

The boy in the slum by Ishaque Syed, Year 7 Alperton Community School

“Few would have thought things would change so dramatically that day but....

I was a boy when it happened. The event that changed my viewpoint on life.

I lived in a mansion, my life was luxurious and rich and all my needs were dealt with by a click of my fingers. I lived in India, apparently full of poverty but I couldn't see it. Not on my street anyway. I had a loving family, my Mum, Dad and two sisters. Then came the day the soldiers came.

My Mum screamed to me to go to my room and stay there. Five minutes later, I heard my Dad pleading with the soldiers. I ran to him in time to see him being dragged away.

Biting back her tears, my Mum told us that we had to leave. Mum said that money was tight, so we had to lose some possessions and say goodbye to our friends. We left with some clothes but no toys or technology.

Mum took us to eat at one of the street food stalls selling stale samosas. It was late but we kept walking until sundown and we could walk no more. We fell to the floor and hid under a bridge along with the other bereft street children.

The next day, I awoke with a pain in my back. I was freezing and had a terrible cough. I asked if we could go to a restaurant. Mum explained that money was tight but that didn't mean we were poor.

Now we started walking to the slum. I thought we were going to donate money like last time but this time we went in. We sat on some old tyres while Mum talked to some men. Mum said that our new home was safer than the streets.

Our home was shabby with crooked walls and a broken roof. There was a foul stench in the air. Mum said it was more than enough but I didn't think so. Mum told me I had to start working, collecting metal because if you did that, you would get money. I finally did what I was told.

Mum warned me never to go to the 'rubbish' hills and I didn't need to be told twice. Everyday, there was a rubbish landslide and when that happened, people didn't come back.

The next day, I clutched my rupees in my hand and spotted hundreds of pieces of metal on the hills. Before I knew it, I started running toward the glistening metal thinking of all the money I could make. A boy's hand came out suddenly and grabbed hold of me. He pointed to the huge stack of rubbish that was tumbling down. I asked the name of the boy who saved my life. Raj became my best friend.

Every day after that, we would hang out together, collecting metal and helping each other out. Until the day my life changed again.

Dad was coming home! I couldn't wait to tell Raj but he didn't look happy that my fate had been saved. I felt bad leaving. To this day, the gap between rich and poor leaves a burning ache in my heart. I was just lucky.