gave me an idea. They had intuitively understood technology. You normally don't expect street children to surf the World Wide Web. We think they are uneducated people who do not go to schools. How can they think about the Internet? Here it was a reality. I thought, why not have an unlettered person appear on a quiz show, where difficult questions are asked and through his real-life experiences he answers them all (Swarup, 1 Feb. 2005).

Jamal recollects how he has fallen into a trap by overstepping his limits by taking part in a quiz progamme meant for the educated lot: "There are those who will say that I brought this upon myself. By dabbling in that quiz show, they will wag a finger at me and remind me of what the elders in Dharavi say about never crossing the dividing line that separates the rich from the poor. After all, what business did a penniless waiter have to be participating in a brain quiz? The brain is not an organ we are authorized to use. We are supposed to use only our hands and legs" (SM, p. 12).

He comes to the realization that the trap was laid by the organizers conniving with the police to continue a TV gimmick:

'I want your help to prove that Thomas cheated on the show. That he couldn't have known the answers to all twelve questions without an accomplice. Just think. He's never been

to school. He's never even read a newspaper.

There's no way he could have won the top prize.'

'Well...I'm not so sure.' The Commissioner scratches his head. 'There have been cases of boys from

poor backgrounds turning out to be geniuses in later life. Wasn't Einstein himself a

high-school drop-out?' (Ibidem, p. 16-18).

When they grill Jamal with a barrage of questions, he answers them all wrong. This convinces them that he had cheated like a British army Major who won £1 million with the assistance of his wife and a college lecturer. He was convicted in April 2003 for fraud. Swarup hit upon the plan of writing his story on an ignorant tiffin boy from the slums of Mumbai, on the verge of winning 20 million rupees, but accused of cheating (Macdonald, 2009).

But the Commissioner of Police is more practical by suggesting to the organisers to pay Jamal some money and force him to withdraw from the quiz. After several hours of torture with different instruments, Jamal is told to sign a confession statement:

I, Ram Mohammad Thomas, do hereby state that on 10 July I was a participant in the quiz show *Who Will Win A Billion?* I confess that I cheated. I did not know the answers to all the questions. I hereby withdraw my claim to the top prize or any other prize. I beg forgiveness. I am making this statement in full control of my senses and without any undue pressure from anyone. Signed: Ram Mohammad Thomas (SM, p. 24-5).

In the novel, Jamal's ordeal ends as a young woman lawyer named Smita Shah comes to his rescue. The rest of the story is recounted through his confession to the lawyer built around thirteen questions of the quiz show.

... I got lucky on the show.'

'You mean you just guessed the answers and by pure luck got twelve out of twelve correct?'

'No. I didn't guess those answers. I knew them.'

#### Dr. A.J. Sebastian sdb, Dept. of English, Nagaland Central University

'You *knew* the answers?'

'Yes. To all the questions.'

'Then where does luck come into the picture?'

'Well, wasn't I lucky that they only asked those questions to which I knew

the answers?' (Ibidem, p.30).

In police custody, Jamal is tortured through different inhuman methods to get a forced confession that he cheated at the show. The Inspector of police suspects that he has been wired up with some network to get the right answers. He cannot come to believe that a Slumdog without any formal education can answer questions which Professors, Lawyers, Doctors, General Knowledge Wallahs never answer.

It is to be noted that every question Jamal answers has its history of episodes connected to various stages of his life. The flashback technique is very aptly employed in the film with energizing musical scores and pithy dialogues. When the question is asked – 'in depictions of the God Ram, he is famously holding what in his right hand? Is it A) A flower. B) A scimitar. C) A child. D) a bow and arrow?' (19).

He reminisces his childhood traumatic experience after his mother was killed in a local riot. While escaping with his brother he observes three year old boy in a doorway, painted in blue holding in his hand a bow and arrow. That gives Jamal the clue to answer the question. He expresses his bitter pain: "I wake up every morning wishing I didn't know the answer to that question? If it wasn't for Ram and Allah, I would still have a mother" (Ibidem, p. 24).

Unable to get the confession out of Jamal despite all tortures, the Inspector assumes that his stubborn resistance is due to love of money and women: "Well, well. The slum dog barks. Money or women. The reason for most mistakes in life. Looks like you got mixed up with both..." (Ibidem, p. 31). His hypothesis is very true as Jamal's determination is strengthened only by his yearning to win money and Latika.

The scenes of child abuse and torture perpetrated by Maman, Punnose and their men, reveal yet another social issue at stake in the slums. Salim is promised to be made a leader and a professional in the trade, if he cooperated with them.

MAMAN: The time has come to choose, yaar. The life of a slum dog or the life of a man.

A real man. A gunfighter, Salim. Your destiny is in your hands, bhai. You can be me.

Or nobody. Understand? (Ibidem, p. 39).

Salim watches them take out the eyes of Aravind to make him a pathetic looking beggar. When Jamal is called in to be blinded, Salim flings chloroform on to Punnose and escapes with Jamal and Latika. However, Latika fails to get on to the speeding train engine.

The episode portraying Salim and Jamal atop a train, admiring the distant Himalayas, makes the latter reminisce their migrant life in the slums: "We criss-crossed the country from Rajasthan to Calcutta. Every time we were thrown off we got back on again. This was our home for years. A home with wheels and a whistle" (Ibidem, p. 45). Displacement is often found in Dharavi by which people keep moving into a different neighbourhood within the slum. Some leave Mumbai and migrate to other places (Chatterji 78). The slum life, being one of struggle for survival with no future in sight, makes the inmates live by a do-or-die principle. Hence, slum subaltern is often led to speaks through anti-social activities.

As the story further develops we find the two brothers as tourist guides in Agra. The episodes at Taj Mahal where they exploit tourists add much humour to the melodrama. Their life of stealing and pick-pocketing is typical of slum-subaltern in action for survival. Simon Beaufoy focuses on the adroitness and intelligence of slum boys in dire straights.

JAMAL: The Taj Mahal was built by the Emperor Khurram for his wife Mumtaz who was maximum beautiful woman in the whole world. When she died, the Emperor decided to build this five star hotel for everyone who wanted to visit her tomb (Ibidem, p. 47).

They confuse the tourists as they fail to find any such details in the guide book. The boys however continue their explanations with further concocted stories like Mumtaz died in a 'road traffic accident' (Ibidem, p. 48).

Returning to Mumbai, the brothers work at different places and at a restaurant. But Jamal's love for Latika continues to motivate him to find her. Though Salim discourages his brother from the wild goose chase trying to track her in the midst of nineteen million people in the city, he keep up his search.. But Jamal doesn't give up searching for his first love. He chances to meet his old pal, the eyeless Arvind, who tells him of his pathetic story after being blinded by Maman's men. While conversing, Jamal confesses how his love for Latika impelled him to escape Maman's dungeon. Arvind is upset with his futile search as he would be captured by Maman's gang.

JAMAL: I owe Latika...Please. Is she alive?...

ARVIND: Alive? Oh, she's alive alright. It's your life, Jamal. Pila Street. They call her Cherry,

now...I will sing at your funeral, yaar (Ibidem, pp. 61-2).

When the brothers discover Latika, she is being groomed by Mamanto be a potential prostitute with skills in dancing and singing. Maman is quick to recognises them both and refuses to let Latika go. The brothel scene presents the child prostitution prevalent in slums.

MAMAN: You really thought you could just walk in and take my prize away? Have you any idea how much this little virgin is worth, bhen chod? (Ibidem, p. 65).

The State of the World's children 2008 on Child Survival, calls on decision making bodies world over to work together to ensure that mothers, newborns and children receive quality essential services and place the survival of children at the heart of global efforts to advance humanity (www.unicef.org). The Oscar-nominated and Academy-award winning documentary *Born Into Brothels: Calcutta's Red Light* 

*Kids* released in 2004 depicts very powerfully child sex exploitation and prostitution (Snyder, 2008).

When Maman refuses to let Latika go free, Salim straightens up his gun and shoots him. He couldn't take the risk of sparing Maman's life, as the mafia would track them all. The three escape with the money they get. The scene depicts how mafia gangs control slum-life through perpetuating slavery through gun culture.

In contrast to this first crime by teenaged Salim, the original screenplay presents a superb scene at Chowpathy Beach at dusk. The scenes contrasts Salim's lost innocence with that of children at play: "Children are splashing in the sea, flying kites, digging sand, laughing. Salim, Latika and Jamal are crouched on the shore watching the sun sink into the sea. Latika is going through Maman's wallet, Salim is fingering the pistol, admiringly. Jamal is staring out to sea. Each in their own world, yet sharing swigs from a bottle of Johnny Walker" (SMM, p. 66). There is symbolic portrayal of lives moving from innocence to experience: Salim has become a criminal and admires his pistol; Latika has tasted a life in the brothel and searches Maman's wallet money; Jamal stares out to sea, dreaming of his love and passion for Latika.

When Jamal has rejoined his girl-friend, Salim's passion for her drives out Jamal at gunpoint. They are once again separated. When they meet again we find Salim working as a hit man for Javid after having had killed Maman. The sequence shows how mafia groups function. Javid was happy to employ him now saying, "My enemy's enemy is my friend" (Ibidem, p. 70).

The two brothers are united once again when Jamal tries to get in touch with the operator to join the contest on *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire*.

SALIM: Jamal? Is that you? Brother? Where are you, man?... I thought you were dead or

something... we had to go, Jamal. Maman's guys. They were searching the hotel...( Ibidem, p. 81).

The sequence shifts to the studio where Jamal proves his worth in the quiz contest. Miraculously he gets all answers correct to the volley of questions to compete for the five million rupees question:

PREM: A few hours ago, you were fetching tea for the phone-wallahs. Now you are richer than they will ever be. What a player, Ladies and Gentlemen! What a player. For five million rupees, my friend: who invented the revolver? Was it A) Samuel Colt, B) Bruce Browning, C) Dan Wesson or D) James Revolver? (Ibidem, p. 84).

In both the fiction and the film, it is revealed that every question Jamal answers has a link to the history of his life in the slums. This is a proof to the resilient spirit of slum-kids, who are intelligent and earnest in whatever they do.

In the sequence where Salim and Jamal meet together sitting atop a building observing their Mumbai city, Salim speaks of his accomplishments after having joined Javed's gang. He boasts of having become rich, becoming the centre of all criminal activities in the slums. They observe that the multi-storied apartments have replaced the old decrepit structures, giving the impression of urban mobility and transformation. Dharavi is the ultimate usergenerated city as each of its 80-plus neighborhoods has been incrementally developed by generations of residents updating their shelters and businesses according to needs and means (Echanove, 2009).

SALIM: Can you believe it? This is our slum. We lived just there, huh? Now it is business, apartments, call centres...India is at the centre of the world, now, bhai. And I am at the centre of the centre, Jamal. This is all Javed-bhai's. JAMAL: Javed Mehta? The gangster from our slum? You work for him? SALIM: Who else would protect us from Maman's gang, huh? (SMM, p. 88).

On the contrary Jamal is only interested in knowing the whereabouts of Latika. When he enquires of her Salim answers slyly: "Still? She's gone, Jamal. Long gone. Now go. Quick" (Ibidem, p. 89). Salim cannot understand the depth of sincere and passionate love Jamal has for the girl.

Meantime, Jamal comes to know that Salim works for Javid as a hit man. He risks following his track and sees Latika on the balcony of Javid's fortified bungalow. He gets access pretending to be the new cook. The door keeper mistaking him for the new dishwasher, lets him in. Latika recognises her long lost lover. Meanwhile they could overhear TV commentary on millionaire programme and the conversation gears up on it, turning attention on the secret of happiness. The sequence is a reflection on slum-subaltern yearning for happiness through riches.

JAMAL: Why does everyone love this programme? LATIKA: It's the chance to escape, isn't it? Walk into another life. Doesn't everyone want that?

JAMAL: You have another life. A rich one.

LATIKA: Who'd have thought it possible? A slum dog, with all this.

JAMAL: Are you happy?

LATIKA: I have five star food, five star clothes. I sleep in a bed, not on the street from where we come from, Jamal, that is happiness.

JAMAL: You don't look happy with a black eye.

LATIKA: You turn up here out of nowhere, telling me I'm not happy: how dare you? (Ibidem, pp. 91-2).

When Javid returns, matters get worsened as he finds the new cook. As he keeps yelling and swearing, Jamal tells Latika to escape with him to freedom.

JAMAL: Come away with me.

LATIKA:...Away where? And live on what? What can you provide? What have you got, Jamal?

JAMAL: Love.

• • • •

LATIKA: Love, that will feed us, will it?

JAMAL: It won't buy you anew dishwasher, but it might make you happy.

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#### Dr. A.J. Sebastian sdb, Dept. of English, Nagaland Central University

JAMAL: You and me. That is the real world. Come away with me.

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LATIKA: You are crazy.

JAMAL: Salim will help us.

LATIKA: Salim? You still believe in Salim?.....You

want to do something for me?

JAMAL: Anything.

LATIKA: Then forget me.

JAMAL: I'll wait at VT station. Five o' clock everyday until you come (Ibidem, pp. 93-4).

Jamal keeps his promise and waits for her daily at VT station at five O' clock in the evening.

As the final episode of the quiz show for 20 million rupees is on for Jamal, everyone is focussed on their TV sets. There is a total change of heart in Salim who persuades Latika to drive off to witness the live show. As she moves off, he offers her his mobile with the premonition that Jamal would call on it in course of the programme. begins with the final question on Alexander Duma's book The Three Musketeers. Jamal confesses he doesn't know the answer and is asked to dial a friend. He calls Salim's mobile and gets Latika online after much delay as she left it on the car seat. As Latika introduces herself on phone there is a first real smile on Jamal's adult life, indicating his final achievement in getting in touch with her. Though she is unable to help him with a clue, Jamal guesses the right answer and makes history winning 20 million rupees.

The scene shifts to Javed's bungalow where Salim fills the bath tub with rupee bills and lies in it. When an enraged Javid comes charging him for having let Latika escape, Salim guns him down. Shot by Javid's men, Salim dies uttering 'God is good.' The film comes to a close with the scene of Jamal waiting for Latika at Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus gazing at the VT station as commuters file past. Their love being genuine, Latika comes in search of him. He forces himself through the crowd and reaches out to her.

LATIKA: I thought we would meet again only in death.

JAMAL: I knew you'd be watching... This is our destiny...This is our destiny (Ibidem, p. 121).

The slum-subaltern has the final victory. The movie climaxes with the hit song Jai ho bringing warmth to the frigid audience.

The fiction and the film have been acclaimed as well as decried by critics. Though most find it very realistic in portraying slum-life based on Swarup's- novel. Danny Boyle has rendered it a superb celluloid sensation. I believe, he has not intentionally presented anything that would undermine Indian ethos. It is indeed a shocking presentation of our slums whether one likes it or not. However certain dehumanising scenes are disgusting to any cultured audience like the way the young Jamal dives in through the septic hole and wades across the mire fully covered in human excrement. Coining the word 'slumdog' been offensive too in a world where affirmation of human dignity is given prime importance by virtue of human rights of individuals. The slum dwellers may be the poorest of the poor, but they are to be respected as persons in a world where there is an ever growing awareness treating Amitabh Bhachan with respect every living organism. rightly reacted when he wrote, " if SM projects India as [a] third-world, dirty, underbelly developing nation and causes pain and disgust among nationalists and patriots, let it be known that a murky underbelly exists and thrives even in the most developed nations" (Bhachan, 14 Jan. 2009).

The fiction and the film have a universal appeal as the characters are representative of everyman in every age. It has been pointed out by Prince Charles, that the Mumbai shanty town featured in the film should be a model for urban planning as the west has much to learn from societies and places which, while sometimes poorer in material terms are infinitely richer in the ways in which they live and organise themselves as communities (Swaine, 2009).

Vikas Swarup, who attained stardom as a fictionist, has been satisfied with the change of title from *Q&A* to

Slumdog Millionaire as it gives it better sense. He liked the film's innovative ending by which the hero is arrested on suspicion of cheating on the penultimate question, and not after he wins the prize as in the novel. In the film are made into brothers. The lead character's name in the film is changed from Ram Mohammad Thomas to Jamal Malik. This removes the original notion Swarup had of projecting his hero as an Indian everyman with a Hindu, Muslim and Christian name. In the film Jamal is a Muslim whose mother is killed by a Hindu mob, rendering it more dramatic. The novelist has appreciated screenwriter Simon Beaufoy's creativity in rendering the film beautiful with a plot riveting with the breathtaking child actors. However, Swarup has reservations on public reaction to communal riots portrayed as people are very sensitive in India (Swarup, 2009).

The prominent episodes in Jamal's life that draw our attention are: i) his witnessing his mother being killed by communal mobs, ii) his begging career with the slum mafia, iii) his escape with his brother from the slum mafia, iv) his involvement in thefts and duping foreign tourists at Taj Mahal, v) his return to Mumbai and being employed at the restaurant and searching for his childhood sweetheart, vi) his determination to save Latika from prostitution and tracking his brother involved with the mafia, vii) his participation in the TV quiz show more for Latika's sake than for the prize money, viii) and the final 'Jai ho' episode that climaxes the movie in the typical Indian style bringing warmth to the frigid audience with the union of lovers.

In the novel he unfolds his story to Smita Shah the lawyer. As she reviews the footage of the show to build the case, Ram tells heart wrenching stories from his life and the mystery unfolds. Ram Mohammad Thomas narrates his life story in 13 controlled, quick paced episodes, that link into each quiz query. On the other hand, in the film the police inspector shows the videotape and after each question Jamal narrates his life- story: his childhood with his brother Salim, his crush for Latika and their fight to survive on the streets. Guided by his common sense and past experiences, Jamal is able to give right answers to all questions.

#### 4. Conclusion

Slumdog Millionaire has captivated the attention of global audience as it depicts the slum reality of the metropolitan cities of the world today with the urbanization of poverty. Slum-subaltern has got its voice heard to some extend, seeking redressive measures. The rags to riches story of Jamal finally climaxing in emotional union with Latika proves to affirm human values of love compassion in a world pivoted on economic boom and materialistic pursuits. The story narrated in episodic flashbacks with three sets of actors of three different age groups from the real slums renders it a powerful presentation in the film. It revolves around love, friendship, betrayal, poverty and hope.

In the present scenario, the UN General Secretary's calls for global attention to solve the slum crisis through determined political will of nations is apt and fitting:

Slums represent the worst of urban poverty and inequality. Yet the world has the resources, know-how and power to reach the target established in the Millennium Declaration. ... the best practises it identifies, will enable all actors involved to overcome the apathy and lack of political will that have been a barrier to progress, and move ahead with greater determination and knowledge in our common effort to help the world's slum dwellers to attain lives of dignity, prosperity and peace (Annan, 2003).

Rapid urbanization due to influx of the poor to cities, calls on planners to utilize it for greater economic growth through sustainability. Meanwhile, *Slumdog Millionaire* remains a powerful fictional and celluloid pointer to the rapidly growing planet of the slums.

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