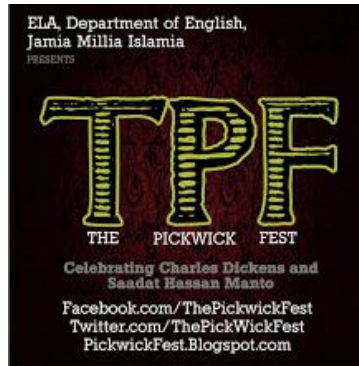


THE PICKWICK FEST '12

A literary carnival, organized by
English Literary Association, JMI

On
15th, 16th and 17th October, 2012



ELA

THE PICKWICK FEST



Student Representatives receiving the Honorable Vice Chancellor at the department gate

English literary Association, Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia, had organized a three day literary festival called The Pickwick Festival, October 15-17, 2012, partly sponsored by Rupa and Aleph. The festival was the brainchild of the Department's Head, Professor M Asaduddin, and the ELA advisor Mr Saroj Mahananda, Asst. Professor in the department, saw to its full implementation. The objective of this literary carnival was to bring together talent and immense potential of students from different universities. Also to bring under one roof Dickens' lovers and to revive Manto's readership. The festival witnessed participation from different universities, and college of the NCR, in various competitions.



Mr. Najeeb Jung inaugurating the festival

Professor M Asaduddin, welcoming the chief guest, Vice Chancellor Najeeb Jung, and other participants, underlined the continuing appeal of these two writers who were not only magical story tellers but, in many ways, the conscience keepers of their generations. He pointed out how, in the context of University education, what goes by the name of “extra curricular” is really “intra curricular” because the objective of education is to create well-rounded, self-reliant individuals who can “think for themselves and speak for themselves”. He encapsulated this by recounting the comment of a first year B.A. (Hons) student. On being asked what difference joining the department has made to her life, she said with a dash of metaphorical flourish, “*Sir, 3 months ago, I was a frog in the well with a limited horizon; today I am like a bird, slowly growing my wings, and almost ready to take my first flight.*” The Vice Chancellor declared the festival open and expressed the wish that the department realized its immense potential and became a coveted destination for students. He said he was extremely interested in the actual lives of students, how they see their future, where they go from here, and that he would like to hold occasional conversations with them on this.



Then it was Professor Sambuddha Sen of Delhi University who spoke on “Dickens, Hogarth and Cruikshank: The Evolution of a Genius.” His lecture left the audience thirsting for more. The great attraction of the inaugural session were the presentations by Abhilash Philip and Kaif Ali Taqvi who took on the persona of Dickens and Manto and took the audience through a personal and intimate journey of the trials and tribulations, and glory and achievements of the two writers, ably assisted by the students of the department who enacted scenes from their works.



The competitive events started off next. Dramatization competition saw ten groups, five groups from Jamia, and 5 groups from several Delhi Colleges, including Khalsa College, Vivekananda College, Deshbandhu College, among others, showcasing their histrionic skills. However, all the screen plays were based either on Manto’s stories or his life. “*Tobatek Singh*” seemed to be the universal favourite. “*Thanda Gosht*”, dramatized by the group from Khalsa College stood out for its sheer professionalism and performative skill and deservedly won the first position. Below are some stills from the various presentations which brought the stage alive.



Graffiti making competition, our next event on the agenda, parallel to dramatics, started with the theme of Charles Dickens and Sadat Hasan Manto. The event witnessed participants pouring in not only from Jamia Millia Islamia but also from Delhi University, Amity University and Gautam Buddha University. Dazzling ideas, which navigated their way on the white sheets, were indeed a bliss to watch. Soon the canvases presented a riot of colours – deep, bright, pastel – and the brushes of the painters moved, sometimes gently, sometimes fiercely, registering bold strokes and refined touches. If some canvases showed a restrained, proportionate and judicious use of space, others showed the painters’ total abandon in reveling in colours and images, but in each case, recording unfailingly their subjective vision. Neeraj Vinod, an MBA aspirant from Gautam Buddha Technical University, said, “we were very excited when we got the invitation for the literary carnival. Playing with colors has always been the best stress buster for me. So it was inevitable for me to take part in the competition.” Professor Zahoor Zargar, the famed Kashmiri landscape painter, and Dean, Faculty of Fine Arts, the chief judge of the event, saw great promise in the participants.



Prof. Zahoor Ahmad Zargar, judging the Graffiti Making Competition, along with Prof. M. Asaduddin

Creative Cruise was one of the most looked forward to event in the festival, for two reasons. Firstly, because it gave wings to the creative imagination of nascent writers, and secondly, because it gave participants an opportunity to interact with Amandeep Sandhu – a novelist garnering rave reviews for his two books from across India. He gave a pep talk before the event to all the participants, which helped them in the course of their creative writing endeavour. This competition was judged by Dr. Nishat Zaidi and Dr. Asmat Jahan. In the event, participating students stepped into the shoes of Dickens and Manto, and refashioned their epic writings in their own unique styles. In terms of responses, several participants admitted that it was the most difficult, challenging, but enjoyable writing competition that they had ever entered into.



Amandeep Sandhu, in conversation with the judges of the event

The second day was the busiest of the festival with three events. The elocution contest and Quiz Competition were held concurrently. Author Nilanjana Roy was the chief guest at the elocution competition, and she, along with Professor Asaduddin and Dr Shuby Abidi, judged the event. Participants gave free rein to their power of eloquence and rhetorical implements and razor sharp wit to bring alive characters and situations from the two writers. The students from the department gave a tough fight to external participants, winning the first position.





Ms Roy applauded the efforts of the ELA to bring back on focus the lost art of elocution, and gave a thumbs up for the event heads who managed it so effectively.



An extremely informative, as well as entertaining quizzing session took place on the second day of the festival. Mr. Roomy Naqvy was the quizmaster and he asked questions on the life, works and contemporaries of Dickens and Manto. Professor Anisur Rahman was the chief guest. This event was a huge hit among students as well as teachers for the depth of knowledge it plumbed for by all those present. The winners outdid their competitors by a mile, receiving their award to a thunderous applause from the audience.



The winners!

Oliver Twist was screened in the Tagore Hall for participants of Moderated Group Discussion, on the basis of which, topics for GD were announced. Students debated and discussed wide-ranging themes from the great literary text by Dickens, which included the spirit of charity, preservation of virtues and the relevance of Dickensian narrative in contemporary time. Palash Krishna Mehrotra, author of Eunuch Park and The Butterfly Generation was present to judge as well as interact with the eager blogging club members. He talked about his works, thoughts and plans at length, and inspired those present around him. Saumya B. Verma, Associate Professor at AJK MCRC, was the second judge, whose grace, elegance and knowledge of cinema and its impact on literary culture was appreciated by all. Mr. Adil Mehdi, from our own faculty was present as the third judge and he brought his own insights to bear on judging the event throughout the two hour screening. Participating students went back happy with the hospitality they had received from the Pickwick volunteers.



The Panel of Judges for Moderated Group Discussion

The paper presentation competition gave a chance to students engage academically and critically with the life and works of Dickens and Manto. the critical acumen and literary flair displayed by the students evoked high praise from the judges. Ms. Ivy Hansdak, Dr. Simi Malhotra and Dr. Anuradha Ghosh were the erudite judges who questioned students on their presentations before tabulating the results. A

thoroughly informative session, it was followed by a screening of a 7 minute film made by Aryak Ray, a B. A. second year student of the department, based on *Hard Times*, the famous Dickens novel.



A team of bloggers was continuously working alongside the festival to document each update from the plethora of events taking place during the festival. The Pickwick bloggers took care to interview each person pivotal to the festival and then put up their impressions on a blog called *The Pickwick Journal*. This blog was a huge success, which became evident in the huge number of page views it gathered in a rather short span of time. This online journal is one legacy from the festival which Professor Asaduddin is keen that the students carry forward.

The valedictory session began with Saroj Mahanada's perspective on the festival. Then the chief organizer, Saumya Kulshreshta, and her individual event leaders, recounted their excitement, anxiety and ecstasy surrounding the festival. The chief guest, Professor S M Sajid, Registrar, Jamia Millia Islamia, and the guest of honour, Mr Sanjiv Agnihotri, applauded the students for their efforts. While Professor Sajid felt that the festival should happen every year and on a grander scale, Mr Agnihotri showed his keenness for dramatics and said that he would be pleased to train students in theatrical skills. The Chair, Professor Asaduddin congratulated students on their success in putting up a great show. He pointed out that after everyday's events he met event leaders for stock taking, where successes were shored up and failings were analysed. This, according to him, was necessary, as he has a long term vision for the festival. The audience witnessed a touching scene when he passed on a special gift, a token that was given him by Oxford University Press when it celebrated its centenary with him, to Saumya Kulshreshta, with the hope that she will, one day, become an Oxford author and stand for things Oxford

represented for several centuries – exploration, preservation and dissemination of human knowledge across the world.



Can't Wait for Next Year's Festival!