

Charlie gave me his number



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 পরিচিতিঃ Born and brought up in Kolkata, Subhadip Dan graduated from the RK Mission Residential College at Narendrapur with Honours in Economics. He is currently pursuing an MBA from the International School of Business & Media. An avid blogger & photographer, Subhadip writes regularly for the cyber alumni portal *Batchmates.com*.

“Take my number down,” said the pantomime. I followed suit in a jiffy. “Call me if you ever throw birthday parties like this”.

“What’s your name?” I asked.

“Charlie” responded the pseudo-Chaplin twirling his butterfly-moustache. A speaking pantomime, an oxymoron of sorts, I said to myself.

I was expecting a commonplace Bengali name. But the very name ‘Charlie’ made me realize the devotion he has for his craft. I have seen the bloke before, in several birthday parties; dressed as Charlie Chaplin, strolling around with a cane in hand. He earns his livelihood by tickling others’ funny bones with his antics.

His caricatures and humorous illustrations could not shift my focus away from his old torn hat and shabby coat, which reflected abject poverty. Though he failed to match up to the legendary tramp in appearance, Charlie left no stone unturned to ape his idol.

The poor Chap(lin) was having a tough time. The kids were pestering him like anything. His bowler hat was snatched away repeatedly thereby exposing his long mane which was quite un-Chaplin like. The tramp was annoyed but preferred to keep a poker face. Although the invitees liked his antics, they seemed to be more curious about the night’s culinary offerings. (After all, ‘Humour’ is not a basic need.) Charlie did not lose heart. Instead he tried to keep the kids occupied by repeatedly changing his facial geometry. The guy was trying hard to make his presence felt. But as gifts started piling up, the wise little beauties deserted him.

Charlie sat down and looked pensive. I thought I should leave the poor guy alone. I approached the buffet where the super-consumerists were having a ball. They were eating like gluttons. A plump, middle-aged bloke started munching a chicken leg and gave me a ‘Triumphant-over-Bird Flu’ look. All I managed was a wry smile.

Suddenly I saw Charlie driving a human-train. The kids were hopping onto the bandwagon with immense enthusiasm. It grabbed a lot of eye-balls and brought a

smile to many a face. The guests applauded and admired. Charlie was elated with the response and sped up his train.

I visualized the train getting past the banquet hall and going up into the sky at a dazzling speed. It exuded radiant beams of gaiety and optimism. The gloomy sky was soon upstaged by the joyride. There was no stopping the train. It was on an eternal voyage to close the Pandora's box. I stood there agape with amazement.

(Dedicated to the legendary Charles Spencer Chaplin who once said – "I Love walking in the rain because Nobody can see me crying...")